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**FIGHTING WORDS: THE PERSUASIVE EFFECT OF ONLINE  
EXTREMIST NARRATIVES ON THE RADICALIZATION PROCESS**

A Dissertation in

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by

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## ABSTRACT

What causes an individual to take up violence against civilians for the sake of a political, religious, or social goal? Of course, there are many possible answers to this question. But, one view suggests that narratives may play an especially important role in changing the beliefs, attitudes, and intentions that are precursors to terrorism. There are at least three important implications of this position. First, it is necessary to determine what is meant by terrorism and related terms. Establishing the conceptual boundaries of these terms is a prerequisite to understanding the relationships among them and with narrative communication. Second, it must be established empirically that narrative has the persuasive potency that has been attributed to it. Although narrative has been compared to other forms of evidence, the impact of narrative communication (vs. none) on beliefs, attitudes, intentions, or behavior, has not been determined. Finally, it is important to directly assess the content of narratives that are intended to radicalize. A close examination of the content within terrorist narratives is needed to reveal the targets of belief and attitude change. By determining the persuasive efficacy of narratives and exploring the radicalizing potential of a specific set of extremist narratives, this project advances our knowledge of narrative persuasion processes and helps address the problem of terrorism by approaching it from a communication-based perspective.

Chapters 1 and 2 are dedicated to the explication of key terms. Chapter 1 explores the notions of terrorism and extremism, two contested concepts within the literature. Terrorism is defined as the use of violence or threat of violence against civilians to achieve ideological goals. Extremism is defined as a psychological state in which an individual rigidly adheres to an ideology that is characterized by behaviors that

marginalize other-minded individuals through a variety of means, up and including the use of physical violence. A model is proposed that suggests that extremism is a risk factor for engaging in terrorism.

As Chapter 1 explored the psychological origins of terrorism, Chapter 2 investigates the psychological origins of extremism. This chapter argues that extremism results from a process referred to as radicalization. Radicalization is defined as an incremental social and psychological process prompted by and inextricably bound in communication, whereby an individual develops increased commitment to an extremist ideology resulting in the full or partial assimilation of beliefs and attitudes consistent with that ideology. Thus, it is proposed that those who undergo radicalization are at risk for extremism, and in turn, at risk for engaging in terrorism.

After demonstrating radicalization to be a contributing factor for engaging in terrorism in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 illustrates the efficacy of one source with which radicalization can be promoted, narratives. In Chapter 3, meta-analytic techniques are employed to demonstrate that narrative communication positively affects beliefs ( $N = 4,510$ ;  $r = .20$ ), attitudes ( $N = 5,861$ ;  $r = .21$ ), and behavioral intentions ( $N = 4,218$ ;  $r = .19$ ), suggesting that extremist narratives have the potential to contribute to fundamental changes in beliefs, attitudes, and intentions in the direction of those promoted by a terrorist group.

Given these results, a close examination of a terrorist group's narratives would illustrate the beliefs, attitudes, and intentions that might be affected by exposure to those narratives. Thus, Chapter 4 features a theme analysis of the narratives of a terrorist organization, The Animal Liberation Front (ALF). This analysis reveals 10 distinct

content themes that are geared towards radicalization. Taken together, the findings of Chapter 3's meta-analysis and Chapter 4's theme analysis show how the ALF's narratives work to promote extremism.

Chapter 5 summarizes the findings from the previous chapters and discusses the implications of them. Specifically, this chapter briefly details the ways in which this dissertation may inform future research on narrative communication and strategies to mitigate the impact of extremist narratives on the radicalization process.

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Earl and Gail Braddock.

I hope you are equally proud to have a son like me as I am to have parents like you.

*Words are loaded pistols.*

-Jean-Paul Sartre

## Chapter 1

**ABSTRACT:** This chapter introduces the notions of terrorism and extremism and links the two in a truncated model explaining the origins of terrorist behavior. Speaking to the complexity of both phenomena, multiple types of definitions are explored before operational definitions to be used in this dissertation are offered. Terrorism is defined as the use of violence or threat of violence against civilians to achieve ideological goals. Extremism is defined as a psychological state in which an individual rigidly adheres to an ideology that is characterized by behaviors that marginalize other-minded individuals through a variety of means, up to and including the use of physical violence. It is proposed that the assimilation of an extremist ideology puts one at greater risk for engaging in terrorism than one who does not assimilate an extremist ideology.



## Introduction

On September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2004, 32 Chechens stormed an elementary school in the small Russian town of Beslan in the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania. During the course of the three-day standoff that ensued, more than 20 hostages were executed. Russian security forces surrounded the school, but were unable to enter as the Chechens threatened to detonate a number of bombs scattered throughout the gymnasium that held the 1,200 schoolchildren and parents.

At around 1:00PM local time on September 3<sup>rd</sup>, an explosion was heard in the vicinity of the school. Russian troops stormed the building in an attempt to end the crisis. During the rescue, 31 of the 32 hostage-takers were killed and the surviving hostage-taker was taken captive by Russian security forces. Of the 1,200 hostages held at gunpoint for three days, 334 were killed and more than 700 were wounded during the siege (Finn & Glasser, 2004). More than 150 of the dead were children. Despite Russian security forces' efforts, more than 80% of the hostages were killed or wounded.

During the siege, the gunmen claimed that the operation was geared towards a political goal—the removal of Russian troops from Chechnya and the establishment of an independent Chechen nation (Chivers & Myers, 2004). The siege represents one example of a relatively small group of individuals employing violent tactics against civilians to achieve political objectives. Adhering to a wide variety of ideologies, several groups, organizations, and movements advocate the harming of noncombatants as a means by which to support whatever cause drives their action. In the popular lexicon, the use of violence against civilians as a means to achieve political objectives has come to be known as *terrorism*.

**Terrorism.**

Debates related to terrorism have been laden with conceptual argument, conjecture, and emotion. In forty years of research, there has been little agreement in determining exactly what terrorism is. Further complicating matters are the ways in which the term has been applied. Where one person may see a “terrorist”, another may see a “freedom fighter,” “rebel,” or “patriot.” Still more confusion stems from the fact that although there are many situations in which one individual can be described as terrorizing another, it is rare that we label those guilty of such infractions as “terrorists.” One does not need to search too extensively to find accounts of personally-motivated violent crimes such as armed robbery, rape, assault, battery, or murder. Although violence is a central component of each of these, there would likely be serious reservations about describing them as “terrorism.” We have come to use that label for something qualitatively different.

Perhaps the defining feature of terrorism is the ideological motivation behind its use. On the surface, terrorist attacks may appear to be designed only to kill innocent bystanders as a response to the grievances of whatever group the attackers claim to represent. Often times, however, the target of the violence is not limited to those attacked. Terrorism is more than violence for violence’s sake; Terrorism is meant to be persuasive. It is meant to induce fear in a wider audience to affect government policy or the social status quo. It is conducted to attract attention. As Jenkins (1974) aptly summarized, terrorism is theater.

Several terrorism researchers have echoed these claims, arguing that one of the central components of terrorism is the intention to arouse fear and anxiety in those who

bear witness to the attack (Friedland and Merari, 1985; Orehek, Fishman, Dechesne, et al., 2010; Schmid, 1993). In this way, the injuries and deaths that occur as a result of an attack are ancillary to the real goals of the terrorist group, which are often political in nature. In this way, acts of terrorism can be described not only as murders, kidnappings, beatings, or assaults, but also as persuasion—“a form of sophisticated psychological warfare” (Horgan, 2005, p. 3). In spite of the understanding that terrorism differs from “common” violence in that it is ideologically-motivated, there remains substantial and widespread debate over two fundamental issues surrounding its employment.

First, there exists much debate regarding the genesis of terrorism at the individual level. Why would an individual opt to participate in violence against civilians (an inherently cost-heavy behavior) for the sake of a political or religious ideology? This question serves as the focus of this dissertation. Although multiple answers have been offered over the history of terrorism scholarship, I propose that the assimilation of beliefs and attitudes that advocate the use of violence for a given ideology (a process I will refer to as *radicalization*) may be a significant contributor to an individual’s choice to engage in terrorism. In the following pages, I will briefly discuss past theories of terrorist motivation. Following from this, I will present a conceptual model that links radicalization with *extremism*, a psychological state in which an individual has assimilated an extremist ideology, which is in turn linked to participation in terrorism.

Prior to explaining individual engagement in terrorism in terms of radicalization, however, it will be imperative to turn to the second contentious issue surrounding terrorism—its definition. Although some may argue that the definition of a phenomenon is not a necessary precondition for its study, there are two fundamental reasons why

defining terrorism is important. Principally, the development of a definition for terrorism facilitates theory building within terrorism studies. De la Roche (2004) argued that “without a useful definition of terrorism, a theory of the subject is not even possible” (p. 1). As such, a clear definition for terrorism facilitates its study not only in the current project, but in other related terrorism research contexts as well. Second, defining terrorism benefits the development and implementation of effective counter-terror strategy. Without at least some common understanding about what constitutes terrorism, international and interagency coordination of effective counter-terror strategy will remain difficult (Schmid, 2011, p. 85). To these ends, the pursuit of a definition for terrorism remains an important endeavor.

#### **Motivations for engagement.**

At the group or organizational level, the allure of terrorism as a strategy of asymmetric war is understandable to some degree. It can be carried out by small, militarily-weak groups that do not possess the resources to directly engage an enemy in armed conflict. Moreover, some evidence has suggested that engaging in terrorism can have the potential to yield marginal success as a persuasive tool in some instances (Held, 1991). At the individual level, however, the question as to “why they do it” becomes more complex given the variety of reasons why a seemingly rational person would want to avoid engaging in such a dangerous and harmful behavior. First, not only has terrorism been shown to negatively affect the psychological (DiMaggio & Galea, 2006; Friedland & Merari, 1985; Frey, Luechinger, & Stutzer, 2007; Joshi & O’Donnell, 2003; Richman, Cloninger, & Rospenda, 2008; Rubin, Brewin, Greenberg, Hughes, Simpson, & Wessely, 2007) and economic (Abadie & Gardeazabal, 2003; Abadie & Gardeazabal, 2005; Chen

& Siems, 2004; Eldor & Melnick, 2004; Enders & Sandler, 1991; Enders & Sandler, 1996; Nitsch & Schumacher, 2004) well-beings of those targeted, but it is also largely regarded as immoral, regardless of the circumstances surrounding its employment (Fotion, 1981; Nozick, 1974). Several philosophers have argued that the use of violence against civilian targets is never justifiable given the wide variety of other means by which political goals can be achieved (Fotion, 1981). Others have said that a civilian's right to avoid being killed or maimed transcends the terrorist's right to commit violence against them for their own perceived necessities (Nozick, 1974). Although that which is moral and immoral cannot be scientifically established, these philosophers maintain that the use of terrorism violates social norms critical to the maintenance of incontestable human rights.

Second, engaging in terrorism is an inherently hazardous endeavor. By engaging in terrorism, an individual risks apprehension, arrest, imprisonment, or death. Similarly, participating in terrorism can come with extreme personal costs. The illicit nature of terrorist activity requires its practitioners go into hiding to avoid detection and/or arrest at the hands of security forces. This often includes cutting off communication with family, friends, and other loved ones. Third, committing violence against civilians can bring about severe negative psychological consequences for the perpetrator. Numerous accounts and testimonies illustrate the degree to which terrorists suffer psychological strains during the course of their involvement with a terrorist group (Horgan, 2009; Jamieson, 1990a; Jamieson, 1990b; Kellen, 1979, p. 23).

But perhaps the greatest discouragement from participating in terrorism is its relative futility. Despite Held's (1991; 2008) argument that terrorism has the potential to

be slightly effective in some cases, the vast majority of terrorist groups are stamped out by security forces or are otherwise dissolved without achieving their stated goals (Cronin, 2006; Cronin, 2009). Rapoport (1992) demonstrated that 90% of terrorist groups do not survive for more than a year and of those that do, more than half are gone within a decade. So, for every terrorist group that maintains its struggle for more than ten years, at least 19 others fail to achieve their goals or sustain an armed campaign geared towards doing so. It would seem counterintuitive to engage in a cost-heavy behavior on behalf of a group that stands a good chance of failing.

Given the negative consequences and relative ineffectiveness of terrorism, a question emerges: Why do some individuals opt to engage in violence against civilians when other, ethically-defensible and potentially more effective forms of dissent (that do not bring such drastically negative consequences for victims *and* perpetrators) are available to them?

Several scholars have attempted to answer this pressing question from a variety of perspectives. Researchers have approached this challenge using individual psychological models (Taylor, 1988; Taylor and Quayle, 1994), economic and rational choice models (Elster, 1986; Gupta, 2008a, p. 30; Sandler, Arce, & Enders, 2008, p. 11), and what have become known as “root causes” (Bjørge, 2005). Many of the explanatory models and perspectives that have been adopted thus far have contributed to our understanding of the motivation to engage in terrorism in some way. However, illustrating the complexity of individual behaviors related to terrorism, they have also been heavily criticized as incomplete or incorrect.

Research based on individual psychological models that focused on psychopathy as a contributing factor for engaging in terrorism have been essentially dismissed (Borum, 2004; Crenshaw, 1981; Crenshaw, 1982; Horgan, 2008; Merari, 1998; Silke, 1998; Taylor, 1988; Taylor & Quayle, 1994). Similarly, explanations of terrorism in terms of frustration, narcissism, or unresolved childhood conflicts have also been rejected as limited in scope or lacking empirical support (Horgan, 2003; McAllister & Schmid, 2011). The relationship between terrorism and economic factors remains unclear (Silke, 2008). And root causes perspectives, although insightful regarding preconditions that serve as risk factors for terrorism in the long run, are general in nature and focus primarily on social problems with a number of negative outcomes of which terrorism is only one (Bjørge, 2005). Despite concerted effort on the part of some terrorism researchers, it appears as though the search for causal explanations for terrorism on the basis of static traits, profiles, conditions, or root causes is a futile one. As such, a large contingent of contemporary terrorism researchers have moved away from attempts to identify a terrorist personality or profile on the basis of static features. The search for the genesis of terrorist behavior may be better served by perspectives that emphasize a “more dynamic, comprehensive account of the social and psychological processes leading to terrorism” (Moghaddam, 2005, p. 161) than those that rely on personal or contextual traits.

In this vein, this dissertation seeks to address the question of individual motivation to engage in terrorism in terms of a dynamic process related to belief and attitude change. As stated above, I will refer to this process as *radicalization*. Broadly speaking, radicalization is a social and psychological process through which an individual

comes to adopt extremist beliefs and attitudes, some of which may advocate or justify the use of terrorism. Before more fully explicating radicalization and conceptually linking it to terrorism, however, it is important to clarify what is meant by terrorism in the context of this project. The following section explores several academic and government definitions for terrorism and offers an operational definition for the purposes of the current research.

### **Defining terrorism.**

There currently exist hundreds of definitions for terrorism (Malik, 2001), each with their own emphasized elements. This has made for a field of study in which researchers are using the same term in efforts to investigate phenomena with different characteristics. To redress this issue, some scholars have attempted to develop a standardized definition for terrorism. In one example, Schmid and Jongman (1984; 1988) considered over one hundred definitions for terrorism in an effort to normalize its study and implementation. They offered the following conclusion:

Terrorism is a method of combat in which random or symbolic victims serve as an instrumental target of violence. These instrumental victims share group or class characteristics which form the basis for their selection for victimization. Through previous use of violence or the credible threat of violence other members of the group or class are put in a state of chronic fear (terror). This group or class, whose members' sense of security is purposefully undermined, is the target of terror. The victimization of the target of violence is considered extranormal by most observers from the witnessing audience on the basis of its atrocity, the time (e.g., peacetime) or place (not a battlefield) of victimization, or the disregard for rules



of combat accepted in conventional warfare. The norm violation creates an attentive audience beyond the target of terror; sectors of this audience might in turn form the main object of manipulation. The purpose of this indirect method of combat is either to immobilize the target of terror in order to produce disorientation and/or compliance, or to mobilize secondary targets of demands (e.g., a government) or targets of attention (e.g., public opinion) to changes of attitude or behavior favoring the short or long-term interests of the users of this method of combat.

To determine the extent to which members of the political terrorism research community would accept this definition, Schmid mailed a questionnaire to two hundred academics gauging their satisfaction with it (Schmid & Jongman, 1988). In a clear illustration the difficulties associated with defining terrorism, nearly two-thirds of respondents were at least somewhat dissatisfied with Schmid and Jongman's proposal, claiming that it was incomplete.

Speaking to the continued debate surrounding the conceptualization of terrorism more than twenty years later, Schmid (2011) revised Schmid and Jongman's (1984; 1988) original attempts, defining the core dimension of terrorism as

...a *doctrine* about the presumed effectiveness of a special form or tactic of fear-generating, coercive political violence and, on the other hand, to a conspiratorial *practice* of calculated, demonstrative, direct violent action without legal or moral restraints, targeting mainly civilians and non-combatants, performed for its propagandistic and psychological effects on various audiences and conflict parties (emphasis in original, Schmid, 2011, p. 86).

Schmid (2011) went on to identify eleven explanatory corollaries to this new core definition. In spite of this updated effort to define terrorism, he yielded that the new definition “holds the middle ground between concreteness and abstraction” and that the attributes of the definition may not “fully represent” the complexity of terrorism’s empirical reality (p. 86). Given this, the complexities of terrorism continue to render it a difficult phenomenon to define.

Despite these debates and disagreements, several counter-practitioners and academics have continued to develop their own descriptions of terrorism. For example, the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) defines terrorism as “the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives” (FBI, 2005). The National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) utilize a different definition, calling terrorism “premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents” (CIA, 2007; NCTC, 2008). Despite agreement between the NCTC and CIA regarding the conceptual tenets of terrorism, the related, but discordant emphases in the FBI’s definition illustrates the lack of uniform terminology regarding political violence among U.S. government agencies.

This lack of consensus is evident in the academic realm as well. For example, whereas Crenshaw (1995) focused on the coercive nature of terrorism, describing it as “a conspiratorial style of violence calculated to alter the attitudes and behavior of multitude audiences” (p. 4), Nacos (2002) emphasized the mass-mediated nature of the phenomenon, claiming that it is “political violence against noncombatants/innocents that

is committed with the intention to publicize the deed, to gain publicity, and thereby public and government attention” (p. 17). Laqueur (1987) incorporated both these aspects in his definition, claiming that “terrorism is the use or threat of the use of violence, a method of combat, or a strategy to achieve certain targets. [It] aims to induce a state of fear in the victim, that is ruthless and does not conform with humanitarian rules. [P]ublicity is an essential factor in the terrorist strategy” (p. 143). Clearly stating the significance of publicity as an integral feature, he argued that “a terrorist strike without news coverage would defeat the whole purpose of the exercise—the deed would pass unheralded and unrecognized” (Laqueur, 1987, p. 123).

Hoffman (1998) echoed these sentiments, arguing that

The modern news media, as the principal conduit of information about such acts, thus play a vital part in the terrorists’ calculus. Indeed, without the media’s coverage, the act’s impact is arguably wasted, remaining narrowly confined to the immediate victim(s) of the attack rather than reaching the wider ‘target audience’ at whom the terrorists’ violence is actually aimed. Only by spreading the terror and outrage to a much larger audience can the terrorists gain the maximum potential leverage they need to effect fundamental political change (p. 14).

Although it is clear that publicity is a central feature within academic definitions for terrorism, they also include their own respective peripheral aspects that are not shared by other definitions. As such, we are left with a collection of academic definitions for terrorism that, although similar, are not uniform. Such heterogeneity is unsurprising. Full consensus on a definition for terrorism would require that every academic and government agent would agree on all elements to be included and excluded. As Schmid

(2011) rightly stated, “such a full consensus will never be reached,” but we can hope for general agreement on the core elements of terrorism (p. 85).

Some of these core elements emerge across the definitions as one considers the governmental and academic attempts at defining terrorism. Of course, the researchers and agencies discussed above comprise only a small fraction of those who have suggested definitions for terrorism. In these few definitions, however, many of the aspects of the 109 definitions explored by Schmid and Jongman (1984) are represented (see Schmid & Jongman, 1988, p. 5 for a list of these aspects). The small sample here illustrates the different emphases that can exist for different researchers and the difficulty associated with conceptualizing terrorism to the satisfaction of the research community as a whole.

Perhaps then, rather than search for a catch-all, unifying definition to capture every nuance of terrorism, it may be valuable to consider the *types* of definitions that have been proposed thus far and identify common themes across them to develop a definition that is useful for this project. In Table 1, the definitions outlined above are grouped by how terrorism is conceptualized within them. Although each definition contains a number of aspects, the grouping under which each definition is listed was determined by the *primary* emphasis within the definition. Even when the overwhelming number of definitions for terrorism is boiled down to a small, representative few, there are clear differences in the emphases among them. Table 1 provides a summary of the types of definitions for terrorism that have been offered and the emphases upon which they have been built.

The contents of Table 1 show that the results of Schmid’s (2011) and Schmid and Jongman’s (1984; 1988) efforts are pervasive. Different entities have and will continue to

have different definitions for terrorism. This is not to imply that any one definition that has been produced is “better” than any others. Most, if not all of the definitions for terrorism contain features of the phenomenon that are salient in different contexts. What is significant in terms of its relation to radicalization in this project, however, is the fact that every definition for terrorism (among academics and practitioners alike) shares one broad, but integral feature: their conceptualization of terrorism as a *manifest behavior* in the form of threat or physical attack. As such, for this project I broadly define terrorism as *the use of violence or threat of violence against civilians to achieve ideological goals*.

Given this definition, the question remains as to how an otherwise “normal” individual becomes a practitioner of violence against noncombatants to further a political or ideological objective. Many of the explanations mentioned above give some insight into how this occurs, but several of these have been debunked or derided as limited in explanatory power. In agreement with the perspective that terrorism can best be explained in terms of dynamic social and psychological processes, this project proposes that the performance of terrorism is, in at least some cases, contingent on the development of a mindset that justifies the use of violence against civilians to further a particular cause. I will refer to this psychological state as *extremism*.

To fully appreciate how extremism and terrorism are linked, however, an explication and definition of the term in the context of this project is also needed. It is to those tasks I now turn.

### **Extremism.**

Neither government sources nor academic literature provide significant guidance in the way of conceptual or empirical exploration of extremism. As a result of the lack of

scientific attention paid to extremism, much of our knowledge related to it has been derived from its common use in the media where it has gone without formal explication. One need only to search major news websites for the word “extremist” or “extremism” to discover that although it is largely utilized to describe terrorists and their ideologies, there is no attempt to define exactly what, if anything, separates “extremist” or “extremism” from similar terms. There have simply been few attempts to explain exactly what extremism is.

Extremism has come to commonly (and imprecisely) mean “a state of being bad.” In spite of its imprecision, the popular use of the term to describe certain phenomena can tell us a bit about how it is understood to relate to terrorism and radicalization. For example, despite its scientific crudeness, the popular use of “extremism” suggests that it is a psychological state rather than a manifest behavior (like terrorism) or a psychological process (like radicalization, to be detailed in the following chapter).

The literature on extremism likewise suffers from many of the shortcomings of the popular press with respect to terrorism, most notably that the term is used largely without formal explication. However, there have been a handful of attempts to define the phenomenon. It is on this small sample of scientific efforts that this section will be focused.

### **Defining extremism.**

There appear to be three primary ways in which the phenomenon is framed. First, extremism has been described as having beliefs that substantially deviate from the statistical mean for that particular belief. Second, it has been described as a deviation from commonly accepted social heuristics. Third, extremism has been characterized as an

indicator of a closed mindset. These related, but distinct characterizations illustrate the disjointed and confusing nature of the literature on extremism. However, the subtle differences in these depictions will assist in developing a definition for the term that will describe its relationship with radicalization.

*Extremism as a statistical outlier.*

A statistical perspective on extremism suggests that by plotting one's beliefs or attitudes on a linear continuum, extremism can be identified as a result of where those beliefs or attitudes are located. If an individual's beliefs go beyond a particular threshold to the ideological left or right, that individual can be considered to have a belief system representative of extremism. George and Wilcox (1996) argued that there is a functional utility in conceptualizing extremism in this fashion—where one can imagine a bell curve on a grid in which the x-axis is extremity of belief and the y-axis is the number of individuals who adhere to that level of extremity. At the center of this bell curve, there would be a great mass of individuals whose beliefs do not deviate far from the mean. On the left and right fringes of this bell curve, however, are those small numbers of individuals whose beliefs could be considered to be extremist in kind.

Wintrobe (2002) also suggested deviation from the mean as being one of the ways in which extremism can be conceptualized:

An extremist person or group can be defined as *one whose equilibrium position in located at a “corner” rather than in the interior on some dimension* (for example, the left-right dimension in political space; emphasis added, Wintrobe, 2002, p. 25).

Despite its prevalence, there are two problems related to defining extremism in this fashion. First, nowhere in the literature on the statistical perspective on extremism is there any mention of an empirical protocol on positioning the boundaries for extremism. Thus, using Wintrobe's (2002) language, placement of the points at which the "interior" of an ideological continuum ends and the "corner" begins is entirely arbitrary and at the discretion of the person drawing the boundaries.

Second, there exist a great number of real-life examples in which beliefs or behaviors that would largely be considered extreme are found to be practiced by large proportions of the population. George and Wilcox explain:

Many dictators, for example, have a large following. *When an "extreme" belief originally held by a small minority becomes popular, does it cease to be*

*"extreme"?* If a Nazi won an election, is he no longer an "extremist"?

Conversely, is a belief "extreme" simply because it is unpopular? (emphasis added, George & Wilcox, 1996, p. 11).

Despite the limitations of the statistical perspective on extremism, there is some merit in the assertion that extremism is represented by a belief structure that *somehow* deviates from a "normal" mindset. The nature of that deviation and the context in which it is present may further inform a definition for extremism in a more comprehensive way. The following section briefly details a perspective that supplements the one described here.

***Extremism as informal norm deviation.***

A second view of extremism suggests that extreme beliefs or behavior are dictated by previously established social norms. In this view, the masses collectively decide what



are the “right” and “wrong” ways to act, things to believe, and in some cases, characteristics to possess. Unlike the first perspective, in the second, there is no formal (real or hypothetical) means with which an individual can be quantitatively identified as an extremist. Whereas the statistical perspective defines extremism as a function of measurable deviation from a theoretical mean, the heuristic perspective defines extremism in terms of unspoken agreements among members of a particular majority. For example, using this definition, an individual who adheres to a “pro-choice” stance on abortion living in a socially-conservative area of the American south in which the majority of individuals are “pro-life” may be dubbed an extremist.

*This is the “popularity contest” theory of extremism, and one that reeks of intolerance that allows a majority to gang up on the minority, whoever that happens to be—people who dress funny, have dark skin or a strange religion, have subversive ideas, or are just “different.”* This approach places excessive power in the social and political elites, particularly in the opinion-molding sector. (emphasis added, George & Wilcox, 1996, p. 11).

Unlike the statistical perspective, the heuristic perspective contains a measure of qualitative judgment in the identification of extremism. That is to say, it allows extremism to be defined using inexact terms—a population knows an extremist when it sees one. Although this captures a qualitative nuance of extremism not addressed by the statistical perspective, it is also a slippery slope upon which it becomes increasingly easy to accuse an individual of extremism on the basis of qualities that are largely benign in and of themselves.

Despite its attractiveness as a means with which to define extremism, if we are to understand extremism and understand its role in political violence, we cannot rely on “knowing it when we see it.” This invites an infinite number of definitions for extremism, as what one person views as extremist may not be what another views as extremist. One final perspective on extremism deviates from both the statistical and heuristic conceptualizations and describes how extremism can be defined *ex post facto* as a result of certain behaviors. I call this the behavioral perspective on extremism.

***Extremism as an indicator of a closed mindset.***

Historically, extremism has been characterized, at least in part, in terms of certain behaviors, particularly towards other individuals (Scruton, 1982; Wilcox, 1996). Several researchers have attempted to define extremism using this conceptualization. Scruton (1982), for example, defined extremism as consisting of three components related to one’s relationship with other individuals and ideologies: (a) taking a political idea to its limits without regard for negative consequences, impracticalities, arguments or feelings to the contrary, and with the intention of not only resisting opposing ideologies, but eliminating them; (b) a general feeling of bigotry against all political or ideological views that differ from one’s own (also see Lang, 1990; Moore, 1983); and (c) the adoption of means to ideological ends that show little to no regard for the basic human rights of others, including the rights to safety and liberty. In describing the conflict between Jewish fundamentalists from Israel and Hamas militants from the Palestinian territories, Wintrobe (2006) supplemented the three components set forth by Scruton by adding that extremists are also entirely certain about the correctness of their ideological position and that they demonize those individuals that hold opposing viewpoints. Although Scruton

(1982) argued that extremism consists of all three aforementioned components, Wintrobe (2006) argued that an individual or group needs only to participate in one of the three components to be dubbed extremist. Despite a few differences, Scruton, Wintrobe, and other researchers have collectively identified (a) taking a political or ideological idea to excess, (b) bigotry against other forms of ideological thought, and (c) promotion of sometimes dangerous means to achieve political ends as being definitive of extremism.

In his work on prejudice and belief structures, Rokeach (1969) supported this perspective on extremism, particularly the position that extremism is characterized by bigotry against other forms of ideological thought. Specifically, he argued that the extent to which a person adheres to a closed mindset that cuts him/her off from other points of view is indicative of extremism. He further argued that no particular belief system has an exclusive grip on extremist viewpoints. He claimed that:

To study the organization of belief systems, we find it necessary to concern ourselves with *the structure rather than the content of beliefs*. *The relative openness or closedness of a mind cuts across specific content*; that is, it is not uniquely restricted to any particular ideology, or religion, or philosophy, or scientific viewpoint. A person may adhere to communism, existentialism, Freudianism, or the “new conservatism” in a relatively open or relatively closed manner. Thus, a basic requirement is that concepts to be employed in the description of belief systems must not be tied to any one particular belief system; they must be constructed to apply equally to all belief systems (emphasis added, Rokeach, 1969, p. 6).

Wilcox (1996) argued strongly for Rokeach's (1969) perspective on extremism as well, claiming that the rigidity with which beliefs are held and the behavioral manifestations of those beliefs are far more important in defining extremism than beliefs themselves, regardless of their deviation from what is considered the norm. Reflecting on his own experience researching political groups, he claimed that:

...most people can hold radical or unorthodox views and still entertain them in a more or less reasonable, rational, and nondogmatic manner. On the other hand, I have met people whose views were fairly close to the political mainstream but were *presented in a shrill, uncompromising, bullying, and distinctly authoritarian manner. The latter demonstrated a starkly extremist mentality while the former demonstrated only ideological unorthodoxy*, which is hardly to be feared...

(emphasis added, p. 54).

For Wilcox (1996), Rokeach (1969), Scruton (1982), and Wintrobe (2006), neither the location of one's beliefs on an ideological continuum (statistical perspective) nor the extent to which an individual adheres to beliefs that differ from those that are commonly accepted as "correct" (heuristic perspective) matter in defining extremism. To these scholars, what defines extremism is the manner in which the beliefs are held, not the beliefs themselves. To this end, Wilcox (1996) offered twenty-two behavioral and psychological tenets that characterize extremism (p. 56-61) in terms of the rigidity with which beliefs are held. Among them are several that allude to the use of violence in defense of one's beliefs. For example, Wilcox argued (p. 59) that extremism is characterized by the beliefs that it is permissible to do "bad" things if it is in the service of a "good" cause. He argues that to extremists, the ends of violent behavior justify the

means. Traits such as this suggest that terrorists, who often justify their killing of civilians as necessary operations to achieve valuable objectives, possess extremist mindsets. This point is vital as it explicitly illustrates the relationship between extremism and terrorism.

Where, then, does this leave us in an attempt to satisfactorily define extremism? Each of the perspectives on extremism offers different, but valuable insight into the phenomenon: the statistical and heuristic perspectives highlight extremists' deviation from the norm and the "closed mindset" perspective highlights those psychological and behavioral characteristics that can identify extremism. Despite these differences, there are themes that cut across the conceptualizations of extremism that can allow us to glean a definition for the term that encapsulates the useful aspects of each perspective.

Table 2 serves to summarize the above conceptualizations. There are far fewer formal definitions for extremism than there are for terrorism, but the definitions summarized in Table 2 were identified via an exhaustive search within the political science and psychology literatures. Whereas the definitions selected for inclusion in Table 1 were chosen on the basis of their representativeness of the wide array of extant definitions for terrorism, the small number of definitions featured within the literature on extremism as it relates to the use of violence renders Table 2 an undersized, but comprehensive summary of extant formal explications of extremism. However, like terrorism, conceptualizations of extremism can be grouped together according to their respective emphases.

Taking previous conceptualizations into account, and considering the suggested relationship between extremism and terrorism (see Breton, Galeotti, Salmon, &

Wintrobe, 2002, Wilcox, 1996), I offer that extremism is *a psychological state in which an individual adheres to an ideology that is characterized by behaviors that marginalize other-minded individuals through a variety of means, up to and including the use of physical violence.*

Because this definition dictates that extremism is largely contingent upon an ideology, it is similarly important to define what is meant by an “extremist ideology.” Therefore, as a corollary for the above-offered definition of extremism, the following brief section will explain what is meant by an extremist ideology.

### ***Extremist ideology.***

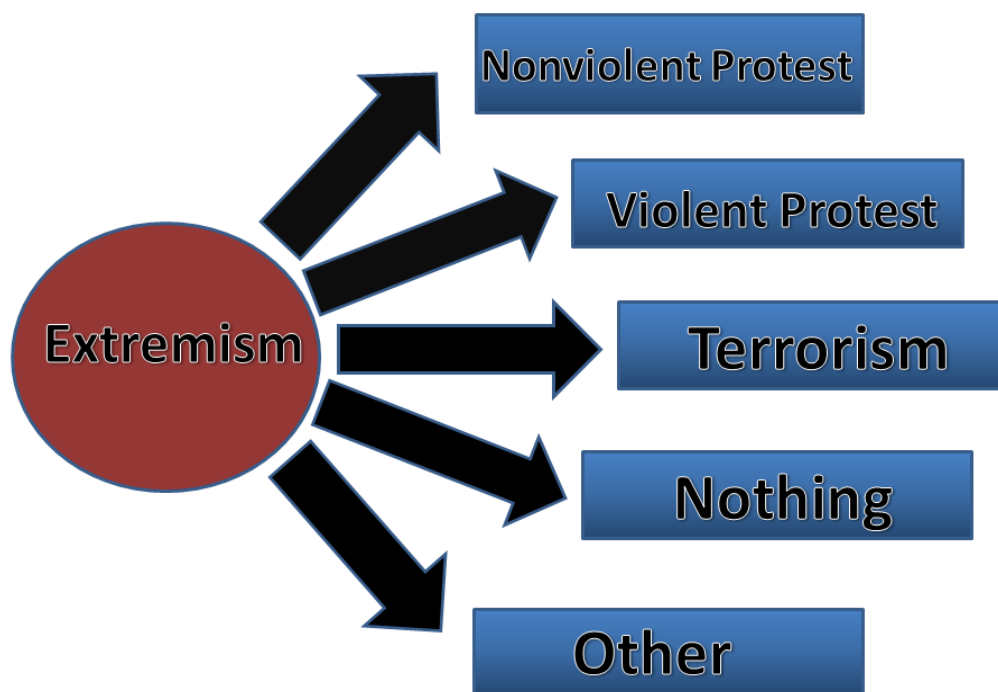
Oftentimes, ideology is defined as a commonly agreed-upon set of rules to which an individual adheres that helps to determine his or her behavior. Borum (2010) claimed that ideology “guides and controls behavior perhaps by providing a set of behavioral contingencies that link immediate behavior and actions to long-term positive outcomes and rewards” (p. 6). In this vein, ideology can be viewed as a not only as the content of one’s beliefs or attitudes, but also as the influence of those beliefs and attitudes on an individual’s behavior (Taylor & Horgan, 2001). Given this, as a corollary to the definition for extremism presented above, an extremist ideology can be defined as *a set of beliefs and attitudes that advocates the marginalization of other-minded individuals through a variety of behavioral means, up to and including the use of physical violence.*

### **Linking Terrorism with Extremism.**

Using the proposed definitions for terrorism and extremism as guides, and drawing from previous work on extremism that has described its relationship with the use

of violence, it follows that extremism can serve as a psychological precursor to terrorism (in addition to other behaviors related to the furtherance of an ideological goal).

Given this, I offer the following truncated model depicting the relationship between extremism and associated behaviors:



If extremism reflects an increased risk for engaging in terrorism, this raises a question similar to the one posed above regarding genesis of terrorism: What is the source of extremism? As referenced above, many terrorism scholars have begun to approach the question of individual motivation in terms of dynamic processes rather than static traits or conditions. One such process emphasizes belief and attitude change as central in the development of a terrorist. This process of belief and attitude change leading to extremism and subsequent terrorism is referred to as *radicalization*.

Because radicalization is the central focus of this research, the following chapter features an extensive description of the process, drawing heavily from an extensive

literature on the subject. I will propose a new definition for radicalization that emphasizes the importance of communication in the radicalization process. From there, I will present a full conceptual model linking radicalization with extremism and terrorism.

Given this, it follows that targeting radicalization requires responses to those mechanisms by which an extremist ideology is disseminated. Chapter 3 will introduce one potential source for extremist ideology exposure and subsequent radicalization—narrative communication. The extent to which many terrorist organizations rely on narratives to spread their ideas suggests that they are an integral component of how some individuals are drawn to participate in terrorism. However, the persuasive efficacy of narrative communication has never been conclusively determined. Chapter 3 presents a meta-analysis of literature related to narratives and belief, attitude, and behavioral intention change to determine whether narratives are, in fact, capable of effectively disseminating an extremist ideology.

Following this, Chapter 4 will illustrate the use of online narrative communication by a specific terrorist organization—the Animal Liberation Front (ALF). This discussion will not only provide background on the ALF and its use of narratives on the Internet, but will also feature a theme analysis of the narratives on the ALF website to determine the types of messages the ALF seeks to disseminate through its stories on the web.

Finally, Chapter 5 will summarize the findings of the narrative meta-analysis and the ALF theme analysis to draw conclusions about the efficacy of narratives for fostering radicalization and subsequent participation in terrorism.

If we are to more fully understand the elements and processes that contribute to the production of an extremist mindset that is willing to engage in terrorism, knowing



only *that* terrorist groups use narratives as a means with which to communicate with their audiences is no longer enough. We must know *what* is being said and *how* it may impact audiences in terms of its potential to affect their beliefs and attitudes. Empirical investigation of extremist narratives online can contribute to our knowledge in this arena and inform the development of counter-narrative strategies to prevent extremist beliefs and attitudes from being transformed into violent action against civilians.

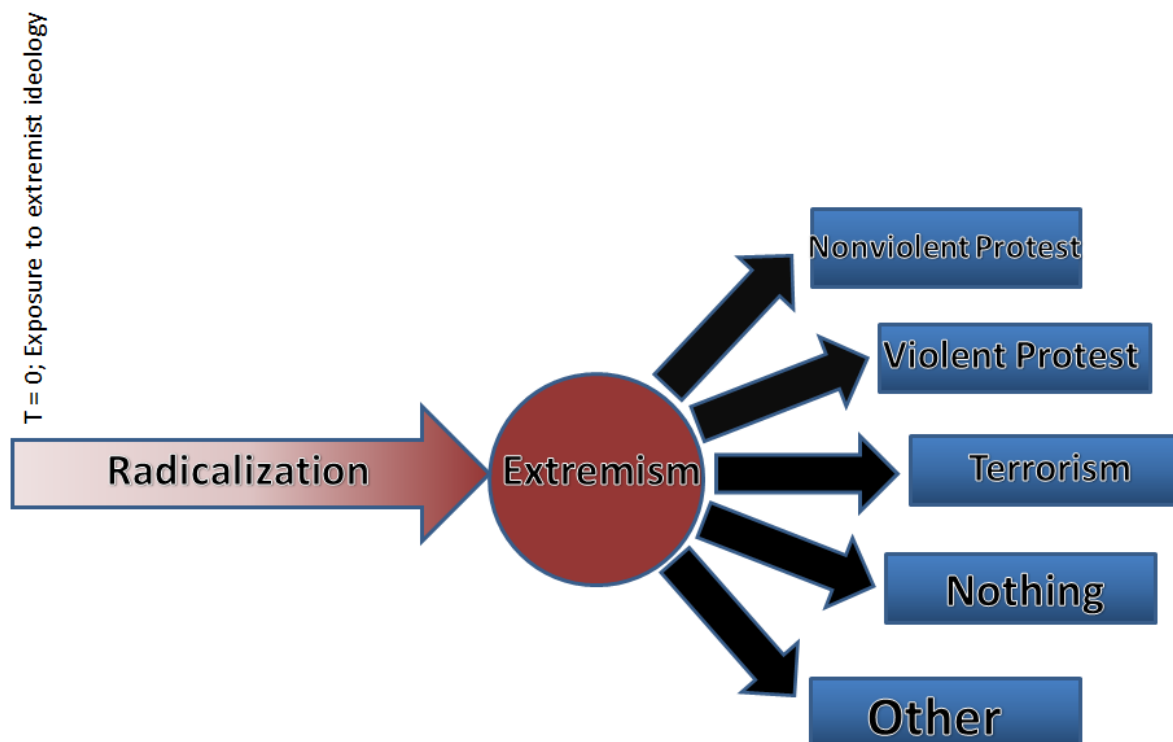
## Chapter 2

ABSTRACT: Whereas the previous chapter introduced a truncated model linking extremism and terrorism, this chapter will extend that model by offering radicalization as the process by which extremism (and subsequently, terrorism) can be fostered. To comprehensively define the parameters of the full radicalization-extremism-terrorism model (RET Model), this chapter features a complete explication of radicalization, focusing on past conceptualizations of the phenomenon. These conceptualizations have generally been characterized by one of four emphases: identity negotiation, motivational knowledge transfer, social networks, and its process-based nature. Drawing from these and incorporating a new element that emphasizes the significance of communication in fostering radicalization, a new definition for radicalization will be offered that allows for its study in the context of this project. Following this, narrative communication will be introduced as a potential catalyst for radicalization.

### **Radicalization as a Contributing Factor for Terrorism**

This dissertation is based on the assertion that the process of radicalization can lead to a psychological state in which extremist beliefs and attitudes are assimilated, which can, in turn, be a risk factor for engaging in terrorism. In this model for radicalization, an individual is exposed to an extremist ideology and through avenues of communication (e.g. interaction with adherents, exposure to propaganda, etc.), the individual's beliefs and attitudes can change over time so as to align with the extremist ideology. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, as beliefs and attitudes consistent with the extremist ideology are assimilated, the individual approaches a psychological state that I refer to as extremism. From here, the individual may partake in any number of volitional behaviors consistent with the extremist ideology they have adopted. One possible outcome of extremism is terrorism. Although violent radicalization (a process which will be described in greater detail below) is the most proximal process related to participation in terrorism, "preliminary" radicalization likewise serves as a risk factor for engaging in terrorism, albeit more distant.

Expanding on the model depicted above linking extremism to terrorism, a process illustrating the relationships between radicalization, extremism, and terrorism can be depicted as such:



This radicalization-extremism-terrorism model (RET Model) is not designed to imply that the path toward terrorism is a straight and sequential process. Instead, there exist two complexities associated with those processes that lead to engaging in terrorism. First, even under the assumption that the RET Model is an accurate depiction of a way in which individuals become involved with terrorism in some cases, individual trajectories are affected by unique personal, social, and political factors. Because of this, the movement from radicalization to terrorism, even in the context of this model, can be heterogeneous on a case-by-case basis.

Second, there exists another perspective on the relationships between radicalization, extremism, and terrorism that runs opposite to the process depicted here. This perspective suggests that violent activity precedes radicalization—that an individual may become involved with a terrorist group and retroactively adopt an ideology that

justifies the use of violence to support it (see Olson & Stone, 2005; Sageman, 2008). The model proposed here does not refute this perspective. To be sure, there are numerous examples of individuals becoming involved with a terrorist group and adopting that group's school of thought after being physically, if not ideologically, assimilated into the fold. For example, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who came to prominence during the Iraq War as an enemy of the United States, learned the tools of terrorism—including the use of automatic weaponry, rocket-propelled grenades, rape, and beheading—while in post-Soviet Afghanistan looking for any fight he could find (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2011). He adhered to no one ideology at that time, and sought only the excitement of violence and war (Brisard & Martinez, 2005). In the years following his learning how to perform terrorism, al-Zarqawi adopted the radical Islamic ideology he encountered while training and fighting in Afghanistan.

However, just as there are numerous examples of individuals becoming involved with terrorism and then radicalizing, there are likewise cases of individuals radicalizing prior to engaging in terrorism as per the RET Model. For example, in 2004, a Pakistani immigrant to Australia, Faheem Khalid Lodhi, was arrested and later convicted for possessing materials related to the preparation of a terrorist attack (Lamont, 2006; New South Wales Government, 2010). It was unlikely that Lodhi moved to Australia with an intention to attack his new home (Williams, 2009). Instead, it was determined that return trips to Pakistan “caused him to undergo a ‘born again’ religious experience” that motivated his intention to engage in terrorism (p. 73). In a more recent example, Colleen LaRose (also known as “Jihad Jane”) was arrested in 2009 and charged with conspiracy to provide material support to terrorists, conspiracy to kill in a foreign country, making

false statements to the FBI, and attempted identity theft (*United States of America v. Colleen R. LaRose*, 2010). Researchers at the National Defense University determined that LaRose's movement toward supporting and engaging in violent activity was preceded by her extensive use of the Internet as a tool for indoctrinating herself with a radical Islamist ideology (Musa & Bendett, 2010).

The RET Model depicts the latter process without denying the occurrence of the former in some cases. That said, there are implications for the study of the RET Model over other models for radicalization as it relates to terrorism. Because (a) the model assumes that radicalization occurs prior to engaging in terrorism, and (b) engaging in a behavior like terrorism can be preceded by the development of attitudes related to it (see Kim & Hunter, 1993), the RET Model suggests that effective counter-radicalization measures would be most effectively implemented prior to an individual's participation in terrorism. Related to this point, the RET Model also has implications for determining which individuals to target with counter-radicalization measures. For an individual for whom engaging in terrorism is not a direct and immediate prospect, it seems more likely that his/her potential engagement will be driven by the assimilation of an extremist ideology that will subsequently motivate their searching for opportunities to engage (e.g. Colleen LaRose). On the other hand, for those for whom engaging in terrorism is an immediate, proximal threat, it seems more likely that such individuals have a greater chance to initially engage in terrorism for non-ideological reasons which may then lead to his/her assimilation of an extremist ideology (e.g. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi). Thus, for individuals for whom terrorism is *not* an immediate prospect, counter-radicalization measures would be most effective prior to their engagement in terrorism. However, for

those individuals who have participated in terrorism prior to their assimilation of the ideology that justifies it, counter-radicalization measures may still be useful in inoculating them against the radicalization that may result from their involvement with a terrorist group (and thus keeping their engagement in terrorism from being reinforced by an ideology that is assimilated after they engage). Taken together, these implications suggest that since counter-radicalization measures are used to stem, prevent, or reverse radicalization, and radicalization occurs at different stages in the different models, the effectiveness of counter-radicalization measures depends on whether participation in terrorism an immediate prospect. For the RET Model, counter-radicalization measures would be most useful prior to the development of an extremist mindset for those individuals who have not yet participated in terrorism.

Given these implications, it becomes clear that understanding radicalization can inform the study of terrorism, its geneses, and strategies for preventing it (Picarelli, 2009). To this end, this chapter will explore the concept of radicalization in detail, paying particular attention to past conceptualizations of the phenomenon. As with the explications of extremism and terrorism, past attempts to define radicalization have yielded a wide variety of descriptions. To illustrate commonalities across them, they will be grouped according to their primary emphases. From there, common themes can be drawn from extant definitions and a new definition that emphasizes the significance of communication in the radicalization process will be offered. This definition will also be explicated, thus defining all parameters of the RET Model and allowing for discussion related to narratives as tools for promoting radicalization.

### **Problems with Current Definitions of Radicalization**

Because of the recent recognition that understanding radicalization can be of use in developing an understanding of terrorism (see, for example, *Assessing and Addressing the Threat*, 2009; Picarelli, 2009; *Understanding Cyberspace as a Medium for Radicalization and Counter-Radicalization*, 2010; *Using the Web as a Weapon: The Internet as a Tool for Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism*, 2009), it has come to the forefront of policy discussions within academic and governmental circles. As a result of the phenomenon's increased prominence within terrorism studies, many have provided a definition for the term (e.g., Horgan, 2009; McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008; Sageman, 2008). In spite of these efforts, there remain several unresolved issues with respect to the study of radicalization.

First, the popular press has increasingly used the term "radicalization" since the turn of the century. In 1999, the English-language press mentioned "radicalization" in just over 100 articles. In 2007, it showed up in almost 1800 articles (Sedgwick, 2010). Although the increase in attention paid to radicalization is understandable given the emphasis on homegrown terrorism in Western Europe in the mid-2000s, common usage of the term has rendered empirical investigation of radicalization difficult. Popular news outlets and mass media often use the terms "radical," "radicalize," or "radicalization" in a variety of ways without clarifying what is precisely meant. This has turned radicalization into an all-encompassing term assumed to reflect "how one becomes bad." This degree of specificity is not sufficient if we are to understand radicalization in a scientific manner.

Second, in both popular media and academia, radicalization has been used interchangeably with outwardly similar, but intrinsically distinct concepts. The confounding of radicalization with extremism and terrorism has rendered analytic



discussion of the former difficult, especially in light of the number of fields and subfields that examine the concept in some way. What is called radicalization in one discipline is often described as extremism or terrorism in another. As a consequence, the literature on radicalization has become increasingly confused and difficult to navigate coherently.

Third, the aforementioned disagreements about how radicalization is related to extremism and terrorism have resulted in competing conceptualizations of radicalization. In one of the most notable examples within terrorism studies, Sageman (2008) and Hoffman (2008) agree that understanding radicalization is imperative to understanding terrorism, but their interpretations of how radicalization occurs differ. Hoffman believes that radicalization occurs as a function of recruitment and training performed by a small core of centralized hardliners. For Hoffman, formal and structured terrorist groups like al-Qaeda are capable of “top-down...planning and operational capabilities” (Hoffman, 2008). In contrast, Sageman asserts that radicalization occurs largely in the absence of formal guidance. For Sageman, the threat of radicalization and terrorism comes primarily from small, leaderless, and loosely associated groups of acquaintances (Sageman, 2008). Conceptual disagreements such as the Sageman-Hoffman debate have rendered “radicalization” a difficult term to describe.

These issues have contributed to a diverse literature on radicalization, illustrated most prominently by the failure of the terrorism research community to develop a consensus definition for the phenomenon. To be sure, several definitions have been offered from an array of academics and counter-terror practitioners. However, as with terrorism and extremism, many of the definitions offered have emphasized some facets of the radicalization process while de-emphasizing or ignoring others. Although this has

made for spirited debate within the academic and professional communities, it has also made the understanding of radicalization's relationship with terrorism context-specific. The following discussion will explore previous definitions and their respective emphases, and will result in a new definition that emphasizes the significance of communication in fostering radicalization, thus paving the way for explaining how extremist narratives may contribute to the radicalization process.

### **Extant radicalization definitions.**

Many researchers have attempted to employ radicalization as a central concept for theorizing about political violence. Scholars within education (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994), history (e.g., Rubenstein, 2008), psychology (Blackwell, 2003; de Rosa, 2006; Ray, 1987), business (Creed, 2003; Shamir, 2004), rhetorical analysis (e.g., Ferree, 2003; Herrick, 1992), political science (Pappas, 2008), and other disciplines have all conducted research on radicalism or radicalization, often with conflicting definitions for them. Despite the many differences that exist among extant definitions for radicalization, there also exist similarities that reveal commonalities in how some theorize about the process.

To inform the construction of a definition for radicalization, I performed a review of the literature to identify key aspects of the process. Because this search was geared primarily towards understanding how radicalization has been historically understood, I limited this review to research that (a) attempted to formally explicate radicalization as the focus of the writing, (b) stated an explicit definition for radicalization as part of a larger study on political violence (and related phenomena), or (c) provided a framework for radicalization as part of a larger study on political violence (and related phenomena), but neglected to explicitly state a definition the term.

This search was undertaken by reviewing influential research related to radicalization (e.g. Hoffman, 1998; Hoffman, 2003; Horgan, 2005; McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008; Sageman, 2004; Sageman, 2008) to identify the means by which their authors developed their respective definitions for the term. In addition, these works were used as launching pads from which other research on radicalization could be identified by way of the research they cited. Finally, a search of online academic databases revealed other sources that had not been revealed through the exploration of relevant reference pages. These databases, including PsycInfo (1982-current), ProQuest, and Google Scholar, yielded a variety of other sources that had not been represented in the previous searches (e.g. Cilluffo, Cardash, & Whitehead, 2007; Post & Sheffer, 2007; Precht, 2007; Silber & Bhatt, 2007).

This exercise yielded a number of definitions for radicalization. Some of these definitions were explicitly stated while others needed to be inferred from the context in which they were presented. Among these, there appeared to be four “types” that emphasized a particular theorized facet of the phenomenon. These include an emphasis on (a) *identity negotiation* (definitions that conceptualize radicalization primarily in terms of the assimilation of a particular viewpoint at the cost of one’s unique psychological characteristics), (b) *acquisition of motivational knowledge* (definitions that conceptualize radicalization as a process by which a particular viewpoint acts as knowledge to be acquired from a teacher), (c) *social networks* (definitions that conceptualize radicalization as a process that occurs as a function of interaction with trusted others), and (d) *incremental commitment to a group* (definitions that conceptualize radicalization as a gradual process of social and psychological change).

***Radicalization as identity negotiation.***

Based on research on social and psychological conditioning in cults, Stahelski (2004) claimed that an individual becomes a greater threat to engage in terrorism through a process characterized by changes in perceptions of identity. This process subsumes several steps related to changes in an individual's perceptions about him/herself and his/her social affiliations. Although Stahelski's positions are derived from research on cults, his description of how an individual becomes involved with and committed to a clandestine (and at times, violent) organization closely relates to more traditional discussions of radicalization in the context of terrorism.

It is widely established that for most individuals, meaningful and personally-significant group memberships are beneficial for psychological health and development (Forsythe, 1999). In most societies, individuals fulfill their needs for belonging and association by affiliating themselves with a wide range of groups. Although being in different types of groups facilitates feelings of belonging, none of these groups (except for perhaps family) is completely essential to an individual's self-concept (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2002).

Affiliation with multiple groups, however, protects against dependence on any one group for the construction of one's own identity. In this vein, Singer and Lalich (1995) argued that for a subversive group to effectively condition an individual to fully adopt and assimilate the group's ideology, the group must be the individual's only affiliation. Stahelski (2004) referred to this as "depluralization." Often times, geographic isolation serves as a means by which an individual is forced to leave his/her previous affiliations. When physical separation is unattainable however, an individual may be

pressured to voluntarily avoid their conventional affiliations while connecting themselves to the extremist group (Morgan, 2001). As Berger and Luckmann (1966) stated, “people and ideas that are discrepant with the new definitions of reality are systematically avoided” (p. 159).

Once outside affiliations have been eradicated, Stahelski (2004) argues that an individual is more susceptible to losing their personal identity (i.e. “self-deindividuation”). New members replace personal values, beliefs, attitudes, or behavior patterns with those expected by established members of the group. Members of the group lose their perceptions about right and wrong, “surrendering their personal values on the altar of group approval” (Akhtar, 1999, p. 352). Jaeger (1981) described this process as the “development of a counterculture, of an alternative system of norms and aims that establishes the frontiers, reduces the constraints, imposes compliance, and—in the situation of complete isolation from the external world—replaces the normal standard of right and wrong, good and evil, by means of a different or alternative value orientation” (p. 157).

Perceptions of reality, particularly perceptions regarding how social forces impinge on one’s life, become aligned with those of the group’s leadership. Over time, a person may begin to think of him/herself not as an individual with unique features, but as a cog in a larger machine—a deindividuated contributor to the achievement of the group’s goals (Stahelski, 2004). In effect, the individual person with unique features is lost and an identity as simply “part of the group” emerges.

In conjunction with the loss of one’s perceptions of self, an individual may also deindividuate those who do not belong to the same ingroup (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert,

2001). Stahelski called this phase in the process “other-deindividuation” (Stahelski, 2004). As an individual’s perceptions about how his/her social conditions are influenced by external groups and forces, he/she may begin to perceive members of these external groups and forces as a homogenous collection of enemies (Morgan, 2001). This is often marked by an attitude that considers all members of the enemy group the same—they all think alike, they all behave alike, they all *are* alike. This is significant because some research has suggested that aggression is negatively associated with perceptions of individuality (see Brown, 2000; Mullen, 1986; Reicher, Spears, & Postmes, 1995; Taylor, O’Neal, Langley, & Butcher, 1991). By homogenizing individuals in external groups in parallel with the development of an image of oneself as an anonymous cog in the extremist group, an individual has effectively simplified his world into groups of “us” and “them.”

After categorizing people as being part of the “us” group or “them” group, Stahelski (2004) argues that individuals may begin to ascribe unilaterally positive attributes to members of the ingroup and negative attributes to members of the outgroup (i.e. “de-humanization”). At this stage, group members will begin to consider their perceived enemies as inhuman through reference to subhuman categories such as animals, pests, and vermin (see Waller, 2002) or “negatively valued superhuman creatures such as demons, monsters, and satans” (Bar-Tal, 2000, p. 122). Over time, consistent use of this terminology in reference to specified outgroups can influence an individual’s attitudes toward his/her perceived enemy and his/her status in relation to that enemy.

By perpetuating the viewpoint that members of enemy groups are subhuman and/or inherently evil, extremist groups rationalize aggression and violence against those perceived enemies. Ulrike Meinhof once described her attitude toward her perceived enemies: “We say that policemen are pigs, that guy in uniform is a pig; he is not a human being. *And we behave toward him accordingly* (emphasis added, Meinhof, cited in Juenschke, 1988, p. 164).

The vast majority of the literature on radicalization specifies justification for the use of violence as an indicator of it. Therefore, once an individual adheres to the belief that the use of violence against his/her perceived enemies is justified, it can be argued that that individual has been radicalized. This is significant because Stahelski includes a fifth stage in his model for radicalization, dubbed “demonization.” Demonization “occurs when...members become convinced that the enemy is in league with the devil and cosmic evil” (Stahelski, 2004, paragraph 19). Although included in his model, Stahelski notes that demonization is a psychological strategy to help prevent feeling remorse *after* taking violent action. Because (a) Stahelski never formally proposes a definition for radicalization, and (b) most extant definitions for radicalization have justification for violent action as their upper limit, the fifth stage in Stahelski’s process can be viewed not as a tenet of radicalization, but rather as a means by which to psychologically tolerate its behavioral manifestations.

Similar to Stahelski, Borum (2003; 2010) explains movement toward the use of terrorism in terms of a four-stage process of acquiring a “terrorist mindset.” This individual-actor model explains how grievances can be transformed into dissatisfaction, dislike, or hatred of a target group, and how those feelings can subsequently be

transformed into a motivation to perform violence. Generally, this process starts by framing an unsatisfying social condition or grievance (“It’s not right”) as being unjust or biased against a particular group (“It’s not fair”). This injustice is then blamed on a target policy, person, or nation (“It’s your fault”) and the responsible party is denigrated or demonized (“You are evil”). This assists in disengaging an individual from moral restraints regarding harming that entity and motivates aggression towards it (Borum, 2010).

Although Stahelski never explicitly proposed a formal definition for radicalization, the phenomena he described suggest that radicalization be defined as *the replacement of a personal identity with a collective identity based on the attitudes, beliefs, and proposed behaviors of an extremist group*. It is clear that there is some evidence supporting Stahelski’s position that issues related to identity formation in the context of an extremist group are important facets of the radicalization process. However, current descriptions of the process are too narrow and too linear to be considered a comprehensive portrayal of radicalization. For example, in Stahelski’s conceptualization of radicalization, an individual will deindividuate himself prior to dehumanizing a targeted enemy group. It is possible, however, for an individual to have preconceived negative attitudes about a particular group prior to becoming involved with an extremist movement at all. To use the language of one of the interview excerpts above, it is plausible that an individual will think of police officers as pigs prior to becoming involved with an extremist group and experiencing a reduced sense of uniqueness and an enhanced sense of group membership. This contradicts the assertion that deindividuation must be antecedent to dehumanization.



Models within the literature on cult radicalization (from which Stahelski heavily draws) likewise present the process as being phasic in nature. For example, as first described by Schein (1971), Singer and Lalich (1995) described three stages people go through as their thoughts and attitudes are altered. First, in the “unfreezing stage”, an individual’s sense of self and notions about how the world operates are destabilized by interactions within the group. The authors argue that successful attitude and behavior change is contingent upon the cult’s ability to undermine an individual’s self confidence in his/her skills, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. Second, in the “changing” stage, beliefs and attitudes are altered. The uncertainty introduced in the first stage is assuaged by introducing new standards for proper beliefs, attitudes, and behavior. From here, an individual will move into the third stage, “refreezing.” In this stage, the cult reinforces desired behaviors with rewards and punishes those attitudes and behaviors with criticism and ridicule.

The process developed by Schein (1971) and utilized by Singer and Lalich (1995) is somewhat less nuanced than the one described by Stahelski (2004). However, it is clear that Stahelski’s stage-like process for identity negotiation in the context of joining a radical movement was heavily influenced by Singer and Lalich’s perspective, who also referenced the significance of replacing one’s beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors with those that align with the group.

This conceptualization of radicalization does not address a number of relevant questions related to how individuals radicalize. For example, what prompts movement down the path toward the justification of and potential participation in violence? How do individuals learn the attitudes and beliefs they are expected to adopt? In a general sense,

why do these attitudes and beliefs take hold? These are important questions that are not comprehensively addressed by the identity negotiation perspective.

Although it also suffers from shortcomings that will be discussed, another perspective on radicalization does provide some outlook on the mechanisms inherent in extremist organizations that convey ideology from established members to budding radicals. This perspective suggests that the process is primarily a function of knowledge transfer.

***Radicalization as the acquisition of motivational knowledge.***

It is widely established within terrorism studies that knowledge transfer is imperative for the survival of terrorist movements. The majority of the research conducted in this area has been focused on the significance of *technical knowledge* in achieving a terrorist group's objectives. Knowledge related to the collection of intelligence on potential targets (Weimann, 2006, p. 121), construction of low- and high-grade explosives (Cohen, 2003; Hoffman, 1998, p. 108), circumvention of security protocols (Gunaratna, 2006), and exploitation of the media to induce fear and submission (Combs, 2006) is regularly taught and learned within terrorist organizations. Of course, transferring this type of knowledge to new recruits is an integral part of a successful terror campaign. However, some researchers argue that another type of teaching and learning must occur within terrorist groups to ensure their survival. This second type of knowledge, which is geared towards motivating potential recruits by imparting the group's ideology, has been referred to as *motivational knowledge* (Forest, 2006).

Technical knowledge transfer is important for understanding how individuals commit

acts of terrorism, but motivational knowledge is more salient to understanding how individuals come to develop mindsets capable of terrorism.

Without bringing new members into the fold, a terrorist organization cannot endure. In reference to one of the more infamous terrorist organizations worldwide, Hoffman (2003) argued that al-Qaeda's ability to survive "is not predicated on the total number of jihadists that it may have or have not trained in the past, but on its continued ability to recruit, to mobilize, and to animate both actual and would-be fighters, supporters, and sympathizers" (p. 9). In essence, the radicalization of new recruits through the dissemination of motivational knowledge is the lifeblood of terrorist organizations. In this vein, one perspective argues that before a budding terrorist is taught how to elude security forces, organize operations, or utilize weaponry, they are taught the ideology of the group for which they justify the use of violence. With regard to the importance of motivational knowledge in sustaining a terrorist movement, Bowyer Bell (1998) once claimed that while an "underground army inevitably has a training program, at least in theory...they are far more concerned with maintaining the creed than in instilling the techniques of war" (p. 137).

Despite the assertion that motivational knowledge acquisition is imperative for bringing new members into the fold of a radical group, few have highlighted teaching or learning as a central facet of the radicalization process. One notable exception to this is found in the definition for radicalization offered by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Analysis Unit (RCMP). The RCMP defines radicalization as "the process by which individuals are introduced to an overly ideological message and belief system and taught

or encouraged to follow thought and behavior patterns that could eventually (but not always) lead to extremist activity or direct action” (as cited in Pressman, 2008).

The RCMP’s emphasis on learning as the key mechanism by which radicalization occurs is not unfounded. Much of the work aimed at illustrating the link between individual learning and ideology adoption uses language that bears some resemblance to other research on radicalization. Forest (2006), for example, claimed that knowledge regarding the history, objectives, and motivations of an extremist movement plays an integral role in inspiring an individual to take up arms for the sake of a religious or political cause. Further, there is some basis for the contention that motivational knowledge is transferred from established ideologues to potential recruits via a variety of social institutions or entities. Some of the entities include, but are not limited to:

- Religious centers (e.g. mosques)
- Radical boarding schools
- The terrorist group itself via an introductory formal training program
- Other authority figures (e.g. parental figures)

For example, shoe-bomber Richard Reid and the “20<sup>th</sup> hijacker,” Zacarias Moussaoui, were found to have connections to the Finsbury Park mosque in North London (CNN, 2003). Although a relationship with a place of worship is not a punishable offense in and of itself, the fact that the mosque’s leader, Sheikh Abu Hamza, was arrested in 2004 for terror-related charges (U.S. Department of Justice, 2004) suggests that Reid and Moussaoui had been exposed to radical teachings in their respective times at the mosque. Similarly, in Hamburg, Germany, the Quds mosque brought together and inspired several al-Qaeda recruits, including the leader of the September 11<sup>th</sup> hijackers,

Mohammed Atta (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, 2004, p. 160-165).

In addition to mosques, religious boarding schools have also been shown to teach radical ideologies to potential terrorists. Within some of these *madrasas*, students are instructed in courses on Arabic, Islam, and the Koran, and develop a sense of commitment to jihad against purported enemies of the Muslim faith (Weaver, 2002). Reiterating the notable link between these religious boarding schools and radical ideologies, Singer (2001) asserted that up to 15% of Pakistan's Muslim madrasas are aligned with political or religious terrorist groups where they are instructed that hatred of a designated enemy is permissible and that holy war against this enemy allows for the murder of civilians- Muslim and non-Muslim alike. At the least, madrasas in the Middle East and southeast Asia play an important role in perpetuating terrorism by introducing students to radical Islamist ideology and associated activities (Abuza, 2006; Forest, 2006).

Instillation of an extremist ideology is not unique to radical Islamism. Jackson (2006) identified the induction, education, and socialization of new recruits as a central goal of training for the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) during the 1970s and 1980s as well. During this initial induction period, potential recruits were asked to attend training sessions during which established PIRA members taught about the essence of Irish Republicanism, what Irish Republicanism means to the recruit and the organization, and the policies of the movement as a whole (McAnally, cited in Jackson, 2006). Of course, teaching a recruit about the history of the movement and its motivations does not

necessarily affect the military capability of the movement, but “its contribution to group cohesion and management means that it cannot be ignored” (Jackson, 2006, p. 121).

The above examples illustrate that imparting motivational knowledge related to a radical ideology may play some part in the radicalization process. Like any cognitive schema, individuals must learn a particular ideology before they adhere to it. However, by suggesting only that radicalization requires the introduction to, teaching of, and encouragement for a radical ideology, the learning model for radicalization neglects to attend to the factors related to an individual’s acceptance of a particular teaching and the mechanisms by which teaching and learning is accomplished. Although learning about a radical ideology and its recommended behaviors may serve as a launching point for radicalization, this definition does not account for the millions of individuals who are taught about things related to radical ideologies (e.g. a particular group’s perceived history of victimization, the identification of those responsible for their plight, etc.) but do not adhere to them. Other factors must be at play.

That said, it would be folly to ignore the effects of radical institutions and valued authority figures as they pertain to radicalization. This critique is not meant to discredit the learning model for radicalization, but rather to suggest that it may be part of a more comprehensive explanatory paradigm for the process. The exposure to and teaching of motivational knowledge, whether through formal institutions or informal relationships, is *required* for an individual to become radicalized. By itself, however, the acquisition of motivational knowledge is not *sufficient* in explaining how one develops a sense of commitment to a radical ideology.

Another perspective that attempts to more explicitly address these shortcomings emphasizes the notion that radicalization is predicated not only by the acquisition of motivational knowledge, but also the interpersonal context in which it occurs. This perspective argues that radicalization is primarily a function of relevant social affiliations.

***Radicalization as a function of social networks.***

On the basis of research pertaining to the origins and evolution of global terror networks, Sageman (2004; 2008) has posited that the radicalization process is innately characterized by an individual's social relationships, whereby an individual's beliefs can intensify through consistent interaction with similarly-minded others. Whereas the aforementioned perspectives on radicalization are limited in their foci (a changing sense of self/other and the mere dissemination of information, respectively), the social affiliation perspective on radicalization allows for a number of psychological mechanisms to operate in parallel that may cause an individual to radicalize. This is because in this perspective, radicalization is not characterized by any specific psychological process or phenomenon. Instead, this perspective argues only that the common factor related to how an individual moves down a pathway to radicalization is his/her interpersonal relationships with others who are already involved with a radical movement in some psychological, if not physical capacity. It allows for variation in how radicalization occurs via social interaction.

Although he avoids stating a formal definition for radicalization, Sageman (2004) emphasized the importance of several kinds of social relationships that may lead to an individual's progression toward joining a terrorist organization. These relationship types—friendship, kinship, discipleship, and worship—provide the personal contexts in

which an individual may interact with others who are interested in a particular radical movement. Within clusters of individuals, strong personal relationships are developed and affiliation and dedication to the movement is intensified.

After this period of intensification, the cluster of individuals will seek out a formal link to the radical movement in an attempt to be officially accepted into it. From this, we can describe radicalization as being defined by the social affiliation model as *an intensification of beliefs resulting from social relationships with others who have a common interest in an extremist religious or political ideology.*

Several researchers have adopted Sageman's perspective as being an accurate portrayal of radicalization. In his description of the 7/7 London bombers, for example, Thayer (2005) explained that they attended the same mosque and generally "hung out" together as friends. Consistent with Sageman's model, their descent into radicalization was facilitated by regular meetings in places of worship and study circles, during which the three bombers mutually developed a social conservatism that isolated them from their peers. Using the London bombers as an exemplar of Sageman's arguments, Thayer (2005) stressed that social network theory highlights the importance of "social bonds among groups of friends that predate formal recruitment into the global jihad as the critical element of this process" (p. 18). Similarly, in his depiction of new recruits to al-Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula (QAP), Hegghammer (2006) asserted that "group dynamics such as peer pressure and intra-group affection seem to have been very crucial in the [radicalization] process". In his analysis of 242 jihadis, Bakker (2006) also found that radicalization did not occur in response to efforts of al-Qaeda recruiters, but that the



jihadis tended to become involved in terrorism by way of social networks of friends or relatives.

The importance of social networks in the radicalization process is borne out in research concerning European radical groups as well. In research by Della Porta (1988) on Italian left-wing groups, at least 843 out of 1,214 individuals had at least one friend already participating in the movement at the time of their initial involvement. Further, in more than 70 percent of these cases, the new member had *more* than one friend who was initially involved (p. 158).

For many, their radicalization and subsequent involvement with a radical group are inherently linked to relationships with those to whom they are close. Through interviews with members of the Italian Red Brigades, Della Porta (1992) found that several members emphasized an innate connection between social affiliations and political interests. These findings were consistent with those of Neidhardt (1982) and Wasmund (1986) regarding the German Red Army Faction (RAF) of the 1970s and early 1980s. Wasmund (1986) claimed that most new recruits into the RAF became involved with the group through personal connections with others who were involved with “political initiatives, communes, self-supporting organizations, or committees” and that the number of romantic couples and kin relationships present within the RAF was “astonishingly high” (pp. 204). Likewise, Neidhardt (1982) depicted the RAF as being connected to form a social network, tied together by links of personal acquaintance.

The above examples illustrate the extent to which an individual’s social networks affect his/her movement toward a radical group. It should be noted that those who adopt a social network perspective on how an individual becomes involved with a terrorist

organization generally accept there to be three stages in this process (see Bakker, 2006; Sageman, 2004; Thayer, 2005):

1. Social affiliation with a radical movement through friendship, kinship, discipleship, or religious ties
2. Intensification of beliefs and faith leading to acceptance of the radical group's ideology
3. Formal acceptance into the movement through the encounter with a link to the movement

Although these three stages are emphasized in the social network perspective, only the first two relate to fundamental belief and/or attitude change, and thus should be the only stages considered to be indicative of radicalization. In this model, it is assumed that individuals who seek out and obtain formal acceptance into a terrorist movement (the third stage) have already had their beliefs intensified to the point of radicalization (via the first two stages). Therefore, formal acceptance into the movement should not be considered a part of the radicalization process, but rather the manifestation of radicalization in a specific way. Other process models for radicalization make this distinction explicit (see Horgan, 2009) and will be discussed in greater detail later.

Despite this, there are a number of terrorism researchers who stand by this perspective on radicalization as there exists a large amount of evidence to suggest that social affiliations do, in fact, play a very large part in an individual's radicalization. Still, this perspective is limited in its linearity. This is not to suggest that social affiliations do not affect an individual's radicalization. They almost surely do. Interviews with jailed and former terrorists across several movements illustrate the extent to which one's

personal relationships can affect their level of commitment to a particular ideology. This is only to suggest that while there are a number of examples depicting radicalization occurring as a function of interacting within a cluster of similarly-minded individuals, there are also examples of individuals seeking similarly-minded individuals with whom to cluster *after* developing a sense of commitment to a radical ideology.

There is a final type of conceptualization for radicalization that addresses some of the issues stated above. In this conceptualization, the process-based nature of radicalization is emphasized. Although some definitions that highlight radicalization's process-based nature depict it as a direct, linear phenomenon, there are others that recognize radicalization as a decidedly more complex process that ultimately results in increased dedication to a radical ideology.

***Radicalization as process or incremental commitment.***

Although the term “process” is invoked to describe radicalization in a number of ways, there are few definitions for radicalization that actually emphasize the importance of incremental change in leading to an individual's commitment to radical political or religious beliefs. To illustrate, consider the discussion above regarding Stahelski's (2004) definition of radicalization. Although Stahelski does discuss radicalization as a series of stages (depluralization, self and other deindividuation, and so on), his emphasis is on identity negotiation. In his model, the phasic quality of radicalization takes a backseat to the common theme described across the stages: perceptions of self and other. Like Stahelski's (2004) definition, the definitions and conceptualizations explored in this section have their own respective tenets, but unlike the above definitions, it is their explicit *emphases on process* that warrants their grouping together.

Among those definitions that emphasize incremental change and process, however, there is an important distinction to be made. Whereas some scholars have described the process-based nature of radicalization as being essentially sequential, there are others who have defined the process of radicalization as being unstructured and non-linear. This distinction is subtle, but has important ramifications for how radicalization is conceptualized. Let us first turn to a definition for radicalization that describes the phenomenon in largely linear terms.

McCauley and Moskaleiko (2008) argued that radicalization refers to a “change in beliefs, feelings, and behaviors in directions that increasingly justify intergroup violence and demand sacrifice in the defense of the ingroup” (p. 416). They claim that political radicalization can occur at the individual, group, or mass level through a wide range of mechanisms (see McCauley & Moskaleiko, 2008, p. 418; McCauley & Moskaleiko, 2011 for a summary). Further, they claim that radicalization of behavior, (“increasing time, money, risk-taking, and violence in support of a political cause” [McCauley & Moskaleiko, 2008, p. 416]), is positively correlated with one’s beliefs and feelings such that “those who do more are likely to have different and stronger feelings about the conflict than those who do less” (p. 416). A number of social movement theorists share this perspective (see Flam, 2004; Goodwin, 2001; Kemper, 1981; Scott, 1990).

From this assumption, McCauley (2006; McCauley & Moskaleiko, 2008) developed a model depicting radicalization as a process in which an individual moves up through various stages of a pyramid as his/her beliefs, feelings, and behaviors move toward the justification of violence against a perceived enemy. At the base of the pyramid

are those who sympathize with or support the goals of terrorist groups, even if they disagree with the means by which those goals are pursued. For example, during the Troubles, the base of McCauley's pyramid for the Irish Republican Army would be comprised of everyone who believed that the British should not have an influence on Irish affairs. The apex would consist of the "hardcore" radicalized—those individuals who actively engage British soldiers or Loyalist paramilitaries in armed conflict. In this example, individuals at the apex of the pyramid are so strongly committed to the Republican cause that they actively engage in violent operations to support it.

This conceptualization of the movement toward armed resistance suggests that radicalization is a linear path, characterized by increasing levels of commitment to an ideology that justifies violence. In essence, this model asserts that those who "do more" (i.e. those at the top of the pyramid) are more radicalized than those individuals who "do less" (i.e. those at the bottom of the pyramid). Continuation of this logic suggests that for an individual to engage in increasingly violent behavior, he/she must undergo an equivalent change in his/her beliefs and attitudes in parallel.

In a similar model, Moghaddam (2005) describes movement towards the use of terrorism in terms of climbing a "staircase." According to Moghaddam's model, if an individual attempts to remedy a perceived injustice or unsatisfying social condition and fails, this will lead to feelings of frustration and aggression (first floor), which can be projected onto an agent perceived to be the cause of the unsatisfying condition. This agent is then regarded as an enemy (second floor). As anger and frustration toward the enemy grows, some individuals will become increasingly sympathetic to the violent tactics and the terrorist groups that employ them against the perceived enemy (third

floor). A contingent of these sympathizers will eventually come to see terrorist groups as legitimate and opt to join a group, organization, or movement that justifies, advocates, or uses terrorism against their perceived enemy (fourth floor). At the highest level of the staircase are those who have joined the terrorist group, organization or movement, overcome any barriers to engaging in violence, and actively engage in terrorist action (fifth floor; Moghaddam, 2005).

Although these perspectives seem commonsensical, there are some reasons why one should have pause about assigning a direct, positive relationship between radicalization and violent behavior. There is some evidence to suggest that the process posited by the pyramid and staircase models do not capture several nuances associated with radicalization and its relationship with active engagement in a radical movement. Consider the examples of individuals who have participated in violent behavior without preliminarily adopting the group's ideology. For example, Silke (2003) described the forced conscription practices by the Loyalist Ulster Defence Association (UDA) in their attempts to bring new members into the group in Northern Ireland. Youths who had little ideological commitment to the UDA were forcibly recruited to join the group. Due to their membership in the UDA (albeit compulsory), they were, in McCauley's language, at the apex of the pyramid in a behavioral sense. McCauley argues, however, that "higher layers in the pyramid are associated with more *radical political views, more support for violence, and more risk-taking and personal sacrifice in support of the terrorists*" (McCauley, 2006, p. 48). While these individuals certainly engaged in more risk-taking and personal sacrifice in support of the UDA, their political views at the time of their conscription was hardly radical, and their support for violence to aid the UDA could have

ranged from marginal to nonexistent. At the very least, their respective levels of support for UDA violence were not substantial enough to motivate their joining the group without the threat of physical harm.

The UDA is not unique in its forcing of individuals to fight prior to their acceptance of the group's ideology. The use of child soldiers in militias (International Criminal Court, 2005) and terrorist groups (see Howden, 2009; Raghavan, 2010) is also widespread across Africa. Many of those brought into the fighting ranks of these movements are kidnapping victims or are otherwise there against their will (International Criminal Court, 2005). Clearly, those individuals being forced into joining a radical movement likely do not adhere to the movement's ideology at the time of their conscription.

Intimidation as a means to recruit fighters is pervasive elsewhere as well. In his book, *The Accidental Guerrilla*, noted counter-terror strategist David Kilcullen (2009) suggested that radicalization is often erroneously attributed to individuals who engage in violence for altogether different reasons than those that are assumed. For example, with respect to suspected Taliban fighters in Afghanistan, an Afghan provincial governor said:

Ninety percent of the people you call "Taliban" are actually tribals. They're fighting for loyalty or Pashtun honor, and to profit their tribe. *They're not extremists*. But they're terrorized by the other 10 percent: religious fanatics, terrorists, people allied to [the Taliban leadership shura in] Quetta. *They're afraid that if they try to reconcile, the crazies will kill them* (emphasis added, Kilcullen, 2009, p. 39).

In another example, Kilcullen (2009) described how during a firefight with Taliban fighters, an American Special Forces patrol came under fire from local farmers. There was no evidence to suggest that the locals had any strategic ties with the Taliban, nor was there any political reason that the farmers chose to engage the American forces. In fact, after the firefight, several of the villagers “said they had no love for the Taliban and were generally well-disposed toward the Americans in the area” (Kilcullen, 2009, p. 40). The villagers’ primary reason for firing upon the American convoy: boredom. Although they espoused no radical attitudes toward American forces and they demonstrated no sympathies toward the Taliban, these individuals attacked the convoy simply because it would be an exciting thing to do and they would have felt shame if they had missed out on the action.

Although the examples outlined above differ in some ways, there is a commonality that cuts across them- engaging in what is thought to be “radical” activity can, and does sometimes occur in the absence of radical beliefs or attitudes by those who ideologically belong at the “base of the pyramid” or “on one of the lower floors”.

The reverse situation is also plausible. An individual may adhere to a radical ideology to the point of condoning the use of violence, but may avoid risk-taking and personal sacrifice for the terrorist movement they claim to support. In simpler terms, just as the “non-radicalized” can plausibly engage in terrorist activity, the “radicalized” can plausibly avoid such activity.

For example, in a 2008 survey of 1,270 adult Palestinians, more than 800 respondents supported launching rockets from the Gaza strip against Israeli civilians (Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, 2008). Using McCauley’s pyramid



or Moghaddam's staircase as guides with which to gauge belief and attitude change, these individuals are radicalized, as they espouse a radical political view and support for violence against civilian targets. However, despite their espousal of radical beliefs, it is unlikely that they are all actively engaging in terrorist-related activity. The linear relationship between radicalization and engagement does not seem to hold in this example either.

In a separate survey conducted by the Program on International Policy Attitudes (Kull, Ramsay, Weber, Lewis, & Mohseni, 2009), participants were asked about their inclinations toward attacks on American civilians in the United States. Within the Palestinian territories (N = 638), 24% of participants responded that they approve of attacks on American civilians on U.S. soil. Lower, but still considerable proportions of participants in other countries responded similarly (11% in Jordan [N = 583], 9% in Pakistan [N = 1200], 8% in Turkey [N = 1023], Kull et al., p. 5). Although the proportions of individuals within each sample that responded favorably toward attacks against U.S. civilians were in their respective minorities, they still represented dozens of individuals out of a few hundred that espoused an extremist attitude (i.e. that violence against American noncombatants is justified). Still, the number of individuals who are active participants of terrorist groups within the aforementioned countries is extremely low. Kull et al.'s (2009) findings corroborate those of the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research—while many individuals may adhere to radical beliefs, an extremely small portion of these go on to engage in violent behavior.

Related to this point, another reason one should take caution to inherently associate radicalization and violence is that participation in violent behavior *is just one*

possible behavioral outcome related to this process. As mentioned above, many individuals who are radicalized opt not to engage in terrorist-related activity. Instead, they may seek other, nonviolent outlets to address their discontent.

There are several, who like McCauley (2006; McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008) and Moghaddam (2005), described radicalization as a process that has violent activity as its eventual outcome. For example, Silber and Bhatt (2007) define radicalization as “the progression of searching, finding, adopting, nurturing, and developing [an] extreme belief system to the point where it acts as a catalyst for a terrorist act” (p. 16). They asserted that although not all individuals who become frustrated with their lives and seek out like-minded individuals end up participating in political violence, “terrorism is the ultimate consequence of the radicalization process” (p. 16). Moreover, they identify steps to the radicalization process, including pre-radicalization (an individual’s life prior to starting the radicalization process), self-identification (characterized by a search for an extremist ideology to which to adhere in response to a cognitive event or crisis that challenged previously held beliefs), indoctrination (characterized by the complete assimilation of an extreme ideology), and “jihadization” (intended for the global Salafi movement, characterized by the acceptance of duty to fight for a given cause). Precht (2007) employed a very similar definition, asserting that in Europe, radicalization refers to “the process of adopting an extremist belief system and the willingness to use, support, or facilitate violence and fear as a method of effecting changes in society” (p. 16).

The definitions for radicalization presented by McCauley (2006, McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008), Precht (2007), and Silber and Bhatt (2007) have two marked similarities. First, they utilize a conceptualization of “process” that suggests a sequential

and stage-like progression from pre-radicalization to radicalization. Second, these definitions suggest, either implicitly or explicitly, that the end result of radicalization is violent behavior. However, as some of the examples presented above demonstrate, radicalization and engaging in violence are not perfectly correlated.

There are other process models that (a) challenge the notion of radicalization as an uninterrupted, undeviating process, and (b) reject the notion that the violent behavior is necessarily the end result of radicalization. For example, Horgan (2009) described radicalization as a “social and psychological process of incrementally experienced commitment to an extremist or political ideology” (p. 152). Horgan (2009) suggests that radicalization is not necessarily causally antecedent to violence- but becoming radicalized is a risk factor that contributes to the possibility of participating in violence.

Whereas the pyramid and staircase models for radicalization suggest a positive relationship between radicalization and violent behavior, Horgan (2009) claimed “the way in which individuals make choices about their involvement in...terrorism is complex and not reducible to single behavioural dimensions” (p. 144; see also Taylor & Horgan, p. 591). Later instantiations of McCauley and Moskaleiko’s (2008) original pyramid model were more consistent with this assertion. Leuprecht, Hataley, Moskaleiko, and McCauley (2009) posited a model for radicalization whereby one’s attitudes toward violent action are largely, but imperfectly correlated with the action they take. In this “double pyramid” model, although inactive individuals are most likely to be neutral with respect to their attitude toward a terrorist movement and active terrorists were most likely to feel a personal moral obligation to take part in it, the authors concede that “a few individual jihadist terrorists may accept no part of the Global Jihad narrative” and that

“there may be a few politically inert individuals who feel a personal moral obligation for jihad” (p. 65), thus illustrating the influence of a wide range of factors on one’s ultimate decision to participate in terrorism. At the center of Horgan’s model for radicalization are three process variables drawn from the literature on Cognitive Behavioral Therapy that may explain this decision process (CBT; see Beck, 1976). These include personal factors, setting events, and social/political/organizational factors (Horgan, 2009, p. 143).

*Personal factors* are “those that relate to the psychological factors as experienced by the individual at any stage of the process” (Horgan, 2009, p. 143). Personal factors vary from individual to individual, and include emotional states, immediate experiences (e.g. perceived repression at the hands of security forces), feelings of dissatisfaction with one’s current activity, feelings of identification with those they perceive as victims, and so on. *Setting events* relate to past contextual influence. Taylor and Horgan (2006) describe these influences as being “effectively unchangeable, in that they have happened as part of the individual’s socialization into family, work, religion, society, and culture” (p. 592). Setting events are those that have commonly been referred to as “root causes of terrorism” and include things like poverty, relative deprivation, and socioeconomic status. *The social/political/organizational context* refers to one’s “external social context that is specifically concerned with political expression and ideology” (Taylor & Horgan, 2006, p. 592) or how a radical organization opts to express that ideology.

In this model, radicalization cannot be reduced to a linear progression from non-violent to violent behavior. Instead, it is a function of the interplay between an individual’s personal factors, relevant setting events, and the social, political, or organizational context in which that individual exists.

Although Horgan (2009; Taylor & Horgan, 2006) argues that a *process* refers to a sequence of events that are normally sequenced and/or interdependent, he adds a caveat that with respect to radicalization, this sequence is not necessarily linear or “stage-like”. This definition for process differentiates Horgan’s conceptualization for radicalization from McCauley’s original pyramid model and Moghaddam’s staircase model. As noted above, the original pyramid model (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2006) suggests that those who are more radicalized engage in more extreme and violent behavior. For Horgan, the radicalized can undergo “role migration” (see Horgan, 2009, p. 10)—the process of shifting roles within a radical movement. Of course, an individual who has undergone radicalization may be inclined to engage in increasingly violent activity, but for any number of reasons (e.g. physical injury, incarceration), he/she may also participate in non-violent activity within the group. The relationship between individuals and their roles in a radical movement may be complex—individuals may not necessarily occupy one role (violent or non-violent), and the roles he/she does occupy will likely change over time (Horgan, 2009, p. 145). In short, for Horgan, radicalization can culminate in any number of behavioral outcomes, of which active engagement in terrorism is only one.

However, this is not to imply that the psychological processes that result in violence are entirely on par with those processes that result in other forms of protest (e.g. handing out leaflets, monetary support of a terrorist group). Jamieson (1990) commented on this difference, citing a “qualitative leap” associated with active participation in violence relative to other forms of involvement with a radical group. The difference between violent and non-violent support of a political or religious ideology is a question of an individual’s radicalization trajectory. Whereas support for or involvement in a

radical movement in *any* capacity is the result of radicalization, violent behavior is a result of what has been called *violent radicalization*, a “social and psychological process of increased and focused radicalization through involvement with a violent non-state movement” (Horgan, 2009, p. 152). Violent radicalization encompasses initial involvement with a terrorist group, but also includes a process of pre-involvement searching for an opportunity to engage in violence specifically, the consideration of alternative avenues of behavior, and remaining involved and *actively engaging* in terrorist activity. The individual who undergoes violent radicalization must have (a) the opportunity for engagement in violent behavior, and (b) the ability to make a choice about that engagement (Horgan, 2009).

In a similar distinction, the United States House of Representatives Act H. R. 1955 (the “Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act of 2007”) defines violent radicalization as the “process of adopting or promoting an extremist belief system for the purpose of facilitating ideologically based violence to advance political, religious, or social change” (H.R. 1955, 2007). In this Act, the United States House of Representatives is clearly stating that violent radicalization refers to a psychological process whereby an individual assimilates a belief system that advocates the use of violence for to achieve political or ideological goals.

The existence of the concept of violent radicalization allows for the possibility that an individual can undergo radicalization without participating in violent behavior. This stands in contrast to other research on radicalization as a process (McCauley & Moskaleiko, 2008; Precht, 2007; Silber & Bhatt, 2007) that suggests an inherent relationship between radicalization and engaging in violence.

*Themes across the definitions.*

Despite the large number of conceptual disagreements within the literature on radicalization, like extremism and terrorism, there are themes that cut across extant definitions that allow for the development of a useful definition for radicalization in the context of this dissertation. Table 3 summarizes the definitions outlined above and organizes them according to their respective emphases.

As evidenced by several of the definitions presented in Table 3, much of the extant research on radicalization has stopped short of explicitly defining the term. For example, Stahelski's (2004) identity negotiation model for radicalization explains how individuals become radicalized, but neglects to propose a formal definition for radicalization itself. Although some researchers have proposed formal definitions, the lack of consensus among these definitions coupled with the reluctance of other scholars to define the phenomenon risks leading research on radicalization and political violence to a place where some will claim that "we know radicalization when we see it." As was mentioned above, "knowing it when we see it" falls short of the standards for academic rigor necessary to investigate radicalization in an empirical fashion.

Still, it must be acknowledged that radicalization may be impossible to define in absolute terms. Like extremism and terrorism, it may be more useful to describe the phenomenon in relative terms—as a process that moves an individual toward a particular set of beliefs and attitudes under a particular set of circumstances. Given this, the best solution in trying to define radicalization may be to specify (a) the elements that affect the process, and (b) the boundary at which one can claim that radicalization has taken

place (Sedgwick, 2010; in the RET Model, that point is the adoption of an extremist ideology as defined above).

For the purposes of understanding radicalization as it pertains to narrative communication, some of the foci of the above-listed definitions for radicalization are significant while others are not. Therefore, a formal definition for radicalization that incorporates appropriate tenets of some of the above definitions is warranted. Further, the definition to be employed in this dissertation will include an important aspect that has thus far been absent from research on radicalization—the function of communication in the process. To facilitate empirical analysis of radicalization in the context of this project, this new, expedient conceptualization of the term will be offered in the following section.

### **Radicalization, Redefined**

I define radicalization as *an incremental social and psychological process prompted by and inextricably bound in communication, whereby an individual develops increased commitment to an extremist ideology resulting in the full or partial assimilation of beliefs and attitudes consistent with that ideology*. By offering this definition, we are able to identify messages and experiences that contribute to it. First, however, the individual components of the proposed definition of radicalization must be explored.

#### **The definition's components.**

##### ***Incremental.***

Radicalization does not occur instantaneously, nor does it result from experiencing a singular traumatic event. Instead, there is evidence to suggest that an individual's level of commitment to a particular ideology is cultivated over the course of



time and events. For example, through his interviews with members of the Provisional Irish Republican Army, Horgan (2005) found that commitment to the Republican cause was often a gradual process. One senior PIRA leader described this process: "...probably my first introduction to it was actually when I was going to primary school. I always had a tremendous interest in Irish history, and that continued on for a few years until secondary school...it wasn't until when the trouble broke out in the six counties that I...found myself...I think in conscience anyway, becoming more and more...committed. Well, I suppose really, our understanding of conflict, or our politicization, is something that grows and it continues to grow throughout our lives" (p. 86). Similarly, Sageman (2004) noted that the Canadian cell involved with the foiled millennium airline bombing plot were not recruited and "brainwashed." Instead, as mentioned above, their radicalization and militancy developed "over an incubation period of almost two years" (p. 108). Rotella (as cited in Sageman, 2004) reported a similar pattern of radicalization among a small group of friends in Milan, Italy. Within this group, their militant rhetoric escalated over a period of time after which they were ready to join the global Salafi jihad.

Although large scale or traumatic events can push an individual over the edge toward violence (O'Callaghan, 1998; Silke, 2003), radicalization likely requires a greater period of time and larger number of small-scale experiences that contribute to the adoption of an extremist ideology.

***Social and psychological.***

Next, consider radicalization as a process involving both "social" and "psychological" aspects. There are two complementary reasons why the radicalization process can be considered a social phenomenon. First, even in those cases in which it

seems an individual has gone through the radicalization process in isolation, there is typically some measure of association to a larger ideological movement. For example, although he alone wounded five at a Jewish Community Center and killed a Filipino mailman, Buford Farrow was known to have associated with several white supremacist groups (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008). Similarly, Ted Kaczynski (the Unabomber) related his beliefs and behaviors to a larger survivalist movement despite being characterized as a complete loner and isolationist. Although he was physically isolated, Kaczynski's beliefs were cultivated through contact with his environment. For example, Chase (2003) found that upon his relocation to rural Montana, Kaczynski was inspired by the political-philosophical writings of Jacques Ellul, which championed the efficacy of revolution. Kaczynski also went so far as to exchange letters with Ellul.

Kaczynski's and Farrow's respective cases illustrate the second reason radicalization can be considered a social phenomenon. Radical beliefs, like any, are not pulled from thin air—they are learned, cultivated, and maintained through salient social interactions. Sageman's (2004; 2008) work reflects the importance of social networks and interaction among members of those networks in the promotion of extremist ideologies. He argued that although "root causes" of terrorism are necessary requirements for an individual's radicalization, they are not sufficient by themselves to explain it (Sageman, 2004).

Instead, Sageman (2008) argues that "the critical elements" in the radicalization process are an individual's social bonds with friends, family, and the ideological movement toward which he/she is moving. Prior to commitment to a particular ideology, social bonds must be developed that support and reinforce the righteousness of that

ideology (p. 135). The International Crisis Group (2003) echoes Sageman's claims, reporting that the southeast Asian militant Islamic Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) passes down its jihadist ideology through strategic marriages and schools with Salafist curricula. Abuza (2006) summarized: "The single most important determinant in terrorist recruitment is 'pull' [positive reinforcement related to association with a terrorist/radical organization] which is achieved through organizational and social networks" (p. 66).

In light of the discussing radicalization as a social phenomenon, it is likewise necessary to characterize it as a psychological phenomenon. In all past iterations of its conceptualization, radicalization has been considered, at its core, a process by which an individual's beliefs and attitudes are altered. The new definition proposed does not deviate from this tradition. Because radicalization involves the alteration of an individual's beliefs and attitudes (with *or* without subsequent manifest behavior), radicalization as conceptualized above is a psychological process by definition.

***Prompted by and inextricably bound in communication.***

This facet of my definition for radicalization is the most integral to its study here. The assimilation of a belief system, regardless of its extremity, is not done in a vacuum. One can only be exposed to an ideology is through some communicative channel. I cast a wide net in defining "communicative channel" here, and propose that an ideology can be communicated face-to-face with other individuals or via any number of published resources (e.g. the Internet, pamphlets, books).

To assert that radicalization is prompted by communication suggests that adherents to an extremist ideology must somehow interact with potential recruits to incite and sustain the radicalization process. Corman and Schiefelbein (2006) address the

necessity of communication prompting radicalization by quoting Osama bin Laden in a letter to Emir Al-Momineen. In the letter, bin Laden champions communication to the public via the media as one of the “strongest methods” at his disposal (p. 71) for winning people to his side. Corman and Schiefelbein (2006) further claim that Islamists “have an explicit communication and public relations strategy, that they execute this strategy in a sophisticated manner that makes use of modern tools and techniques, and that they are rapidly assimilating new media into their repertoire” (p. 71). These assertions illustrate the centrality of communication in prompting and facilitating radicalization.

One cannot assimilate beliefs or develop psychological bonds to a particular ideology if he/she is not aware of or exposed the tenets of that ideology. To be made aware is to communicate, so without some form of communication related to the ideology to which an individual can be drawn, radicalization is impossible. Because radicalization can not occur without communication, it follows that empirical study of the exchanges and messages that play a part in the radicalization process is needed to understand the process.

***Extremist ideology.***

As outlined above, I define extremism as a psychological state in which an individual rigidly adheres to an ideology that is characterized by behaviors that marginalize other-minded individuals through a variety of means, up to and including the use of physical violence. An extremist ideology, then, is one that adheres to these standards. It follows then, that radicalization is the process by which an individual develops a sense of rigid commitment to an ideology that may condone the use of violence against a particular group for the sake of that ideology.

### ***Beliefs and attitudes.***

To understand the relationship between beliefs, attitudes, and terrorism, it is useful to reference theory that concerns beliefs and attitudes and how they relate with behavioral intention and volitional behavior. One such theory, Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975; 1980) Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) provides some insight into how the adoption of beliefs and attitudes regarding a particular ideology constitutes radicalization.

In summary, the TRA posits that the most direct causal indicator of volitional behavior is behavioral intention. That is, the best predictor of one's behavior is the intention that he/she has to perform that behavior. That intention, in turn, is predicted by (a) that individual's attitude (an affective or valenced response) toward the behavior and (b) the product of that individual's perception of valued others' expectations of him/her and the pressure he/she feels to match his/her behavior to those expectations. Ajzen and Fishbein's Summative Model of Attitude (1967) posits that attitude is primarily predicted by belief strength and belief evaluation. Belief strength is the certainty with which one believes that a particular attribute is linked with a particular volitional behavior (e.g. eating cake will make me gain weight). Belief evaluation is the extent to which the attribute (e.g. gaining weight) is judged to be a good thing or a bad thing.

Although some have argued that attitudes can be aroused in the absence of beliefs, several studies (see Fishbein, Ajzen, & Hinkle, 1980; Holbrook, 1977; Infante, 1973) have empirically investigated the proposition that attitudes are predicted by belief strength and belief evaluation, and there has been consistent positive support for these relationships. Tellingly, O'Keefe (1990) found that the statistical correlation between beliefs and attitudes has been reported as being as high as .80.

Given all this, a question arises: Why conceptualize radicalization as the assimilation of extremist beliefs and attitudes? In essence, this question has two parts. First, why not include behavioral intention or volitional behavior as components of radicalization? Second, why not constitute radicalization as being indicated by *only* beliefs *or* attitudes? To address the first question, including manifest behavior as a condition for radicalization conflates the concepts of radicalization and terrorism. Given that I theorize that radicalization leads to extremism, which can lead to terrorism, including terrorism as a necessary condition for radicalization produces a tautologous definition for radicalization. For the purposes of this dissertation, behavioral intention is likewise left out as a component of radicalization. Recall that some terrorism scholars (e.g. Horgan, 2009) have differentiated radicalization and violent radicalization. This distinction is an important one because it highlights that while radicalization *can be* a risk factor for engaging in terrorism, violent radicalization is a particular form of the phenomenon where commitment to an ideology is refined through participation in violent behavior. One implication of this distinction is that whereas participation in violent activity is the outcome of violent radicalization, there are a number of behavioral outcomes associated with “preliminary” radicalization. To avoid confounding these two phenomena, behavioral intention (which Ajzen and Fishbein [1967] have shown is a strong causal indicator of behavior) is left out of the definition for radicalization.

To address the second question, consider the definitions for beliefs and attitudes proposed by the aforementioned persuasion scholars (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1967; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; 1980; Hale, Householder, and Greene, 2002). Beliefs are unvalenced judgments about the relationship between an attribute and some behavior—they are our

perceived truths and falsehoods about the world. Because they are unvalenced, they are not motivational. They are simply our judgments about the world around us, which is not sufficient to be considered radicalization. For example, “Saudi Arabia is holy land” constitutes a belief.

On the other hand, attitudes are valenced judgments about a particular behavior. For example, “the presence of American troops in Saudi Arabia is a bad thing” constitutes an attitude. The assimilation of an ideology that justifies or promotes the use of violence is indicative of an attitude change in the direction of that extremist ideology. Radicalization, then, is attitude change in a direction consistent with an extremist ideology. According to the TRA, an attitude about an ideology (extremist or not) cannot be developed without having beliefs about the behaviors associated with that ideology. As such, if we are to accept that radicalization is characterized by the assimilation of extremist attitudes, we must likewise accept that beliefs are assimilated or changed as well.

Given this, the question remains: What tools do terrorist groups and organizations use to promote these changes in beliefs and attitudes? One response to this question emphasizes narratives as influential in the radicalization process.

### **The Use of Narrative as a Tool for Radicalization**

There currently exists an extensive literature on the ways in which multiple types of communication influence issues related to terrorism. For example, the “war of ideas” that is waged between terrorist groups and governments via mass communication channels to influence the greater public has been studied at great length (see Brown,

2003; Corman, 2006; 2008; Norris, Kern, & Just, 2003; Nacos, 2002; Schnell & Callaghan, 2005).

In addition, and evidentiary to an increased recognition of the importance of terrorist communication, many researchers have begun to investigate radical rhetoric and how terrorist groups employ it. For example, Pennebaker (2011; Chung & Pennebaker, 2011) has explored the use of computerized text analysis to infer aggressive intent on the part of terrorist organizations. In this line of research, qualitative content analytic techniques have been applied to terrorist press releases, interviews, and articles to illustrate that through an investigation of terrorist groups' stylistic language use, it is possible to identify not only *which* groups are most likely to engage in violence (Hermann & Saklev, 2011; Smith, 2004; 2008), but also *when* groups are most likely to engage in violence. Similarly, by analyzing language style used in terrorist groups' public statements, it is possible to predict the planning of aggressive action (Conway III, Gornick, Houck, Towgood, & Conway, 2011; Smith, Sudefeld, Conway III, & Winter, 2008; Walker, 2011), the ways in which the groups are organized (Pennebaker, 2011), and the extent to which the groups are bluffing about potential attacks (Handelman & Lester, 2007).

Other research related to the analysis of terrorist communication has done much to identify the "personality" of terrorist groups relative to ideologically-similar but nonviolent counterparts. Hart and Lind (2011) found that compared to nonviolent individuals, violent Islamists were more optimistic and willing to embrace charismatic authority. Other work in this domain has shown that relative to non-terrorist or control



groups, terrorist rhetoric is generally more social in nature, contained more references to the concept of power, and lower in rhetorical complexity (Conway III & Conway, 2011).

Despite the growing literature on communication's role in the use of political violence, the effect of specific types of communication on the individual radicalization process has been largely ignored. This fact is troubling considering the extent to which terrorists employ a wide variety of communication strategies to reach audiences in justifying their actions and achieving tactical objectives (Corman & Shiefelbein, 2006).

One type of persuasive communication that is pervasively used by militant groups is commonly referred to as *narrative communication*. Narratives play several critical roles for terrorist groups at various stages throughout the group's life cycle. As it pertains to the growth of a terrorist group through the radicalization of pertinent audience members, narratives provide incentives for recruitment by providing "justice frames" that incite discontent among audience members, justify the necessity of the terrorist group's existence to the community in which the group operates, reinforce pre-existing identities that are amenable to the actions of the terrorist group, and create new identities for group members (Casebeer & Russell, 2005). Despite the utility of narratives as tools for belief and attitude change in the context of a terrorist group, they have received little attention with respect to their roles in the radicalization process. This inattention is consequential, given their persuasive potency.

The major thrust of the current research will seek to redress this oversight by exploring narratives as communicative tools with which terrorist groups disseminate their ideology and pose a threat for radicalizing individuals who are exposed to them. To determine the radicalizing potential of extremist narratives, however, we must first

determine the persuasive efficacy of narrative communication in general. Should narrative communication be shown to influence beliefs and attitudes of audience members across research contexts, it follows that extremist narratives can induce the adoption of extremist beliefs and attitudes specifically. The following chapter will feature an investigation into the persuasive efficacy of narratives and identify them as instruments with which radical groups can bring individuals to adopt their ideology and place them at increased risk for engaging in terrorism.

### Chapter 3

ABSTRACT: Although terrorist groups have used narratives extensively, the persuasive efficacy of these narratives has yet to be illustrated. This chapter seeks to redress this oversight by determining the extent to which narratives can affect audience members' beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behavior. Through a meta-analysis, the cumulative literature on narratives shows them to positively affect beliefs ( $r = .19$ ), attitudes ( $r = .20$ ), and behavioral intentions ( $r = .19$ ). There were insufficient data to properly meta-analyze the effect of narratives on volitional behavior, but a Fisher's  $r$ -to- $Z_r$  transformation suggested that that relationship is likewise positive ( $r = .30$ ). Through these methods, it is determined that narratives are efficacious tools with which to persuade audience members, and as a corollary, that extremist narratives are effective at contributing to the radicalization of those that are exposed to them.

## **Determining the Persuasive Efficacy of Narratives**

Stories have been with us throughout the course of human history. They have been demonstrated to affect our emotional states (Hogan, 2003; Oatley, 1995; Oatley, 2002), our belief systems (Green & Brock, 2000; Prentice, Gerrig, & Bailis, 1997; Wheeler, Green, & Brock, 1999), our behavioral patterns (Hinyard & Kreuter, 2007), our health (Pennebaker, 1999), and our responses to the world around us (Bruner, 1986; Dahlstrom, 2010; Dal Cin, Zanna, & Fong, 2004; Gerrig, 1993; Strange, 2002).

Generally, scholars who have investigated narrative persuasion have studied the ways in which information contained in a narrative can affect perceptions of reality on the basis of social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986; Slater & Rouner, 2002), the transportation-imagery model (Green, 2004; Green & Brock, 2000), or as a subfield out of traditional persuasion research (Wheeler, Green, & Brock, 1999). These research traditions have shown that narrative forms of communication are often believed to have potent effects on the psychology of those that are exposed to them.

In spite of the attention paid to narrative persuasion, years of empirical research on the topic have yielded a literature that is largely inconsistent. Some studies have found that exposure to a narrative affects an individual's beliefs and attitudes so as to align with the espoused viewpoints (e.g. Bae, 2008; Bae & Kang, 2008; Diekman, McDonald, & Gardner, 2000; Lee & Leets, 2002; Mulligan & Habel, 2011) while others have suggested that there is little evidence to account for the existence a relationship between narrative and persuasion at all (e.g. Hong, 2009; Peracchio & Meyers-Levy, 1997).

Further complicating the effort to clarify the nature of the persuasive impact of narratives are the methods by which many communication researchers have drawn their

conclusions. Throughout the literature on narrative persuasion, there are countless studies that have placed narrative forms of communication in contest with other forms of persuasive communication (primarily presentation of statistical evidence; Allen & Preiss, 1997; Baesler & Burgoon, 1994; Kazoleas, 1993; Kopfman, Smith, Ah Yun, & Hodges, 1998; Taylor & Thompson, 1982; Yalch & Elmore-Yalch, 1984), which has yielded no consistent support that one type of evidence is unilaterally more persuasive than the other. Although narrative was shown to be more effective in several studies (see Borgida & Nisbett, 1977; Kahneman & Tversky, 1973; Kazoleas, 1993; Koballa, 1986), statistical evidence has shown to be more persuasive in many cases (see Cacioppo, Petty, & Morris, 1983; Slater & Rouner, 1996; Wells & Harvey, 1977) or that there is no significant difference in the persuasiveness of narrative evidence relative to nonnarrative evidence (see Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). Although these studies have provided some insight into the persuasive impact of narrative relative to other forms of argument presentation, they have failed to determine the persuasive effect of narrative in and of itself.

The overall purpose of this chapter is to clarify these issues by exploring the concept of narrative and its persuasive effect. In doing so, this chapter is intended to illustrate the ability of extremist narratives to affect the beliefs and attitudes of those that are exposed to them. First, because there has been no one, agreed-upon definition for the term, I adopt a definition for narrative that (a) captures the salient characteristics of several extant definitions and (b) can be applied to discussions and analyses related to radicalization. I will then turn to the literature on narrative to survey the mechanisms by which it has been theorized to be persuasive. Then, the major thrust of this chapter will be presented. To ascertain the persuasive effect of narrative as it has been tested thus far, a

meta-analytic review of the narrative literature will be presented in which I will quantitatively demonstrate the extent to which narratives can affect changes in beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behavior, and further, the degree to which those changes are contingent on identifiable moderators. Finally, I will discuss potential moderators that were unable to be tested. Taken together, this chapter will demonstrate that stories have the potential to change beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors, and given this, stories presented by terrorist and radical groups can affect radicalization insofar as they are able to effectively instill a particular ideology via narrative persuasion.

### **Defining Narrative**

A lengthy tradition of studying narratives within the field of communication has produced similar but slightly different perspectives on the term. Although there are conceptual disagreements on what constitutes narrative, all definitions for the term argue that, at the simplest level, narrative can be defined as the representation of an event or a series of events (Abbott, 2008). This definition implies that a narrative must contain some sort of action, even if there is only one action undertaken. Without an event, one could compose a description, an exposition, an argument, or some combination of these, but one could not rightfully compose a narrative. Consider, for example, if I claimed that “my soda is warm.” This describes my soda, but nothing occurs. If I claimed that “I drank my warm soda,” however, most would argue that it would more rightfully be dubbed a narrative because it tells of a particular action that took place.

Although there are few scholars that would argue against the position that a narrative requires at least one event (Abbott, 2008), several have argued that narrative requires at least two events, offering that the primary characteristic of a narrative is its

sequential nature (see Barthes, 1982; Rimmon-Kenan, 1996). Scholes (1981) claimed that a narrative is “the symbolic presentation of a sequence of events” (p. 205). Genette (1982) echoed Scholes’s claim, arguing that “one will define narrative without difficulty as the representation of an event or sequence of events” (p. 127).

Others have ascribed more detailed definitions to the term. Prince (1982) claimed that narrative can be defined as the representation of two real or fictional events in a time sequence in which none of the events presupposes or entails any of the others (p. 1, 4). Fisher (1987) expanded upon this, including the sequential nature of events as being only part of a full definition for narrative. Instead, he proposed that narrative consists of “symbolic actions—words and/or deeds—that have sequence and meaning for those who live, create, or interpret them” (p. 24). For Fisher, narratives are not created or understood in isolation—their meaning is derived from the experiences of those that interact with them. Still others have gone even further, claiming that not only must narratives contain events that are sequentially ordered and be derived from and provide meaning to those that construct and consume them, but that the events contained in the narrative must be causally related (Bal, 1997; Richardson, 2002). For example, Onega and Landa (1996) described narrative as a “semiotic representation of a series of events, meaningfully connected in a temporal and causal way” (p. 6).

Each of the tenets identified by these and other scholars provides some workable insight into the nature of narrative. However, none of them offer a comprehensive account of the nature of narrative because of their emphasis on one of its inherent characteristics. Ryan (2007) argued that it is “admittedly debatable to what extent definitions should rely on implications” and that instead, any definition should support

that narratives are about (a) problem solving, (b) conflict, (c) interpersonal relations, (d) human experience, and (e) the temporality of existence.

Hinyard and Kreuter (2007) noted the inherent inconsistencies associated with the characteristics emphasized in several extant conceptualizations for narrative and developed a definition based on themes and concepts encountered in a wide array of research on the topic (Baesler & Burgoon, 1994; Black & Bower, 1979; Green & Brock, 2000, 2002; Oatley, 2002). According to Hinyard and Kreuter (2007), a narrative is “any cohesive and coherent story with an identifiable beginning, middle, and end that provides information about scene, characters, and conflict; raises unanswered questions or unresolved conflict, and provides resolution” (p. 778). This definition not only encompasses several of the salient themes encountered in many of the traditional definitions for narrative outlined above, but also aligns with those characteristics described by Ryan (2007) as being fundamental of narrative. The completeness and applicability of Hinyard and Kreuter’s definition to many of the narratives encountered in existing literature renders it a useful one for this project. As such, I adopt Hinyard and Kreuter’s definition for identifying narratives to be included in all the meta-analyses to be conducted.

### **Meta-analysis of Narrative Literature**

Thus far, outcomes associated with narrative persuasion have been treated as more or less homogenous. There has been little effort expended in determining the respective persuasive effects of narrative forms of communication on different types of beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behavior, respectively. For example, within the literature related to narrative’s effect on behavioral intentions, there has been no attempt to



delineate the relative effects of intentions geared towards oneself and intentions geared towards others. Though subtle, distinguishing between these types of intentions would illuminate the persuasive effect of narrative under particular conditions.

Given the wide range of message and/or message recipient features that could influence the persuasive effect of a narrative, the following meta-analyses are designed not only to ascertain the main effects of narrative on beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behavior, but also to test some of features that may moderate those effects. Moderator testing in this realm requires a large amount of dependent measure data concerning characteristics of the narrative stimuli used in the studies (to test message features that moderate the narrative-persuasion relationship) and the message recipients (to test audience features that moderate the narrative-persuasion relationship). Unfortunately, complete data related to neither narrative stimuli nor message recipients is widely available. As a consequence, moderator testing is only possible to the degree that messages can be distinguished by some identifiable factor.

From this, I pose two research questions:

*RQ1: Can narrative change beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and/or behavior?*

*RQ2: Are there qualities of narratives or message recipients that moderate the relationship between exposure to narrative and changes in beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and/or behavior?*

### **Method.**

#### ***Literature search.***

The large majority of the studies used in this meta-analysis were identified through the PsycINFO database by searching for studies related to narrative and

persuasion. In addition, I used other open source databases and search engines including ProQuest and Google Scholar. The following two sets of search terms were used in all possible cross-set combinations: (a) *narrative(s)*, *story(ies)*, and *entertainment education* and (b) *persuasion*, *persuade*, *influence*, *beliefs*, *attitudes*, *intentions*, *behaviors*, and *change*.

I used several criteria to determine whether a study would be included in the meta-analysis. First, because I am primarily interested in the effect of narrative persuasion on beliefs, attitudes, intentions, or behavior, the study had to have either (a) an independent variable measure for exposure to certain types of narrative (for correlational studies), or (b) at least one condition in which a narrative was compared to a no-message control (for experimental studies). Second, the study had to include at least one outcome measure related to beliefs, attitudes, intentions, or behavior. Finally, I included only those studies that provided a statistical metric by which to illustrate the association between narrative and persuasion that was convertible to Pearson's  $r$  correlation coefficient. Although some studies provided Pearson's  $r$ , other studies required conversion from other statistical metrics.

A total of 16 papers met these criteria. Among these studies, there were 30 effect sizes that could be extracted and included in the meta-analysis: Eleven were related to beliefs, nine were related to attitudes, eight were related to behavioral intentions, and two were related to volitional behavior. Of these studies, publication dates ranged from 1990 to 2011. Due to the low number of effect sizes gathered for volitional behavior, the meta-analytic procedures conducted on the belief, attitude, and intention data were inapplicable

to the behavior data. Detailed information concerning each study and the effect sizes contained in them is summarized in Tables 4-7.

*Narrative stimuli.*

The studies selected for inclusion in these meta-analyses utilized a variety of narrative stimuli presented using different kinds of media. Nine (56%) of the studies used text-based narratives in testing for changes in beliefs, attitudes, intentions, or behavior (Allen et al., 2000; Baesler, 1997; Dahlstrom, 2008; Dahlstrom, 2010; De Wit, Das, & Vet, 2008; Diekman, McDonald, & Gardner, 2000; Greene & Brinn, 2003; Lee, 2001; Lee & Leets, 2002). Sixteen (53%) of the individual effect sizes used as data in the meta-analysis were taken from these studies. The other seven studies (Bae, 2008; Bae & Kang, 2008; Brown, 1990; Mazor et al., 2007; Mulligan & Habel, 2011; Tal-Or, Boninger, Poran, & Gleicher, 2004; Wilkin et al., 2007) used video-based materials and provided the remaining 14 (44%) effect sizes to be included in the meta-analysis.

The majority of studies presented narratives related to health promotion (e.g., De Wit, Das, & Vet, 2008; Greene & Brinn, 2003) and organ donation (Bae, 2008; Bae & Kang, 2008). Other topics included social issues (e.g. women's status, Brown, 1990; extremism towards race, Lee & Leets, 2002), professional development (Baesler, 1997), and fictional tales with embedded facts (e.g. Dahlstrom, 2008; Dahlstrom, 2010). I was able to secure the narrative stimuli for only half of the studies. All of those that I was able to obtain were text-based.

*Publication bias.*

There exists an assumption that there is a bias toward publishing significant and/or interesting results. One implication of this problem is that null, uninteresting, or

theoretically contradictory findings remain unpublished, which can result in an inaccurate snapshot of the overall effect of a phenomenon under investigation. When publication bias occurs, the overall effect of the independent variable (in this case, narrative persuasion) on the dependent variable (in this case, beliefs, attitudes, intentions, or behavior) is overstated. Some have argued that to overcome publication bias, unpublished studies should be included in meta-analyses (see Hedges & Vevea, 1996). To the extent possible, I made attempts to include unpublished manuscripts in this meta-analysis. For example, to identify unpublished dissertations and theses with data relevant to narrative and persuasion, I searched the Dissertation Abstracts database using the same terms used to identify relevant published work. If a dissertation or thesis was identified, I contacted the author and requested a full text copy of the manuscript. In some cases, the authors obliged, and as a result, two unpublished dissertations were included in the meta-analysis.

I then constructed a chart with  $N$  on the x-axis and effect size (corrected for measurement error) on the y-axis for each outcome measure (see Figures 1-3). These charts were constructed to visually determine if studies that reported relatively large effect sizes were overrepresented within the literature. As an indication of publication bias, one would expect a cluster of large effect sizes independent of sample size.

For the belief (Figure 1) and intention (Figure 3) data, there was a high degree of variance in the effect sizes for those studies with relatively small  $N$ s and a low degree of variance in those studies with relatively high  $N$ s. Further, as the sample sizes increased for each of these outcomes, the reported effect sizes moved toward their respective means ( $M = .24$  for beliefs,  $M = .23$  for intentions). These results provide no evidence of publication bias in the belief or intention data. For the attitude data (Figure 2), there is a

high degree of variance in effect sizes regardless of their respective sample sizes, and the effect sizes did not move toward the mean ( $M = .24$ ). However, because there was no clustering of high effect sizes, there is likewise little evidence to suggest the existence of publication bias within the intention data.

*Statistical analyses.*

Schmidt and Le's (2005) Hunter-Schmidt Meta-Analysis Program (Version 1.1) was used to execute the analyses. Pearson's  $r$  was used as the index of effect size. Although studies utilized different inferential statistics to test for the relationship between exposure to narrative and various dependent variables (e.g.,  $t$ ,  $F$ ,  $M$  and  $SD$ ), I manually converted all of these to  $r$ . Once these conversions were complete, the individual effect sizes ( $r$ ), reliability estimates of the independent variables ( $r_{xx}$ ), reliability estimates of the dependent variables ( $r_{yy}$ ), and the sample size associated with the statistical tests ( $N$ ) were entered. Inclusion of the reliability estimates allowed for the correction for measurement error in each effect size.

Cohen (1988) suggested the following guidelines for the interpretation of  $r$ : Effect sizes are considered negligible if  $r < .10$ , small if  $r = .10-.29$ , reflecting a proportion of variance (PV) explained of .01-.08, medium if  $r = .30-.49$ , reflecting a PV explained of .09-.24, and large if  $r \geq .50$ , reflecting a PV explained of .25 or higher. In the following meta-analyses, effects were positive if narratives were demonstrated to affect beliefs, attitudes, intentions, or behaviors in the direction of those advocated in the message. Effects were negative if beliefs, attitudes, intentions, or behavior changed in the opposite direction as those advocated in the narrative.

*Parameter estimates.*

For each meta-analysis, the parameter used to describe the relationship between the independent variable and dependent variable is  $r_w$ , the observed weighted mean correlation of all the effect sizes included in that meta-analysis. Because each  $r_w$  contains error attributable to experimental artifacts,  $r_w$  must be corrected to account for it. The corrected weighted mean correlation, which is considered to be the population mean effect size (Whitener, 1990), is  $r'_w$ .

As a method to illustrate the accuracy of the reported  $r'_w$ , Hunter and Schmidt (2004) discussed the use of credibility intervals relative to confidence intervals. Unlike confidence intervals, which express the distribution of likely estimates of a single value, Hunter and Schmidt (1990) and Schmidt and Hunter (1999) emphasize the use of credibility intervals, which refer to the distribution of estimates of the mean true score of the population (or the corrected weighted mean correlation,  $r'_w$ ). For each meta-analysis, a credibility interval (CI) around  $r'_w$  will be reported.

In addition, for each meta-analysis, the variance of  $r'_w$  was calculated along with an estimate of the expected variance (EV). Following, a ratio of the EV to the observed variance (OV) in  $r'_w$  was calculated (EV/OV). As a rule of thumb, Hunter and Schmidt (2004) claimed that if 75% of the OV can be attributed to the EV, then one can conclude that all of the observed variance is due to correctable artifacts considering that the remaining 25% is probably due to artifacts for which there is no possible correction (p. 401). Therefore, EV/OV ratios of 75% or greater can be considered to be homogenous whereas lesser values indicate the presence of moderating variables in the data. Therefore, when EV/OV ratios were less than 75%, I attempted to identify moderators.

### *Units of analysis.*

The unit of analysis ( $k$ ) for each meta-analysis was the individual statistical test of narrative's persuasive impact on a given dependent measure. In the majority of the studies included in these meta-analyses, statistical tests were performed on a wide array of dependent variables. Some studies exclusively tested the effect of narrative on beliefs, attitudes, intentions, or behavior whereas others included a series of dependent measures representing a combination of these. Because I wished to maximize the number of observations in each meta-analysis, individual statistical tests within studies were extracted and included in the appropriate meta-analysis.

In situations where an individual study conducted statistical tests on dependent variables of the same type (beliefs, attitudes, intentions, or behavior), I took steps to avoid “double-dipping” by either (a) choosing only one effect size for inclusion in the appropriate meta-analysis, or (b) averaging the effect sizes and reliability estimates to construct a new dependent measure. The former option was exercised in cases where there was one distinct statistical test that most closely represented the narrative-outcome measure relationship. The latter option was exercised in cases where a number of dependent measures were of the same type and were closely related to one another. For example, in a study by De Wit, Das, and Vet (2008) examining the relationship between narrative and perceptions of Hepatitis B infection, two closely-related outcome measures (perceived risk for contracting Hepatitis B and perceived severity of Hepatitis B infection) were averaged and treated as one outcome measure.

## **Results.**

### ***Beliefs.***

Meta-analysis of the belief data (see Table 4 for a summary of study characteristics;  $k = 11$ ,  $N = 4,510$ ) produced a  $r_w$  of .19 ( $SD = .07$ ), and a  $r'_w$  of .20 ( $SD = .08$ ). In addition, the 80% credibility interval associated with this correlation did not include zero (.09 - .30), indicating statistical significance ( $p < .05$ ). However, the ratio of expected to observed variance was only 27.14%, a value that was well below Hunter and Schmidt's (1990) recommended 75% cut-off.

Given the fact that this meta-analysis included two relatively high- $N$  correlational (Mean  $N = 1779$ ) and nine relatively low- $N$  experimental (Mean  $N = 106$ ) studies, I tested to ensure that the low ratio of expected variance to observed variance was not due to the drastic variance in sample sizes. To do so, I divided the studies in terms of their sample size and separately meta-analyzed those effect sizes that were calculated from a sample size exceeding 1000 and those effect sizes that were calculated from a sample size less than 1000.

For those effect sizes derived from studies in which  $N < 1000$  ( $k = 9$ ,  $N = 952$ ), the  $r_w$  was .18 ( $SD = .10$ ) and the  $r'_w$  was .20 ( $SD = .13$ , 80% CI = .03 - .37, EV/OV = 39.92%). For those effect sizes calculated in studies in which  $N > 1000$  ( $k = 2$ ,  $N = 3,558$ ), the  $r_w$  was .19 ( $SD = .07$ ) and the  $r'_w$  was .20 ( $SD = .07$ , 80% CI = .11 - .28, EV/OV = 11.08%). Because (a) neither those studies with relatively high sample sizes nor those with relatively low sample sizes yielded a ratio of expected variance to observed variance significantly different than that of the overall sample and (b) the CIs overlapped, there was no need to divide the sample on the basis of sample size. Still, the low ratio of expected variance to observed variance observed in the overall sample demanded the identification and testing of moderators that may have accounted for the



variance observed in the mean effect size estimates. Accordingly, I tested for several other moderators. See Table 8 for a summary of effect sizes, EV/OV ratios, and credibility intervals associated with these moderator analyses.

*Moderators.*

First, I tested the effect of perceived fictionality (i.e., impressions about a narrative's reality) on narrative's potential for changing an individual's beliefs. Among the effect sizes included in this meta-analysis, six were derived from narrative stimuli in which the participants were either told the narrative was fiction or the narrative was obviously a fictional story. Five effect sizes were derived from narrative stimuli that were presented as nonfiction. For those effect sizes from a fictional narrative condition ( $k = 6$ ,  $N = 625$ ), the  $r_w$  was .25 (SD = .08), and the  $r'_w$  was .26 (SD = .13, 80% CI = .09 - .43, EV/OV = 38.79%). For the nonfictional narrative stimuli ( $k = 5$ ,  $N = 3,885$ ), the  $r_w$  was .18 (SD = .07) and the  $r'_w$  was .19 (SD = .07, 80% CI = .10 - .28, EV/OV = 21.65%). On the basis of these results, most notably the significant overlap of the credibility intervals, there was no evidence that perceived fictionality influenced the impact of narrative on beliefs.

Next, I tested the effect of the nature of the beliefs being advocated within the narrative. In some ( $k = 8$ ,  $N = 902$ ) of the narrative stimuli, assertions regarding the state of the world were advocated. For example, Dahlstrom (2010) presented a story in which it was claimed that dolphins prefer to eat fish in deeper waters, that pansies rotate during the day to constantly face the sun, and that berry bushes are thickest on the windward side, among other claims. In post-testing, participants were asked about their beliefs regarding the truthfulness of these assertions. Beliefs such as this were dubbed "world

beliefs.” In contrast, some ( $k = 3$ ,  $N = 3,608$ ) of the narrative stimuli featured details regarding perceptions of others’ expectations for them. For example, Bae (2008) asked participants about their beliefs regarding social norms related to cornea donation. Following the Theory of Reasoned Action, beliefs of this nature were dubbed “normative beliefs” (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; 1980). To determine if the differences between world and normative beliefs accounted for variance in the means, I meta-analyzed these two groups of effect sizes separately. For world beliefs,  $r_w = .19$  ( $SD = .10$ ), and  $r'_w = .20$  ( $SD = .14$ ,  $80\% CI = .03 - .38$ ,  $EV/OV = 36.22\%$ ). The results for normative beliefs followed a similar pattern. The  $r_w$  was  $.19$  ( $SD = .06$ ). The  $r'_w$  was similar ( $.20$ ,  $SD = .07$ ,  $80\% CI = .11 - .28$ ,  $EV/OV = 16.25\%$ ). These results suggested that the nature of the beliefs being advocated in a narrative have little bearing on the effectiveness of that narrative to affect beliefs.

Finally, I tested the effect of research design (experimental vs. correlational) on narrative’s potential for changing beliefs. Several of the effect sizes included in this meta-analysis ( $k = 8$ ,  $N = 659$ ) employed an experimental design whereas a handful of others ( $k = 3$ ,  $N = 3851$ ) were correlational in nature. Experimental studies were designed as either within-subjects repeated measures or between-subjects manipulations. The correlational studies gauged the extent to which participants were exposed to particular narrative stimuli (e.g. reading romance novels, watching a particular TV show) and held beliefs that align with those espoused within those stimuli. For effect sizes drawn from experimental studies, the  $r_w$  was  $.19$  ( $SD = .12$ ) and the  $r'_w$  was  $.22$  ( $SD = .17$ ,  $80\% CI = -.01 - .44$ ,  $EV/OV = 35.95\%$ ). For effect sizes drawn from correlational studies, the  $r_w$  was  $.19$  ( $SD = .06$ ) which remained constant ( $.19$ ,  $SD = .06$ ) when corrected for measurement

error (80% CI = .11 - .27, EV/OV = 16.47%). Once again, the overlapping credibility intervals suggested that there is no significant moderating effect for study design on the relationship between narrative exposure and belief change.

*Summary.*

Overall, the effect size ( $r'_w$ ) of narrative on beliefs was .20, and the 80% CI surrounding  $r'_w$  did not include zero. Taken together, these results suggest that narratives are capable of affecting belief change in those that are exposed to them. Moderator analyses showed no effect of sample size, perceived fictionality, belief type (world vs. normative), or research design on the narrative-beliefs relationship, suggesting that no one narrative will be significantly more persuasive than another in achieving belief reinforcement along the lines of those moderators tested here. However, consistent EV/OV ratios below Hunter and Schmidt's 75% cutoff suggested that moderators remain present in the data that may yet explain the observed variance in  $r'$ .

*Attitudes.*

Meta-analysis of the attitude data (see Table 5 of study characteristics;  $k = 9$ ,  $N = 5,861$ ) produced a  $r_w$  of .20 (SD = .12), and a  $r'_w$  of .21 (SD = .12, 80% CI = .06 - .37, EV/OV = 9.81%). As with the belief data, there was a contingent of effect sizes that were calculated in studies that had significantly higher sample sizes than their counterparts within the sample. To ensure that the drastic difference in sample sizes was not driving the low ratio of expected variance to observed variance or producing undue influence of the estimate on the mean effect size, I tested sample size as a moderator variable. To do so, I split the studies in terms of their sample size ( $N < 500$  vs.  $N > 500$ ) and separately meta-analyzed those effect sizes that were calculated from these samples.

For studies with  $N < 500$  ( $k = 5$ ,  $N = 498$ , Mean  $N = 100$ ), the  $r_w$  was .27 (SD < .01) and the  $r'_w$  was .32 (SD < .01, 80% CI = .32 – .32, EV/OV = 100%). For those studies in which the effect sizes were derived from the studies in which  $N > 500$  ( $k = 4$ ,  $N = 5,363$ , Mean  $N = 1341$ ), the  $r_w$  was .19 (SD = .13), and the  $r'_w$  reached .21 (SD = .13, 80% CI = .04 - .37, EV/OV = 4.7%). Overlapping credibility intervals suggested that the studies were not significantly different with respect to their calculation of narrative effect on attitudes. As such, there was no need to split the sample of effect sizes. Accordingly, I tested for several moderators that may have accounted for the low expected variance to observed variance within the overall sample of effect sizes associated with attitude change. Effect sizes, EV/OV ratios, and credibility intervals can be found in Table 9.

*Moderators.*

As with the belief data, I tested the effect of perceived fictionality on narrative's influence on attitudes. Five effect sizes ( $N = 1,618$ ) were drawn from studies in which the narrative stimulus was described as, or was known to be, fictional. The  $r_w$  was .12 (SD = .09), and the  $r'_w$  was .15 (SD = .10, 80% CI = .01 - .28, EV/OV = 27.81%). For effect sizes in which the narrative stimulus was presented as nonfiction ( $k = 4$ ,  $N = 4,243$ ), the  $r_w$  was .22 (SD = .12), and the  $r'_w$  was .23 (SD = .12, 80% CI = .08 - .39, EV/OV = 5.82%). The substantial overlap between the two credibility intervals suggests that there is no significant difference in a narrative's potential for affecting attitude change on the basis of whether those exposed to it believe it is fictional or nonfictional.

Second, I tested the possibility that research design was a source of variance in the corrected correlations between narrative and attitude change. For those effect sizes

that were drawn from experimental studies ( $k = 5$ ,  $N = 1036$ ), the  $r_w$  was .11 ( $SD = .11$ ) and the  $r'_w$  remained about the same (.11,  $SD = .13$ , 80%  $CI = -.06 - .28$ ,  $EV/OV = 25.09\%$ ). Given that the 80% credibility interval included zero, there is no evidence of an association between exposure to a narrative and attitude change for experimental studies. For effect sizes drawn from correlational studies ( $k = 4$ ,  $N = 4,825$ ), the  $r_w$  was .22 ( $SD = .11$ ) and the  $r'_w$  was .24 ( $SD = .11$ , 80%  $CI = .10 - .37$ ,  $EV/OV = 6.71\%$ ).

*Summary.*

The corrected weighted mean correlation between exposure to narratives and attitude change was .21, with an 80%  $CI$  that did not include zero. These results suggest that narratives can have an impact on changing or reinforcing the attitudes of those that are exposed to them as to align with those viewpoints presented in the narrative. Moderator analyses conducted on the attitude data did not reveal any effect of sample size, perceived fictionality, or research design on attitude change, suggesting that the narratives included in these meta-analyses are statistically equivalent in their potential for affecting attitudes in terms of the moderators tested here. As with the belief data, however, the  $EV/OV$  ratios resulting from these analyses were well below Hunter and Schmidt's 75% threshold, indicating the existence of other moderating variables within the attitude data that have yet to be identified.

*Intentions.*

In a meta-analysis of the behavioral intention data (see Table 6 for a summary of study characteristics;  $k = 8$ ,  $N = 4,218$ ), the  $r_w$  was .19 ( $SD = .08$ ), which, after correction for measurement error, remained about constant ( $r'_w = .19$ ,  $SD = .08$ , 80%  $CI = .09 - .29$ ,  $EV/OV = 23.32\%$ ). As with the belief and attitude data, sample size was tested as a

moderator. For those effect sizes derived from studies in which  $N < 1000$  ( $k = 6$ ,  $N = 660$ ), the  $r_w$  was .23 ( $SD = .14$ ), which remained nearly equal ( $r'_w = .23$ ,  $SD = .14$ ) after correction for measurement error (80% CI = .05 - .41, EV/OV = 36.93%). For studies in which  $N > 1000$  ( $k = 2$ ,  $N = 3,558$ ), the  $r_w$  was .19 ( $SD = .06$ ). As with those effect sizes drawn from studies with relatively low sample sizes, the correlation remained about constant ( $r'_w = .19$ ,  $SD = .06$ ) after correction for measurement error (80% CI = .11 - .26, EV/OV = 12.73%). Because neither those studies with relatively high sample sizes nor those with relatively low sample sizes yielded a ratio of expected variance to observed variance drastically different than that of the overall sample, and because neither reached 75%, it was decided that there was no need to divide the sample on the basis of effect size or to remove effect sizes that resulted from studies with extremely large sample sizes. Still, the low ratio of expected variance to observed variance observed in the overall sample demanded the identification and testing of other moderators that may have accounted for the variance observed in the means of the overall sample. Accordingly, I tested for such moderators. Refer to Table 10 for a summary of results associated with the main meta-analysis and subsequent moderator analyses for the intention data.

*Moderators.*

First, as with the belief and attitude data, I tested for an effect of perceived fictionality on the relationship between exposure to a narrative and behavioral intention. For those studies in which the participants were told that the narrative stimulus was fiction ( $k = 3$ ,  $N = 342$ ), the  $r_w$  was .15 ( $SD = .06$ ), which remained constant at .15 ( $SD = .06$ ) after correction for measurement error (80% CI = .07 - .22). The ratio of expected variance to observed variance reached 70.52%, a value that is close to Hunter and

Schmidt's (1990) 75% rule of thumb. For those effect sizes gleaned from studies in which the narrative stimulus was presented as nonfiction ( $k = 5$ ,  $N = 3,876$ ), the  $r_w$  was .20 ( $SD = .08$ ). This value remained about constant ( $r'_w = .20$ ,  $SD = .08$ , 80% CI = .08 - .30, EV/OV = 16.08%) after correction for measurement error. On the basis of these results, particularly the extent to which the two credibility intervals overlapped, it seems as though whether an individual perceives a narrative to be fiction or nonfiction has no bearing on the effect of that narrative on his/her behavioral intentions.

Second, I distinguished the effect sizes from the intention data on the basis of whether the narrative from which they were calculated advocated a behavioral intention that was oriented towards the individual exposed to the narrative or a valued other. For example, one study (Greene & Brinn, 2003) included a measure for the extent to which the participant intended to use sunblock in the future. I dubbed this a "self-oriented" outcome. In another study (Wilkin et al., 2007), there was a measure for the extent to which the participant intended to suggest that their female relatives get mammograms. I called this an "other-oriented" outcome. For those effect sizes related to self-oriented outcomes within the narrative ( $k = 3$ ,  $N = 3,657$ ), the  $r_w$  was .19 ( $SD = .06$ ). When corrected for measurement error, the correlation rose slightly, but remained nearly equal ( $r'_w = .19$ ,  $SD = .06$ , 80% CI = .11 - .27, EV/OV = 18.09%). Effect sizes related to other-oriented outcomes within the narrative ( $k = 5$ ,  $N = 561$ ) yielded a  $r_w$  of .21 ( $SD = .14$ ) and a  $r'_w$  of .22 ( $SD = .15$ , 80% CI = .03 - .40, EV/OV = 28.23%). Similar to the meta-analyses that tested the effect of perceived fictionality on intentions, the results of these meta-analyses likewise suggest that neither self-oriented narratives nor other-oriented narratives are superior at affecting behavioral intentions.

*Summary.*

The corrected weighted mean correlation for exposure to narratives and change in behavioral intention was .19. As with the belief and attitude data, the 80% CI surrounding this value did not include zero, suggesting that narratives have the potential to affect changes in behavioral intention for those exposed to them. None of the moderators tested (i.e., sample size, perceived fictionality, or intention orientation) were shown to have a significant effect on behavioral intentions. Still, the consistency with which the EV/OV ratios associated with these analyses were less than 75% suggested the presence of moderators in the data that have yet to be identified.

*Behaviors.*

Although there was sufficient data to meta-analyze the relationship between exposure to narratives and beliefs, attitudes, and intentions respectively, I was only able to glean two effect sizes linking exposure to narrative and volitional behavior ( $N = 192$ ) from the literature. See Table 7 for a summary of these data. With so few data points, it is not meaningful to use  $r_w$ ,  $r'_w$ , or credibility intervals to describe the overall relationship between the two variables. Instead, I compared the two effect sizes corrected for measurement error ( $r'$ ) using Fisher's  $r$ -to- $Z_r$  transformation (Fisher, 1928; Rosenthal, 1994) to illustrate the relative homogeneity within this small dataset.

The  $r'$  derived from Diekman, McDonald, and Gardner (2000) relating exposure to narrative and condom use was .41. The  $r'$  taken from Greene and Brinn (2003) relating exposure to narrative and tanning behavior was .19. Using Fisher's  $r$ -to- $Z_r$  transformation ( $.5(\ln(1 + r) - \ln(1 - r))$ ), the  $Z_r$ s were .44 and .19, respectively. Because the difference between these  $Z_r$  scores is only .25, they are not significantly different from one another.



Given this, the two  $r$ 's can be averaged to provide an overall effect size. Using this procedure, the overall effect size for the relationship between narrative and volitional behavior is .30.

*Summary.*

The overall effect size between exposure to a narrative and its impact on volitional behavior is .30. Moderator testing was impossible due to the fact that any splitting of the sample would result in groups of one study each, disallowing the summarization of multiple effect sizes. These results suggest that exposure to narrative positively affects behavior, but these results should be interpreted with caution due to the exceedingly small number of effect sizes included in the meta-analysis. Given more data related to narrative and behavior, one could properly meta-analyze and interpret the findings. Perhaps more importantly, moderators could be identified and tested to determine their relative influence on volitional behavior.

**Discussion.**

An extensive literature on narratives has suggested that they are effective tools for persuasion. However, much of the work in this domain has been speculative in nature, lacked empirical evidence, or confounded by placing narrative in contest with other forms of evidence. In the history of narrative research, there had been no attempt to empirically determine the persuasive efficacy of narratives in and of themselves. This study addresses that oversight by providing empirical, quantitative evidence of narrative's potency as a tool for affecting beliefs, attitudes, and intentions. This section will summarize the findings of the current study and explore some ways in which

narratives may achieve their persuasive effectiveness. Avenues of future research and limitations of the meta-analysis are also explored.

*Summary of findings.*

*Research Question 1: Narrative persuasion.*

In the case of each meta-analysis, the tests for main effects yielded positive corrected weighted mean observed correlations. This suggests that the answer to RQ1 is “yes”: Exposure to a narrative can affect the beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behavior of the individual exposed to it such that they are in closer alignment with those arguments contained in the narrative. On the basis of the data available, the positive corrected weighted mean correlation for beliefs (.20), attitudes (.21), and intentions (.19), and the average overall mean for behavior (.30) suggest a positive relationship between exposure to a narrative and belief, attitude, intention, and behavior change, respectively.

*Research Question 2: Moderators.*

Although these meta-analyses provided support for the notion that narratives can affect several psychological and behavioral outcomes, the characteristics of narratives responsible for those effects remain unclear. Upon conducting each meta-analysis related to the main effect of narrative on beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors (respectively), the ratio of expected variance to observed variance was consistently below the 75% mark (with the exception of the sample size moderator analysis for the attitudes outcome measure), suggesting that the variance in the effect sizes included in the analysis were attributable to artifacts not accounted for in the analysis. I was able to conduct moderator analyses by separating the data on the basis of identifiable characteristics and run meta-analyses on these subsamples. None of these meta-analyses provided evidence

that the moderators on which they were based were responsible for the variation in the means of the overall sample. Further, the consistency with which the ratio of expected variance to observed variance was below 75% in the moderator analyses suggests that there are other moderators present within these data that may illustrate why some narratives yielded relatively strong effects whereas others yielded relatively weak effects. These results suggest that the answer to RQ2 is also “yes”: There are variables that moderate the relationship between narrative and changes in beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors.

*Theorized processes of narrative persuasion.*

Given this, we are left to wonder where to go from here. Is it possible to empirically identify characteristics of narratives that render them persuasive? Provided sufficient data are available, the answer is an unequivocal yes. Unfortunately, the data for these meta-analyses were sufficient enough only to distinguish the effect sizes on the basis of characteristics that were identifiable through a reading of the studies in which they were contained. Although separating and meta-analyzing the effect sizes along these lines provides some insight into the persuasive efficacy of narratives, identification of other potential moderators within these data would further clarify what makes a narrative persuasive with respect to changing or reinforcing beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behavior. Several theoretical processes that describe narrative persuasion include factors that could serve as moderators if one is able to secure and analyze sufficient narrative stimuli to be included in future meta-analyses.

For instance, Busselle and Bilandzic (2008) took a mental models approach to narrative processing to offer a theoretical framework designed to explain conditions that

affect perceptions of a narrative's realism. Within this framework, the authors provide several conditions (internal and external to the narrative itself) that can affect a narrative's persuasive power. Specifically, Busselle and Bilandzic (2008, p. 272) proposed that the extent to which a narrative affects knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors is contingent upon the construction of three types of mental models on the part of the reader or viewer.

Busselle and Bilandzic (2008) argued that message recipients construct character models, story world models, and situation models to make sense of the events in the narrative. Character models consist of identities, traits, and goals of individual characters. Story world models define the spatial and temporal setting, as well as establish the logic of the story world. Situation models combine these two and "track the events and actions of characters, as well as spatial and chronological cues" (p. 272). The authors argue that any deviations from the actual world must be explained by the story world logic and be constructed so as to seem plausible. Further, to comprehend a narrative, message recipients must shift their focus from the actual world into the fictional world and situate themselves within the mental models they construct for the story. If message recipients are able to fluently construct mental models relevant to the narrative, they undergo transportation, a process through which readers lose awareness of the actual world due to psychological immersion in the fictional one. However, transportation can be disrupted if certain aspects of the narrative prompt judgments of incoherence. First, if violations of real-world logic (e.g. when you drop something, it falls) occur within a narrative without having been explained beforehand by story world logic (i.e. there is violation of "external realism"), the message recipient's narrative experience will be disrupted. Second, if there

is incoherence, implausibility, or inconsistency within the narrative itself (e.g. a gritty drama about World War II includes a cartoon bird that can sing; violation of “narrative realism”), interruption in the narrative experience can likewise occur. However, if a narrative is constructed so as not to violate external realism or narrative realism, it is likely to prompt psychological transportation, feelings of narrative flow, and identification with characters within the story. These experiences open the door to a number of mechanisms of persuasion.

For example, some researchers have argued that the psychological transportation experienced as the result of being absorbed into a narrative could render that narrative more effective by circumventing traditional barriers to persuasion. Citing the Extended Elaboration Likelihood Model (E-ELM; Shrum, 2004), Moyer-Gusé (2008) claimed that when individuals are engaged in a narrative, they are less critical of the messages contained in it. Similarly, Green and Brock’s (2000; 2002) Transportation-Imagery Model posits that transportation, a process whereby all mental systems and capacities become focused on events contained in the narrative, reduces counterarguing against a message because message recipients are caught up in the narrative and not sufficiently motivated to critically evaluate or counterargue points contained therein. In addition, Green, Brock, and Kaufman (2004) have demonstrated that transportation into a narrative world causes enjoyment, regardless of the valence of that world. This suggests that whether the world is happy or sad, angry or peaceful, or dangerous or safe, enjoyment is derived from being caught up in the narrative. As a consequence, psychological transportation can be useful in getting an individual to attend to topics that they may have otherwise selectively avoided due to fear (Leventhal, 1970; Moyer-Gusé, 2008).

In another line of research, psychological reactance theory (Brehm, 1966) asserts that individuals have an inherent need to choose their own viewpoints and actions, and threats to that freedom results in a negative form of arousal. In turn, this negative arousal will motivate the reassertion of one's volitional freedom. This theory suggests that when persuasive communication is perceived as such, it may be seen as a threat to the message recipient's freedom. As a result, the message recipient either rejects the message or participates in a behavior opposite to the one advocated as a way to reassert his/her volitional freedom (Burgoon, Alvaro, Grandpre, & Voloudakis, 2002; Bushman, 1998). Hence, the less intrusive a message is perceived to be, the less likely it is to be rejected (see McGrane, Toth, & Alley, 1990; Weinstein, Grubb, & Vautier, 1986). Narrative forms of persuasion (e.g. fictional stories, dramatic television shows) are designed and structured in such a way as to not appear overtly persuasive. Therefore, narrative persuasion may have the ability to circumvent psychological reactance to the extent that it is constructed in such a way that its persuasive intent is disguised.

Some have also argued that taking on the perspective of a character (i.e. identification; Busselle & Bilandzic, 2008; Knowles & Linn, 2004; Slater & Rouner, 2002), perceiving a character as similar (Bandura, 2002; Moyer-Gusé, 2008), or developing parasocial relationships with characters (Horton & Wohl, 1956; Burgoon, et al., 2002) can also serve as means through which persuasion can occur. For example, identification with characters can lead to a reduction in counterarguing against messages contained in the narrative (Slater & Rouner, 2002). Similarly, character identification can overcome the tendency for individuals to resist changing their beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behavior (Knowles & Linn, 2004). By taking on the perspective of a

character in a story, a message recipient may experience an increased willingness to contemplate dissonant perspectives and to imagine him/herself participating in behaviors or thought processes that he/she would not otherwise consider (Moyer-Gusé, 2008).

Perceptions of similarity with characters in a narrative can likewise facilitate persuasion. For example, some message recipients may harbor psychological biases in which an individual believes he/she is at lesser risk than others for negative consequences associated with risky behavior (e.g., I recognize that people die in car crashes, but that will never happen to me—I don't need to wear a seatbelt; Frankenberger, 2004). As a result of this perceived invulnerability, individuals may disregard persuasive messages that warn against risky behavior (Goossens, Beyers, Emmen, & van Aken, 2002). If an individual perceives a character that *does* experience negative consequences resulting from a discouraged behavior as similar to him/her, the narrative may be more effective in getting the message recipient to avoid that particular behavior. On the other side of the coin, perceptions of similarity to efficacious characters can overcome a message recipient's lack of confidence that he/she is able to engage in *promoted* thoughts and/or behaviors (see Bandura, 2002). If an individual recognizes that a character that is perceived as similar to him/her is able to engage in a particular belief, attitude, or behavior, then the message recipient's self-efficacy will increase with respect to the belief, attitude, or behavior being advocated. Consistent with these assertions, Bandura (2004) further argued message recipients are sensitive to displays of reward and punishment

Research on parasocial relationships and persuasion has yielded similar outcomes. Moyer-Gusé (2008) argued, for example, that narrative persuasion can overcome

psychological reactance and counterarguing through the development of relationships between the spectator and performer (i.e. parasocial relationships, Horton & Wohl, 1956) resulting from increased feelings liking and trust toward the character. Because peers are perceived as being less authoritative and controlling (Burgoon, et al., 2002), it is likely that persuasive messages delivered by them are not seen as attempts to control the message recipient's beliefs or attitudes. As a result, parasocial relationships with characters perceived as peers should lead to reduced levels of psychological reactance and counterarguing.

In addition, the development of parasocial relationships with narrative characters can affect persuasion by altering a message recipient's impression about social norms surrounding a particular belief, attitude, or behavior. When a message recipient parasocially interacts with a character, that character is perceived as part of the recipient's social network (Brown, Childers, & Waszak, 1990). Because individuals derive their understanding of social norms from members of their social networks, the inclusion of a parasocially interactive character that engages in a particular belief or behavior can alter message recipients' perceptions about norms surrounding that belief or behavior. In this vein, narrative persuasion occurs via parasocial interaction as a means to alter perceptions of social norms surrounding a given belief, attitude, or behavior.

*Untested moderators.*

One difficulty I encountered while conducting these meta-analyses was securing the data needed to identify characteristics that may moderate the relationship between exposure to narratives and persuasion. Although some moderators could be identified on the basis of explicit mention in the studies (e.g. perceived fictionality) or review of the



outcome measures (e.g. world vs. normative beliefs), the theoretical processes presented in the previous section demonstrate the large number of other variables at play to achieve narrative persuasion. To test these variables as moderators, review and analysis of the narrative stimuli and/or the qualities of the message recipients is necessary.

Unfortunately, without the narratives or specific outcome measures related to characteristics of message recipients, several potential moderators went untested. As a result, an important question has thus far remained unanswered: what are the features of messages, message recipients, and the possible interactions between them that require further investigation? The theoretical processes for narrative persuasion presented above and other literature on narratives have linked several features of messages and message recipients with narrative persuasive efficacy in terms of belief, attitude, intention, and behavior change.

*Qualities of messages.*

As evidenced by some of the persuasive mechanisms of narrative detailed above, it is plausible that qualities of narratives themselves may play some role in the extent to which they affect changes in beliefs, attitudes, intentions, or behavior. For example, some have argued that transportation and subsequent persuasion through a narrative is contingent upon the degree to which that narrative employs *vividness*—detailed verbal descriptions that gain emotional attention and interest, produce mental images, and elaborate cognitive elaboration (Mathews, 1994; Nisbett & Ross, 1980). Several have echoed this claim, as vivid language has been thought to prompt not only psychological transportation (Green & Brock, 2000; Knowles, & Linn, 2004), but also identification (Slater & Rouner, 2002), parasocial interaction (Burgoon, et al., 2003, Horton & Wohl,

1956, Moyer-Gusé, 2008), memorability (Baesler & Burgoon, 1994), and enjoyment (Moyer-Gusé, 2008), all of which can affect an individual's propensity for being persuaded (see above).

Although vividness has been theorized to affect the extent a narrative's persuasiveness, the empirical literature on the topic is largely uninterpretable. Taylor and Thompson (1982) argued that researchers have, in large part, erroneously defined vividness on the basis of their hunches and intuitions rather than by the theory from which it stems (p. 156) and as a result, empirical studies on the vividness of a particular message and its impact on psychological or behavioral outcomes have yielded no clear results in either direction. Taylor and Thompson (1982) summarized a wide array of empirical studies that tested the persuasiveness of messages on the basis of the extent to which they employed (a) description specificity, (b) illustration, (c) video, (d) face-to-face interaction, and (e) descriptive case histories. Among these studies, 59% showed no effect of vividness (as conceptualized in the study) on persuasive outcomes. Still, the remaining 41% suggest that vividness may have some effect on the persuasiveness of a narrative. Moderator analyses developed on the basis of vividness would shed light on the relationship between vividness and persuasion, but a necessary precondition to such research is a careful explication of the meaning of the construct.

Another quality of narratives that has been theorized to affect their persuasiveness has been referred to as *explicitness*. Consistent with Searle's (1975) definition of direct and indirect speech acts, explicitness refers to the extent to which persuasive attempts are presented as statements in which the conveyed content is in accordance with the writer's/speaker's intention (Lee & Leets, 2002). In explicit messages, only one meaning

is conveyed—there is little to no confusion about the denotation of the persuasive statement. In contrast, implicit messages can suggest multiple meanings or interpretations—information must be inferred, and both the message developer and the message recipients can deny the message’s intention (Lee & Leets, 2002; Nicholas & Brookshire, 1995; Searle, 1975). Although previous research has suggested that the explicitness of both a message’s conclusion (O’Keefe, 1997) and supporting arguments (O’Keefe, 1998) increase that message’s ability to persuade, this research was not focused on narrative forms of communication. However, some research that has employed narrative stimuli has shown that the extent to which a persuasive message is explicit affects responses to that message. For example, Lee and Leets (2002) found that for individuals who were neither predisposed to nor disagreed with racist messages (i.e. neutral), explicit arguments produced strong positively- and negatively-valenced cognitive responses relative to implicit messages. Lee and Leets (2002) also found that the explicitness of a story can affect the extent to which it influences beliefs, but that relationship is moderated by audience members’ receptivity to the ideas contained therein (a quality of message recipients to be discussed below).

Although some of this literature is difficult to navigate and understand, it seems that the extent to which a narrative’s language is vivid and/or explicit may be related to the extent to which it is persuasive. This relationship may be at play in the data associated with the current meta-analyses, and is driving the consistently low EV/OV ratios. To test for the moderating effects of vividness and/or explicitness, the narrative stimuli used for the studies in the meta-analyses would need to be collected and content analyzed, and the narratives would need to be delineated along these lines. I was able to contact several of

the authors whose work I included in these meta-analyses and requested the narratives they used. Unfortunately, I was unable to procure sufficient narrative data to conduct moderator analyses related to vividness or explicitness. Future research on the persuasive effects of narratives would benefit from obtaining ample narrative data, analyzing that data, and conducting moderator analyses based on the narratives' vividness and explicitness to determine if changes in beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and/or behavior is contingent upon these message features.

*Qualities of message recipients.*

The possibility also exists that the low EV/OV ratios can be attributed to variation in qualities associated with message recipients. Several researchers have argued, for example, that message recipients are not indifferent sponges that soak up any persuasive message (Kopfman, et al., 1998; Lee & Leets, 2002; Slater & Rouner, 1996; Slater & Rouner 1997). Rather, a message recipient's prior receptiveness to arguments about a particular topic plays a large part in how persuasive a narrative may be. For example, Kopfman and her colleagues (1998) found that when exposed to narrative messages about organ donation, individuals with high levels of prior thought and intent (PTI) judged the persuasive narrative to be more credible and effective than those with low levels of PTI. Similarly, Lee and Leets (2002) found that individuals who had a relative predisposition toward racist attitudes judged hate websites to be more persuasive than those who had previously disagreed with the messages contained on them (p. 940). These studies suggest that the predispositions and values that message recipients possess play an integral part in how a narrative is judged, and given the substantial relationship between

the perceived effectiveness of a persuasive message and its actual persuasiveness (see Dillard, Weber, & Vail, 2007), how persuasive it actually is.

In addition, research has shown that some individuals have a general proclivity for experiencing empathy for fictional characters relative to others (Davis, 1983). Davis (1980; 1983) developed a measure of individual difference in empathy called the Interpersonal Reactivity Index. Whereas past research had treated empathy as a unipolar construct, Davis (1980; 1983) treated it as consisting of four dimensions: perspective taking (tendency to adopt the psychological point of view of others), fantasy (tendency to imagine oneself into the feelings and actions of fictitious characters in narratives), empathic concern (tendency to feel sympathy and concern for unfortunate others), and personal distress (tendency to feel anxiety and unease in tense interpersonal settings). Research by Coke, Batson, and McDavis (1978) suggested that three of the four dimensions—perspective taking, empathic concern, and personal distress—are important in prompting helping behaviors. In addition, fantasy (as it was later named by Davis, 1980), which is most relevant to the study of the persuasive function of narrative, had also been shown to affect beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors (Stotland, Mathews, Sherman, Hansson, & Richardson, 1978). The persuasive mechanisms upon which identification are based can be drastically affected by variations in the extent to which a message recipient is prone to experiencing empathy for a character in a narrative as conceptualized by Davis (1982). Given this, it follows that individual differences in empathy for characters may likewise affect how persuasive a narrative can be.

Both attitudinal predispositions and empathic propensity can have an influence on the extent to which a narrative is effective in bringing about belief, attitude, intention, or

behavior change. Similar to testing those qualities of writing that may affect persuasiveness, testing qualities of message recipients for moderating effects would require the procurement of relevant individual-level data. Unfortunately, data related to neither message recipients' predispositions nor their respective levels of empathy were available for analysis. Thus, moderator testing along these lines was not possible. Future research related to the persuasive effect of narrative on beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behavior would do well to include measures for individual differences such as these to account for the variation in narrative persuasiveness that may result from them.

*Message by recipient interactions.*

Finally, in addition to the main effects of narrative and message recipient characteristics may have on persuasion, there has been some evidence to suggest that features of the narrative and features of the message recipient interact to affect the degree to which that narrative alters beliefs, attitudes, intentions, or behavior. For example, Lee and Leets (2002) found an interaction between predisposition (a message recipient feature) and explicitness (a narrative feature). Whereas negatively inclined individuals reported little difference in the persuasiveness of a racist website regardless of the explicitness of the messages contained therein, participants who were predisposed to the messages found explicit messages more persuasive than implicit ones (p. 941). In addition, the authors discovered a three-way interaction in which participants who disagreed with the message counterargued most against low-narrative (messages that do not link events in a meaningful way; no plot or character identification), explicit messages and counterargued least against high-narrative (written presentations that include plots and main characters), explicit messages. In contrast, participants that were

predisposed to the racist messages counterargued most against high-narrative, implicit messages and counterargued least against high-narrative, explicit messages.

Interactions between messages and message recipients are standard fare in persuasion research. One would expect that provided with enough data, the Lee and Leets (2002) findings described above would be replicated and that other interactions would be borne out as well. However, because many of the moderators described above proved untestable due to insufficient data, interactions between them suffer the same drawback. Future research in this arena should seek to include data related to the qualities of messages and message recipients to test not only their direct moderating effects, but also the moderating effects of their interactions.

*Limitations of the meta-analyses.*

*Insufficient data for moderator testing.*

The data available allowed for moderator testing only to the extent that moderating variables could be identified via a close read of the methods and measures used in the studies. Because of this, there are potentially a wide range of untested moderators that may explain the variation in the effect sizes observed in the independent studies. These moderators include features of the narratives (e.g. explicitness of embedded arguments), message recipients (e.g. predisposition toward embedded arguments), and the interactions between them. Unfortunately, because many of the narratives themselves and/or more complete data regarding the qualities of message recipients were unavailable, these moderators and their interactions could not be empirically investigated.

*Limitations of the narrative-behavior meta-analysis.*

Studies related to beliefs, attitudes, and intentions provided sufficient data with which to draw conclusions about their respective relationships with narrative. Unfortunately, studies related to narrative and volitional behavior change were far scarcer. Whereas I was able to glean eleven effect sizes for beliefs, nine for attitudes, and eight for intentions, I was only able to secure two effect sizes related to the relationship between narrative and behavior change. As such, I was unable to employ traditional meta-analytic techniques and relied on a Fisher's  $r$ -to- $Z_r$  transformation (Fisher, 1928) as a way to determine whether the effect sizes could be meaningfully averaged. Although the effect sizes were not significantly different ( $p < .05$ ), the fact that there were only two effect sizes available renders the findings related to narrative and behavior much less sound than the findings related to narrative and beliefs, attitudes, and intentions. This is not to say that the findings are invalid—given the findings of the other meta-analyses, it seems likely that the relationship between narrative and behavior is similarly positive. However, because it is based on only two effect sizes (fewer than what one should comfortably deem representative), it is possible that the effect size reported here (.30) is not indicative of the true relationship between narrative and behavior.

*Confounded moderators- research design and stimulus type.*

Given the potential for visual imagery to affect persuasion, it may have proven useful to test for the effect of stimulus type (text vs. video) on the relationships between narratives and beliefs, attitudes, and intentions. Unfortunately, within the narratives collected, stimulus type is almost perfectly confounded by research design. All but one of the effect sizes drawn from the correlational studies were based on a video-based stimulus while all but two of the experimental studies employed text-based stimuli. Had



any of the moderator tests involving an experimental-correlational distinction produced a ratio of expected variance to observed variance greater than 75%, it would have been impossible to determine whether the effect could be explained by research design or stimulus type. To distinguish these variables more clearly, experimental research related to narratives should employ more video-based stimuli, and correlational research should employ more text-based stimuli. Had that been the case in the current data, I could have tested narrative stimuli type for a moderating effect. The current state of the literature, however, makes distinguishing stimulus type and experimental design difficult, if not impossible.

*Limited nuance of specific message effects.*

Although this meta-analysis established the persuasive effectiveness of narratives on beliefs, attitudes, and intentions in a general sense, it was unable to explain the effect of narrative on *specific* types of belief, attitude, and intention. For example, this dissertation focuses on the potential for extremist narratives to induce radicalization on the part of those that are exposed to them. However, available data do not allow for testing this specific relationship in terms of beliefs, attitudes, or intentions that are indicative of radicalization (e.g. killing civilians to establish a worldwide Islamic caliphate is justified; African Americans are inferior to whites). As a result, testing the effect of narratives on radicalization specifically remains difficult. To the extent that the relationship between narrative and specific beliefs, attitudes, and intentions remains unclear, further meta-analyses treating those specific outcomes as the dependent variables are needed to resolve the ambiguity. Still, given that the meta-analyses in the current study incorporated research from a wide variety of contexts and included effect sizes

related to an array of specific outcome measures, they provide some confirmation of the persuasive efficacy of narratives across specific outcomes.

*The application of online narratives to the study of terrorist movements.*

Narratives are the principal method through which social entities like terrorist groups share information with and attempt to influence the public (Hinyard & Kreuter, 2007). They are used to teach audience members what to think (Schank & Berman, 2002) and may be particularly effective when used to discuss issues central to terrorist groups' positions, including morality, religion, personal and social values, and the meaning of life, for which reasoned or logical arguments are less effective (Howard, 1991; Lutrell, 1989; Polkinghorne, 1998). Quite simply, narratives are valuable tools for promoting a view of the world that is consistent with a terrorist group's ideology in a way that is readily understandable by audience members.

This chapter has illustrated that narratives can alter beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and perhaps, volitional behavior. It follows that radicalization (a change in beliefs and attitudes toward an extremist ideology) can result from specific types of narratives that advocate or justify the use of violence against civilians for the sake of an ideological goal. However, with the exception of Lee and Leets (2002), none of the existing data directly explore the relationship between exposure to extremist narrative and radicalization.

Given (a) the extent to which terrorist groups have been found to execute a variety of sophisticated communication and public relations strategies (Corman & Schiefelbein, 2008, Weimann, 2006) and (b) the usefulness of narratives as tools for the promotion of complex extremist ideologies, a better understanding of narratives that are used by

terrorist groups in the context of their recruitment and socialization efforts might point the way towards efforts to better understand, prevent, and dissuade radicalization. As such, we need to begin taking a more comprehensive and empirical look at those narratives that are designed to influence beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behavior in the context of extremist ideologies. However, there are some basic questions to address in beginning a consideration of this possibility. Where can they be found and in what contexts are they used? What sorts of themes do terrorist groups attempt to convey through their stories? In short—what do extremist narratives look like?

Although extremist narratives have historically been disseminated via a wide array of channels, one front that has become increasingly central in radical groups' communicative efforts is the Internet (Corman, Trethewey, & Goodall, 2008; Weimann, 2006). As Internet use continues to gain in popularity across the globe, terrorist groups will continue to utilize it to achieve strategic and communicative objectives (Weimann, 2006). Unlike with traditional media (i.e. television news), terrorist use of the Internet allows for decreased gatekeeping with respect to what content is disseminated. As a result, the features of the Internet that facilitate communication allow organizations to motivate message recipients through any number of persuasive appeals that may not be available to them through other means (Tsfati & Weimann, 2002). In addition, the sheer pervasiveness of the Internet makes it an attractive communication tool for terrorist and radical groups. With 1.8 billion users worldwide (Internet World Stats, 2009), the Internet provides an avenue for sharing a radical ideology to those whom the group might otherwise lack access.

In addition to the availability and reduced gatekeeping standards associated with the Internet, its capacity for collaboration and social construction also makes it a useful medium through which terrorist groups can disseminate narratives. The recent growth of social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, websites that invite user content) allows individuals of like minds to virtually gather and co-construct narratives according to their shared worldview. One implication of this is the establishment of what amounts to an online “echo chamber,” where ideas can reverberate among like-minded individuals which leads to progressively increasing dedication to those ideas. In terms of radicalization, the Internet provides a means for potential terrorists to gather and discuss their co-constructed narratives in an environment free of opposing viewpoints. When this occurs, “the mutual validation of ideas among the participants may not only lead them to develop ideas at odds with the rest of society, but also harden their beliefs...” (Sageman, 2008, p. 117). Further, those individuals who are unsure of their beliefs will likely stay silent rather than express their reservations. Those that do attempt to incorporate dissent into the emerging narratives are quickly discouraged and shunned from the online community (Gupta, 2008b). Sageman (2008) argues that in a short period of time, those individuals that remain will develop the convictions expressed in the co-created extremist narratives due to the narratives’ widespread acceptance in the online social universe.

The sustained utility of the Internet for disseminating narratives related to a radical ideology coupled with the extent to which terrorist groups have begun to use it to this end demands a social scientific examination of the messages contained therein. The necessity of studying messages produced and received by extant and budding radicals online is summarized by Goodall and his colleagues, who claimed that “the future of

strategic communication will likely center on narratives, particularly as those narratives emerge from, inform, and transform networks of ‘netizens’” (Goodall, Trethewey, & Corman, 2008, p. 18). If we are to more fully understand the role of online narratives in the production of a radical mindset, knowing only *that* terrorists use the Internet to disseminate is no longer enough. We must know *what* is being said within them and *how* it may impact audiences in terms of its potential radicalizing effects.

To this end, a focus on narrative content (in contrast to narrative style or structure) is particularly useful for understanding radicalization for two reasons. First, it is the content of extremist narratives that contain the ideology of a terrorist group, advance a view of the group and its enemies conducive to the group’s activities, and promote the use of violence in support of the group. Therefore, empirical investigation of the content within online extremist narratives can contribute to our knowledge regarding how the narratives may lead to radicalization specifically. Second, stylistic and structural aspects of narratives may shed some light on the ways in which terrorist groups attempt to influence their target audiences, but they cannot be explored independent of content. Without content to comprise the narrative, there can be no structure or style. As a result, the first step in understanding the persuasive impact of extremist narratives is analyzing the content contained therein.

The following chapter will present a case study that begins to address these issues. The Animal Liberation Front (ALF), who is recognized by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security as a domestic terrorist threat, maintains a website that employs a variety of interactive features with which the group’s ideology can be passed to audience members. Among these features is an extensive library of narratives. Because of the

terrorist threat posed by the ALF and the degree to which they use narratives, a descriptive analysis of the ALF narratives would not only provide further insight into the ideology of a federally-recognized terrorist group, but also illustrate whether the narratives they employ may be effective in radicalizing those that are exposed to them. The following chapter will provide a brief description of the ALF and their website, and then turn to a thematic analysis of narratives contained therein.

## Chapter 4

**ABSTRACT:** In the previous two chapters, I (a) argued that radicalization consists of a communication-prompted change in beliefs and attitudes toward an extremist ideology, and (b) showed that beliefs and attitudes can be altered as a result of exposure to narratives. Given this, it follows that extremist narratives may be effective tools with which terrorist groups can induce radicalization in audience members. This chapter provides a descriptive account of the narratives of a terrorist group, The Animal Liberation Front. First, this chapter will briefly describe the Animal Liberation Front (ALF), its goals, and its designation as a terrorist group. Following, to illustrate the themes that are communicated through the ALF's narratives, an exploratory theme analysis of those narratives will be presented. Through this analysis, I demonstrate that the ALF's narratives communicate several thematic elements related to their extremist ideology and that these themes may promote radicalization. Implications of these findings, directions for future research, and limitations of the study are also discussed.

### **Narrative Theme Analysis: The Case of the Animal Liberation Front**

Chapter 3 demonstrated that narratives can draw beliefs, attitudes, and intentions toward those espoused in a story, but the database did not permit an examination of narrative content related to radicalization. To redress that shortcoming, two interrelated goals must be achieved: (a) identification of a set of narratives whose purpose is radicalization followed by (b) analysis of those messages via some method that will illuminate their (potentially) radicalizing content.

The first goal, that of identifying radicalizing narratives, hinges on the inference of intent. Establishing that the source of the messages is a genuine terrorist entity is a necessary condition for inferring intent to radicalize. However, it is difficult to understand intent apart from context. Accordingly, this chapter controls context by focusing on a single terrorist group, the Animal Liberation Front, which has posted 72 narratives on its website. I will show that the ALF constitutes a terrorist entity and that the contextual features surrounding the narratives' dissemination suggest that they are designed to promote radicalization toward ALF-consistent beliefs, attitudes, and intentions.

The second goal aims for a means of examining and analyzing the content of the ALF narratives. One such method, content analysis, is a family of techniques geared towards describing the substance of messages. There is significant variance in abstraction among these techniques, the least abstract of which involves tallying overt features of messages (e.g. words, symbols, phrases). However, there exists another form content analysis that can be used to generate descriptions of higher-level concepts in semantic narrative data that correspond more closely to beliefs, attitudes, and values. Called *theme*



*analysis*, this technique seeks to understand the latent meaning of text by identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns of inherent higher-level concepts within semantic qualitative data (Berelson, 1952). Thus, theme analysis is useful in that it facilitates inferences regarding the objectives and implications of text by evaluating not only what is overtly said within messages, but also what is meant by those messages and how those messages may be interpreted.

In the following two sections, I turn to the issues of intent and analysis. First, I elaborate on the actions and goals of the ALF as well the context in which it communicates to demonstrate its status as a viable terrorist entity. Then, I expand on theme analysis, illustrating it to be a useful method with which to show certain themes in the ALF narratives as potentially contributory to the radicalization process.

### **Identifying Narratives Intended to Radicalize**

#### **Judging terrorist entities.**

There are three criteria by which a group can be judged to be a genuine terrorist entity. First, the group's activities must be primarily motivated by some political or social ideology. Second, the group's activities must include the use or threat of physical violence. Third, civilian targets must be the objects of that violence.

In this section, I evaluate the ALF on the basis of these three criteria to demonstrate that it represents a terrorist entity. Because understanding the ideological goals of the ALF will provide meaning to descriptions of the groups actions, I explain the group's ideology first.

As stated on its website, the ALF's ideology centers on the idea that animals should not be viewed as property and are entitled to the same freedoms as people (Berlin,

2011a). Further, the group claims that failure to recognize animals as free or to exploit animals for the sake of financial or material gain represents “speciesism,” which is as ethically flawed as sexism or racism (Best, n.d.). However, recall from Chapter 1 that ideology refers not only to the content of one’s beliefs or attitudes, but also how those beliefs and attitudes guide one’s behavior. Following from this, the ALF has stated its mission as the “effective allocation of resources to end the ‘property’ status of nonhuman animals” to achieve the abolition of “institutionalized animal exploitation” (Berlin, 2011b). Between the belief that non-human animals should be entitled to the same freedoms as humans and the proclamation that the ALF’s activities should be designed to promote these beliefs, it is clear that the ALF has an ideology that drives its activity.

It is the nature of that activity defines the second criterion for identifying a terrorist entity—the use or threat of violence to support the ideology. Between 1987 and 2012, members of the group have been responsible for nearly 100 acts of violence (Conn & Parker, 2008; National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism [START], 2010a; Miller, 2007; Garner, 1993; Paton, 1993). More than 75% of these attacks were conducted using an explosive or incendiary device of some sort (START, 2010a). However, acts of violence alone are not sufficient to warrant classification as terrorism; the violence must be conducted in support of the ALF’s ideology. The stated motivations behind the attacks demonstrate that they were undertaken in support of ALF goals and objectives.

For example, on May 1, 2009, individuals claiming to be members of the ALF asserted that they “delivered fake bombs at 1901 Avenue of the Stars in Century City, California” in *Bite Back*, an online magazine dedicated to documenting their actions

(ALF, 2009). The perpetrators said that the intended target was Abraham Wagner, who subleased office space at that address and is married to “primate vivisector Edythe London, who addicts primates to crystal methamphetamines and nicotine”. In their communiqué following the threat, the ALF directly addressed Wagner, claiming that, “next time...the bombs won’t be fake and will be placed strategically when and where you least expect them” (ALF, 2009).

In another example of the ALF’s willingness to employ violence for ideological ends, in November of 2010, Walter Edmund Bond pled guilty to setting fire to the Sheepskin Factory in Glendale, Colorado. Through this attack, the ALF targeted a company that produces items from the skins of sheep and cows (Robles, 2010). In June of that year, Bond claimed responsibility for the attack in *Bite Back*. Calling himself an “ALF Lone Wolf,” Bond claimed the arson was performed “in defense and retaliation for all the innocent animals that have died cruelly at the hands of human oppressors” and threatened that “making a living from the use and abuse of animals will not be tolerated” (ALF Lone Wolf, 2010). Further, on a website supporting Bond and linking to ALF-related websites, Bond recommends reading “A Declaration of War,” in which it is said that “non-violence as an effective means of gaining freedom for animals is a myth,” and that liberators should “make abusers conscious of pain when they hurt our [animal] family members” (Screaming Wolf, n.d., p. 46-47). Given the violent nature of a large proportion of its actions and the statements made by its members and other affiliated individuals, the ALF meets the second criterion for being a terrorist group.

Finally, the third criterion for classifying a terrorist group stipulates that the targets of a group’s violent action must be civilian in nature. The National Consortium

for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism's (START) Global Terrorism Database (GTD) reports that between 2001 and 2009, the ALF conducted 25 acts of violence in the United States, 24 of which were aimed at civilian targets (START, 2010a). Some of these attacks included the burning of a vehicle owned by a UCLA neuroscientist (START, 2010b), the firebombing of two animal researchers' homes (START, 2010c), the firebombing of the University of Washington's Center for Urban Horticulture (START, 2010d), and the attempted bombing of a McDonalds in Chico, California (START, 2010e). In addition, between 2010 and 2011, *Bite Back* received eight claims of violent action (other than vandalism) by ALF members, all of which were aimed at civilian targets. In one communiqué, someone claiming to be a member of the ALF alleged that "on the night of March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010, we planted an incendiary device in the exhaust pipe of California Vivisectionist Howard Fox" in the hopes that "this action will help Mr. Fox decide to pursue a different career choice" (Animal Liberation Front, 2010). The actions reported by the GTD (START, 2010a) and perpetrators' claims in *Bite Back* show that the vast majority of ALF targets are civilian in kind.

Given that (a) the ALF possesses an ideology that drives its actions, (b) the actions it performs to pursue that ideology are often intended to harm or intimidate individuals, and (c) the targets of these violent actions are predominantly civilians, the ALF can rightfully be classified as a terrorist entity.

#### **Judging intent based on context.**

Classification of the ALF as a terrorist entity helps to establish the radicalizing intent behind the narratives. However, to the degree that their purpose remains ambiguous, consideration of the context works to resolve that ambiguity. As such, we

should consider the “local,” as opposed to the historical context of the narratives. Because the ALF narratives are presented on [www.animalliberationfront.com](http://www.animalliberationfront.com), a website dedicated to the endorsement of the ALF’s ideology and goals, the local context is defined in terms of the content and meaning of the other aspects of the website on which the narratives are posted. Examination of these other elements provides an opportunity to clarify the purpose of the narratives by considering the degree to which they align with one another ideologically. Salient elements of the local context include (a) suggestions for or allusions to methods of illegally (and sometimes violently) becoming involved with the animal liberation movement, (b) imagery related to the illegal operations of the ALF, and (c) links to communiqués and other information that supports the ALF’s mission. A description of these contextual elements illustrates how they contribute to the promotion of the ALF ideology and by extension, how the ALF narratives are likewise intended to promote that ideology. It is to these contextual features that I now turn.

First, there are a number of places throughout the website that feature instructions on how one can uphold the ALF’s ideology, some of which relate to illegal (and sometimes violent) operations to promote human-animal equality. For example, on a page of the website entitled “Simplest ALF Action,” there are detailed instructions on how to successfully plan and execute an illegal ALF action. A section of that page called “Level Two, Planning an ALF Mission” documents how to motivate others for action, connect with other ALF members, conduct reconnaissance, organize the attack to minimize possibility of being caught, and finally, sorting the logistics of the attack itself (“Simplest ALF Action,” n.d.). In another example, the website links to an essay by Steven Best entitled *Plant Seeds or Plant Bombs?* In this essay, Best argues that a

“patient wait-and-hope approach might have had some charm or nobility” in the past, but “not in the 21<sup>st</sup> century of social collapse and biological meltdown” (Best, 2011). To resolve this issue, Best argues that, “instead of planting seeds [of ideological change], we need to plant bombs” as a means to “radically transform both psychological mindsets and social institutions... end anthropocentrism, destroy speciesism, and transcend humanism” (Best, 2011). Both essays (and others like it) provide instructions or motivation for adopting the ideology the ALF ideology and taking action to support it.

The second feature that defines the local context of the narratives relates to the imagery depicted on the ALF website. Embedded in the essays mentioned above (as well as other portions of the website) are images that, like the text in the essays, provide motivation or instruction for adopting the ideology of the ALF. For example, on the front page of the website, there is a video that shows a small monkey named Britches being subjected to medical research (Berlin, 2011a). Early in the video, Britches was blinded, attached to a sonar device, and isolated in a small cage. Later, members of the Animal Liberation Front are shown breaking into the facility where Britches was being held. After his release, the monkey was said to have healed and lived a relatively normal life, free of pain. Images like those depicted in the “Britches” video could be useful in getting a viewer to at least entertain the arguments of the ALF. Some imagery went further, and seemed to be intended to show audience members how to behave like an ALF member. Within *Plant Seeds or Plant Bombs*, for example, there are several provocative images, including a schematic diagram of an improvised explosive device and a photograph of a truck bursting into flames (see Best, 2011). Neither the “Britches” video, nor the pictures in *Plant Seeds or Plant Bombs* were uncommon on the ALF website. There are currently

hundreds of visual materials presented on the site that justify or advocate the ALF's ideology.

Finally, perhaps the most prevalent contextual features of the ALF website are the links provided on the site that direct the user to information that supports the ALF ideology. On the front page of the ALF website alone, there are sixteen links to information related to the ALF. Among these, there are links to a slideshow that reviews the ALF philosophy in detail (including arguments against "speciesism"), lists of no-kill animal shelters, catalogues of ALF violent and nonviolent activity worldwide, arguments for vegetarianism and veganism, and a guide to animal rights and liberation activity (complete with caricatured illustrations of evil scientists and noble ALF members; see Figure 4; Berlin, 2011a). Another subdomain within the ALF website presents a detailed list of 96 frequently asked questions (FAQs), all of which are intended to promote the views of the ALF (Altar, Esterhazy, Graft, Harrington, von Haugwitz, et al., 2012). For example, one FAQ asks: "What exactly are rights and what rights can we give animals?" Parts of the response to this question explicitly mention and advocate ALF beliefs:

Animal rights means that animals deserve kinds of consideration—consideration of what is in their own best interests regardless of whether they are cute, useful to humans, or an endangered species, and regardless of whether any human cares about them at all (just as a retarded human has rights even if he or she is not cute or useful or even if everyone dislikes him or her). It means recognizing that animals are not ours to use—for food, clothing, entertainment, or to experiment on... The rights that animals and humans possess are determined by their interests and

capacities. Animals have an interest in living, avoiding pain, and even in pursuing happiness (as do humans). As a result of the ethical imperatives, they have rights to these things (as do humans). They can exercise these rights by living their lives free of exploitation and abuse at the hands of humans (Graft, 2012).

The various types of content presented on the ALF website illustrate the extent to which the site is geared towards the promotion of the ALF ideology. As mentioned above, the website features subject matter that (a) provides instruction on how to behave like an ALF member, (b) visually justifies and advocates the ALF ideology, and (c) provides explicit arguments for the adoption of ALF beliefs. These elements of the website define its local context and suggest that the information contained therein are intended to urge the adoption of ALF-consistent beliefs and attitudes.

Because the ALF is a genuine terrorist entity and their stories are presented in a context with the apparent purpose to bring audience members' beliefs, attitudes, and intentions in line with those of the group, it seems as though the primary function of the ALF narratives is to radicalize those who encounter them.

### **Analysis of Narratives Intended to Radicalize**

By showing that narratives can influence beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions, Chapter 3 broadly demonstrated that narratives have the potential to radicalize. In spite of this finding, the meta-analysis suffers a shortcoming: it does not allow for the examination of a specific set of narrative data to determine exactly *what* beliefs, attitudes, and/or intentions are being targeted. To fill this gap, an empirical method that allows for identifying specific concepts embedded within a set of extremist



narratives would assist in clarifying what beliefs, attitudes, and/or intentions are targeted by those narratives. Theme analysis represents such a method.

Theme analysis is a method by which patterns can be identified, analyzed, and reported to organize a set of narrative data in detail. Because there is no clear consensus regarding what exactly constitutes theme analysis or how it is conducted, multiple versions of qualitative investigation (e.g. grounded theory [Glaser & Strauss, 1967;] interpretive phenomenological analysis [Smith & Osborne, 2003; Smith, Jarman, & Osborne, 1999], heuristic research [Moustakas, 1990]) are often claimed to be theme analytic in nature (Braun & Clarke, 2006; see Attride-Stirling, 2001; Tuckett, 2005 for examples). But in a general sense, all theme analysis entails reading (or listening to) some form of written or spoken data (e.g. interviews, discourses, narratives) and identifying patterns within those data that give some idea about the meaning behind the words. These qualitative patterns are referred to as *themes*.

The features of theme analysis make it a useful method with which to develop a descriptive account of the ALF narratives. First, theme analysis permits a great deal of flexibility in its execution. Coding, data structuring, and analysis decisions are largely contingent on the conclusions the researcher wishes to draw from the data, and are thus subject to the researcher's judgment. For example, the amount of text required to comprise a legitimate theme can be highly variable. It has been argued that rather than base themes on the amount of text used to comprise them, themes should be judged on the basis of their "keyness," that is, how well they capture something relevant with respect to the narratives and to the research questions driving the investigation (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Researchers conducting a theme analysis can also study text at the explicit

or interpretive level, depending on research questions under investigation (Boyatzis, 1998). If the theme analysis is conducted at the explicit level, the researcher is generally interested only in what has been written (or said). In contrast, a theme analysis conducted at the interpretive level is primarily geared towards identifying the dormant beliefs, ideas, concepts, and ideologies that influence the explicit content of the narrative data. For example, whereas a explicit-level theme analysis of “The Three Little Pigs” would identify animals (pigs and a wolf) and construction material (straw, sticks, and bricks) as themes, an interpretive-level analysis may identify themes related to cross-species distrust (the pigs did not let the wolf in their respective houses) and work ethic (the pigs with the non-brick houses were lazy). The current study will be performed at the interpretive level to identify latent themes related to beliefs, attitudes, and intentions—the underlying ideas that the ALF is communicating through the explicit-level text that may serve to radicalize audience members.

The second strength of theme analysis concerns its compatibility with statistical analyses. Some researchers have argued that theme analysis can be useful for converting qualitative patterns into quantitative data, which are amenable to numerical description or further statistical testing (see Boyatzis, 1998). This strength of theme analysis differentiates it from similar types of qualitative analysis like interpretive phenomenological analysis or grounded theory, in which quantification of qualitative data is uncommon. Because the goal of this project is to provide a description of the themes inherent in the ALF narratives to the fullest extent possible, the current study will leverage the dual description features of theme analysis by complementing qualitative description with quantified data.

The third benefit of theme analysis is its applicability to a single narrative datum (i.e., one narrative) or to an entire narrative dataset (i.e., multiple narratives; Murray, 2003; Riessman, 1993). Braun and Clarke (2006) argued that such applying a research design that investigates an entire narrative set would be particularly useful when investigating an under-researched area (which narrative radicalization is) or with datasets for which the meaning of the text is not explicitly known (which, for the ALF narratives, is not). In the case of the current study, the theme analysis is designed to provide a rich description of the entire ALF narrative dataset. Therefore, the current study will feature a theme analysis that applies to the ALF narrative dataset in total.

Based on the goals of the ALF and my specific knowledge of its ideology and activities, I had several expectations regarding what themes may comprise the ALF narratives. For example, the ALF's stated goal of achieving human-animal equality suggested that at least a portion of their narratives would be characterized by themes that espouse the virtues of animals or the faults of humans. In addition, because the ALF presents itself as a group dedicated to the protection of animals, I anticipated themes to emerge that portrayed animals as helpless or victimized. However, in spite of these expectations, I also attempted to maintain receptiveness to instances in which the narrative data revealed a recurring theme even when its relation to the ALF ideology was not apparent. Given that the ALF stories are valid sources of narrative data related to radicalization and that theme analysis represents a useful method with which to identify ideas within those data, I pose the following research question:

*RQ3: What themes are manifested in the online narratives of the Animal Liberation Front?*

Although theme analysis allows for the identification of higher-order, potentially-radicalizing concepts within the ALF narrative data, it remains unclear whether replications would yield similar codes and/or themes as those discovered in the current study. Although some variation in code and theme identification is expected, there should be some metric with which to measure the accuracy of the claims made in this study. Therefore, to determine whether the codes and themes identified here are reliable representations of the ALF narrative data, a portion of this study is devoted to estimating the reliabilities of the codes that comprise the themes. Thus, I pose a final research question:

*RQ4: Can the results of the theme analysis be replicated by independent judges?*

#### **Method.**

##### *Data.*

The narrative data were drawn from a webpage entitled “Animal Stories” under the “Literature” heading on the ALF website. In total, this page offers 88 links to what are referred to as written stories. However, 16 of these did not meet the definition of written narrative as outlined in Chapter 3. Seven of the 19 disqualified texts were descriptions without any discernable plot, five were prose of some form (e.g. free-form poetry without an identifiable plot or characters), three were explicit persuasive appeals, and one simply offered a link to more information. Removal the non-narrative content left 72 narratives that were consistent with the definition for narrative proposed in this project.

##### *Analytic procedures.*

Upon familiarizing myself with the 72 narratives, I generated an initial list of codes—interpretive labels that are attached to segments of raw narrative data that can be assessed and organized in a meaningful way (Boyatzis, 1998). For example, one code was called “Bad Conditions.” This code was applied to any text related to the negative living conditions made available to animals, which included conditions that were unsanitary, noisy, cold, diseased, small, or otherwise inhumane. One ALF narrative called “Cows Do Glow on Midnight” included an excerpt that illustrated this code:

Cows were assembled along the wall- like never before, all with ropes around their necks and their calves chained to those ropes—all cows had that sad look in their eyes I never saw before—like they were saying to me- “goodbye.”

Code parameters were not restricted with respect to length; segments could consist of any number of words provided they reflected a substantive idea or concept. Preliminary coding was conducted manually by writing notes about fragments of the narratives in the margins of the text itself. This first round of coding yielded 70 codes. Once all data were coded, I consolidated several codes that were nearly identical. For example, the first round of coding yielded two codes called “No Hope for Older Animals” (which referred to the unlikelihood of a happy life for older animals) and “No Hope” (which referred to the unlikelihood of a happy life for animals in general). Because these two codes were similar in quality and were attributed to bits of text that described similar scenes, I collapsed them into one code entitled “Hopelessness.” Consolidations such as these reduced the overall number of codes to 43.

Once the list of codes in the ALF data was finalized, two independent coders reviewed each of the 72 narratives. Unit of analysis was the narrative itself—if one of the codes was found to occur within a narrative, coders were instructed to identify as such. Instances of each code's presence within the stories were then summed to provide an illustration of the prevalence of that code within and across the narratives. Following the coders' review of the narratives, discrepancies were resolved by reviewing the stories in which they occurred and seeking to understand the cause of the coding disagreement. Upon determining the cause of coding disagreements, I adjudicated the discrepancies. This enabled a frequency analysis of each code.

Using Patton's (1990) dual criteria for judging categories of codes—internal homogeneity (data within themes should fit together meaningfully) and external heterogeneity (there should exist identifiable differences between themes), I then sorted the 43 codes into overarching themes to identify higher-order concepts in the ALF narratives. Descriptions and examples of text related to each code can be found in Appendix C.

## **Results.**

### ***Research Question 3: Theme analysis.***

I identified 10 themes in the ALF narrative data. The number of occurrences as well as the proportion of narratives in which the themes (and the codes that comprised them) occurred is summarized in Table 11. Each of the themes will be discussed in turn. Included in these discussions will be descriptions of each theme, accounts of the ways in which the themes were communicated, and reports on the prevalence of each theme.

#### *Animal emotions.*

The *animal emotions* theme indicated the presence of text that signified an animal's experience of some sort of sentiment. Animals were predominantly described as subjected to five emotional experiences: fun, fear, helplessness, hopelessness, and remorse. The most common experience described was fun, which was used to construct scenes in which an animal was enjoying itself, typically while playing with other animals or its owners. This appeared in 16 (22%) of the narratives. Descriptions of animals having fun were usually employed to describe past joy as a means to contrast the negativity of the abuse to which the animals were subjected at the time of the story. Depictions of animal fear were also relatively common, appearing in 15 (21%) of the narratives. Narrative elements related to fear depicted animals as nervous, timid, or scared, and were often used to describe an animal living in bad conditions or on the verge of euthanasia or slaughter. Helplessness and hopelessness were closely related, but had a subtle distinction. Helplessness referred to depictions of animals that were unable to improve their own conditions or to take care of themselves. Hopelessness related to descriptions of animals that were described as feeling a sense of resignation to a negative fate. Helplessness was present in 12 (17%) of the narratives and hopelessness was present in nine (13%). The most infrequent emotion that animals experienced in the narratives was remorse, which appeared in only three (4%) of the stories. Depictions of remorse were characterized by animals feeling regret for a perceived transgression against their owner. This was used to illustrate that even in bad behavior, animals are kind-hearted enough to feel guilty for harming their master in any way. Overall, the *animal emotions* theme was among the more prevalent in the ALF narratives, appearing in 33 (45%) of the 72 stories.

*Mental capacity of animals.*

The *mental capacity of animals* theme referred to an animal's cognitive ