

**COMBAT BRANDING AND THE ISLAMIC STATE: A MISSING LINK TO
GENERATING A TERRORIST RECRUIT PROFILE**

A dissertation submitted

by

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to

FIELDING GRADUATE UNIVERSITY

in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN PSYCHOLOGY

With an Emphasis in
Media Psychology

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ABSTRACT

Profiling has its traditions in criminal investigations where it is used to assist in apprehending an offender by examining and attempting to understand his or her psychological motivations and personality. Terrorist specialists and theorists have applied traditional profiling techniques in hopes of distinguishing nonterrorists from terrorists and in an endeavor to understand the motivators for radicalization. However, these attempts have created a divide between the theorists resulting in contradictory data and debate. With the rise of social media, the methods of terrorism have changed. The Islamic State (IS) in particular has tapped into using media, not only to recruit, but as a form of technological combat, which in turn has added to their success and strength. This dissertation introduces the theory of Combat Branding. The findings of this dissertation suggest that it is possible to create a deductive profile of Western IS recruits by beginning with the examination of IS's Combat Brand. This is a qualitative visual narrative study of official IS media consisting of video and still images. It is my hypothesis that starting with an analysis of the Combat Brand is a missing link to approaching a deductive profile of the intended target audience.

KEY WORDS: COMBAT BRANDING, ISLAMIC STATE, VISUAL NARRATIVE STUDY, QUALITATIVE, DEDUCTIVE PROFILING, IDENTITY FORMATION, TERRORISM, BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL, FILM

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my dissertation committee members.

In particular, my thanks to Dr. Garry Hare, Dr. Gregory Seese, and Dr. Dan Sewell for their enthusiasm, support, and encouragement.

Thank you to my husband, mother, father, and sister for their unwavering support and love.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: Literature Review	20
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	77
Chapter 4: Findings.....	84
Chapter 5: Discussion.....	106
Chapter 6: Conclusion	111
References:.....	113

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Combat Brand’s Five Caveats.....	124
Appendix B: Self-Concept.....	125
Appendix C: Greenpeace Advertisements.....	126
Appendix D: Codebook Mind Map.....	128
Appendix E: Examples of IS Media Logos.....	129
Appendix H: Word Clouds.....	130

FIGURES

Figure 1: The three phases of this study.....	83
Figure 2: Deductive profile based on combat brand analysis.....	99
Figure 3: Case study findings.....	105
Figure 4: Immigrant status of case studies.....	109

TABLES

Table 1: Mise-en-scène video media signifiers, archetype, and narrative themes.....	86
Table 2: Cohen’s kappa intercoder reliability rating chart.....	93
Table 3: Mise-en-scène still media signifiers, archetype, and narrative themes.....	95

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Today, social media and mobile technology have allowed groups be they prosocial, terrorist, criminal, or political to have complete control of their brand power¹. They are no longer reliant on third-party media outlets to convey a brand and messaging that can affect how they are perceived. Therefore, one can now deconstruct their visual images to analyze the brand's use of signifiers², how the signifiers are used to elicit emotion via associations, and how they inform their target audience. This has provided researchers a unique opportunity to study a group's brand using the group's media as a direct reflection of how they envision themselves, allowing for the first time what I have termed a *Combat Brand* to be created by these groups.

Individuals favor familiarity. Therefore, signifiers or visual narrative rules that are familiar will be more influential and favorable than the nonfamiliar, for example, the Islamic State's (IS)³ use of Western culture film signifiers in visuals directed at Western audiences to gain recruitment and/or support. In the hopes of creating a profile of high risk potential recruits, I will examine three distinct aspects: analysis of IS's Combat Brand, creating a Western recruit profile, and case studies of known Western IS recruits.

The first stage involves the analysis of IS's Combat Brand as depicted through their visual media (video and still photos). This involves identifying a range of elements from the archetypes

¹ Brand Power: "The ability of a brand to attract a share of its particular market" (Cambridge Dictionaries Online). I am also using it to reference the emotional power that a brand can come to signify and be imbued with.

² Signifier: "A symbol, sound, or image, that represents an underlying concept or meaning" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

³ The Islamic State (IS) is also known as Da'esh, ISI, ISIS, and ISIL. These monikers are all appropriate in use. However, they have officially adopted the moniker, the Islamic State (IS) (The Week, 2015). Since this paper examines how the group refers to and references themselves in their media via their combat brand, I will be referring to them as IS.

used to the visual signifiers present in their media. Media leaves a fingerprint on individuals based on the visual cultural rules one has been exposed to growing up. For instance, one can tell when a director is inspired by another auteur⁴ (Phillips, 1996), or if a cinematographer has a European background and sensibility versus a Hollywood influence. By examining the signifiers through the lens of cinema language, this study will decipher the visual symbols and what they psychologically denote to a Western audience (e.g., United States, Canada, Australia, and Western Europe). This information will be used to create IS's Combat Brand profile based on the psychological understanding of the various visual narrative signifiers they use and the intended meanings behind them.

The second stage is the creation of a traditional deductive behavioral profile in an attempt to understand who would most likely be motivated to join IS based on how the narrative visual structure is intended to be interpreted.

The third and final stage involves examining case studies/histories of actual known Western IS recruits. During this process, a limited biopsychosocial history, as well as a compilation of risk factors that each individual possesses, will be outlined, examined, and compared to the deductive profile created in Stage 2.

Global Rise of Islamic State Media

IS was selected for this study because they are one of the first terrorist organizations to tap into and harness the maximum benefit of technology, social networking, and brand control. Fractions of IS and lone wolf terrorist cells have begun popping up in Middle East territories such as Lebanon, Egypt, and Afghanistan, and other Muslim prevalent countries such as Asia

⁴ Auteur: "A French word meaning 'author'. Auteurs in cinema can be taken to be those creative individuals (usually directors) whose work over a body of films expresses a discernible world view" (Kochberg, 1996, p.18).

and Africa. In addition, they have been active in Europe (Brussels and Paris) and the United States (San Bernardino) orchestrating successful attacks against the *kuffar* (disbelievers).

Western recruits from the United States and Europe, motivated to join IS, are making *hijra* (the act of making the journey to join jihad). It is important to understand and decode the attraction of Westerners, both young and more mature, male and female, who, by a Western perspective, would likely be turned off by this demanding, non-tolerant, law-centered terrorist organization. Between 27,000 and 31,000 foreign fighters from over 86 countries have left home to join IS in Syria and Iraq (TSG, 2015; Bora, 2015). However, the focus of this paper will involve case studies of Western recruits from Western Europe, North America, Australia, and Canada. Around 280 North Americans, that we know of officially, have joined IS in 2015 and a more significant number of Western European recruits estimated to be around 5,000 (TSG, 2015).

A large part of the allure of IS emanates from their effective narrative barrage. They have successfully built a narrative machine that has stunned the globe and left much of the world attempting to silence it. Through a unique combination of cinematic studies at a semiotic level, psychological profiling, and biopsychosocial analysis, this paper hopes to facilitate a better understanding of IS and the individuals who respond to its brand and call to action. The purpose of this study is not to understand the act itself but to understand “Why?”.

Semiotics and Cinema Studies

In film there are two different narratives occurring simultaneously, the visual and the audible (dialogue and/or text). These separate narratives can be either supportive of or in conflict with each other. For example, a character may say one thing, but through visual cues we

see that he or she means the opposite or is not telling the truth. Depending upon the relationship between these two narratives, the audience will experience different emotional reactions. For instance, when the dialogue differs from the visual “truth,” a feeling of conflict or tension may be elicited in the audience. By contrast, when the narratives support each other, for example, a commander giving an inspirational speech to his/her troops right before battle, such as in the films *Braveheart* or *Elizabeth*, an emotional reaction of camaraderie or inspiration can be triggered in the audience. Work by Seese and Haven (2015) on influential narratives and strategic story structure discuss *residual resolution emotion* (RRE) and its importance on influencing behavior. RRE is when the individual experiences a strong positive or negative emotional response to a narrative’s resolution. This residual emotion motivates the individual to act on the emotions in order to rectify or support the emotions he or she is experiencing in response to the narrative. This emotional response has residual effects in that it is still influential for some time after the narrative has concluded. It is through the emotionally triggered behavioral response, that the individual undergoes an attitudinal change in response to the behavior he or she is performing.

Since this dissertation is aimed at Western recruits to IS, the visual narrative is important to understand in isolation. Much of the audio in the visual media that IS disseminates is rhetoric and, to a Westerner, is likely the most foreign of the two narratives. To a portion from the West, and especially those who have no Arab or Muslim backgrounds, “*Allah*” and Islam are going to be foreign concepts. Therefore, it is my opinion that the familiarity and the allure that IS’s visual media holds for Western recruits is the familiarity in the visual narrative’s construction and themes. It is via the visual narrative where the Western viewers are aligning IS’s media with their own internal narrative and needs.

Cinematic analyses and media studies have examined the “meaning” inherent between single film frames by studying the construction of a film’s montage, and by breaking the film’s montages into the basic structure and signifiers used in the creation of the *mise-en-scène* (,mēz, ān ‘sen), which is defined as all the elements that are in front of the camera’s lens that are to be filmed, including lighting. At this micro-level, the sender’s (filmmaker’s) message and emotional intent of the image being sent to the receiver (viewer) can be examined. Images, words, and sounds all contribute to and follow codes that are the basis of communication used by individuals to navigate, comprehend, and experience their environment. These signs are conventional and arbitrary, and individuals come to process both the denoted and connotative meaning through their culture and experiences. The signs come to represent and/or trigger a particular meaning that is contributed by the message’s receiver. For instance, the letters in this order *h-o-r-s-e* are a symbol for our exemplar of what is considered to be a horse. The word acts as a symbol that activates our cognitive scheme of the attributes that make up a horse.

Two of the leading semiotic theorists were Saussure (1959) and Peirce (1868). Saussure focused on language and the semiotics in words and linguistics, whereas Peirce focused on images and visuals as signs and their codes. Peirce broke visual and auditory signs into three main types: *icon*, *index*, and *symbol*. Icons are signs resembling the actual object; indexical signs suggest a causal relationship with another sign, for example, smoke is a sign of fire; and symbols have come to stand for a specific meaning or understanding that is culturally specific and arbitrary in nature. In film, the placement of one frame next to another creates meaning that is located in-between the frames. The viewer is guided by associations formed between two independent images and cognitively creates a cohesive emotional narrative or meaning.

Using categories, one has the ability to apply and decipher the relationships between the

signifier and signified in order to understand, navigate, and communicate with others and with the world around them. For example, the image of a simple home-cooked dinner laid out on a dining table can denote family, tradition, hearth and home, and/or nostalgia, but when paired next to an image of a starving child it could take on the meaning of privilege, overindulgence, wastefulness, class, and/or opulence. A brand's goal is to provide rich meaning that will be successfully decoded by the intended audience in an emotionally impactful way, which Berger (2012) defines as, "striking the responsive chord." For this to be accomplished, the signs and codes used in the message need to be understood and decoded by a specific receiver. Signs and their meanings are conventional. They are taught from one generation to the next and can be altered between generations. Therefore, how a message is to be decoded depends on it being understood by both the sender and the receiver. To obtain the intended result, it is required that there is a shared understanding of what codes should be used within a particular message. Crow (2003) writes that in advertising one can always count on the fact that "signification is always intentional" (p.74).

The process of communication contains the following steps. First, the sender creates a thought or message that he or she wants to communicate. Second, the sender chooses the medium with which the message should be communicated. Third, the sender codes the message using ambiguous, yet conventional information appropriate for the intended audience. Fourth, the sender dispatches the message and it is received by the receiver. Fifth, the receiver takes in the coded message and, using the shared cultural or personal rules that exist, creates meaning from the signs through the process of decoding the message, which is the final step. This is accomplished by the receiver forming cognitive associations based on the signifiers present in the message. At each stage, there are intentional actions taking place by the sender, whose goal

is to compose a message that will be successfully interpreted with the intent to inform, inquire, persuade, develop good will, or simply entertain the receiver.

History of Behavioral Profiling

Psychological profiling, which dates back to the 1940s, is used to assist in apprehending an offender through examining and attempting to understand his or her psychological motivations and personality. Profiling largely focuses on building a model of the offender's personality based on crime scene details resulting from the offender's behavior at the scene. Details can involve the setting, the victim, the act, and so on. Together, these details can help explain what occurred, the motivation behind the act, the type of person who is likely to have committed the act, and what personality characteristics this individual most likely possesses (Egger, 1999).

Mainstream media has always been enthralled with the idea of profiling and, in many instances, misrepresenting exactly what is involved in real-life profiling. Despite the criminal component that has been linked to profiling by Hollywood and the media, the first recorded use of psychological profiling was political in origin when, during WWII, Dr. W.C. Langer (1972) was approached to draft a psychological profile of Adolf Hitler (Egger, 1999). Military profiling has been further developed by the U.S. Army by what is officially known as *Psychological Operations* (PSYOP). This organization's goal is to assist the Combat Commander and other U.S. ambassadors by using a detailed profiling analysis model called *target audience analysis* (TAA) in order to understand a specific foreign *target audience* (TA; United States Army, 1966/2007).

Dr. James Brussels (1968) was asked in 1957 to construct a profile of the Mad Bomber. What makes this case so noteworthy was that Brussels was able to profile with such accuracy

that he determined the suspect would be wearing a double-breasted suit, which he was upon arrest. Ironically, one can assume it is also this case which has come to serve as the archetype for the misconception or belief that a profile can be so exact.

There are three paramount instances responsible for establishing the foundation of profiling: The FBI's first involvement in profiling in 1972 which led to the establishment of the FBI behavioral analysis unit in 1978; Dr. David Canter's involvement in 1985 with a multi-jurisdiction manhunt in England for a murder-rapist known as the Railway Rapist responsible for over 30 rapes and two murders; and in 1994 at the University of Liverpool when Dr. Canter started the first degree program in psychological profiling (Egger, 1999). Dr. Canter's teaching focused on how to examine the narrative of the criminal, what he called the "*criminal shadow*" (Canter, 1994), which is constructed through signals tied to behaviors seen in the analysis of the crime scene and victim. The signals are as follows:

- *The personal world that the offender inhabits*
- *The degree of care that the offender takes in avoiding capture*
- *The degree of experience that the offender shows in the crime*
- *The unusual aspects of the criminal act, which may reflect the type of person who may be recognized*
- *The habits of the offender, which may carry over into his daily life* (Egger, p. 222, 1998).
(Egger, 1999, p. 247).

Collectively these signals help profilers to construct the personality of the offender.

Two main theories of profiling have come to dominate this field of study, *organized vs. disorganized* (Ressler & Burgess, 1985) and *personality-types*. The organized vs. disorganized personality type is a prominent theory in modern day profiling, though not without criticism.

Organized personality offenders are socially skilled, able to plan, organized, and very methodical. Organized personality criminals are thought to be associated with psychopathic personalities and anti-social personality disorders. Whereas, disorganized personality offenders are thought of as possessing a more chaotic mindset reflected in a disorderly crime scene. Disorganized personality offenders are more likely to be diagnosed with a severe form of psychopathology, such as borderline personality disorder or other schizoid mental disorder that hinders planned action. In 1992, a mixed or hybrid personality for offenders who did not fall neatly into organized or disorganized typology was introduced by Douglas, Burgess, Burgess, and Ressler. Profiles are constructed before contact with any suspect is made or a specific individual is known (Cook & Hinman, 1999). It is used as a tool to help focus investigative efforts in forming an idea of a yet unknown suspect's personality and their motive from the crime scene.

A second major theory in profiling is personality-type theory. Personality-type profiling is the process of identifying an individual's personality with regard to the degree of interplay between the two perceiving functions, two judging functions, two orientations, and two attitudes used to perceive the outside world, leading to a series of possible combinations (Francis & Dato, 2012).

Profiles can be either *deductive* or *inductive*. Deductive profiles are constructed from the specific details of the crime scene, victim, and nature of the crime, which are studied in order to deduce the type of individual who committed the crime. The FBI's criminal investigative analysis method and the United States Army's TAA profiling method are examples of deductive profiling models. For example, the TAA method is conducted in order to profile a specific TA to uncover the intrinsic and extrinsic motives behind the TA's current behavior and to use the

profile to understand how they can be influenced or emotionally motivated to adopt a desired behavior. The profile is then used to create strategic and effective media and/or communication for that specific foreign TA in order to alter their behavior and attitudes bringing them more in line with U.S. defense goals/objectives. Whereas, inductive profiling is based on a set of generalities or commonalities shared by past offenders and are used to composite a profile of the individual. For example, rapists tend to be 31 years old; therefore, an inductive profile would use this age group as a starting point. The inductive profiling method is not as accurate as deductive.

Applying Traditional Behavioral Profiling Techniques to Terrorism

Traditional criminal profiling, or criminal investigative analysis, techniques have proven to be a point of contention. Numerous studies have shown that personality typing and the presence of psychopathology is not a common theme amongst terrorist organizations or a root cause for self-sacrificing behavior such as suicide bombing (Kruglanski & Fishman, 2007; Belanger, Caouette, Sharvit, & Dugas, 2014) despite studies that have attempted to suggest that they are. There is a lack of opportunity or need for further research to study this theory in order to declare it diminutive (Lachkar, 2006b; Grimland, Apter, & Kerhof, 2006). This discrepancy has led to mixed results and staunch opposition from researchers on both sides, creating what some have called the *syndrome vs. tool* perspectives of terrorism (Kruglanski & Fishman, 2007). The “syndrome” perspective views terrorism as psychologically motivated in origin. Whereas, the “tool” perspective views terrorism as a logically and rationally selected tool used to achieve a larger goal, terrorism as a battle tactic. However, it is my belief that these opposing arguments, with regard to studying terrorist groups, are both too simplistic and narrow.

Old Ways Meet a New Day

Previous endeavors have failed to find a single personality type or psychopathology that distinguishes terrorist members from non-terrorist individuals (Dean, 2007; Dernevik, Beck, Grann, Hogue, & McGuire, 2009; Merari, Diamant, Bibi, Broshi, & Zakin, 2009; Moskalenko & McCauley, 2011; Monahan, 2012). However, technology, multiple terrorist organizations with unique agendas and targets, as well as homegrown radicalization, have changed the landscape and the behaviors that should be evaluated when profiling terrorism. Traditional methods of profiling and mere theorizing no longer serve any real purpose in the modern day fight against terrorism. Terrorists have moved the battlefield and capitalized on the use of pop culture media. They have become a complex branding machine using emotional triggers that go beyond simple catchy slogans.

In fact, applying the term “propaganda” to modern terrorism media output may fall short of the mark and be too simplistic. Propaganda was traditionally used to increase morale of the in-group and vilify and demoralize the out-group. However, IS’s terrorist media output not only meets these basic tenets of traditional propaganda, but goes beyond in successfully recruiting members from the out-group to join the in-group. What began as a minor aspect with pro-al Qaeda fringe radical webzine, *Inspire Magazine*, and sites such as *Revolution Muslim* and *Islampolicy* (Levin, 2015), has been expanded by IS. Their media promotes an “inclusive” message that non-Muslims are invited to join IS as long as they convert to Islam and pledge allegiance to the caliphate. Likewise, IS’s large media output and their use of *user generated content* (UGC) is truly unique to this type of organization. Based on an estimation in 2015, IS distributed around 38.2 pieces of official new media a day (Winter, 2015), aside from UGC.

There is no doubt this is a well-oiled branding machine. Therefore, using the term “propaganda” to define IS media, in my opinion, fails to encompass the gravity and sophistication behind its intent and magnitude.

Today, each terrorist organization has a particular brand that sets them apart and individualizes them, whether they capitalize on it or not. IS has tapped into and mastered the current technology trends and outlets, such as social media and brick-and-mortar media kiosks, as recruiting tools, leaving the “big five” on the defensive in an attempt to counter the affect. Past data’s relevance is weakened in this changing technological environment and demographics, at least to the extent upon which one can base an entire foundation and body of work. As the pool of recruits increases, past assertions are not likely to remain accurate.

For example, ruling out psychopathology as not playing a part in terrorist profiles may be changing in conjunction with the advancement of technology. The Palestinian Islamic Jihad will not recruit individuals for suicide missions who are suicidal or depressed, and instead insist that candidates must be able to “withstand severe psychological pressure” (Moghadam, 2003, p. 83). It is not difficult to see the logic behind the assumption that individuals with severe psychosis or depression may not be able to follow through or effectively take orders. However, this is a generalization, since psychopathology manifests itself in a sequence of unique ways depending on social and individual factors. Perhaps it is a question that individual self-radicalization may involve some degree of psychopathology or common biopsychosocial risk factors in lone wolf terrorists whose terrorist acts are independent of the organization. In the case of lone wolf terrorism, the act is unknown to the terrorist group prior to activation and is executed without an official handler or overseer. Though this lack of tolerance of psychopathology at a group level has some validity, social media and online environments have led to greater exposure and access

to a larger pool of potential recruits which, in conjunction with lone wolf terrorism, leaves the door open for the potential of psychopathology and personality being relevant topics in various instances of terrorism. One must also consider that the new face of terrorism may actually prefer or utilize individuals with a psychopathology such as (but not limited to) antisocial personality disorder. These individuals' lack of conscience and empathy, may be essential to the organization's goals. In addition, elements that IS promotes in their media, may appeal to a specific personality.

Online socialization allows for insights into social aspects of an individual's identity formation which were previously unavailable. Social media is the new perspective through which a psychosocial understanding of terrorism, at both the collective and individual level, can be examined. One way of leveling the playing field is analysis of the media authored by these organizations. By approaching terrorist groups via their brand, unique and novel advances in counterterrorism may present themselves. Since social media is the common ground where IS and their recruits are connecting, it is here that the research must initially take place. However, it is important to note, that this dissertation will only be concerned with official IS imagery media (video and still photos) in publications and within their social media.

Each individual is unique, just as each terrorist organization has a unique set of qualities or character traits depending on its size, organizational factors, dynamics, and goals at a specific time (Kruglanski & Fishman, 2007). Various groups may want to attract and appeal to different types of individuals, which supports the call for an approach to profiling that encompasses a variety of psychological disciplines. It is, therefore, my intention to create a system that compares the brand itself, with regard to how it is manufactured to a specific target, and then compare that to actual case studies of recruits in the hopes of seeing how the two line up, as well

as creating a list of various common risk factors that may present themselves. By breaking down the media into the smallest signifier, one can analyze this relationship in more detail.

Radicalization and recruitment are personal processes, each with its own unique recipe based on the brand symbols and messages in the media and an individual's own unique psychology, perspective, and experiences. It is when these two narratives meet, one of dissatisfaction with some essential necessity and one offering a solution to the crisis, that mere curiosity or passive interest risks being turned into action by the individual.

A New Approach - Combat Branding

An examination of the specific terrorist's Combat Brand and media used to recruit, is the first step in understanding its allure and the individuals who will respond. Looking at one aspect of the terrorist network or its individual members will provide only a portion of the puzzle. Technology has redefined the war zone; combat is now online as well as on the ground. Today, terrorist networks take place around the "kitchen table" (Goldfarb, 2007) as well as via a hashtag.

What I have termed Combat Branding defines a new form of branding used by terrorist groups for online radicalization. It is my opinion that this term better describes IS's media and its intent than "propaganda." Combat Branding is not a narrative structure guide nor a method of constructing a narrative, but instead is a theory concerning a specific type of brand. In order for a brand to be called a Combat Brand it must meet five caveats⁵:

- The specific group must have complete unadulterated control over content creation.
- The media is designed with a specific TA in mind. The group's brand may have various

⁵ See Appendix A

TAs and different specific narratives for each one (*target audience segmentation*), but the media is constructed with a specific TA in mind.

- The direct intention of the media is to further a combative or competitive objective. The objectives can be prosocial as well as anti-social depending on the type of group.
- The media has a direct statistical impact on the group. In the case of IS, it effects their combative statistics with regard to recruitment and death tolls (friendly and enemy).
- The media is effectively attempting to convert the TA to the group's cause. It is not meant to merely separate or express intergroup differences, but to convert the other to joining this in-group.

IS has become a sophisticated organization that promotes and recruits using a solid and stable brand. However, though it is stable in its core story, it is able to adapt its presentation and promote different aspects of its brand to specific target audiences. They use their brand as ammunition to incite fear, inspiration, revenge for the purpose of recruitment, and to justify their actions. It is the advent of social media that has made this type of branding possible. Social media has changed the landscape of terrorism and the rules of war (Hoffman, 2014). By viewing their media through the lens of Combat Branding, we may begin to understand the dynamics of terrorist groups and the individuals who are likely to be drawn to their message. Social media has facilitated the minority influence of IS enabling them to fund their cause and grow as no prior group has, and making it possible for them to evolve into a complex and multifaceted terrorist organization. Al-Qaeda was one of the first terrorist groups to organize under an umbrella ideology used to create *lone wolf* terrorists, self-motivated to act on their own instead of through direct orders from the top. However, IS is a new breed of technologically savvy, well branded, entrepreneurial terrorism. Since IS's Combat Branding occurs through media

positioned for online and social media distribution, this is where the profile must start.

IS, in particular, targets “Westerners” for two distinct reasons: (a) to incite fear by giving the impression that IS is “everywhere” (they could be your neighbor or your own child), and (b) as a power move, “your own people abandon you to join us.” Combat Branding provides the means for psychologists, U.S. Department of State and Department of Defense operations practitioners, and social and behavioral scientists to profile the terrorist group, and through this process identify robust risk factors for individuals susceptible to their message. One starts with the specific Combat Brand and works towards the specific potential recruits. The profile is compiled by examining the platform, the message, the brand, and the target audience, all of which provide elements that contribute to the final composite.

Virtual communities and social media platforms have changed identity formation through technology’s fundamental design of online communication, and the fact that we have become dependent on it as an engrained tool in our daily lives. Identity formation has become more plastic. Online identities and ideal-selves can now be explored and played out. Individuals who feel they are outliers with undeveloped or fractured true-selves, are now able to immediately reinvent themselves. This phenomenon provides a whole new breed of recruits who may lack an identity within their countries of origin and be drawn to others who share a marginalized existence.

An approach to profiling terrorist groups and individuals in the modern age requires a method that incorporates psychological fields such as social, media (online and social media), behavioral, and neuro sciences. Perhaps, it is the group’s Combat Brand that may signify the unique combination of psychological aspects that need to be examined to create accurate profiles of the group’s members. IS’s brand has proven to be emotionally and politically triggered. In

addition, the psychology of Millennials may be applicable to IS, since the organization appears to have the largest draw for this demographic with regard to the methods, style, and symbolism they have chosen to employ. Likewise, an online environment, by function and the adoption of brands with regard to identity signifiers, gives individuals control over self-presentation whereby they are able to mediate how they are perceived by others. This is achieved by associations with a brand being expanded to judgments made by the individual. *Self-presentation theory* examines what choices an individual makes with regard to information about the self that he or she chooses to include, hide, or alter when presenting one's self to others. Self-presentation applies to online and face-to-face communication; however, today's technology gives individuals more control in what information is presented about themselves. Self-presentation involves and/or is dictated by the target audience and social context (Toma, Hancock, & Ellison, 2008). For instance, the brands of cars we drive, the devices we use, and the brands we wear are all examples of self-presentation.

Political and decision-making psychology is an area of study (Westen, 2007; Khaneman 2011) with regard to the roles of emotion versus rational reasoning in the decision-making process. It has been shown that when a political message is able to evoke strong emotion, and when we are making decisions that have direct impact on our lives, we tend to be motivated to act in a way that is emotionally provoked rather than one that is based on rational analysis (Westen, 2007). In fact, Westen's studies have shown that rational messages based on facts alone tend to lose out to more emotionally charged messages, even when it concerns matters that have major personal impact. IS seems to be strongly aware of this fact. They are now constructing political messages using emotionally charged and familiar "Western" culture formats in their montages, music, and themes to create a media that will outweigh rational

thought of their targeted viewer, who is likely already emotionally charged, dissatisfied, or socially alienated. This type of emotional media is likely to withstand rational-based messages that attempt to counter IS.

This analysis of Combat Branding is based on profiling and decoding the emotional triggers used by these groups and focusing and matching them to the vulnerabilities⁶ in individual audience members. Though profiling has been an area of contention when taking traditional principals and applying them to terrorists in the hopes of separating them from the fold, it is perhaps the technique and not the theory that is the issue. Over time, the term “profiling” has come to have a negative connotation. For some, they think of a cookie-cutter method or short cut that fails to account for individuality. In others, it evokes thoughts of racial profiling, “Flying While Arab” or “Driving While Black” (Gorman, 2002). Though these are valid arguments, it is likely still an error in practice and technique that is at fault. Instead, perhaps through a process that accounts for multiple sources of information, factors, and individualized evaluation, profiling could offer assistance. At an individual level, profiling can aid in the therapeutic methods of counter-radicalization. At a group level, a profile of the group based on examination of their Combat Brand, may expose vulnerabilities that could be exploited and countered by organizations and departments tasked with the responsibility of countering these terrorist organizations.

Research Question

The research question that will be examined is the following: Can an accurate deductive

⁶ The United States Army’s PSYOP division uses the term “vulnerabilities” when discussing the fourth step to profiling the TA. Vulnerabilities are defined as the “Characteristics, motives, or conditions of the TA that can be used to influence the desired behavior” (Psychological Operations Target Audience Analysis Handbook, 2013, p. 10).

profile of Western recruits be compiled using IS's Combat Brand? This involves analyzing IS's Combat Brand via their visual media; second, by creating a traditional deductive profile of potential Western recruits based on the findings from the Combat Brand analysis; and third, by examining case studies of recent Western recruits and identifying common markers and risk factors from a biopsychosocial perspective. Combat Branding may serve as the key to solving the issue facing traditional behavioral profiling currently being applied to terrorism. This study is based on the theory that profiling the Combat Brand of an organization is a vital first step to merging both the individual and social spheres and creating a useful profile. Two additional subhypotheses are the following:

- Millennials' demographic characteristics will be important to the profile.
- Psychopathology and personality type will become relevant to the discussion.

This research, if successful, could be utilized in profiling organizations, be it political, terrorist, prosocial, or criminal. It has strong implications for counteracting the media effect of these types of branded organizations and minimizing the media effects on at-risk individuals in general, in addition to providing insight into counterterrorism tactics and narratives.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to compile a deductive biopsychosocial profile of any kind, whether it is of a brand or an individual, various fields of psychology can be referenced. The fields of brand, social, behavioral, neuropsychology, internet, media, terrorist, and developmental psychology become relevant in relation to profiling a group's Combat Brand and the individuals to whom the brand appeals.

Identity-Individualist and Collective Perspectives

There are two perspectives to social psychology with regard to self. The individualist perspective views the self as a separate entity that exists on its own in relation to others and is studied as such. In contrast, the collective perspective is defined relative to specific social groups to which an individual belongs. Some social psychologists believed that by studying group characteristics of the self, one could end up with the individual self as well (Hogg & Williams, 2000). Likewise, as no man is truly an island, European social psychology believed it was more beneficial to examine self in relation to others.

Identity equals "Who am I?". This question varies depending on the social and environmental context of one's existence. Identity is defined by Oyserman, Elmore, and Smith (2012) as, "the traits and characteristics, social relations, roles and social group memberships that define who one is" (p.69), and that identities can be past, present, or future focused. These identities make up what is known as a *self-concept*, also known as *self-identity*⁷. The degree of clarity that one has with regard to beliefs and perception about oneself can vary, which in turn affects our behavior and social navigation. Self-concept is an internal scheme of oneself that one

⁷ See Appendix B

uses to navigate personal and social situations (Baron & Byrne, 2000). Self-concept is how we view ourselves as distinct from others, and may contain characteristics or aspects that go unexpressed. This concept is formed from our earliest social interactions with family, and then as we age, with larger social groups and interpersonal relationships which involves navigating between *peripheral* and *central* attributes of self. Central attributes involve aspects that are very important and held with great clarity. In this sense, the individual considers these attributes as extreme in that they are overwhelmingly consistent, whereas peripheral attributes are less extreme and vital to the self-concept. For instance, “On the whole, I persevere” or “I tend to be funny,” and so on. These are attributes that may vary depending on the context or social interaction we have with others at any given time.

Individuals rely on this internal self to be somewhat consistent, though in actuality, it is thought to be more flexible than one would first believe. For instance, housed within the general self-concept are the *true*, *possible selves*, and *ideal selves* (McKenna, 2010). The true self is those characteristics that may go unexpressed to others, is what makes us fundamentally unique, and is where our individuality resides. An ideal self is defined as the self “which contains those attributes of self-hood that we would ideally like to possess and which we strive to become” (McKenna, 2010, p. 207). Possible selves are defined as “those selves that we possibly might become in the future” (McKenna, 2010, p. 207). Possible selves are similar to ideal selves, in that both tend to be future oriented. They are the selves for which we strive. However, possible selves may also be more realistic in obtainment than ideal selves. Both ideal and possible selves can be characteristics or physical attributes. For example, our future possible self could be kinder, more patient, more powerful and/or accomplished, and could also include physical attributes, such as being healthier or more attractive.

Another aspect of one's self-concept is the *general social self-concept* component, which is comprised of characteristics about our self in relation to the social aspects of our lives (relationships, group memberships) that tell us something about our self. The general social self-concept can be broken down further into various other identities depending on the social contexts and different groups of which we are a part. Social-self, or collective-identity, is important to our general self-concept in that one gains significance and value via the groups with which we associate or of which we are members.

Ultimately, one's definition of "Who am I?" is based on both self and social concepts. For instance, when interacting with work colleagues, one may be considered diligent and reliable as it relates to that social identity. However, a family member may say that the same individual is lacking initiative with regard to family tasks or functions. Therefore, these peripheral attributes of the self-concept affect the social identities and perceptions through self-evaluation. Interaction with others affects identities by confirming or conflicting with the concepts of the self that are exhibited in that identity. Identity formation is largely an ongoing process. In a developmental capacity, identity formation occurs as an individual goes through distinct changes and is effected by social interaction in his or her environment and experiences.

Since we house a variety of identities and selves, identity development is an individual attempting to define with clarity who he or she is using social feedback, group membership, and his or her central and peripheral characteristics based on the various selves and identities that he or she expresses and those which the individual chooses not to express. Depending upon feedback, certain self-concepts are reinforced, while others are diminished or put in conflict. Individuals also vary in the degree of clarity they may achieve with regard to the self-concept and social self-concept schemes, which affects the clarity with which they define themselves.

For example, if an individual is unable to establish a clear or solid definition of who they are, it could lead to an imbalance between the various types of identities. When the general self-concept is weak because of a fragile or unclear definition or undeveloped or rigid identities, then one has no true foundation upon which to build a clear self-scheme.

One of the most influential theories on identity formation is Erikson's *stage theory* (1950). This theory suggests that there are eight main stages of development that an individual must go through from infancy through adulthood. At each stage, a particular crisis emerges. How one deals with the crisis at a particular stage affects the development of the individual as well as the proceeding stages of identity formation. It is throughout this process of resolution within the eight stages, that Erikson believed one's personality is developed. Personality is considered to be made up of the most consistent characteristics and is the basis of why individuals behave in a particular fashion. It should be noted that extreme life stressors or psychopathology can also change self-concept and personality to varying degrees at any point in one's life cycle.

The fifth stage is especially important with regard to this dissertation, as it is the identity formation stage which occurs during young adolescence and early adulthood (around ages 12-24). Here the individual struggles with the crisis of identity formation versus confusion. If by the end of this crisis, the individual is able to answer the question "Who am I?" with some clarity, he or she will have successfully navigated the fifth stage. During this stage the individual is testing out different identities that embody a variety of characteristics and exploring membership in different groups in order to elicit feedback to determine which characteristics are reinforced or disproved. However, if one struggles with this stage, it could lead to identity confusion, affecting all the subsequent stages and one's ability to form constructive interpersonal relationships, self-value, self-esteem, and life fulfillment.

It has been suggested that the main contribution of Erikson's (1950) stage theory is that it accounts for and displays how social interaction affects one's personality, yet some critics have called it an "idealized" version of development (Weiten, 1998, p. 436). Erikson's theory has been supported by similar developmental struggle studies such as the *life history theory* (LHT). The evolutionary LHT suggests that there are various times in a life cycle when an individual is faced with tasks that, depending on how they are handled, will affect his or her chances for reproduction and survival and effect individual differences based on the strengths and weaknesses acquired during life stages. Both the LHT and stage theory show how negative outcomes in preceding stages effect future ones and that stage crises occur in a similar order (Dunkel & Sefcek, 2009). This lends support for the validity of Erikson's theory regarding strengths and weaknesses acquired at these various developmental stages.

Social Identity Perspective Theories

This brings us to social psychology theories regarding identity. *Social identity theory* was inspired by a desire to understand intergroup dynamics with regard to prejudice and stereotypes. In the theory, the self is looked at in relation to the social memberships and the value that is achieved by them (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The self was divided into two identities: the *personal identity* and the *social identity*. Social identity involves a collective identity formed from interpersonal relationships and one's identity in relation to the collectives to which he or she belongs and the similarities he/she shares with other members. It is how one sees oneself in relation to others. Whereas, personal identity involves the identity as it relates to who we are as individuals and what qualities or values we have with regard to being distinct and that separate us from others in our group.

If one's self-identity is weak or undeveloped, the social identities could take more importance leading to deindividualization and a submissive personal identity. This imbalance between social and self-identities can create an individual who is more susceptible to the persuasions of others, may ultimately suffer psychological distress, or may further lose any sense of personal identity becoming enveloped in the group or social self. Brewer's (1991) *optimal distinctiveness theory* examines how one's personal identity is balanced against social identity. According to Brewer's theory, the social and personal identities are on a spectrum with each at opposite ends. Balanced individuals will be in the middle of the spectrum. This means that they will have strong social connections and social identity, and that they are comfortable in their membership and definition of themselves at a collective level within their groups. They will also have an equally balanced personal identity, seeing themselves as distinct and individually valuable within that collective. Neither the social nor the personal identities outweigh the other. They understand who they are both as a member of their collectives and as a distinct individual and are satisfied in both domains. Brewer's model involves circles that focus onto a center, similar to layers of an onion. The outer layers are the collective or social selves beginning at the largest, most indistinct collective identities and moving inwards to deeper layers, eventually arriving at the center of the personal identity. For example, in the case of an IS extremist, the layers would go from a Muslim social identity in general, to extremist, to IS member, to active terrorist, to a specific martyr. If one's self is too strong in their social identity, to the point that they can only describe or define themselves as a member of the group, then they are out of balance. Likewise, marginalized individuals who feel too distinct, or whose identity does not involve others or a collective to which they belong, are also out of balance.

Optimal distinctiveness theory ties into the *marginalization theory* which is concerned with

an individual who, either through real life or perceived inability is unable to fit in, or perceives him/herself as not belonging to the majority in-group, and is thus pushed to the margins of psychological and social existence, thereby making the individual's place in society small or nonexistent which negatively affects identity. The individual struggles to define the self in a way that repairs this disconnect. Such individuals find themselves on the outside looking in with a self-concept that defines them in opposition to the majority group. Marginalization can affect an individual's identity clarity, disrupting his or her identity formation to the point that the individual may suffer an identity crisis. When examining terrorism and the individuals who are spurred into active recruitment for IS, it is important to note that, "Individual identification with group grievances is central to the collective action surrounding Muslim radicalization" (Murshed & Pavan, 2011 p. 260). For example, IS is a minority jihadist group who felt marginalized in the Iraqi culture, and have now branded themselves as David in a David vs. Goliath narrative. This marginalized group identity tends to resonate with other individuals who feel marginalized in their countries of origin based on a characteristic associated with their Muslim identity. Murshed and Pavan (2011) write about how modern European racism towards cultural differences can be seen to contribute to Muslim youth's identity conflict. For instance, being a German national and being culturally Muslim, creates a conflict of values and characteristics which results in a hatred for their homeland and pushes them towards radical groups who offer membership as a means of violent retaliation against their marginalized group identity. It has been shown that group membership is a powerful reducer of the anguish caused by uncertainty with regard to one's identity (Hogg, 2014). However, it could be that this is a convenient catch all. There could be other aspects of one's true self that puts individuals in opposition to the majority and marginalizes them, but it may be a characteristic that the individual does not want to

acknowledge or is unaware of.

Another theory that pairs nicely with stage theory, optimal distinctiveness, and marginalization theories, is the *quest for significance theory*. This theory suggests that individuals are driven by a need to be significant and find that significance within the groups with which they identify. It has been suggested that this theory explains why individuals who feel their lives lack individual significance may join what they view to be significant groups, and once a member, will attempt to further that significance within the group. This theory has also been used to explain the motivation behind individuals volunteering for suicide bombings which provides them with the ultimate significance within Muslimhood, martyrdom. Kruglanski and Orehek (2011) use the theory to explain the psychological mechanism for violence in terrorism or what makes one motivated to commit violent acts on behalf of a group. They write that “The quest for significance has been identified as a fundamental human motivation by many psychological theorists” (Kruglanski & Orehek, 2011, p.154).

A social self has been thought of as a biological need essential to being human, a need to be part of something other than ourselves. This is supported by evolutionary psychology which suggests that survival and reproduction is aided by those with whom we align ourselves and a collective’s intragroup dynamics. This innate need is exhibited in other species in the animal kingdom with regard to herd and troop behaviors. Neuropsychologist Michael Lieberman (2013) has expressed the theory that our social need is hardwired in our brain, and the fact that our species’ large brain is a direct association with the emphasis and importance we as humans place on a need to be social (Lieberman, 2013). He also asserts that social rejection manifests into physical pain. Lieberman writes how administering pain medication to an individual suffering from a “broken heart” can actually alleviate some of the physical pain he or she experiences. If

one subscribes to this argument, then it becomes easier to understand why, when an individual is marginalized or unable to find a group for social support, it makes him/her vulnerable to the need to fix this imbalance at any cost. Quite possibly, in the urgency to regain balance, choices that provide an immediate solution could ultimately evoke a negative consequence. Relative to IS recruits, it may be this need for balance and IS's message of a utopian or brotherhood collective that resonates with an individual who is struggling with identity and social value. In instances in which an individual has a fractured identity, one could compare the power of social membership as being similar to Konrad Lorenz's (1937) animal imprinting studies. An individual who lacks clarity of a personal identity uses the group's social identity to make up for a lack of his or her own. The group's values and characteristics are imprinted upon the individual which he or she assimilates as his/her own. By exposure to the cues through interactions with group members, group identification becomes incorporated and dominant in the personal identity. And if there are no personal characteristics strong enough to question the group's values, the collective identity becomes more influential and valued to a higher degree within the self-concept.

Social identity perspective, with regard to identity formation, is an important perspective when attempting to assess and understand both inter and intragroup dynamics of both collectives and individuals. This is especially pertinent, when examining the phenomena of terrorism, because in many cases it is motivated through association with a larger group. Post (2010) writes that, relative to the topic of terrorism, it is more appropriate to use a collective identity lens when examining psychology and behavior. Terrorism is a collective identity issue involving group dynamics. However, how identities and self-concepts guide an individual in their choices and interactions will be relevant when examining the individual case studies as to how the self and social self-concepts are balanced.

Group Size, Inter- and Intragroup Dynamics

In the past, much of the social psychology research, with regard to social identity perspective (self-conception and intra-intergroup relations), has focused on large groups. However, Hogg, Abrams, Otten and Hinkle (2004) argue that a social identity perspective is able to be applied to and studied amongst small groups as well and is more likely to be seen in collectivist cultures. This idea is important since small groups have been shown to be an aspect of the radicalization process used by IS and in lone wolf or fringe groups who identify with a larger group but function on their own in smaller cells. *Computer-mediated communication* (CMC) is one example proposed by Hogg et al. (2004) of the social identity perspective being used in small groups. They point out that the anonymity provided in CMC deindividualizes the user, making him or her more influenced by the social identity and norms espoused by the prototype members.

The importance of understanding the dynamics within small groups and their collective identity is vital to counterterrorism. Understanding how the group influences the individual, and vice versa, is fundamental in comprehending intra and intergroup dynamics. Group membership via social identity not only influences an individual's behavior or personal identity, but the individual can also influence the social identity of that group, thereby affecting group and individual identity and behaviors in both a top-down and bottom-up fashion (Postmes, Halam, & Swabb, 2005). "Communication in small groups can serve to construct norms and identity.... Self-expressions by individual group members can be informed by aspects of personal identity as well as social identity" (Postmes et al., 2005, p.19). This model of interaction can help explain how a recruit is brought into IS's fold. Both the individual and the group are symbiotically creating a revolving loop of reinforcement. This can also explain how group values can become

misconstrued and become the individual's values and vice versa.

Research has shown that IS recruitment takes place at many different levels: through intimate groups either *face-to-face* (F2F), instant messaging, or through threads in chat rooms, as well as through larger scale communications such as on webzines or Twitter (Kohlmann, 2008). This form of group radicalization, in which a small group of individuals connects via a common interest or grievance, is effective since it is the beginning of cross-radicalization. McCauley and Moskaleiko (2008) write about group radicalization developing in small combat groups isolated from the larger group, and the intimacy and cohesion that is formed in the small group dynamics insulates and facilitates radicalization from within the group. McCauley and Moskaleiko (2008) write,

When cohesion is very high, as when an individual's social world has contracted to just the few friends in his combat group or his terrorist cell, the social reality value of the group is maximized. The group's consensus about value and morality acquires enormous power, including the power to justify and even require violence against those who threaten the group. (p. 423)

In other cases, online radicalization involves limited small group contact with key recruiters or individuals who are perceived to be prototype members of the jihadist movement. Via social modeling, these prototype members encourage recruits on their paths to IS terrorist acts.

Social perception relates to how others perceive us. Receiving feedback from one's various identities is important, ultimately confirming or denying aspects of our general self-concept. Individuals attempt to control situations and presentations within their identities in order to confirm what they see as favorable aspects of the self. Sen (2006) discusses, that

individuals have choices over which identities, and/or combination of one's various identities, they choose to adopt, prioritize, make durable, in their presentation to others. Typically, this provides feedback that informs one of their behaviors, associations, and self-perception. It is common for individuals to desire a positive social perception; one which others admire. Through social interaction, we interpret social cues allowing us to rate the degree to which this feedback is either favorable or nonfavorable. These social cues include nonverbal communicated behavior and attribution. Research has established that first impressions are powerful indicators of the types of future interactions and are critical in regard to social perception formation. This involves the self-presentation theory also known as *impression management theory*.

Self-presentation theory states that individuals will attempt to edit the types of information and presentation they project to others in order for them to form a favorable opinion. Self-presentation occurs in both F2F interactions and in technology thru CMC. CMC self-presentation can be accomplished via profile descriptions, photos, number of "friends," text lingo and symbols, brands that are aligned with an individual, and other personal cues.

One facet of self-presentation, as well as social perceptions, is the question of just how accurate are the perceptions we form of others, and what is the degree of accuracy with which someone presents themselves to us. It has long been understood that the online environment plays down, or in some cases, eliminates the behavioral and physical cues that occur in F2F presentations. Unlike F2F, there is no way of verifying physical attributes or other descriptors unless that individual chooses to provide that information through third-party confirmations, or via photographs. But even a photo or descriptor may not be accurate or may be distorted to control for self-presentation.

Likewise, an individual is also protected from the possibility of the immediate negative non-verbal cues of others if their presentation does not meet expectation. For example, one is spared witnessing eye rolls, shocked expressions, or smirks that may occur in F2F social situations, which can lead to awkward social interaction or internal discomfort for the individual. In CMC this risk is diminished, and one has more control over self-presentation. Individuals who are high in social anxiety, or suffer from low self-esteem associated with a physical or psychological perceived weakness, may find it easier to interact with others online. The asynchrony of the CMC allows individuals more time to edit the presentation and to reflect on how they want to be perceived.

Self-categorization involves the trend for individuals, once they had assigned themselves to a group, to begin categorizing themselves and other individuals into distinct groups (Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1992). This need to categorize is associated with our self-esteem by confirming positive social and personal self-attributes. Therefore, it is important to understand how one identifies with various collectives to which he or she belongs, as well as how one defines the “other” because, as observed in *in-group* and *out-group* dynamics, it affects one’s social interactions. In-group can be defined as the group to which one is a member and with which one identifies. An out-group is a collective with which one does not identify or associate and to which one does not claim membership. Commonly, individuals within a group suffer from *in-group bias*. An individual will evaluate one’s own group’s attributes, beliefs, behavior, and opinions as positive, while defining out groups has having more negative attributes or vastly different values, behaviors, or identities from one’s own social identity. In addition, self-categorization can explain how one’s in-group characteristics can become ingrained into self-concepts.

One of the most prolific studies involving in-group and out-group dynamics and identification was conducted by Zimbardo (Haney, Banks, & Zimbardo, 1973) in the summer of 1971. It was originally designed to study human aggression as it pertained to the United States prison system (Haney et al., 1973). In a basement on the campus of Stanford University, a group of 22 “normal” males was chosen to take part in a 6-week study. Zimbardo was interested in the effects that prison had on the social dynamics of prisoners and guards. Participants were assigned to either the guard group or the prisoner group based on the flipping of a coin. The guards’ authoritative group identity was emphasized through feedback, uniforms, shaded glasses, and the freedom of controlling the “prison.” Their collective and social identity was that of guard.

The prisoners, were also deindividualized, but in their case, it was focused around a loss of authority. They were made to wear nylon caps to remove the individualization that one’s hair style can denote. They were clothed in loose knee-high smocks with nothing underneath so that their posture would be unfamiliar to them and render them vulnerable. Each was given a chain and lock placed around his ankle so that the acknowledgment of confinement and identification as a prisoner, void of authority, would be reinforced. In both cases, it was Zimbardo’s (Haney et al., 1973) desire that social identity would be reinforced and strengthened, while personal identity was decreased or eliminated, and that their interaction, behaviors, and so on, would be influenced by their identification with the group instead of the individual. In both cases, deindividualization and group membership was reinforced by the uniforms as well as observing how others behaved during intergroup interactions. As is now widely known, the results were beyond what Zimbardo expected. Reactions and behaviors of individuals within the “guards” group became, in many cases, those of a cruel dictator, and in contrast, “prisoners” became either

complacent, broken, or rebellious. The experiment had to be cut short after 6 days due to the psychological effect verging on abuse and ethical violations. What it did show was how powerful the dynamics of group association are when group characteristics override personal identity.

This experiment displayed aspects of imbalance between social and personal identities as discussed in Brewer's (1991) optimal distinctiveness model. Additionally, Zimbardo's (Haney et al., 1973) study shows how important external cues and attributes are at reinforcing group association, as in the case of the uniforms which played down individual identification allowing for group control and personal values, morals and ethics, and accountability to be lost to the group. The guards became more sadistic as a group than they would have if they had acted alone or in line with their self-concept. Only one guard expressed a problem with how the prisoners were being treated. In the end, the social identity and group membership overrode one's own self-concept, which due to either expressed aggressiveness or weakness, led to cognitive dissonance once the study ended and the participants' behavior was evaluated. This need to rationalize the misalignment between group membership actions in the study and one's self-concept was experienced by both guard (more so) and prisoner group members. For example, most guards explained in post-study interviews that they were merely playing a role, and that the role of a "tough guard" called for particular aggressiveness (Haney et al., 1973).

It could be argued that, in some cases, individuals were allowed to act out aspects of their true self that in a real world setting would be socially unacceptable and have negative feedback. That once in a permissive environment, they were able to explore these darker or anti-social characteristics of self-concept. This question is one of interest in regard to the types of individuals motivated by IS recruitment media and their motive to join.

Another study of note is one conducted by Stanley Milgram (1963). Milgram's study demonstrated how authority can elicit obedience by creating a situation in which an individual may act in a manner out of line with one's self-concept, by giving up accountability to an authoritative figure. This is important to mention because it shows that this phenomenon is not limited to large-group dynamics but occurs in dyadic interaction as well. *Deindividuation* occurs when an individual's self-identity or accountability becomes de-emphasized.

Milgram's (1963) study is relevant to IS which puts emphasis on the collective identity requiring that an individual joining IS must relinquish authority to the collective. This is achieved by the individual convert pledging loyalty, following rules that downplay individual identity, and in many cases, self-evaluation. This is also important when profiling or analyzing individuals whose sense of self may be fragile. In which case, their association with a particular group may become their primary identity.

The Milgram (1963) study, like Zimbardo's (Haney et al., 1973), showed the power of external signifiers on one's identity. In Milgram's study, the authority figure was dressed in a white lab coat, which symbolized authority and expertise that the individual participant did not possess. Likewise, it denoted membership to an elite group. This showed that a uniform is a powerful reinforcer and identifier of one's social identity that downplays an individual's attributes. A uniform reinforces one's membership, as seen in United States military and other organizations throughout history. This is relevant to IS's visual media and how uniforms and other external group membership cues are used.

There are two more significant theories that need to be considered when examining the dynamics that in-group membership involves, and that is how the group functions as a whole independent of its members. These theories are *group polarization* and *in-group persuasion*

effect. Group polarization, as studied by James Stoner (1961), examines how, through group discussion, a group comes to strengthen the group's already dominant points of view or tenets. This leads to more polarized and extreme held beliefs, which translates to group behaviors as seen in *risky shifts* (Stoner, 1961), rather than held by the individual members. This translates into the loss of identity within the group dynamic. The individual's personal limits, moral and ethical values, and behavioral evaluations are put aside in favor of the group. As this occurs, the group becomes more extreme with regard to the values and responses held as appropriate by the group.

In-group persuasion effect involves the tendency for messages from within one's in-group to be more persuasive, valued, and held with higher trustworthiness than messages from out-groups. Studies on in-group persuasion effect have shown that intragroup discussion furthers an in-group's prejudice by enforcing stereotypes (Postmes et al., 2005). It has been theorized that individuals use the source of information as a heuristic from which to decide if it should be attended to or be accepted (Wyer, 2010). The information an individual may receive from one's group can be assimilated into one's world and social schemes and affect their opinions and behaviors, when in actuality it may have little or no validity. In examining out-group messages, even if they contain more validity, persuasion to accept other facts and information becomes greatly decreased if the message is perceived as coming from an opposing group. This effect is likely heightened if the perceived differences between one's group and an out-group is increased. This phenomenon occurs often in politics, when one candidate downplays facts presented by an opposing party's candidate, claiming them to be invalid. With regard to IS, once the identification process occurs in a potential recruit, messages that discredit IS or facts about their violence is likely to fall on deaf ears. The message is perceived as coming from "someone who

does not know the truth” or “a group who just wants to be in control.” Unfortunately, unless the individual has cause to question his or her group; comes to no longer identify with that social self; or there is too much disparity between the social and personal selves, it is likely this effect will not be diminished and could perhaps increase.

However, Wyer’s study (2010) found that there are some factors that limit the in-group persuasion effect: the meaningfulness of the category of information and how well it matches a category valued by the group; how much the category is valued by the individual, especially when the group’s position is in opposition; and the more highly valued by the individual, the more likely he or she will invest the time to consider the facts independently. Therefore, if the information does not appear to be a category endorsed or dependent on membership, the group’s attitudes will not have as strong an effect on the individual, and he or she will evaluate them more objectively. But when the information is in line with the group’s values, the individual will deindividualize and evaluate the information from the group perspective or social identity, thus the individual is more likely to be persuaded.

A study by Huang, Kendrick, Zheng, and Yu (2015) showed that when oxytocin was given to individuals via intranasal administration, they were more inclined to conform to both in-group and out-group opinions in situations where the pressure is implicit. Positive stimuli induce the hypothalamus to produce oxytocin which is a neuropeptide that promotes positive affect. Therefore, in a situation in which oxytocin can be produced, one’s likelihood to conform is increased not only to in-group opinions but out-group as well. For example, during a hug or when receiving a smile, our brain’s hypothalamus begins producing this hormone increasing positive affect which promotes interpersonal connection. Oxytocin is considered a pleasure hormone that has been associated with bonding and attachment behavior. This study offers an

understanding of why, when conformity is pleasurable to an individual, he or she is likely to engage in in-group persuasion effect. But it also offers insight into how to combat IS media. For example, if recruits can be primed to release oxytocin prior to being presented with out-group (anti-IS) facts or information, they may be more receptive to the message. Research conducted by Paul Zak (Lin, Grewal, Morin, Johnson, & Zak, 2013; Zak, 2015) on the influence of oxytocin offers additional support.

Fractured Identity

This leads us to the question of why an individual with a fractured identity is drawn to elitist type groups. One theory attempting to answer this question is the *uncertainty-identity theory* (Hogg, 2014). It attempts to explain the process of how one is motivated to seek out membership in a social group in order to alleviate discomfort caused by identity uncertainty. Based on this theory, the uncertainty caused by a fractured identity is the actual motivation for seeking out a group (Hogg, 2014). Hogg suggests that this is particularly true in situations where the group with which the uncertain individual is seeking membership is one that possesses rigidly clear and defined identity, beliefs, and behavioral rules. The more stringent the group's identity the bigger the draw for an individual racked with personal uncertainty. This may explain the type of individual susceptible to IS, as well as the allure of IS to foreign recruits from individualistic nations like the West, and why they are drawn to a group that is contrary to what one would assume would appeal to them.

A study by Lambert, Stillman, Hicks, Kamble, Baumeister, and Fincham (2013) showed that individuals who were primed for belongingness reported a larger degree of meaningfulness of life overall. This supports the value one gains from feedback received from group

membership and how that membership translates to other areas of one's life and self-concept. Their results can help us understand what makes our social membership not only valuable to our self-concept and overall life satisfaction, but to also see how it can feed our desire to maintain and protect that membership.

Being a member of a criminal or negative group that is in opposition to one's cultural majority can provide reinforcing feedback to an individual's personal identity. Wood (2014) discusses specific group processes underpinning gang membership and how they influence the social cognitions in individual members. Some gang theorists attempt to understand the process by using *unified theory* which involves a multistage assessment. The first assessment is done to determine why individuals are drawn to the gang collective, and then they are assessed again once they are members of the gang. It has been seen that joining a gang may initially begin with a need, and through media a perception is formed that the gang provides this need (Wood, 2014). In many cases this need can be monetary, familial, and/or survival. Social can override individual cognition, as seen in the social cognition effect, called *moral disengagement* (Bandura, 2001). This occurs in gangs through intragroup endorsement and beliefs that justify carrying out violent, reprehensible acts. Three things occur in this process: (a) violent acts are reinterpreted; (b) there is a displacement or diffusion of responsibility, and a distorting of the consequences; (c) the dehumanization of one's victims (Wood, 2014). It is not difficult to see how, when these themes are laid over the IS media template, the two match up.

Groupthink occurs in gangs, which ultimately lowers the chance that a single individual will dissent or question the group. This allows gang violence to be directed at the out-group as a means of existence and enables an individual to be pushed beyond his or her personal limits or objections. The gang identity is a prime example of how a powerful group and its values can

come to influence individuals. It also demonstrates how some ultra-violent individuals can set the group norms, and through social dynamics and psychological effects, can influence and attract individuals who are in search of meaning and a clear self-concept.

Internet Psychology

Internet psychology has largely focused on how technology affects individuals at both personal and social levels. With regard to the personal, it has focused on the way one explores various selves/identities (true, possible, and ideal) and the editing process involved in self-presentation. Socially, the field has looked at interpersonal relationship formation, social networks, interaction, and communication styles with regard to feedback and reciprocity, and the differences of bridging and bonding social value in CMC. It is important to point out that, though this may be where much of the focus is, this is only a small glimpse of the girth of internet psychology.

When looking at the psychology of the internet, one must first understand the aspects that are inherent in Web 2.0's design that have had a profound effect on an individual's psychology. Web 2.0 allowed for CMC that was asynchronous, anonymous, ubiquitous, mobile, and with customizable privacy and profile features. This offered the user convenience and control, more so than one could expect in F2F. Consequently, CMC offers a unique blueprint for interaction that allows for insight into human psychology based on these design features.

The internet has come to be an important aspect of both our personal and social lives. Individuals have carved out distinct areas for themselves in this online world. One platform in particular, that emerged as a result of Web 2.0 design attributes, is social media applications. Mobility of the technology (both devices and application) allows for individuals to stay

connected and have a social presence from almost anywhere at any time. Users are able to not only document or provide feedback, but receive it as well. Social media has become a real time self-validator as well as a presence monitor. “Being connected to others fosters a sense of purpose, belonging, and attachment that is central to the concept of community” (Parks, 2011, p. 114). Though this is true of offline communities and the value found in being a member of a group as previously discussed, online social networks have made being a part of a collective easier and more accessible to individuals who may have been limited either due to geography, difficulty in finding like others, or social anxiety of F2F interactions. Online communities abound and one is hard pressed to find a community type that is not represented. Today, individuals’ lives are being lived out both offline and online simultaneously, with much overlap in-between. To understand the psychology of individuals in an online environment (as well as offline) one must become familiar with some primary concepts: social capital, bridging versus bonding behavior, and a social network.

Researchers have defined the value that we place on interactions, serving as motivation to maintain and seek out connections with others as *social capital*. It is important to note that social capital has emotional and tangible value. Social capital has been associated with economic capital (Ellison, Lampe, Steinfield, & Vitak, 2011; Bourdieu, 1986). It is the actual value that is supplied an individual through social interactions.

One form of social capital development is reciprocity. This involves the value one feels one receives for what he or she puts out and what he or she gets in return. The higher the return the more value placed on that social connection. For instance, if one posts a question on a site and his or her contribution is not reciprocated with a reply or answer, this would equal low social capital. Social capital is always in flux; it is something that can grow or lessen, relatively

affecting one's behavior. It is important to point out that social value does not denote intimacy. Likewise, the social capital that each individual receives from his or her interaction may differ as to the degree and the way in which that capital is being acquired.

Bridging and *bonding* social capital behaviors create two forms of online interaction and connection building, each important to the overall social capital, and each with its own value of capital based on the services it supplies. Bonding social capital is created between close and intimate connections. These tend to be very highly valued, thus supplying great social capital. Bonding connections tend to be offline in origin and eventually move online. Studies have shown that the use of social network sites is motivated largely by one's desire to maintain offline friendships that have moved online, possibly due to the ease of access and connection overcoming geographical barriers, or as an extension of offline intimacy (Ellison et al., 2011). Therefore, these types of behaviors are more geo-located. The online environment serves as a way of supplementing the offline connection, so the paths are not very long between the points of connections (or nodes on a social network map) in bonding interactions. In contrast, bridging social capital extends beyond one's intimate connections. Bridging connections tend to be with members of outside groups. This form of social capital comes from learning something that is not known within our in-group. These types of connections largely originate and remain online. However, it is important to point out that if value increases, perhaps in the form of reciprocity or engagement, these types of bridging connections can eventually move toward becoming bonding connections as well as moving offline.

These two communication types and connections make up one's *social network*, which can be viewed as a web of nodes indicating connections, whether they are bonding or bridging, and the strength or value they provide the individual. This "map" can display how connected, where,

and with whom one interacts within a social capacity online and off. Social network theory has proven to be important not only in media studies, as a form of visualizing connections at group and individual levels, but also in analogue real world applications. For example, the social network model is being used by health organizations to map out social connections of individuals within a community to help identify which of the individuals are at highest risk of spreading disease (Kraus, Croft, & James, 2006). This type of analogue application could prove useful in profiling as well as implementing “on the ground” strategy to target or better understand information flow within a community.

Identity Exploration Online

Amichai-Hamberger (2010) points out four defining principals of the internet that he feels makes it different from traditional F2F with regard to how they affect our psychology: anonymity, asynchrony, decreased importance of physical attributes, and the ease of finding like-minded others. This last principle is especially important in regard to niche communities for minority or marginalized groups/individuals. It is based on the ease with which we find others who may share a unique interest. It is here that IS’s social media and recruitment have found a foothold. Individuals can find like-others who share unique predilections, perceptions, physical/emotional attributes or disabilities, and interests with great ease. This is both a positive and negative depending on what those particular interests are. From a social standpoint, finding like-minded others allows marginalized or niche individuals to discover a social group to which they can belong, begin to form social connections, and receive self-concept feedback. The value of these niche social connections comes in the form of supportive feedback through sharing various and deeply unique characteristics and aspects of themselves. Therefore, these four

attributes of the internet have powerful implications with regard to the psychology of identity formation at the individual level.

Online chat groups, social networks, Wikis, and blogs are becoming common hunting grounds where these marginalized individuals can find similar others and can create ideal selves. The anonymous and ubiquitous online environment provides individuals with a prime arena, to not only find sympathetic groups but to explore the plasticity of identity in general. In some cases, individuals can even maintain distinct and fantastic multiple identities beyond one's offline identity.

In particular, internet psychology has examined the exploration of one's ideal vs. true self as it relates to one's self and social concepts. Online, individuals are able to test various identities to confirm or reject characteristics to include in their self-scheme. Additionally, they are able to maintain multiple identities at the same time relevant to various online social groups to which they belong. The ubiquitous and asynchrony of the internet allows for greater and faster feedback when performing identity development.

Online, the concept of identity, which involves self-concept, true, and ideal selves (Amichai-Hamberger, 2010), provides numerous options regarding how and where identities are presented. In particular, the internet has made the exploration of the ideal and true selves easier. Again, the ideal self is who we want to become; these are characteristics we hold in high regard that we don't feel are currently a part of our current self-scheme. It is what and who we strive for or hope to become. The ideal self is a presentation of oneself that emphasizes the characteristics one feels will increase one's social value among those with whom one shares these characteristics; for instance, using a much younger picture of oneself on a profile page or falsely emphasizing personality traits such as humor or bravery as a dominant part of one's

character. This is achieved through self-presentation. The degree to which the ideal self deviates from the true self varies on whether or not these aspects can be verified offline.

Again, true self can be thought of as the characteristics that are so uniquely ours that we often and most likely do not let others know about them. McKenna (2010) lists four main reasons for why one's true self may go unexplored: (a) role expectancy and constraints, (b) conditional acceptance, (c) social anxiety and loneliness, and (d) the need for containment vs. the need for expression. The internet's anonymity has allowed some individuals to express or find others with whom they share common true self traits, making it is less risky to explore these deeper more intimate aspects of self-concept. It is relatively easy to assume that, when an individual shares true self characteristics and receives positive feedback by other individuals or a group, the connections formed will carry heavy social capital, as well as increasing the likelihood of forming bonding connections. Sharing of one's true self with one's social group online can increase the value of those characteristics within one's self-concept, thus becoming dominate in one's self-scheme. This is especially true if an individual feels these traits marginalize them from others and/or effect their membership in the groups to which they belong. With a variety of privacy settings and the anonymity that comes with a username, one can be motivated to explore or divulge these private aspects of themselves. The ability to come in contact with others who share characteristics that an individual may have thought made them a minority, and to have these same characteristics become a point of camaraderie formation, can be very liberating.

Individuals who share their true self online form intimacy more quickly and have a tendency to move from online to real world interaction (McKenna, 2010). In that regard, individuals who may share jihadist ideas with other likeminded individuals online may become radicalized faster and may be more likely to take online interaction offline. They begin to put

more value into these types of relationships and become more influenced by them. Positive reinforcement of one's social group, supporting or solidifying these aspects of self, are likely to become stronger identifiers.

Online self-presentation is another area where editing control, afforded by an online environment, allows individuals more authority over the characteristics they choose, and how they present themselves to others. Despite the freedom and control for identity exploration that Web 2.0 provides, there are still boundaries and consequences that come with these allowances. One must still account for online identity presentations having real world, offline consequences if and when they meet. A study at the University of Michigan showed that Facebook connections originated more from offline connections than from random online connections (Lampe, Ellison, & Steinfield, 2006). Therefore, identity elaboration in one's online profiles has the possibility of being verified and contested by offline third-party substantiation. For example, an individual cannot go onto Facebook saying he or she works for the Pentagon, and not expect his/her offline contacts who see his/her claim, to question it. This does not mean that slight profile or identity enhancement does not occur. However, studies have also shown that online self-presentation tends, for the most part, to be somewhat representative and factual with regard to an individual's self-concept (Seidman, 2012).

Identity exploration does not always have to occur in a realistic presentation or digital environment. Online self-presentation can occur via symbolism or by using a proxy, such as an avatar in *massive multi-player online games* (MMPOG; Park & Chung, 2011). Park and Chung found that, in MMPOGs, self-presentation facilitated trust and commitment, thereby making it an essential ingredient that facilitated social capital between players. In these cases, the character represents aspects valued by the individual (strength, power, abilities, etc.) and the validation

comes via other players remarking or respecting the individual's playing abilities via the proxy, showing the extent to which self-presentation can garner social capital. In addition, the study shows that social connections need not only take place in the traditional online communities (Facebook, etc.), but that multiplayer games are also communities where connections can be initiated and developed and possibly moved offline depending on the intimacy that develops.

Balance of Personal and Social Identities Online

Another way in which online environments can affect identity is the degree to which self vs. social concepts are formed and the balance between them. For instance, Web 2.0 may allow individuals the opportunity to find optimal distinctiveness, while it can also be argued that it provides a quick fix for identity uncertainty.

CMC has been shown to allow aspects of one's social and self-concepts to become stronger or weaker depending on how they are presented and reinforced through online interaction (Postmes, 2010), which is important when looking at online interaction and the *social identity model of deindividuation effects* (SIDE). SIDE occurs when the self-concept becomes deindividuated in the online environment, and in which group membership and values become more prized and incorporated than self. The anonymity of online allows the individual to become lost in translation and more susceptible to the group with the self-concept giving way to the social identity. In this regard, the value received from group membership, that is based on sharing one's true self, makes social identity more salient by allowing one's true self to be realized, creating a situation where the group gains significance.

Group Dynamics Online

CMC can also affect in-group and out-group dynamics in which the individual and other group members bond through identifications unique to their group, and it involves comparing one's specific group characteristics to the differences used to define various out-groups. The more unique and strong the bond between members of an in-group, the greater the emphasis on differences between them and the out-groups. In-group persuasion effect and group polarization applies to online groups via CMC as well as F2F. Therefore, an online environment may facilitate the dynamics of these two groups to occur at a faster rate and with more ease than observed in offline F2F collectives.

The private and the public are morphing into a collective world. The internet and online communities are affecting one's offline behavior. This is largely linked to mobility and asynchrony. The facilitation of discussion and the access to information at any moment can affect one's behavior. This is true for IS and other jihadist groups, such as al Qaeda, using their online presence to encourage homegrown terrorism (Kohlmann, 2008). Internet psychology has demonstrated that online discussion can transfer to offline political action by providing the individuals with the information they need to get involved to turn talk into action (Johnson, Zhang, Richard, & Seltzer, 2011).

According to Ellison et al. (2011), Web 2.0's CMC online environment allows for more bridging behavior than offline, facilitated by the ubiquitous, asynchronous, anonymous, and mobile attributes of the internet. This is worth repeating since much of IS's online recruiting stems from bridging connections that, in some cases, through radicalization, may move offline.

Lastly, since identity formation permits individuals to "try on" aspects of their self-concept that might not otherwise be possible offline, it may encourage and nurture radical behavior. This

aspect of online identity formation is relevant, since mere curiosity or fringe appeal to a particular aspect of IS identity could be fostered and fanned into full blown identification and a motivating desire to become an active member. Such individuals are able to play with IS identification which may be fueled by their psychopathology, fractured identity, or marginalized existence. These aspects of self can be played out online with little initial threat or cost to the individual.

The positive feedback via these bridging connections leads to social capital, where deeper or darker characteristics and social grievances can find support from online jihadist communities. Online technology has allowed potential recruits to locate and inform themselves with very little oppositional outlets to balance out this perspective. Likewise, because these taboo characteristics may be linked to true self, they may find an understanding audience in these niche jihadist groups. Being able to speak and explore socially stigmatic thoughts and behaviors can create a sense of intimacy between the individual and group, making them more susceptible to group influence. This intimacy could elicit a sense of being truly understood and a camaraderie that could turn mere online curiosity into a trigger for offline radicalization.

Postmes (2010) lists three key processes that individuals use to identify with a collective action: sense of injustice, sense of efficiency, and sense of shared social identity. These three processes have been identified in a similar nature to three motivations of radicalization, and they are not isolated to online interaction, but also occur in offline collective action as well. However, the ease with which one comes into contact with groups who share their grievances increases exponentially online. Social identification may be more easily formulated in the online environments since identification and individuality of others is lost by the ability to become anonymous (Postmes, 2010). This is not to say that curiosity is not a contributing factor to being

drawn into IS. But for those with low offline or online socialization, who are marginalized based on identification with Islam, and who have taken on the shared grievances of a jihadist group as a way of mending a fractured identity, the offline negative consequences for these individuals and the public at large could be grave.

Behavioral Analysis/Profiling Psychology

There are two main profiling models, organized vs. disorganized and personality-type. Though both have been used successfully in psychological and behavioral profiling, they also have their fair share of criticism. The largest issue facing profiling models and practice is that the field has lacked empirical testing. That being said, profiling has real world examples that when used appropriately and not as a short cut, can offer some valuable insight and accuracy when attempting to compile an understanding of an individual (Cook & Hinman, 1999).

Organized vs. disorganized personality (criminal profile theory) is one of the most commonly known theories and is used in criminal behavioral analysis fields. It was originally designed for the FBI to be used for compiling personality profiles of serial murders and rapists. Originally, it consisted of two main offender personality types, organized vs. disorganized. Based on analysis of the crime scene, an offender could be profiled into fitting into one of the two personality categories.

Individuals who are profiled to fall into the organized personality profile are thought to be able to remain in control and have presence of mind with regard to forethought, clean up, and taking actions to hide identification. These individuals are usually believed to suffer *anti-social personality disorder* (ASPD) and to exhibit psychopathic tendencies. Individuals with ASPD have a marked lapse in moral facilities and exhibit an inability to empathize with others. What

has come to be known as ASPD was first termed as *maïne sans delire* in the early 1800s by Philippe Pinel (1806) describing a type of individual who exhibited inappropriate affect displays (or the absence of them), and who were prone to violent outbursts and impulses while still possessing strong reasoning capabilities (Sutker & Allain, 2001). ASPD is exhibited at a higher rate in males and tends to have comorbidity with other personality disorders such as borderline personality disorder (Sutker & Allain, 2001).

Organized personality type individuals are triggered to kill or begin their serial violence due to some sort of stressor. The similarity between this type of criminal offender and terrorists is important to note, in that Klausen, Campion, Needle, Nguyen, and Libretti's (2016) model for radicalization shows that the individual undergoes some sort of stressor which starts them on their path to radicalization. Therefore, in both cases, understanding what type of stressors can cause someone to take steps to convert a strong emotion into violent behavior is a vital part of a profile.

Disorganized personality individuals are categorized as highly emotional, socially incapable, and exhibit a tendency toward crimes that are sexualized, because it is theorized that they lack interpersonal relationship abilities and are sexually inexperienced. The offender lacks presence of mind for planning, and the scene tends to lack evidence of meticulous or precautionary actions. This type of personality has been thought to apply to individuals who tend to have *borderline personality disorder* (BPD) or other schizoid mental disorders. These types of psychosis can affect one's ability to plan methodically or reason to varying degrees.

BPD is marked by identity disturbance, impulsive behavior (e.g., recklessness or gambling) with little consideration of consequences prior to action, intense interpersonal relationships that tend to be unstable or multiple, fear of abandonment, feeling of emptiness,

paranoid thought processes, recurrent self-mutilating or self-harm, reactive in mood, and lastly, difficulty controlling anger (Adams, Bernat, & Luscher, 2001). An individual can vary in the degrees to which these characteristics are observed, but higher impulsivity would obviously make planning difficult for individuals with BPD.

Persons with schizoid-type mental or personality disorders can exhibit aspects of magical thinking, odd thinking or speech, and tend to misinterpret events and the actions/intentions of others. For example, the delusion of reference is typical, they tend to be high in paranoia and suspiciousness, and may suffer from social anxiety - again, to varying degrees, based on where they fall on the spectrum and diagnosis (Miller, Useda, Trull, Burr, & Minks-Brown, 2001). These types of characteristics tend to lead to minimal interpersonal interaction and relationship formation. Like BPD, the processing ability to rationalize and plan are greatly hindered.

In both organized and disorganized types, BPD is mentioned either as the main or as a common secondary psychosis. This is important to point out because some theorists have made the argument that Islamic cultures, within limitations, and jihadist terrorists could be said to exhibit characteristics of BPD (Lachkar, 2006a, 2006b). A third hybrid category for individuals who did not fit neatly into either of the two primary types, called the “mixed” offender category was created (Douglas, Burgess, Burgess, & Ressler, 1992).

Though this form of profiling is still widely used, it has been argued that it is not the most effective approach for various reasons, such as lack of training, empirical testing, and application. For example, Canter, Alison, Alison, and Wentink (2004) showed that the organized/disorganized dichotomy does not stand up under empirical testing. The primary issue is similar to the “all or nothing” rule that dominated the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual's* (DSM) diagnostic methods for years. A demand for accuracy and personalization of diagnosis

called for a move away from categorical towards dimensional diagnostic methods. Individuals do not always fit into broad categories because they are unique with their own experiences, biology, and perception. Therefore, it is more appropriate to assess on a dimensional scale that accounts for the specific individual, increasing the odds for a more appropriate diagnosis as well as lowering the risk of overdiagnosis which can have negative effects on an individual's psychology due to stigmatization, leading to unnecessary emotional distress. It is important to point out that, contrary to some opinions, profiling does not only apply to individuals with psychopathology. Instead, profiling is looked at as a methodical process of identifying personality, behavior, and demographic characteristics of an individual without direct assessment of the individual or a specific suspect in mind (Cook & Hinman, 1999).

The second popular profiling method is personality-type theory. It has been widely used in various fields to understand how an individual's personality affects his or her behavior and choices. It has also been applied in studies on religion, consumer behavior, education methods, clinical psychology, human resources, and career counseling, to name a few. The theory involves the process of decoding the dominant type of personality using the strongest characteristic within four specific categories, with two characteristics per category. The categories and characteristics are (a) perceiving functions (sensing vs. intuition), (b) judging functions (thinking vs. feeling), (c) orientations (extrovert vs. introvert), and (d) attitudes used to perceive the outside world (judging vs. perceiving), leading to a series of possible combinations (Francis & Dato, 2012). Individuals will possess various attributes from all eight dimensions, but one will be dominant in regard to personality type. For example, an individual will show both thinking and feeling attributes but will be dominant in one or the other. Depending on how these categories are combined, one will fall into a specific personality type. More so than one's

economics, ethnicity, sex, class, or education, one's personality type can explain one's innate preferences and relationship dynamics/choices (Smith, 1993).

Personality types have also been used to study communication preference (attention), persuasion, and action in the field of public relations. Smith (1993) points out that when using personality type to profile how an individual will react to advertisements or communications, the precise interplay between Sensing/Intuition along with Thinking/Feeling can help explain the types of messages that may be more persuasive to an individual, as these are the two pairs involved in persuasion. Knowing which characteristics are dominant in these two pairs is valuable to knowing how a specific personality type is going to process media. Creating a profile using personality type of recent recruits or defectors of IS would help establish the type of personality that may be most susceptible to their Combat Brand and media.

A study by Francis and Dato (2012) examined personality type and religion. They compiled a personality type profile for the mosque group which they found to be ESTJ, then compared it to the personality type profile that had been established for churchgoers in other studies, which was ISFJ. This cross-comparison, between their study and the personality type of churchgoers, provides important insight into the type of individual who is motivated, based on his or her personality, for religious behavior. It also allows insight into possible differences between these two groups, which could help when negotiating group dynamics between them.

With the rise in popularity and the abundance of social media platforms, social media can be a great source for capturing profiling insight that previously had not been available. Already, various studies have looked at using social media as a way of profiling attitudes and behaviors, as well as personalities. A study of digital consumers' media production on social media platforms found that individuals who were high in extroversion, narcissism, and agreeableness

(ENA) tended to be better targets for new brand campaigns as they engaged in more word-of-mouth UGC via social media (Yeo, 2012).

Various profiling studies have already used Facebook to examine profiles with regard to actual vs. possible selves through an individual's use of self-presentation and belonging tied to their personality (Seidman, 2012). A study by Fernandez, Levinson, and Rodebaugh (2012) was able to accurately identify individuals who suffered from social anxiety disorder based on Facebook profiles. These studies are important for two reasons: First, they suggest that individuals tend to be somewhat accurate in their self-presentation on social media, making it a somewhat reliable source of UGC profiling; second, they show that profiling social media can lead to making accurate identifications of specific characteristics based on the self-descriptions and presentation choices of individuals with social anxiety. Despite these individuals having unique backgrounds, there were common characteristics that linked those suffering from social anxiety that could be consistently observed and identified.

Using an individual's online behavior and personality to predict and profile what an individual may prefer is not new. Netflix and Amazon have been using behavioral profiling algorithms and metadata to examine what an individual may prefer or enjoy based on past purchasing behaviors and ratings. Value congruence with regard to personality profiling is a booming field in consumer science. Companies realize that by pairing advertisement, experiences, and products to an appropriate personality type, a company can increase the emotional attachment and positive experience leading to a more fulfilling and engaging experience and increasing brand value and loyalty in the individual.

Using an individual's social media and user-generated content is still new and brings with it a host of ethical and legal issues regarding privacy. Therefore, using a brand's media output

may be a more viable option to begin delving deeper into applying social media output to profile based on whom it targets. A brand's media does not fall prey to the same types of privacy issues or having to assume privacy intentions and definitions of the users. Hence, starting with IS's Combat Brand is a valid point. By approaching profiling from both brand and individual, one may get a clearer picture of the interaction between the two, and uncover commonalities that were overlooked when inspecting solely the group's or the individual's profile.

Terrorism and Profiling

After 9/11, terrorism profiling became rampant in the State Department with the desire to screen visa applicants in the hopes of weeding out terrorists. However, it has undergone a lot of criticism (Gorman, 2002). Many of these anti-profiling arguments have validity and have shown that the current method of use is outdated and there is a lack of training. Terrorism is evolving with the rise of homegrown terrorism. Agencies now must also focus on attempting to identify and profile these potential terrorists living within their home boundaries.

Profiling terrorism has been an area of study that is a hot button issue. Different theories have approached profiling terrorism from different angles; some from developmental (Locicero & Sinclair, 2008), others from more clinical perspectives, still others use personality psychology, and even socio-economical perspectives. However, one prominent theme, despite continued work, is the fact that the majority of theories lack empirical study and that terrorism has long been thought to have no defining psychopathology or personality type. Terrorists don't seem to stand out from nonterrorists. This point is one of contention and much debate. Past studies and theorists have been split on the relevance and accuracy of profiling terrorism from a psychodynamic perspective. Despite this, it does not mean that terrorists have a clean bill of

mental stability (Grimland, Apter, & Kerkhof, 2006). Various models of radicalization of homegrown terrorists have revealed two common psychological factors: relative deprivation and identity crisis (King & Taylor, 2011).

This debate has caused a split in the body of literature called the tool vs. syndrome effect (Kruglanski & Fishman, 2007). Syndrome is the perspective that there is a unique psychological construct that can be identified at both individual and group levels. The tool perspective is that terrorism is not a psychological effect but is instead, a goal-oriented political agenda. This perspective of terrorism views it as a rationally and logically chosen means to a desired end. The tool perspective is supported by the fact that, in the past, it has been hard to come up with consistent evidence that there are unique psychological or personality traits (Moghadam, 2003; Grimland et al., 2006; Locicero & Sinclair, 2008; Moskalenko & McCauley, 2011). However, this could be a factor that is no longer valid as the combat methods of terrorism evolve.

In the past, organizations, and in particular terrorist groups, lacked the ability to control their media output, their portrayal in mass communication, and their unique brand. The tool theory downplays the distinct differences in various terrorist groups; they may all use terrorist tactics but for vastly different reasons, justifications, and ends. Similarly, it does not distinguish between self-sacrificers who only kill themselves, such as the Tibetan monks who commit self-emulation, and those who self-sacrifice but target civilians in the act. Likewise, there are many who support a terrorist organization but do not engage in nor condone violence towards innocent civilians or fellow countrymen. So the question is, “What makes the groups and individuals who are willing to pull the trigger different from other nonviolent or non-murderous supporters?”

Another weakness in the tool vs. syndrome theory is that technology has changed terrorism by giving these groups a wider reach beyond just media control. For example, online

recruitment has increased the size of the pool of potential recruits and is able to nurture and encourage homegrown terrorism (lone wolf/fringe cells) that has little direct association with or consequences for the official organization. IS has picked up where al Qaeda left off, encouraging young jihadists to “Find their own way to engage in the fight” (Kohlmann, 2008, p. 99).

It is more realistic to assume that it is not as simple as a choice between either tool or syndrome as a definition, but a combination of both, which differs in influence based on the Combat Brand unique to that organization. With the increased number of recruits and the encouragement of individuals to commit jihad on their own, it is impossible to say that psychopathology and personality type has not found its way into terrorism. This could be, in part, due to applying a Western definition of psychopathology to an Eastern culture like Islam.

Perhaps psychopathology at an individualist level in a collectivist culture is the wrong approach, in other words, it is actually a cultural psychopathology that has become a cultural norm. The cultural stigma that applies to psychopathology may not present itself as something abnormal, but is instead a way of life. The psychopathology could be a cultural rather than an individual one. For example, Lachkar (2006b) argues that Islam perpetuates traits that are similar to those seen in individuals with BPD. She argues that, by examining historical interaction, one can actually build a profile similar to an individual both in justification and behaviors in reaction to various historical events. Other theorists have argued for a narcissistic-self psychological theory (Grimland et al., 2006).

A study by Merari, Diamant, Bibi, Broshi, and Zakin (2009) examined Palestinian suicide bombers and found that, though a single profile could not be applied to the bombers, there were distinct personality characteristics. “These characteristics converge to a personality style and

ego structure that is susceptible to social influence, especially by persons perceived as authoritative” (Merari et al., 2009, p. 96). In addition, there were some “subclinical suicidal characteristics,” such as depression and *post-traumatic stress disorder* (PTSD) in the group that had attempted but failed to be martyrs. It is important to note that the depression may have stemmed from not succeeding in the suicide attack, making this finding a “chicken or the egg” dilemma. Merari et al. are quick to warn against using personality factors alone. They argue for looking at both social and individual levels when assessing profiles of successful suicide bombers, since it comes down to the individual characteristics under the right social interaction that are more likely to motivate specific individuals. Their study showed that suicide bombers did in fact differ in their motivation and background from non-political suicide individuals.

With the recent involvement of Western recruits, a Western approach and definition to psychopathology now becomes culturally applicable. Calling on Western recruits to join up and kill civilians in Western countries validates a Western approach to psychopathology and criminal profiling methods when examining why Western individuals would be motivated by the images of beheading, crucifixion, and execution depicted in some of IS media. There may be psychopathic individuals who find homicidal or violent acts appealing, and under the guise of religious law, can justify such acts.

Much of the reasoning that psychopathology does not play a role in terrorism is based on the assumption that it would be a liability for the organizations. A common argument against the syndrome perspective is that a suicide bomber’s strength of mind actually contributes to his/her success, and that psychopathology would weaken his/her effectiveness (Grimland et al., 2006). For instance, someone who is suffering from severe schizoid personality disorder may stand out in a crowd and risks being caught before accomplishing his or her task. Another scenario could

involve a psychologically disturbed individual turning on the organization. However, the online radicalization puts a safe distance between the terrorist organization and the individuals motivated to act. Psychopathology or personality traits that were once cause for concern are now acceptable motivators and of little risk to the organization. It is not as if IS is administering psychological assessments on the fringe cell members or lone wolves.

A study by Belanger, Caouette, Sharvit, and Dugas (2014) found individuals primed for self-sacrifice express a higher level of committing self-sacrifice in a video game. Likewise, the more an individual was prone to self-sacrifice the more he or she promoted violence as a reasonable means to an end, and the more profound the desire to have members from the out-group join his/her side and adopt his/her values. Additionally, the act of suicide seemed to be motivated by a means of regaining some sense of significance and viewing others who had self-sacrificed as being heroic and righteous, hence, the allure of martyrdom. Therefore, if an individual experiences a loss of significance or views others as being more significant due to their self-sacrifice, it increases the likelihood of him or her engaging in self-sacrifice behavior. Belanger et al. also found that the big five personality traits were involved in constructing self-sacrifice, though no specific trait stood out as a primary motivator to engage in the behavior. They found that psychopathology did not seem to play a role, though anti-social personality tendency was a high predictor of self-sacrifice in that it broke with social norms.

Others have argued in favor of a forensic approach to studying various risk factors, but tailoring it to the specific risk factors of an individual relevant to violent terrorism (Monahan, 2012). These various studies and theories, reviewed along with other theoretical research, support an argument for instrumenting a biopsychosocial approach to profiling terrorism, both at the group (IS) and individual recruit levels. *Biopsychosocial* perspective accounts for an

individual's biological, psychological, and social interactions throughout his or her life and how they combine to create an individual perspective which will not only affect personality but also behavior and decision-making processes. "Clearly, terrorism as a phenomenon is both social and psychological" (Chen & Kruglanski, 2009). This approach can account for both individual psychological and social dynamics working together to motivate individuals to join a jihadist movement, and provide a better understanding of underlying needs or stressors and how these domains interact. A biopsychosocial approach is important when compiling a profile and when reviewing case histories of individuals. It has been argued that a solely clinical perspective to understanding motivations of terrorism is not complete (Locicero & Sinclair, 2008).

By combining an individual risk factor analysis (including bio and demographic factors), along with the creation of an individual's psychosocial profile, an examination of one's media consumption and behavior, and a group's Combat Brand profile, one can conduct a multilevel comparison. Each approach carries weight, and when combined could provide an accurate means of predicting who may be at risk of becoming radicalized and motivated to action. Technology may have opened the door for reevaluating the debate between tool and syndrome with regard to terrorism.

Media Psychology

A couple of behavioral effects that have been studied in media psychology are *engagement* and *flow* (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990). Engagement is when one is able to become involved in the media either through narrative or interaction. Flow is an effect of engagement. The more one is able to engage and become "lost" in the media the more one is able to achieve flow. During flow, peripheral stimuli fade away and time seems to fly by. Flow and engagement are not

limited to just media. For example, one can experience both performing a task, and both can be highly pleasurable experiences. Suspension of disbelief is an example of engagement, where the narrative structure (film or text) takes over suspending one's tendency to be aware of, or unwillingness to accept, unrealistic plot elements. Basically, one is willing to let the narrative override rationality.

Social cognition theory takes into account an individual's social and individual cognition with regard to the cognitive, affective, and biological factors, and how these affect each other bidirectionally in creating, what one assumes to be, acceptable perceptions, behaviors, and attitudes (Bandura, 2001). Social cognition is meaningful when discussing media psychology because mass communication supplies models after which others mold their behavior, and serve as examples of the types of consequences for the behavior they may want to emulate. Influential models tend to embody characteristics one wishes to possess. "Types of models who predominate within a social milieu partly determine which human qualities from among many alternatives, are selectively activated" (Bandura, 2001, p. 282). If these social models are shown via media and become an accepted norm, then the characteristics they exhibit are likely to be the ones that are admired and modeled. This effect is even more influential when those models are already exhibiting characteristics that are the "norm" of the observer's world as they are already embedded with a sense of acceptance, nostalgia, and understanding. This makes it easier for the observer to adopt the particular social model, behavior, and symbols because they don't feel foreign, and may even be characteristics that one's in-group has already assumed or with which it is associated.

Through repetition in media, one is exposed to models who exhibit distinct behavioral and attitudinal characteristics, which can serve as exemplars of acceptable concepts of behavior and

thought. And the instantaneous feedback available through social media speeds up the process of either rejecting or accepting modeled behaviors and ideas one has tried out. If the feedback is positive, it will reinforce the likelihood of these social models being adopted. Over time, repeated exposure increases our positive attitudes towards these exemplars, making it a repetitive cycle of reinforcement. “What gives significance to vicarious influence is that observers can acquire lasting attitudes, emotional reactions, and behavior proclivities toward persons, places, or things that have been associated with modeled emotional experiences” (Bandura, 2001, p. 281).

Bandura (2001) warns that when someone is heavily exposed to the symbolic world of mass communication one can come to believe that it is an accurate portrayal of affairs and not a skewed or subjective view. This can also occur with genre models. When media is constructed following a specific genre’s narrative rule or production cues, such as a documentary, individuals are likely to believe that what they are seeing is the truth and not the opinion of the filmmaker. This often occurs in news media as well. *Media framing* can have a huge effect on triggering specific values and cues from how the media is presented via one’s associative network model. Values are an important part of one’s schemes, affecting how information is processed and assisting in behavioral decisions. Media framing can work to trigger the elicitation of specific values in an individual as a way of emotionally guiding a receiver to a specific option or action (Rameriz & Verkuyten, 2011)

Bandura's (2001) *social cognition model* possesses four subfunctions of observational learning, each adding to the preceding one and required to increase the likelihood that the behavior will be adopted.

1. Attentional process is when one’s cognition, due to some observant factor of the model or behavior, warrants one’s energy to pay attention to it.

2. Retention process is when the observed action that has been retained is transferred from attention to memory becoming part of one's cognition for later retrieval.
3. Production process is when one takes action on the retained cognition.
4. Motivational process is when, based on direct, indirect, or self-produced motivational incentives, the individual reenacts the modeled behavior that they have pulled from memory after having evaluated that, in so doing, it will result in a positive value or feedback.

Through this process, via media or live observations of models or behaviors, what one observes transitions from symbolic conceptions to reenacted behavior. With repetition and/or positive feedback comes the increasing likelihood that the behavior will be repeated in the future and/or adopted. This helps explain the *Werther effect*, where media that sensationalizes an account of a suicide increases the chance of copycats modeling suicidal behavior, in the case of this dissertation, terrorist suicide bombings or lone wolf attacks (Grimland et al., 2006).

Media is important with regard to IS because it has allowed for a power shift in their favor that many would have assumed to have been impossible. Prior to the digital age, this would not have been possible, at least not to the degree and speed that IS has accomplished it. With today's technology media output is cheaper, easier, and more mobile. Through media, minority opinion or groups are more effective by having a larger platform to get their message out. IS may currently be the most skilled in the use of technology and social media to create a Combat Brand to accomplish their goals, but they will not be the last.

Minority influence (Moscovici & Lage, 1976), is a social psychological theory whereby a minority group is able to influence a majority group. Terrorism is a prime example of being able to persuade and overpower a majority group to the demands of the minority. Chen and

Kruglanski (2009) point out, that beyond political demands, minority influence can involve forcing the majority to adopt the beliefs, opinions, or attitudes of a minority group. With media and Combat Brands, this is now carried out on a narrative platform through online and social media where IS displays messages of revenge and hope to those who feel they are a minority group and would likely sympathize with their cause. Media has given the minority effect gravitas. Therefore, by deconstructing IS's media one may be able to see how it is able to influence both local and foreign individuals, and how their Combat Brand is used to elicit media terrorism.

Terrorism has been compared to a "theater of terror" (Weimann, 2005). Weimann (2005) discusses how one can look at terrorism as a symbolic communication whereby the terrorist acts as the transmitter, the target is the recipient, the message is the bomb or violence; and lastly, feedback which comes from the reaction and terror of a population. Take this model and apply it to how IS controls their numerous daily messages of terror, and one has a situation where repetition becomes even more effective, the message more specific, and the audience larger.

The terrorists are no longer dependent on third-party media outlets to carry their messages of terror or domination. Weimann (2005) discusses how media is viewed by these terrorist groups as a form of psychological warfare. Fog, Budtz, and Yakaboylu (2010) explain that a good brand invokes an emotion and tells a story. Social media has provided the vehicle to accomplish this by taking the "theater of terror" to a wider audience and developing a cohesive Combat Brand. This theater of terror is not limited to the immediate population personally experiencing or witnessing the blasts, crucifixions, or beheadings, and so on, but is capable of being experienced globally. Instead of having their images aired by a third party which could vilify their acts, IS can now release their images in a manner that can cast them in a different

light, such as a force for retribution or heroism. IS is now able to control the narration, tell their story, and use each media piece to reinforce their Combat Brand and archetypes.

Brand, Consumer, and Political Psychology

Organizations also have identities, known as “brands.” These brands use *archetypes* to elicit recognition, engagement, and value within its audience. Archetypes are very important tools for organizations and groups in their role as distributors. Archetypes unite the organization’s brand with an overall defining symbol that communicates its core identity and story. Archetypes are both images and emotions that can create myths, religions, and philosophies that have profound and universal meaning (Jung, 1964). They are imprinted and hardwired into our psyches within a narrative scheme. It becomes the persona associated with the brand and provides the brand with meaning. A single organization can have several archetypes that are used at various or different times to appeal to a wider audience, to address specific issues, or to rebrand.

Brands, and the emotions that they elicit, have become valuable assets to our self-presentation and identity exploration through the associations one forms with them. In other words, brands help show others something about ourselves based on the connotations held in the social arena about that brand. Brands have been shown to elicit strong emotions in individuals (Lisjack, Lee, & Gardner, 2012; Hwang & Kandampully, 2012; Fog et al., 2010), which have a profound psychological effect. The emotional responses they evoke and the defining attributes of status that they carry are reinforced with how the brand is presented in media. Brands use cultural connotations or signifiers associated with archetypes to convey social meaning.

How a brand is presented and advertised has fallen under the watchful eye of consumer

psychology. For instance, colors can trigger emotion, grab attention, and serve symbolic meaning. A white wedding dress is meant to symbolize purity and the virginity of the bride. Another example is the color red and its association with attention. Red, used in stop signs and emergency vehicle flashing lights, has come to symbolize danger or urgency; therefore, it has one's immediate attention. Likewise, green is associated with "go." These cognitive associations can also influence behavioral responses automatically. For example, one is stopped at the first in a series of stop lights. The second light ahead turns green while the one the individual is at is still red. Upon seeing the one ahead turn green, the individual finds him/herself automatically pulling through his/her intersection on what is still a red light without being cognitively aware of his or her actions. The default cognitive system (System 1) has reacted to a behavioral color cue, putting the body in motion.

Consumer psychology has also examined the manner in which a receiver of an ad will process the information and be persuaded. Both verbal and nonverbal cues are important to how persuasive a message can be to a particular receiver. Studies have shown gender of audience and/or presenter (Jacks & Lancaster, 2015; Whipple & McManamon, 2002), perceived attractiveness (Debevec & Kernan, 1984), presenter's assumed expertise (Smith, Houwer, & Nosek, 2012; Bohner, Ruder, & Erb, 2002), and one-sided versus two-sided arguments (Sanaktekin & Sunar, 2008) are just some of the cues that can affect the message's persuasiveness. Additionally, a message that is in line with the receiver's beliefs or currently held opinions is deemed more influential in that it validates previously held notions through in-group bias.

Experts or authority figures have been shown to be more influential conveyers of a message, resulting in a higher degree of persuasion and a deeper belief by the recipient. "It came

from an expert, so it has to be true.” This was an influential aspect of Milgram’s (1963) obedience study in which an authority figure’s position was reinforced by wearing a lab coat. A study by Adam and Galinsky (2012) found that individuals performed better on a *Stroop Color-Word Interference Test* (aka Name that Color Test, where subjects are asked to name the color of the text’s ink not say the name of the color that is spelled out) when wearing what was described to them to be a lab coat. This shows that individuals are not only affected by the connotations they apply to others wearing expert signifiers, but they are even affected when they themselves are associated with the cues.

A main model for information processing and persuasion is the *elaboration likelihood model* (ELM). In this model, information is processed by the individual in one of two ways depending on the type of information provided and the amount of attention one assigns to it. The first type is *central processing*; it is the information upon which one chooses to elaborate. This is decided by the individual having paid close attention to the information, consequently remembering it, and eventually elaborating upon it. It is important to note one must first be motivated to attend to the information in order to engage in central processing. Likewise, information processed via central processing is the most influential type of information, and has the longest effect in regard to persuasion.

The second type is *peripheral processing* which is information that requires and is given less attention. Peripheral processing is considered to be the default and primary method that one uses. Only once the peripheral information warrants attention, does it move to central. Taking this information in, one can assume that when information either supports an opinion one values as an essential part of who he or she is, one is going to be more likely to use central processing and further elaborate on the information either through research or use. In applying this concept

to IS media, one could assume that individuals who find their opinions, beliefs, or values in line with IS messages or social identity, will use central processing with that particular media. The ease and flexibility of communication that mobile technology has provided, minimizes the amount of energy and cost one must expend to elaborate on information. One now has the ability to troll for information in hope of confirming his or her views, sharing the information, or seeking similar types of information with others, at little personal expense, which increases the persuasiveness of the initial media or advertisement.

Self-esteem has been shown to influence persuasion (Sanaktekin & Sunar, 2008; Rhodes & Wood, 1992). In this study, Sanaktekin & Sunar (2008) found that individuals with low personal self-esteem but high relational self-esteem (self-esteem that comes from social or group associations) tended to be more persuaded. Overall, one-sided messages were more persuasive over two-sided. It has also been found that individuals who rate moderate self-esteem are more likely to be persuaded (Rhodes & Wood, 1992). This finding segues into social identity theory that self-esteem being a motivator for which groups one chooses to associate, and how one categorizes others. That individuals with moderate self-esteem are more likely to be persuaded could be due to the fact that they may rate themselves as adequate in their ability to identify false information and thus avoid false advertisements. So for them, if the media meets moderate requirements for truth it can be believed. They neither feel too smart nor too moronic to overlook the message. The level of self-esteem that Western IS recruits possess is important to keep in mind when reviewing individual case studies. Even in marginalized individuals, where one could assume an individual has low self-esteem, group identification has been shown to be motivated by our need to engage in social categorization as a means to increase one's self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Again, this is achieved by putting individuals with "negative" traits

into out-groups and those with “positive traits” into our in-groups, increasing one’s own sense of value. One may find that even marginalized individuals identifying with IS may possess moderate self-esteem acquired through their social association with the organization. Likewise, it is possible that one’s self-concept, despite social hardships, may still possess inflated self-esteem if one feels adequate in other areas or abilities. Self-esteem is also connected to the brands which one has incorporated into one’s self-concept or with which one has aligned oneself. Research has suggested that personality traits are malleable based on context and self-concepts which ultimately vary the traits that an individual chooses to present, and that a brand’s attraction is influenced by whether or not it displays or represents these *schematic traits* (a set of traits that are both highly descriptive and valued by the individual; Aaker, 1999). If a brand reflects the personality trait of strength, comradery, and respect, it may appeal to an individual who is marginalized, but holds these traits as important to one’s ideal self. Moderate to low self-esteem that stems from being marginalized makes the individual more apt to adopt brands that reflect these desired personality traits that are highly desired and important to one’s ideal self and are activated in a social context based on the desired self one wishes to present to others. It has been shown that when these identity brands are threatened, individuals take it as a threat to the self and to their self-esteem, which in turn, makes them defend the brand passionately (Lisjack et al., 2012). This study illustrates not just how engrained a brand can become in one’s definition of self, but the strong emotions that can become associated with a brand. One’s identification with a brand also facilitates what is known as *brand loyalty*.

Ultimately, it is the emotional connection that helps to facilitate adoption and commitment (brand loyalty) between brand and individual (Hung, 2014; Hwang & Kandampully, 2012; Zhou, Zhang, Su, & Zhou, 2011; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). It is how that emotion carries over to the

social and self-concepts of one's identity that is vital to understanding the effectiveness of IS media and recruitment. Because an organization's brand is a form of identity, it is possible to create a profile of that organization just like one would an individual. Brands and their media can ultimately be broken down into the types of signifiers that have come to elicit strong emotional affect as well as effect perception and persuasion. Brands that serve specific needs of individuals tend to be the ones with which individuals become highly involved and attached to. One particular need that can motivate individuals is the need to belong (Maslow, 1943). Research has shown that brands and their brand communities (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001) can create a sense of belonging in those who practice brand engagement and interactions that extend from a shared brand (Hung, 2014; Schau, Muniz, & Arnould, 2009; Schau & Muniz, 2002; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). It is not hard to see how this ties into IS's brand and current "utopian verbal message" (Russell & Rafiq, (2016); Winter, 2015). Western cultures tend to be high branding cultures. Likewise, Western cultures are high in individuality with brand adoption and loyalty (Lam & Lee, 2005). So, what is the attraction of a collectivist culture brand, such as IS, to a Western culture? Past research has shown that brands can be used both as unique self-expression and as a way to show that one belongs to a collective (Moon & Sung, 2015). Therefore, it could be argued that Western cultures, which are thought to be more individualist, may use brands to not only symbolize individual aspects of our self-concept in order to identify us as unique, but to also show that this is a brand-group to which they belong. It also lets others know who are members of the same brand in-group, that they share a commonality. Based on this information, the Western recruits may be high in personal identity and in search of social identity in order to obtain optimal distinctiveness balance, making a collective brand and collectivist media appealing.

Consumer psychology studies on persuasion overlap with political psychology's decision-making research. Individuals tend to believe that their political decisions are decided based on the facts, when in actuality, much of the time they are emotionally driven (Westen, 2007). Political candidates, and politics in general, involve branding, either by creating their own or by association with a political party's brand. When studying a group like IS, which involves political maneuvering and combating other political groups, it becomes relevant to understand how individuals process political messages using their emotions. Westen does a very good job at showing how a political message is first broken down into the bare signifiers, then how these signifiers are placed into a montage and mise-en-scène, which work to create powerful emotional narrative associations that have a clear and purposeful objective of leading the receiver to a precise end point. By examining the media, one is able to get an idea of who is targeted by the brand because these pieces are knowingly constructed with an objective by the sender. This is why it is important to break down media representations of the brand and their advertisements into these basic, emotionally charged, and symbolic principals to understand the influence they have on the viewer.

By profiling the Combat Brand, one could begin to identify parallels between individuals who are already primed to respond to this particular message. Westen's (2007) work, the area of semiotics and the field of media studies, offers powerful support that brands and their media can and should be deconstructed to truly get at the heart of who is affected by their media and how and why they are affected.

When discussing how an individual makes a decision, which the act of recruitment involves, one must discuss *heuristics*. Heuristics involve cognitive short cuts for processing information based on currently held and previously tried information or processes. Heuristics

tend to be adequate most of the time, but in some more complex processing or decision making, these imperfect time savers can steer one against logic. Despite this, individuals continue to use them as a default form of processing. Khaneman (2011) writes of two systems working within the brain, *System 1* and *System 2*. Most heuristics operate on System 1's processing level. System 1 is our default system. It is quicker, uses heuristics to save energy and time, and tends to operate at an emotional rather than logical level. It has been suggested that when an individual is highly involved with a brand or when the advertisement is of high importance, the tendency to use heuristics declines (Jansson-Boyd, 2010) as one implements more System 2 processing. System 1 is the "gut feeling" that what has worked before will work again. On the whole, System 1 gets us through life relatively well and is engaged on a daily basis.

System 2 is rational, logical, and it takes a great amount of energy in the form of attention and cognitive processing. This would be similar to the central pathway in ELM in that System 2 information is likely to be elaborated. However, in some important decisions System 1 can override System 2, in which case one may feel that one is providing the most accurate answer based on logic, when in reality, it is being decided using an emotionally provoked short-cut.

When one is presented with information that triggers one at an emotional level, one will tend to process that incoming stimuli using System 1. Sometimes individuals will switch back and forth between the two systems when processing the same information. Khaneman (2011) writes, "The main functions of System 2 are to monitor and control thoughts and actions 'suggested' by System 1, allowing some to be expressed directly in behavior and suppressing or modifying others" (p. 44). Therefore, advertisements, media, or even questions about ourselves (who we are, etc.) can operate on one or both of these systems. Unless the individual is willing to be introspective and devote time to understanding how and why, one may be quick to answer

with System 1, especially if System 2 is already overloaded or exhausted. In these cases, System 2 may never be activated to question the decisions one is making. Media analysis at a finite, semiotic level is important for understanding how recruits may be making their decisions with regard to IS media, and in order to see which one of these systems the media is trying to stimulate and what signifiers are used. Jansson-Boyd (2010) writes, “Emotions can be used as a source of information and that they communicate metacognitive information about the thinking process” (p. 139) of the receiver.

One narrative model that should be reviewed, based on its association with the TAA model used by PSYOP, is the *primal branding model* (Hanlon, 2006), that functions on understanding the primal code (Hanlon, 2006) used within a brand’s narrative. This model is based on seven key elements: *creation story*, *creed*, *icons*, *rituals*, *sacred words*, *nonbelievers*, and *leader*.

These seven elements provide additional insight into understanding the current brand narrative when profiling a TA using the TAA model at the community level. Once the TAA has been conducted, one is able to use this analysis and apply it to the primal branding model to construct lasting and strong counter-narratives. The primal code also provides an understanding of the TA’s motivation for his/her current behavior and attitudes by allowing the analyzer to see the personal narrative at both a holistic and deconstructed level, thus creating a background in which information from the TAA worksheet can be inserted into the counter-narrative. It is these seven elements that have to be addressed when constructing a counter-narrative to the specific TA. Identifying which primal code elements are currently being used in a TA’s brand narrative also provides information about the strength of the belief system that is in place. The more elements present within the brand narrative, the stronger the belief system of that specific TA

(Hanlon & Seese, 2013). Some brand narratives may not possess all seven elements of the primal code, but ones that do will be less inclined to change based on a more developed and integrated narrative that reinforces a particular belief system held by that brand and reinforced within that brand's narrative. Likewise, a strong counter-narrative will attempt to address all seven elements when creating the alternative narrative to replace the current one.

Combat Branding

This paper has three specific goals: (a) to study the power of visual narratives within a specific group's Combat Brand; (b) create a deductive profile based on a group's visual narrative analysis of their Combat Brand; and (c) introduce the theory I have termed Combat Branding, which for the first time, categorizes this specific genre of brand. Combat Branding involves in-depth profiling of the brand and archetype and decoding down to the physical visual signifiers used. As mentioned earlier, in order for media or a group's brand to be labeled as Combat Branding, it must meet the following five caveats:

- The specific group must have complete unadulterated control over content creation.
- The media is designed with a specific TA in mind.
- The direct intention of the media is to further a combative or competitive objective. The objectives can be prosocial as well as anti-social depending on the type of group.
- The media has a direct statistical impact on the group.
- The media is effectively attempting to convert the TA to the group's cause. It is not meant to merely separate or express intergroup differences, but to convert members of the "other" to join.

IS's media meets all five of these requirements.

Therefore, the analysis of IS's Combat Brand includes how these individual signifiers are effectively used to wage a "combative objective" against their opposition (e.g., increase loss of life, increase foreign recruitment totals, conversion of population within an oppositional territory, etc.); to define what those objectives may be, and how IS is achieving their goal through their media and brand. Combat Branding asserts that the brand has a direct effect on a group's goal statistics. This is why using the term propaganda, as mentioned before, is not appropriate when applying it to their media. It is no longer about defining us vs. them, but to change the strategic picture. Brands are now being used simultaneously as ammunition and for the purposes of recruitment, not simply to narrate a perspective or justification, but to actually recruit others from outside groups.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Visual narratives (VN) have begun to be recognized as their own conceptual body of study (Pimenta & Poovaiah, 2010). VNs are defined as the process of storytelling through the use of visuals. As VNs come to be recognized as an independent entity and distinct area of narrative study, they are able to be analyzed at an “ideological and structural level” (p. 28), and being that VN is a relatively young area of study, further research is warranted to examine specific VNs with regard to componentry and functionality (Pimenta & Poovaiah, 2010). Though VNs are in the early stages of being recognized as a distinct area of study, independent from text and audio, it begs the question, “Why has this taken so long?” The act of visual storytelling is one of the oldest forms of narration predating formal language and the written word. The origins of VNs are linked to drawings found on European cave walls dating around 30,000-10,000 BC. Scientific attempts to study VNs have begun to surface based on the understanding that there are formal visual codes and rules that the storyteller and “reader” must share in order to correctly “read” VNs.

Pimenta and Poovaiah (2010) divide VNs into three distinct subcategories based on the medium: A *static visual narrative* (SVN), which includes comics and picture books; *dynamic visual narrative* (DVN), which includes films and animation; and *interactive visual narrative* (IVN), which includes augmented reality. The organization of VNs into subcategories allows for a better understanding of the narrative and more specific constructional analyses. For the purpose of this study, my media focus includes video and still images. Therefore, I will be looking at both dynamic and static visual narrative forms of VN. VN research using video to examine a group’s Combat Brand and create a deductive profile of the target audience (TA) solely based on signifiers used within the VN, to date, has not been conducted to my knowledge.

Therefore, it has required me to create my own methodology to study profiles created from VN and brands.

As mentioned before in Chapter 1, there are two distinct narratives within a film. There is the visual narrative and the audio narrative. It is my theory that for a Western audience (United States, Australia, Canada, and Western Europe), the audio narrative will be the least influential with regard to familiarity and engagement, and is of little use to this specific audience in creating a personal motivational narrative. Following this theory, the audio narrative may be perceived by this TA as non-specific foreign rhetoric, and hence drowned out. To a Westerner, who has had no previous exposure to Islamic teachings or culture and is not Arabic in ethnicity, it is my theory that these are most likely foreign, alienating, and non-resonating concepts. I posit that IS is aware of this fact, and it is in the VN that they embed the narrative signifiers that will appeal to this specific TA. Therefore, only the visual narrative within the videos and still images will be analyzed.

“A film’s style tells you a lot about the relationship between the filmmaker, subjects, and spectators. The conventions of composition, and of shots, moves, and transitions are all laden with meanings of various kinds” (Barbash & Taylor, 1997, p.95). By examining the signifiers through the lens of cinema language, this study will decipher the visual symbols and what they psychologically denote to a Western audience. This involves identifying the archetypes, the visual signifiers, and the theme of the visual narratives. These data will then be used to create IS’s brand profile and in identifying the target audience based on the psychological understanding of the various signifiers IS uses and the intended meanings they denote. Only media that has English or Western European narration or subtitles will be analyzed. Visual narrative analysis requires that the appropriate social and cultural visual codes apply to both the

creator of the VN and with the specific TA (Pimenta & Poovaiah, 2010; Barbash & Taylor, 1997). Therefore, by using only IS videos that have English or Western European narration or subtitles, I am able to deduce that the media was created for this specific TA and that the VN was constructed using signifiers and visual rules held by this TA. In addition, limiting the media to videos and still images with English or other Western ethnic dialogues and subtitles serves to account for my Western perspective, allowing me to apply Western psychological definitions and profiling techniques, while increasing the accuracy of the analysis both in terms of the match between the TA and the media.

A critical film analysis is an appropriate lens through which to analyze IS's Combat Brand as it is largely dependent on visual media. "Modern terrorism can be understood in terms of the production requirements of theatrical engagement. Terrorists pay attention to script preparation, cast selection, sets, props, role playing, and minute-by-minute stage management" (Weimann, 2005, p.381). This form of analysis becomes even more significant given the fact that there are similar, competing, prosocial narratives directed at this same "Western Millennial" demographic, Greenpeace's advertisements and media being one such example. Comparison shows that both narratives have clear oppositional groups (IS/Western World, Greenpeace/Poachers, and Eco-polluters), both offer adventure and fighting the "good fight" in foreign locations, and both present themselves as warriors (IS/Warriors for Allah, Greenpeace/Eco-warriors). Additionally, Greenpeace uses images to evoke battle or fighting references⁸. This comparison validates the question as to what type of individual would be attracted to IS's VNs as opposed to Greenpeace's which has similar but prosocial narratives. Hence, IS's Combat Brand lends relevance to the investigation of their media to conduct a deductive profile. Hopefully, analyzing

⁸ See Appendix C

the VN of IS's Combat Brand will provide insight into the "who" and "why" of the equation.

A qualitative approach was adopted for analyzing the media data. The media was analyzed using a codebook I compiled and wrote⁹. The codebook was divided into three Root Code Categories: *Mise-en-scène signifiers*, *Archetypes*, and *Narrative Themes*. The Root Code Categories were then broken down into a set of strict *Parent Codes* that were further reduced into *Child Codes*, *Grand-Child* and *Great-Grand-Child Codes*, and so on. Only these more specific levels of codes which directly related to the signifiers observed were allowed to be created during coding.

The *Mise-en-scène Signifier* Root Code chapter was compiled using definitions and descriptions from various texts such as *Cross-Cultural Filmmaking* (Barbash & Taylor, 1997) and *An Introduction to Film Studies* (Nelmes, 1996). In the *Archetype* Root Code chapter definitions were compiled from *The Hero and The Outlaw* (Mark & Pearson, 2001). In the *Narrative Theme* Root Code chapter definitions were compiled from a multiple media study that included photo, video, and radio conducted by The Quilliam Foundation (Winter, 2015).

My study used the provided definitions of those themes when possible. In some instances, in all three codebook sections, definitions were not provided or did not exist for specific signifiers (including elements of effects on TA). In those instances, I created a general descriptive definition. In some instances, the signifier was self-explanatory and did not require further description (e.g., Cushion); in such cases no definition was given. My independent coders and members of my dissertation committee weighed in on the definitions and effects prior to the codebook being accepted and implemented. This was done to provide a greater level of clarity and completeness. Again, analysis of text or dialogue was not conducted due to the fact

⁹ See Appendix D

that this is a visual narrative study concerned with IS's Combat Brand promoted via images.

DESIGN

Method: The study consists of three phases:

Phase 1 involved a VN analysis of IS videos and still images that are part of IS's Combat Brand geared specifically for a Western TA. First, IS's Combat Brand was decoded and profiled by reviewing the various signifiers present in IS's VNs that were intended for a Western TA. All media was limited to that which was released from January 1, 2014-June 1, 2016. Official IS produced videos were gathered via open sources using online search engines Safari and Firefox. The use of open sources found via internet searches, as a method of data gathering, has been validated by work from research organizations such as the Quilliam and Clarion Project foundations who gather much of their research on IS media in the same manner (A. Coleman, personal communication, March 20, 2016). In addition, IS overtly brands their media¹⁰ with logos of their official media output source, making it a relatively reliable method to identify and ensure the authorship of the media. The still images examined in this study came from *Dabiq* magazine, which is IS's official English webzine. The editions were from the same timeframe as the video media. The *Dabiq* editions were downloaded from the Clarion Project website. All visual media was entered, coded, and analyzed using Dedoose.

Analysis of the videos was conducted by studying the montage using the codebook to identify the specific signifiers. The codebook was used to provide both the definitions and effects of the signifiers analyzed, the archetype, and the themes. A qualitative analysis of the mise-en-scène construction and montage was compiled. The audio narrative (text and dialogue)

¹⁰ See Appendix E

was not studied as this was a VN study. The video media was coded by myself due to time and training constraints.

The still images were analyzed based on the subject, graphics, props, and visual narrative action of each image. The codebook was used to provide definitions and the effects of the signifiers analyzed, the archetype, and the themes of the still images. Descriptions were based on the individual identifiers and the overall narrative of the images.

Two additional coders, in addition to myself, analyzed the still image media and assigned codes for various signifiers. Intercoder reliability was tested on 20% of the still image media in two testing sessions, and each additional coder achieved a total intercoder reliability score that fell between 0.61-0.80 for 20% of the still media data. Cohen's kappa was used to calculate the intercoder reliability score. This ensured a level of reliability between the coders and their independent analysis of the data.

Phase 2 involved creating a traditional, deductive, behavioral analysis profile based on the Phase 1 VN analysis. The traditional behavioral analysis focused on the type of individuals who were targeted and most likely to be motivated to action by IS's Combat Brand. This was possible because, similar to a crime scene, IS's official media provided a direct, uncorrupted source from which both the intent of the group and TA could be deduced.

Phase 3 involved gathering case studies of known Western recruits who have joined IS or been motivated to engage in IS "associated" terrorism (this was terrorism where either the individual(s) attributed their act in support of IS or IS took credit for the individual(s) acts). Due to privacy laws and ethics, as well as the limited time and resources for this initial study, these case studies were compiled using open source media, third-party, and unclassified material. The case subjects were analyzed using a limited biopsychosocial perspective. It was limited in the

sense that I had no access to medical records and or direct contact with case subjects and relied on open source content. In addition, a list of risk factors for each case was catalogued.



Figure 1. The three phases of this study.

The case studies were compared to the deductive profile created in Phase 2 using IS's Combat Brand. This was done to ascertain the accuracy of profiling the TA based on IS's Combat Brand, and second, to identify commonalities of the risk factors identified between the individual case studies.

Participants: There were no subjects used in phases 1 and 2 of the study. In Phase 3, case studies and open source accounts of known Western recruits were compiled. No interviews or contact with the actual individuals was conducted for this study. This will be discussed in more detail in the limitations section.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Phase 1: Combat Brand Analysis

Video Media

A total of 38 (originally 40, but 2 were omitted) IS videos intended specifically for a Western audience and unedited by a third party were analyzed using Dedoose. First, the Root, Parent, and Child codes were entered. After the initial code framework was implemented into Dedoose, no new Parent codes were created, but Child, Grand-Child, and Great-Grand-Child codes, and so on, were allowed to be created if an accurate code for a specific signifier was not already present. Not being able to create additional Child, Grand-Child, and Great-Grand-Child codes, and so on, when coding the media, would otherwise limit the analysis, since it would be impossible to anticipate and list all the possible signifiers that may appear in a video beforehand. Two videos were deleted from the collective sample, V39 *Child Beheads Prisoner* and V40 *Footsteps of My Father*, due to the fact that the videos were primarily in Arabic and subtitled for Arabic audiences. This denotes that the videos were not necessarily intended for Western audiences. It is important to note that this does not mean that IS won't repurpose the Western language sections in these videos, but to only code those sections, or to code the entire original video because of these small sections would risk validity and reliability. So, to avoid this, they were removed from the sample.

Analysis began by sectioning up the remaining 38 videos into individual excerpts that were designated by "in and out points" constituting individual shots. In total there were 2,184 excerpts; I then assigned the signifier codes that applied to each excerpt of the videos. These data were then run through Dedoose to identify the most common signifiers in the video media. A total of 23,662 code assignments were assigned in the analysis process. Analysis

within Dedoose resulted in assigning the frequency and type of signifier that appeared in each excerpt. Analysis of each signifiers' dominance created a breakdown of IS's Combat Brand at the level of the signifier, and from this I constructed a profile of IS's Western TA by combining the findings from the video and still media data.

Video Media Dedoose Findings

I went through the Mise-en-scène Root Code Categories and listed the most prevalent of signifiers assigned for each Parent Code Category. I then listed the top two for Archetype and Narrative Root Code Categories. These data were compiled using the Word Cloud¹¹ and Code Application Analysis in Dedoose. There were three Child Codes, *Indiscernible Clothing*, *Non-Descript Setting*, and *Moving Text*, that were deleted from this final analysis, as they did not contribute anything of significance.

¹¹ See Appendix F

Table 1

Mise-en-scène video media signifiers, archetype, and narrative themes

SIGNIFIERS	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Honorable Mention
Age	Adult (940)	Young Adult (221)	Child (151)	Teen (44)	
Gender	Male (1,232)	Female (26)			
Race	Non-Caucasian or Otherwise Unknown (362)	White (182)	Multi-Race (164)	Black (46)	
# in Shot	One (491)	Group (302)	Two (277)	Crowd (175)	
Framing	Duplicate (438)	Wide (416)	Medium (397)	Medium Close Up (358)	
Camera Motion	Zoom (151)	Pan (129)	Tracking (55) / Tilt (55)		
Camera Angle	Low (103)	High (71)			
Lighting	Natural (1,001)	Practical (122)	Stylistic (63)		
Camera Support	Tripod (537)	Handheld/Steadicam (431)			
Costume	Combat Fatigues (380)	Ammo Vest/Belt (363)	Headscarves or Coverings (361)	Balaclava (351)	Prisoner Uniforms (297)
Props	Gun being held by subject (407)	Gun on person (167)	Vehicle (125)	Knife being held by subject (87)	IS flag in setting (72)
Setting	Desert (174)	Urban Setting (112)	Foliage Area (100)	Neighborhood-Damaged (91)	
Performance	Look and talk directly to camera (386)	Combative Action (264)	Physically Restrained (225)	Act of Killing (121)	
Editing	Cross-Dissolve (472)	Wipe/Push (153)	Fade In (136)	Fade Out (134)	
Post Special Effects	Color Saturation/Effect (393)	Vignette (297)	Stuttering (157)		
Post Graphics	Image Collage (245)	Manufactured Document/Map/Graphic (199)			

Narrative Theme

	First	Second
Narrative Theme	Brutality (17)	Belonging (8) War/Military (8)

Archetype

	First	Second
Archetype	Outlaw (15)	Regular Guy/Gal (6)

The following are the signifiers most commonly coded within the video media for Mise-en-scène Parent Code Categories. With regard to the subject's characteristics, the most common *Age* signifier was *Adult* followed by *Young Adult* correlating with the Millennial demographic of 16 to 35 (Keeter & Taylor, 2009). *Gender* was primarily *Male*. The most coded *Race* signifiers were *Non-Caucasian Otherwise Unknown*, followed by *White*, *Multi-Race*, and *Black* respectively. It is important to note, with regard to *Race* coding in both video and still media, that it was coded solely based on the subject's skin color and appearance, it was not verified using any other indicator. This is valid for this type of VN study because the viewer of the media will be making similar judgments and associations based on this same visual information.

The most common *Number of Characters* portrayed within a frame was *One-Shot* followed by *Group Shot* (more than 3 less than 10). This is significant because a *One-Shot* suggests an individual appeal from sender to the receiver. The viewer is able to put him/herself in direct relation to the subject in the frame, witnessing his/her direct appeal. This can create the feeling of being acknowledged and valued in the viewer. Additionally, it makes it harder for the viewer to remain empathetic to the VN as there is a lower chance of *Bystander Effect*. On the other hand, a *Group Shot* emphasizes the idea of belonging. This juxtaposition suggests that the individual can be a part of something bigger than him/herself.

The *Framing* signifier that was most commonly coded was the *Duplicate Shot*. This is meaningful because it illustrates IS's understanding of Western editing techniques and composition rules for sequential visual narratives necessary to create an impactful and engaging VN. In addition, they are intentionally reusing the emotionally powerful shots for the greatest effect and efficiency.

The next category was *Camera Motion*. The most common signifier used was the *Zoom*.

This technique is used to emphasize relationships between signifiers which creates an emotional transition within the viewer all within the same frame. By moving either into or out of the frame, the filmmaker is able to show a specific signifier in relation to a bigger overall narrative or vice versa. A zoom's reveal is used as an emotional hook and increases that initial emotion by zooming in or out.

The most common *Lighting* signifier was *Natural Light* with a coding frequency of 1,001. This suggests two things. First, it shows us that they're not using large production packages. They are shooting this on the fly, which tells us that they are using quality cameras and not having to rely on a heavy lighting package for exposure and image quality. Second, it suggests the access to individuals who know how to operate this type of prosumer camera. Additionally, it suggests a look of realism which may enhance the feeling of authenticity or documentary-style footage.

The next category was *Camera Mount*; the most commonly used was the *Tripod*. This is a very important observation because it is commonly used in professional Western cinema, not only denoting professionalism but also suggesting they are trying to suspend disbelief. This tool is used to lower one's awareness of the camera and filmmaker's presence, allowing a heightened engagement with the VN. Thus, IS does not want the viewer's suspension of disbelief to be broken, risking the viewer becoming critical of the narrative.

The most common *Costume* signifier was *Combat Fatigue*, followed by *Ammo-Vest*, *Headscarf*, *Balaclava*, and *Prisoner Uniform* respectively. *Combat Fatigue* as a signifier takes on meanings of both belonging to a specific group and identification of a role. The fact that *Prisoner Uniform* was only coded 100 instances less often than *Combat Fatigue* suggests the desire to emphasize the narrative effect of the *Combat Fatigue* (the in-group) against the

Prisoner Uniform (the out-group). This relates back to the work of Milgram (1963) and Zimbardo (Haney et al., 1973) discussed earlier in Chapter 2. These signifiers are a way of visually telling the viewer “us versus them.” Likewise, combat fatigues are used to represent and identify the role of the protagonist, asking the viewer to identify with that specific group.

Gun Being Held by Subject was the most prevalent *Prop* and was only coded if the subject was actively engaging with the gun. It did not qualify if the subject was shown merely holding a gun. There had to be a direct and implied association between the person and the weapon. This was followed by *Gun on Person, Vehicle, Knife Held by Subject*, and *IS Flag in Setting* respectively. The props most used symbolized aggression suggesting a connection to brutality or power.

The most common *Setting* signifier was *Desert* followed by *Urban Setting*. *Desert* being the most prevalent is interesting for two reasons. First, a setting devoid of other elements in the frame allows the viewer to focus solely on the subject for communication of information within the frame. The subject’s actions do not have to compete with information from the background. Second, a desert setting might appeal to an explorer-type looking for adventure and an exotic change by portraying a romanticized view of the Middle East. On the other hand, *Urban Setting* suggests familiarity and a desire to show that the Middle East is not “so” different.

In the category of *Subject’s Performance*, the most common signifier was *Look and Talk Directly to the Camera*, followed by *Combative Action, Physically Restrained*, and *Act of Killing* respectively. This implies that the performance is emphasizing a direct appeal followed by the themes of power and warrior, IS possesses power over “others” lives. This could appeal to an Outlaw sensibility, as well as somebody who wants to feel empowered.

In the *Editing* category, the most prevalent signifier was *Cross-Dissolves*, coded 472

times. This is important because it is one of the more commonly used transition devices in a Western VN. This editing technique helps to suspend disbelief by not allowing the viewer to be aware of the cut. It suggests a strong emphasis on the importance of linking two juxtaposed shots to each other based on their meaning. This format increases the “flow” and impact of the visual narrative by creating a less jarring, more seamless experience, allowing the viewer to retain the emotional impact from one shot to another.

Within the *Special Effects* category, *Color Saturation*, *Vignette*, and *Stuttering* were the top three signifiers used, suggesting a knowledge of various complex post-production software tools. This is important with regard to Western audiences who are familiar with sophisticated visual effects and the hyperrealism aspect of action genres such as *Sin City*, where the viewer can engage his or her fantasies. If they are brutal fantasies, it may make it easier to fantasize by validating or suggesting it to be “normal” to engage in brutal imagery. It allows viewers to lower their social or individual resistance to brutality, giving themselves over to the VN. Lastly, these types of attention focus techniques can increase the emotional impact of particular actions or images by emphasizing the specific aspects of the frame that IS wants to emphasize and have it resonate emotionally. For example, desaturation of all color in the frame except for blood increases the focus on the brutality. These techniques are more commonplace within a Millennial demographic as they have become common practice in a variety of visual media from commercial ads to narrative cinema and in still imagery.

In the category of *Post-Graphics*, the most common signifier was *Image Collage* followed by *Manufactured Document/Graphic/Chart/Map*. An *Image Collage* is familiar to Western audiences from the comic book styles of VN where different images, simply by sharing the space of the frame, denote specific narrative connections and a common shared emotional

impact based on this association. For example, an image of a foreign or U.S. president giving a speech, next to an aircraft carrier, next to a Syrian child crying is an emotional, impactful VN without any real-life, linear connection between the images other than their juxtaposition of sharing the same frame at the same time. This is also significant in the reflection of *generation effect* studies (Slamecka & Graf, 1978) where the individual creates a meaningful relationship to information by generating the connections and by working with the material. This makes the information more memorable and significant to the individual than if he or she is not given the opportunity to generate the connections him/herself. Additionally, this use of graphics provides a sense of validation, in the sense that the individual is providing documentation.

The main *Narrative Themes* were *Brutality*, *Belonging*, and *War/Military* respectively. The main *Archetype* signifiers were *Outlaw* and *Regular Guy/Gal*. An outlaw would be anybody that considers themselves outside of mainstream society. IS is an outlaw faction, placing themselves in opposition to the “corrupt” mainstream (political and social) of both the Western and Eastern nations. *Regular Guy/Gal* suggests to the viewer that the VN roles shown are accessible and realistically obtainable. Together these signifiers support the narratives of *Brutality*, *Outlaw*, *Regular Guy/Gal*, and *Belonging*. For example, a viewer who feels marginalized may be more prone to adopt brutality. A VN depicting regular guy/gals, belonging to a group that brutally retaliates against a part of society that denies them fulfilling their potential or value, can become a plausible and shared message to a marginalized and angry receiver. This allows the receiver to rationalize an IS association as a justifiable and obtainable alternative to satisfy these needs and ideal self. The *War/Military* narrative theme acts as a social justification for revenge. It introduces the possibility to see one’s ideal self as a hero and/or provide purpose to one’s behavioral drives culminating from a marginalized social

positon.

Still Media

Still images were taken from all 14 issues of IS's magazine, *Dabiq*. The still images that were analyzed were taken from the following sections of each issue: *the cover page*, *last page*, *foreward*, *Islamic State Report*, and *Wisdom/Harjar*. These sections were chosen as representative of how IS wants to be portrayed as a brand, in their own "words" through images.

Out of the total 203 still image files, 20% (41 still image files) were randomly selected to be used to test intercoder reliability. Twenty of the 41 still images selected for testing were used on the first intercoder reliability test (Test 1), and the remaining 21 images were used on the second test (Test 2). These two individual Cohen's kappa scores were averaged together to achieve a total intercoder reliability score for each coder. In addition to myself, two additional assistant coders participated. Each was provided training regarding the definitions and were allowed to provide feedback contributing to the finalized definitions used in Dedoose. They received this training on an individual basis and in a group setting that equaled or exceeded 7 hours each. Training included codebook descriptions, image examples (none of which were part of the coding sample), and practice coding sessions. The assistant coders then took Test 1.

The scores for Test 1 using Cohen's kappa coefficient were Coder A: 0.68; Coder M: 0.65. After the first test, coders reviewed discrepancies in code applications, reviewed and edited codebook definitions as a group, and practiced more coding examples (not from sample), after which they proceeded to take Test 2.

The scores for Test 2 using Cohen's kappa coefficient were Coder A: 0.74; Coder M: 0.72, giving Coder A an averaged Cohen's kappa score of 0.71 and Coder M an average score of

0.69. The scores rounded to the nearest hundredths came to 0.71 and 0.69. Both coders’ individual total scores fell within the preset limit suggesting substantially strong reliability (Landis & Koch, 1977; Viera & Garrett, 2005).

Table 2

Cohen’s kappa intercoder reliability rating chart

Kappa	Agreement
<0	Less than Chance Agreement
0.10-0.20	Slight Agreement
0.21-0.40	Fair Agreement
0.41-0.60	Moderate Agreement
0.61-0.80	Substantial Agreement
0.81-0.99	Almost Perfect Agreement

12

Once coding commenced, to make sure that all of the codes covered the specific signifiers that were present in each of the images, coders were allowed to enter Child, Grand-Child, and Great-Grand-Child codes, and so on, while coding images. Not being able to do so would otherwise have limited the analysis in that it would be impossible beforehand to list all the possible locations, or signifiers that could appear in all selected still images.

Analysis began by dividing up the remaining 158 still image files between myself and the two additional coders. I was assigned 63 files, Coder A and Coder M were assigned 50 each.¹³

We assigned codes that appeared in each of the still images for which we were responsible. Some of these image files contained multiple images which were viewed and coded

¹² Source is Viera & Garrett, 2005

¹³ Number of files does not equal the number of excerpts created because single files may have contained multiple images.

as separate, non-related excerpts or considered split frames and coded in relationship to each other (as a single excerpt) if there was an intentional visual narrative relationship and they had to be considered as a whole, similar to a comic book sequence. In total there were 348 excerpts created and analyzed and 4,527 codes assigned. These data were processed within Dedoose to identify the most common signifiers within the still image media.

Still Media Dedoose Findings

I went through the Mise-en-scène Root Code Categories and listed the most prevalent of signifiers for each Parent Code category. I then listed the top two for Archetype and Narrative Root Code Categories. These data were compiled using the Word Cloud¹⁴ and Code Application Analysis in Dedoose. Two Child Codes, *Indiscernible Clothing* and *Non-Descript Setting*, were deleted from this final analysis, as they did not contribute anything of significance.

¹⁴ See Appendix F

Table 3

Mise-en-scène still media signifiers, archetype, and narrative themes

SIGNIFIERS	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Honorable Mention
Age	Adult (178)	Young Adult (68)	Elder (23)	Child (13)	
Gender	Male (260)	Female (4)			
Race	Non-Caucasian or Otherwise Unknown (122)	Multi-Race (52)	White (34)	Black (7)	
# in Shot	Group (72)	One (69)	Crowd (64)	Two (47)	
Framing	Wide (107)	Medium (81)	Medium Close Up (38)		
Camera Angle	High (40)	Low (22)			
Lighting	Natural (180)	Practical (49)			
Costume	Headscarves or Coverings (108)	Western Style (82)	Combat Fatigues (73)	Balaclava (53)	
Props	Gun being held by subject (53)	IS flag in setting (27)	Vehicle (25)	Gun on person (24)	IS flag held by subject (21)
Setting	Urban Setting (40)	Desert (23)			
Performance	Looks directly at camera (64)	Combative Action (36)	Death Aftermath (34) Death caused by IS (21)	Act of Destruction (23) Act of Celebration (23)	
Photoshop	Split Frame (27)	Vignette (22)	Color Saturation (13)		

Narrative Theme

	First	Second
Narrative Theme	War/Military (164)	Brutality (78)

Archetype

	First	Second
Archetype	Outlaw (153)	Hero (62)

The following are the signifiers most commonly coded within the still media for *Mise-en-scène Parent Codes Categories*. With regard to the subject's characteristics, the most common *Age* signifier was *Adult* followed by *Young Adult*. *Gender* was primarily *Male* and *Race* was *Non-Caucasian Otherwise Unknown*, followed by *Multi-Race*, *White*, and *Black* respectively. Within the still media analysis, *Multi-Race* was more prevalent than *White*; this was reversed from the video findings.

As for the *Number of Subjects* within the frame, *Group Shot* was most prevalent followed by *One-Shot*. Similar to the video media, both *Group* and *One-Shot* were still the top two signifier types used, but within the still media, the frequency was reversed. This still supports the finding of both individual appeal and belonging being strong elements in the VN media.

As for *Framing*, the *Wide Shot* was the most prevalent signifier. A still image has a single frame in which to depict the narrative unlike video/film where there is an image sequence. Therefore, a wide shot would allow the frame to be filled with a greater amount of information producing a more comprehensive narrative.

Next was *Camera Angle*. *High Angle* was the most common signifier in this category with 40 coding instances followed by *Low Angle* which was coded 22 times. Though this may seem contrary to the assumption that a high angle downplays the power and importance of a subject. However, the high angle shot, even though it subjugates and weakens the subject in the frame, the camera, as the eye of the viewer, looking down on the subject creates the sense that the viewer and the image maker (IS) are lofty, superior, and powerful. This type of camera angle used in a still image and combined with wide framing achieves this same reverse effect, in that it gives the viewer the perspective that IS has a "godlike" or omnipotent vantage point looking down on the world. In other words, IS is so powerful they have dominion over all they survey.

But in shots depicting IS victims or captives, this high angle accomplishes what is normally associated with it, which is weakening or subjugating the frame's subject.

As for *Lighting*, it was again primarily *Natural Lighting* suggesting quality cameras, and on the fly production. However, it also suggests a candid element, that they are merely documenting the "truth." The more staged it feels the more it could detract from the power of IS's VNs.

The most prevalent still media signifier in the category of *Costumes* was *Headscarf* which was followed by *Western Style Dress*, *Combat Fatigues*, and *Balaclava* respectively. The combination of headscarf and Western clothes creates a fusion of East and West that may appeal to a foreign recruit placing him/herself in the role of "like" others. This suggests that IS is attempting to appeal to Western styles in the hopes of inducing familiarity within the TA making it more likely for them to engage with the image.

The most common *Prop* signifiers in stills, as in videos, was *Gun Being Held by Subject*, followed by *IS Flag in Setting*, *Vehicle*, *Gun on Person*, and *IS Flag on Subject* respectively. There are strong similarities between video and stills with regard to the types of props chosen again emphasizing brutality, aggression, and power.

Setting was dominated by *Urban Setting*. This may be of greater relevance when acknowledging the Western TA of *Dabiq*. This plays on the similarity of surroundings, especially if IS is asking an individual to leave his or her homeland and come to a foreign country. The familiarity could work to create a common link, making the viewer feel like it is not going to be such a drastic transition.

Subject's Performance was *Looks Directly at Camera* suggesting that IS is using the direct appeal approach followed by *Combat Action*. This is similar to what I found in the video

media analysis. The third most significant signifier was *Death Aftermath* coded 34 times, and out of those 34 instances, 21 were *Death Caused by IS*. This further suggests that IS's VNs are emphasizing power, omnipotence over the "other," and military prowess. The signifier, *Act of Destruction*, in which IS members were shown destroying Arabic artifacts, buildings, and icons, suggests an "out with the old and in with new" type of message.

Photoshop was a category solely applied to still imagery but treated similar to *Special Effects* in the video analysis. Here the most prominent signifier used was *Split Frame*, followed by *Vignette* and *Color Saturation* respectively. This again was similar to the video media findings with regard to *Post-Graphics* and *Special Effects*. *Split frames* are similar to *Image Collage* in the video media, both using the comic book layout of multiple images taking up the entire page/frame, helping to create a more emotionally resonant message by juxtaposition of different images into a singular narrative frame. *Split frames* work on similar principles of generation as previously discussed.

War/Military was the most dominant *Narrative Theme* followed by *Brutality*. The most prevalent *Archetype* signifier was *Outlaw* followed by *Hero*. This suggests an attempt to appeal to individuals who have adopted the outlaw identity or perspective but who, at the same time, long to be a hero with purpose. Through the visual narrative, IS presents themselves as a solution for the cognitive dissonance between the real and ideal selves. IS is suggesting that the viewer embrace their outlaw identity through jihad and become a hero. This combination of *Outlaw* and *Hero* is well established in Western culture with the "Robin Hood" types and anti-hero protagonists that have become common in narratives of various mediums. These archetypes, whether solely or combined in the viewer's ideal self, would appeal to a marginalized audience who feel they are on the outside, but are seeking a lofty purpose,

acceptance, and recognition. Similar to the findings in the video analysis, there is a suggested connection between *Outlaw* and *Brutality*. For example, an outsider may be more receptive to acting out what would be considered brutal behavior as a means of fighting against some unjust entity or other, which supports and reinforces the *Hero* archetype.

PHASE 2: Deductive Profile of IS Target Audience (TA) from IS’s Combat Brand

Based on the signifiers identified in both the still and video media analyses of IS’s Combat Brand, the following profile was created.

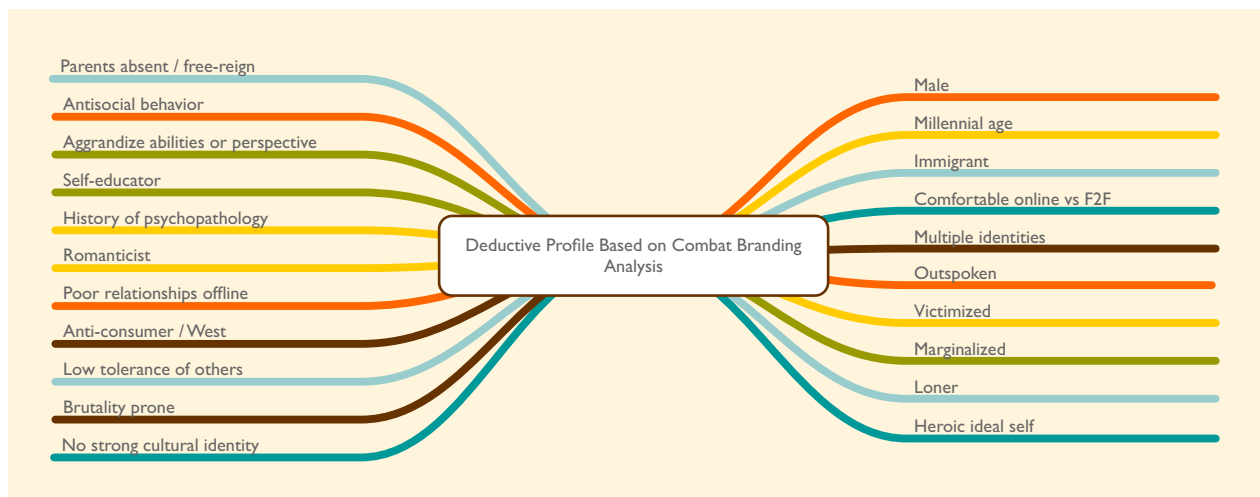


Figure 2. Deductive profile based on combat branding analysis.

The individual is most likely a Millennial age male. The profiled subject would most likely be very comfortable engaging in an online presence, possibly more so than face-to-face interaction. He may be more “talkative” and expressive online than in his offline interactions. This could be due to the fact that the Millennial Generation was the first generation to be raised in such a technology-rich environment and are more open to online discourse.

This profiled individual may be more comfortable in establishing group affiliation and

identity exploration via technology. He may tend to have multiple well-formed identities within various online communities. One group knows him as a certain “type” of individual, while another knows him to be vastly different. He may be comfortable and skilled at role playing multiple selves. The Combat Brand media analysis signifiers suggested an overlap of roles for a single individual: soldier/caregiver/captor/killer/friend/doctor/regular guy or gal, and so on. His online presence may lead to a fragmented identity, or lack of personal self-development, creating an imbalance between personal and social selves (Brewer, 1991). He is likely to be outspoken, especially online, if he feels he has an audience to the injustices or issues that elicit his anger or persecution. He may put forth very strong opinions in support of a particular group or person he feels is being singled out or mistreated.

He may feel victimized, actual or perceived. He may be directly affected himself, being subjected to bullying or domestic abuse and so on, or perceive himself as a victim. This leads to feelings of marginalization, actual or perceived. He may find himself gravitating towards niche groups or others who have expressed similar views or experiences.

These individuals may tend to exhibit a heroic ideal self. They may hold themselves, as well as others, to a high level of expectation. They may believe they have not been afforded the opportunity to utilize their talents or fulfill levels of achievement. They may be prone to brutality out of anger of their perceived or actual lack of social standing. For example, they may lash out aggressively if they find themselves the butt of a joke or directly challenged. They may overreact in response to what the situation actually warrants.

These individuals may likely have a criminal record or be known to security officials either for juvenile acts (fighting at school, aggressive behavior, etc.) or more serious charges, ranging from misdemeanors to felonies. Individuals who may already have a history of rebellion and

going against social mores or laws, would appeal to IS as possible candidates for lone wolf terrorism or foreign terrorist cells. This previous criminal activity could provide the individual with a means to resources to carry out his attacks, which may appeal to IS and their limited resources in foreign countries.

These individuals may likely have a past history of recreational drug use, alcohol, and drug abuse. This could lead to behavioral changes. They may also use these substances as a form of self-medication. In general, there will likely be a report or record of general anti-social behavior. Their behaviors may lead to affiliations with groups or individuals on the fringe of society further encouraging a victimized and/or marginalized existence. They won't fully adhere to what they perceive to be an unjust and unsympathetic majority. There may also be a history of psychopathology; this could be in the form of depression, anti-social personality disorder, inferiority complex, or fractured identity. With regard to degree, these psychopathologies could fall anywhere on the spectrum and may be environmental or chemical in origin or a mixture of both. They likely may not be perceiving situations accurately when exchanging feedback with others on a shared event. Third parties may claim that the individual has undergone a personality change.

They may aggrandize their abilities, registering positive feedback for their actions as being much greater than they really are. They may display a bravado and gloat over believed wins or successes. They may suffer from a tendency to believe that they're right and that the others around them are wrong. They may have a lower tolerance of others, especially if they perceive them as "others."

They most likely lack a strong cultural identity. If they are immigrants, their parents or family may not have adequately expressed or practiced the customs of their native culture. Thus

the individual feels he is existing in a “gray zone,” where he is an immigrant to the majority of his nationalized country, unable to fully belong or identify as a member of it, but also unable to identify with his own foreign culture as well. This could lead to a susceptibility to others who may provide an excuse or extremist views as a solution for this dissonance. This “gray zone” existence could explain the marginalization and/or victimization such individuals feel. They feel they simply don’t seem to belong anywhere, so they may seek out others who can provide them with a sense of identity, belonging, and purpose.

They may have a history of expressing anti-consumerist views and regard their nationalized/naturalized country as being full of materialistic “whores.” This anti-consumerism may actually go against what they previously believed and displayed. Instead, they may have, at one point, been brand adopters and/or expressed deep brand loyalty. Brands may be associated with clothing, technology, cars, football/sport teams, musicians, and so on. I hypothesize that this may be due to the fact that at some time they had attempted to fit in with the majority via brand adoption, hoping to be accepted and find belonging via brand communities, but unfortunately, their strong brand affiliations failed them in their attempt at acceptance by others. As a result, the individual comes to despise these brands and others who express brand adoption. Out of their feeling of abandonment by these brands, they condemn consumerism as a negative Western trait.

In general, these individuals may tend to lack social support systems which is especially true within the realm of romantic relationships, having either a lack or excess of them. In either case, the individual may have an absence of true, intimate, meaningful connections. Ironically, they may also tend to be romantics. They likely think that the world should be a certain way. This unfulfilled romanticized view can also contribute to their sense of victimization and/or

anger issues. They believe in an ideal state and that others are preventing this state from becoming a reality. They probably hold highly romanticized views about others, life, and what is expected from others. Marginalized males may also have pent-up sexual frustrations.

The profiled individual is likely a self-educator and not prone to going outside his comfort zone or inner circle to find answers, especially if he perceives the majority to not truly understand him. Such individuals may tend to spend large amounts of time researching online and off-line to educate themselves. Yet, at the same time, if they can find an off-line mentor whom they trust, he/she will be highly influential in assisting the individual to achieve his identity. If this occurs, they may only seek information that supports their mentor's philosophy or teachings.

They may tend to be immigrants or the first generation born within the adopted Western country. Marginalization from an immigrant status could increase if their ethnic country of origin has strong cultural indicators. Immigrant status tends to be supported by the high prevalence of the *Non-Caucasian* or *Otherwise Unknown* signifier for *Race* within the media analysis. This leads to the suggestion that it may be easier to target those who are marginalized based on appearance. Using subjects in the media who are physically familiar (race, age, gender) to the marginalized targeted receiver, allows for higher engagement and vicarious interaction with the media. They may also perceive these subjects as having similar narratives or experiences, giving more credence to their perspective based on the physical familiarity between subject and viewer. They are able to identify the subject as part of one's in-group based solely on the ambiguity or identification of race. However, *White* was also a common signifier, which suggests the desire to recruit individuals who may more easily assimilate within a Western majority, but still perceive themselves different from it for various reasons other than

appearance. Additionally, it supports the claim of using a Combat Brand to convert the “other” to IS’s side.

The profiled individual may have grown up in a home where his parents either turned their backs on him out of frustration due to his refusal to adhere to rigid expectations, or who gave free reign and took little interest in what their child was doing. Without the opportunity to live up to expectations and to test boundaries, an individual may seek guidance or value elsewhere. Identity formation may become more difficult devoid of the feedback that comes from the expectations of trusted others. These individuals may not be pushed to develop a strong sense of self, which can lead to a lack of security in their own abilities. On the other hand, they may develop a grandiose sense of self, bred from a lack of feedback and consequence. Both scenarios can lead to an inability to accept or function within society at large and to understand one’s place within it. Hogg (2014) has mentioned that the further fragmented one’s identity is, the more one will seek boundaries and guidance and be drawn to extremist groups that have rigid and defined internal rules and identification for its members. This relates back to the formation of multiple identities online, thus increasing a possibility of a fractured or plastic identity. They can be anything to anyone and yet no one at all.

PHASE 3: Case Studies

Out of 30 case studies of known Western IS terrorists (including both lone wolf and individuals trained by IS) there were common risk factors that these individuals possessed. These findings are supported by various studies that focused on identifying common factors between foreign recruits to terrorism (Bergen, Sterman, Sims, & Ford, 2016; Quantum, 2015; Venhaus, 2010).

Average Age was 23.3 Years

Case Study Findings

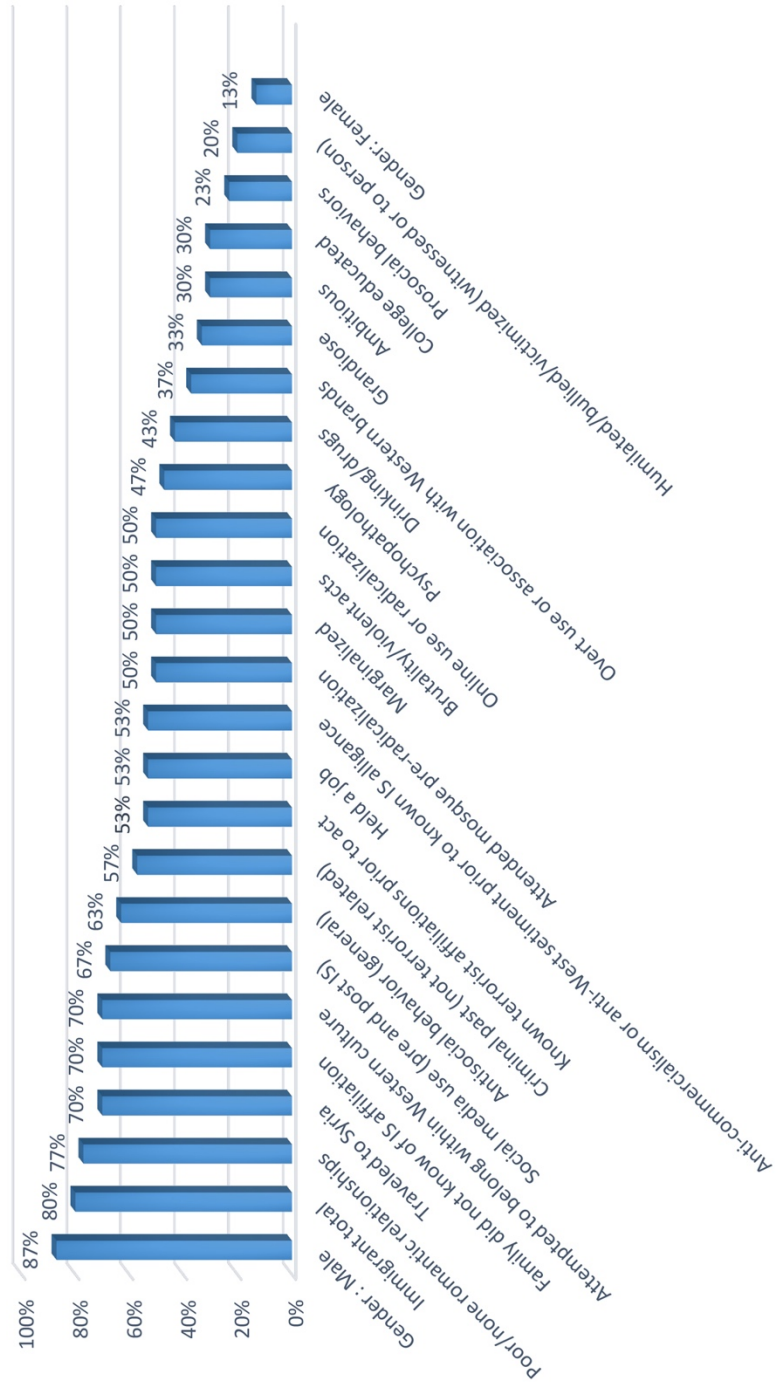


Figure 3. Case study findings.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The main hypothesis that an accurate profile of a specific, intended TA can be established via an analysis of IS's Combat Brand put forth in their VNs was supported. Additionally, the subhypothesis of Millennials making up this TA was supported, as was the subhypothesis that psychopathology and personality type warrant some discussion, though at what level would require future study. Based on signifiers outlined in Chapter 4, the profile was created and supported by the case studies of known Western recruits.

The most common signifiers used in both the video and still VNs targeting Western audiences showed results supporting the argument that IS's Combat Brand is specifically tailored to appeal to this particular audience, with a direct understanding and meaning implied between sender and receiver.

The still media analysis was largely supportive of the findings in the video media. However, there were instances where certain signifiers were reversed in their prevalence. Unlike the video findings, the most prevalent still media signifier in the category of *Costumes*, was *Headscarf* which was followed by *Western Style Dress*, *Combat Fatigues*, and *Balaclava* respectively. This is an interesting difference, since IS may be attempting to combine the traditional Arabic headscarf and the Western-style clothing to create an East-West hybrid that is compatible with their Western webzine, *Dabiq*. This fact becomes more relevant after examining the *Race* signifiers, which suggests an "Arab/Non-Caucasian" subject supported by the high instance of assigning *Non-Caucasian Otherwise Unknown*. The case studies showed that out of the known Western recruits studied, most were of Arabic descent whose parents were nationalized immigrants. Thus, costume reflects the hybrid nature of the Western Arab individual.

There were strong similarities between video and still media with regard to the types of *Props* chosen emphasizing brutality, aggression, and power. One point that should be addressed, with regard to East vs. West, is the theme of brutality. It could be argued that “brutality” of beheadings only applies to a Western audience, since it is a commonly accepted and public form of punishment to an Eastern audience. Therefore, it is only considered brutality when looking at it from a Western perspective. However, this argument can be countered by looking at the types of signifiers used in the production techniques of the media content. For example, in sequences within the video, *Soon... Very Soon*, some of the beheading scenes are desaturated of color all except for the blood. In addition, they use extreme close-ups and slow motion to emphasize the carnage. Death sequences are “ramped” or sped up and then suddenly stopped at the point of maximum emotional effect, playing up one’s visceral response to the gore elements. The use of repeating the same shot over and over again in order to “relive” the brutality also accentuates the response to the gore elements. These post-production techniques highlight not the primary act of beheading, but are utilized to emphasize the secondary effects of the carnage. This supports the argument that it is the gore/brutality IS is emphasizing and playing on to appeal to a particular type of individual, and not the act of beheading as a mere form of cultural punishment. They are sensationalizing the disturbing elements of the act.

Based on the analysis of both still and video media a profile of the type of individual who would be drawn to this Combat Brand was created. Despite the profile’s focus on males, based on the dominance of that gender’s signifier in the VN analysis of IS’s Combat Brand, it is important to note that females have been and are involved in terrorism. Some more recent examples are Sally Jones, Jihadi Jane, Tashfeen Malik who took part in the San Bernardino 2015 attack, and Hayat Boumeddiene’s role in the Charlie Hebdo attacks to name a few. This is

supported in the fact that 13% of the 30 case studies involved female subjects. Though women have long been involved in terrorism both at a supportive and tactical level (Rahmah, 2016; Bloom, 2011), terrorism experts have debated the amount of support and roles females serve within the organizations (INSIGHT Blog, 2010). Media has also downplayed the depictions of females as fighters in the past (Rahmah, 2016), leading to the misconception that women in terrorism is a new phenomenon. With the Quran being ambiguous on this topic, there is a discrepancy between groups and their beliefs on the use of females in terrorism, and this has led to a disagreement between jihadist decision makers on what role females should take in terrorism (INSIGHT Blog, 2010). Though women are active in some of today's terrorism groups their role overall in terrorism is still that of a minority compared to men (Speckhard, 2015).

Case study analysis supports the deductive profile as well. The major findings with the 30 case studies compiled for this study found interesting percentages concerning recruits who had previous criminal records and/or psychopathology which some previous terrorism research has declared as not being relevant as previously mentioned in Chapter 2. Additionally, there was drug and alcohol use, attempting to belong to the Western culture, marginalization, and a high immigrant status. Though 80% of the case studies were immigrants of some form, this category can be further broken down with regard to the type of immigrant: *Individual Only* immigration (here the case subject alone immigrated to the Western country), *Parent and Individual* immigration (where the case subject plus his/her family immigrated to the Western country), and *Parents Only* (in which parents were immigrants but their child, the case subject, was born in the Western country). In this case the highest percent were born in the Western countries their parents immigrated to. This is interesting because it suggests a possible parallel existence and fractured cultural identity for the children of immigrants. Their parents' immigrant status

transfers on to the individual so that he or she is on the “outside looking in,” which is reinforced by the tendency to be labeled by other “stereotypical” Westerners as an “immigrant” when in reality he/she is a naturalized citizen. This creates a dissonance that makes it so the individual is unable to fully identify and assimilate into his/her Western country, leading to marginalization.

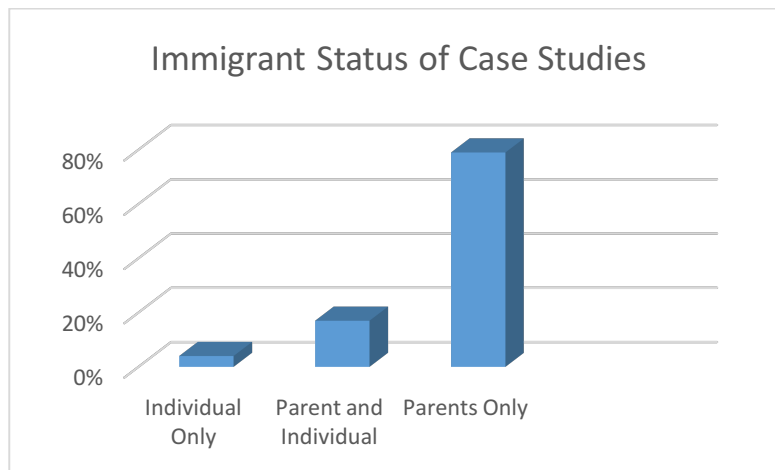


Figure 3. Immigrant status of case studies.

Limitations

There were a number of limitations that should be addressed relative to this study. First, is the ability to get in-depth case studies. This study was limited to news and court documents to validate information via corroboration. For research purposes, having a database of public source information for known terrorists would be highly beneficial to future studies. This is currently difficult as many are sealed from public or research access due to age of the offender and privacy laws. This research database would increase the information known about this specific demographic as well as increase the validity and generalizability of studies on this topic.

Second, there was no central IS video archive when this study was conducted. A

depository where all IS videos are collected, unedited as soon as IS posts them would prove to be highly beneficial. Without this, much time and investigation is necessary to ensure the videos are authentic and untainted by third parties. All videos used in this study were deemed authentic and unedited using multiple sources and official IS media logos to do so. Ones that could not be verified were removed from the sample. Consequently, I was limited in the number of videos to which I had access. Creating an unclassified archive for research would be highly effective for future studies and would increase similar types of VN studies with regard to validity and reliability of findings.

Third, there is a lack of adequate VN analytical software with the ability to study video. This would make for more dynamic research as well as decreasing the amount of time in collecting and coding. There is a need for this software to possess more accurate metadata collection tools and analysis filters. For example, using an exact frame-by-frame scrubber tool would help insure more adequate and exact “in and out” points without requiring the researcher to eyeball it. As this methodology was designed specific to this study, I will be drafting an outline of my ideas and recommendations for a more efficient and dynamic analytical software program based upon my experiences in this study.

Lastly, VN studies are in their infancy; to my knowledge, this study is the first of its kind, therefore, the methodology has no previous studies to call upon. One future direction is to conduct additional studies using this methodology to profile TAs of other Combat Brands.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

Combat Branding is not a branding model; it is a genre of brand type. Once a brand reaches the level of a Combat Brand it has become finely honed, purposeful, and embedded with powerful strategic intent to convert the “other” to adopt its brand. At this level of application, the Combat Brand becomes a valid starting point from which we can profile the target audience it was designed to motivate. Combat Brands are not about one side in opposition to another or boosting one group’s morale and vilifying the other, or mere justification, but are instead about conversion. The Combat Brand becomes saturated with signifiers conveying an emotionally charged VN, that allows individuals to take what they need to weave their own unique narrative into the overall tapestry of the brand. “Emotions provide the compass for guiding our attention and behavior” (Westen, 2007, p.50).

Despite numerous prior attempts of applying criminal deductive profiling to terrorism, the results have yielded debatable or controversial benefit. However, although inductive profiling has compiled some common risk factors, it has also been accused by many as merely being a form of racial profiling that fails to account for changes and adapt quickly to new terrorist strategies. This results in blind spots. Combat Brand profiling may be the counterbalance to a combination of deductive and inductive methods, allowing for both to work in tandem towards a more adaptable and psychological portrait of the individuals likely to be motivated by IS’s Combat Brand. This study shows that IS’s Combat Brand seems to provide a supported deductive profile by allowing the VN to serve as a form of metaphorical “crime scene” where one can identify the key signifiers in order to provide insight into the types of individuals the group is targeting. This type of analysis provides an understanding of the possible motivations that IS is utilizing to convert and cue specific behaviors by providing justification

for individuals to engage in terrorism, which IS can then use to promote their terrorist goals.

Lone wolf terrorism may be changing the face of terrorism. IS media appears to be providing individuals with justification for their own psychologically motivated turmoil. Whether it is for notoriety, revenge, anger, homicidal tendencies, depression, or another form of self-interest or mental pain, these individuals are finding their own personal reasons to engage in violent behavior using IS allegiance to achieve and stimulate themselves to reach this end goal. They are most likely not true believers. IS is willing to take the press coverage and credit to further profit from these lost individuals' actions and to further motivate and justify similar actions by others. This creates a domino effect of violence spurred from the individual's personal narratives and experiences more so than a common belief in IS's ideology or political goals. Even more concerning is that this type of lone wolf "Werther effect" may begin to gain momentum. Regardless of the intentions of these individuals, in the end they are using IS both as a form of identification and justification for their actions. Meanwhile, media and academics argue over what to call these lone wolf type of attacks, either terrorism or mass murder, and so on. However, they may be missing the point by failing to identify the signifiers that are psychologically motivating individuals through IS's VN. As a result, they are unable to understand the format and signifiers that would enable them to make an effective counter VNs to redirect this effect. Hopefully, this study's introduction of Combat Brands and their use as a starting point for profiling specific TAs will open a new discourse on identifying the power certain groups have in converting individuals to their cause.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: COMBAT BRAND'S FIVE CAVEATS

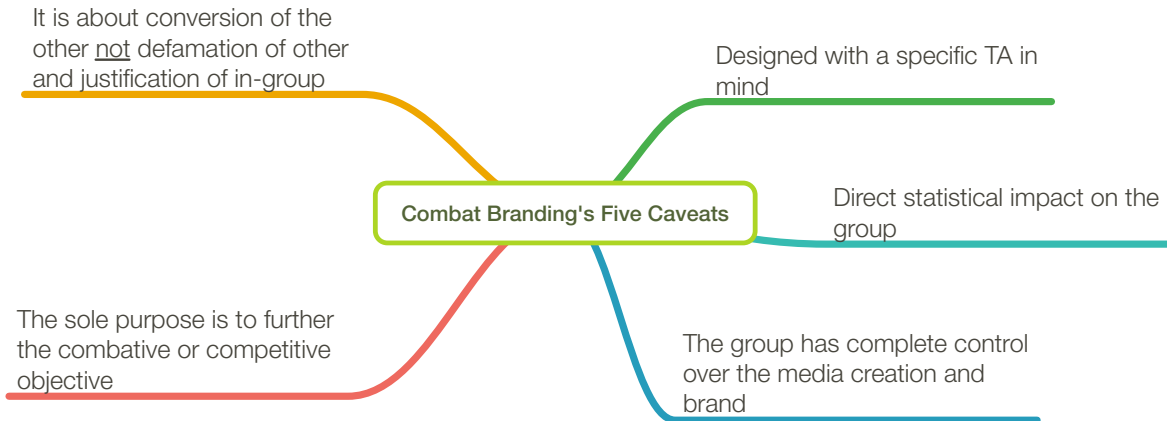


Figure A1. Combat branding's five caveats.

APPENDIX B: SELF CONCEPT

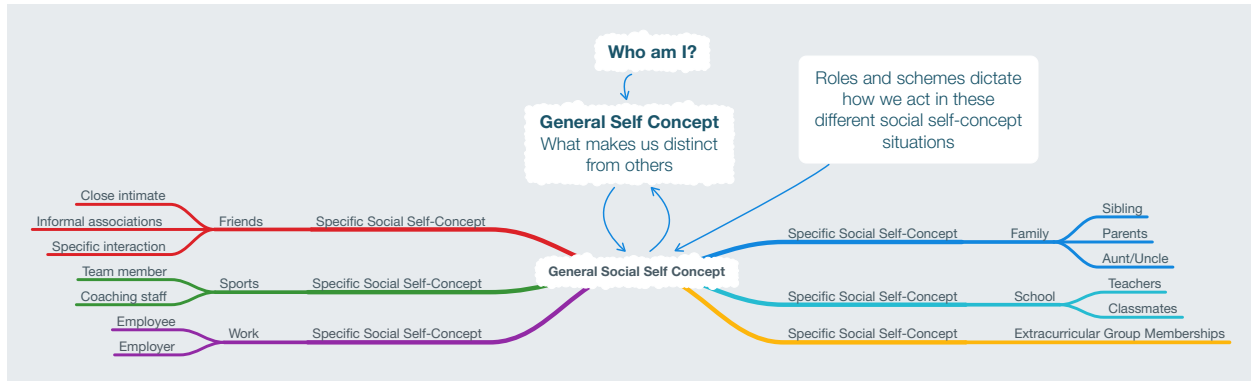
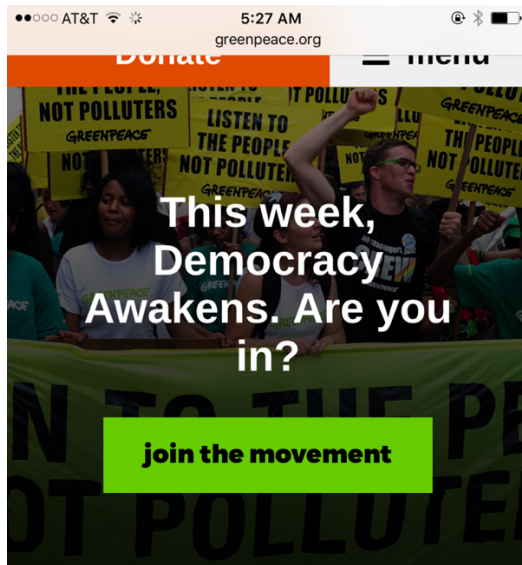
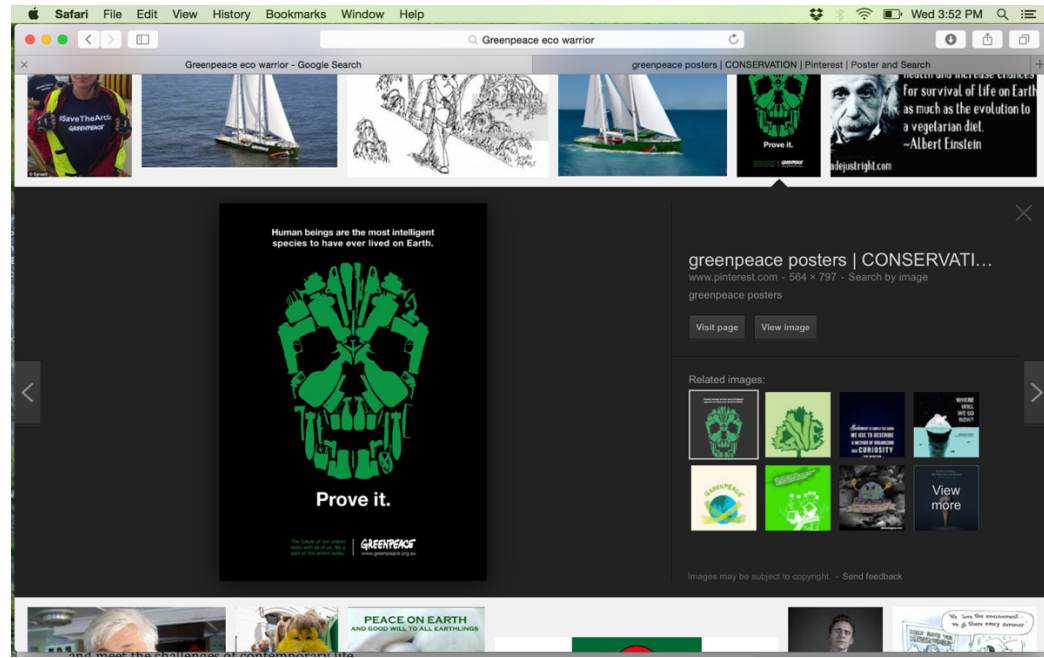
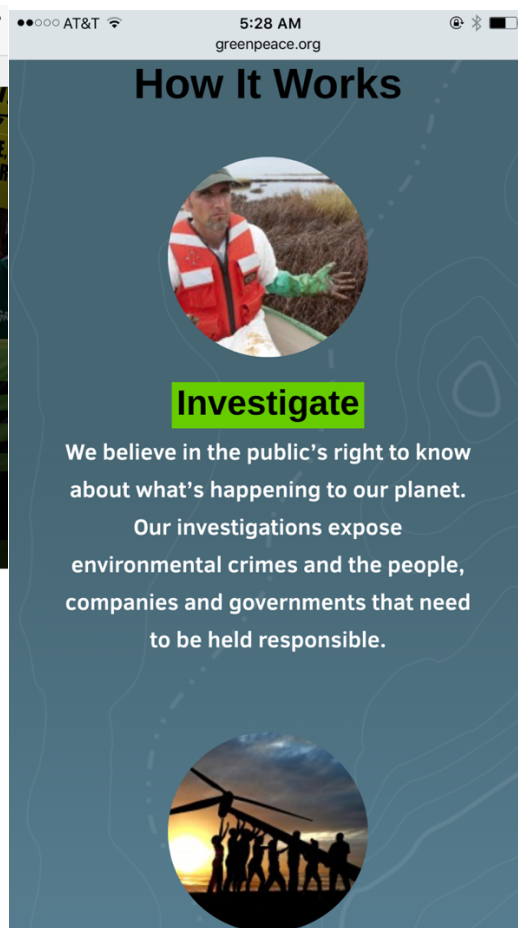


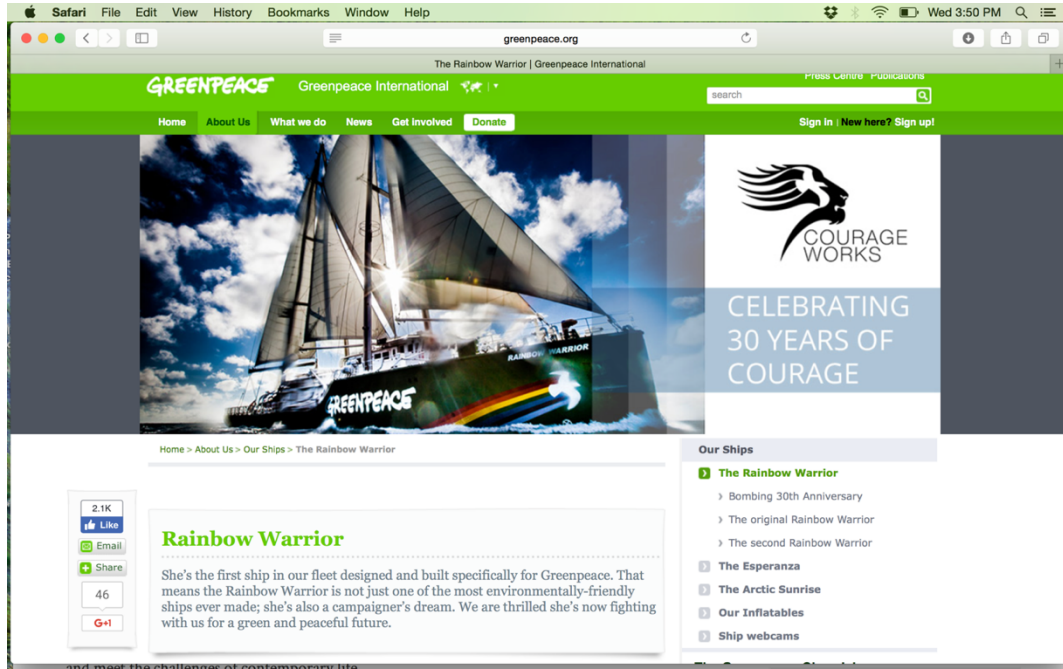
Figure B1. Self-concept.

APPENDIX C: GREENPEACE ADVERTISEMENTS (Example of Prosocial Combat Brand)

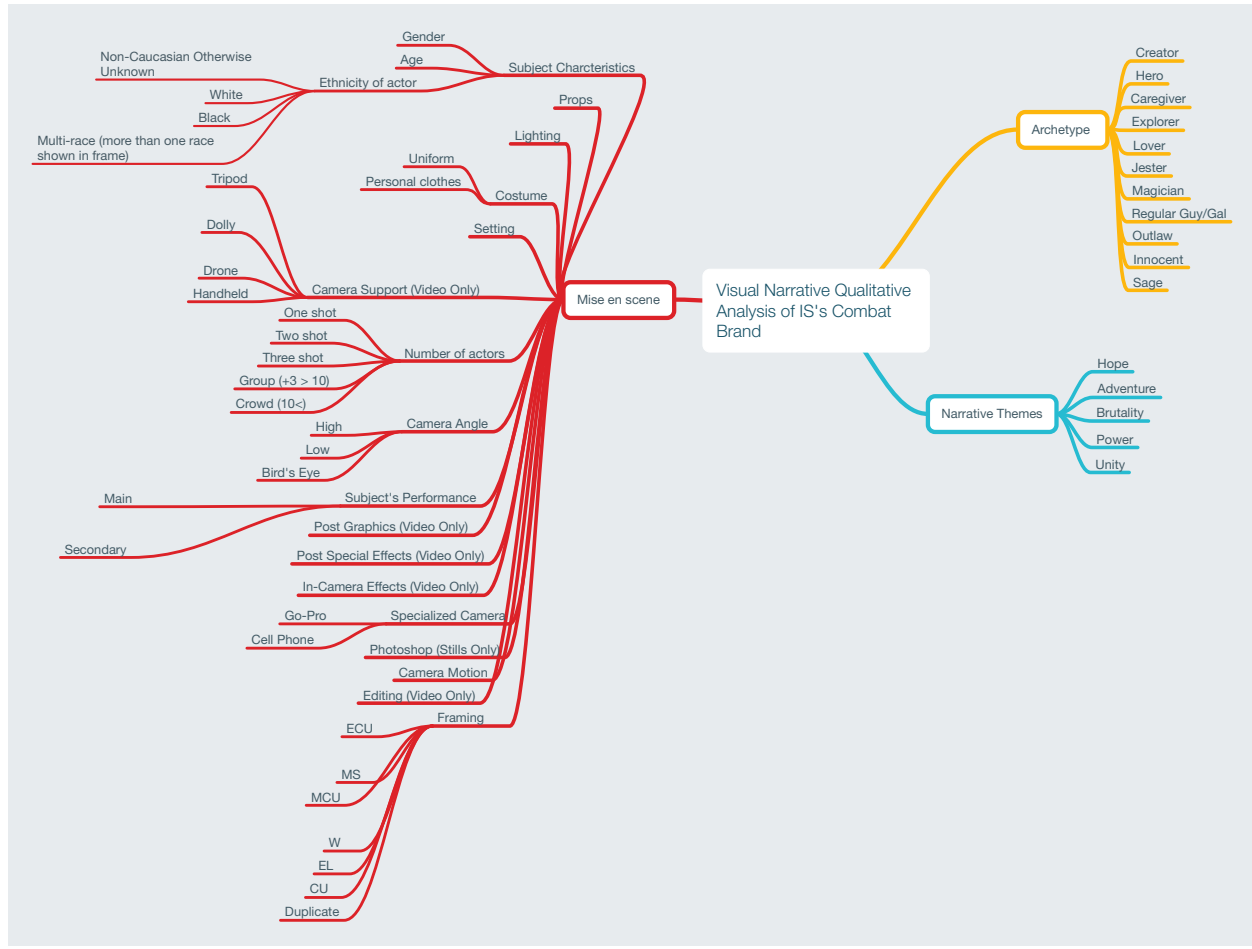


Greenpeace and people like you are a people-powered movement fighting for a green and peaceful future for our oceans, forests, food, climate and democracy.





APPENDIX D: CODEBOOK MIND MAP ORGANIZATION MIND MAP VISUAL



15

Figure D1. Codebook-Parent Code Organization Example

¹⁵ This does not show all the Child, Grand-Child, Great-Grand-Child (etc.) codes but is to give the reader an idea of the organization of the codebook in a visual format.

APPENDIX E: EXAMPLES OF SOME OF ISLAMIC STATE'S MEDIA LOGOS

al-Furqan Foundation



al-Hayat Media Center



Islamic State Flag



Example of Use:



APPENDIX H: WORD CLOUDS

VIDEO ANALYSIS WORD CLOUD:



STILL ANALYSIS WORD CLOUD:

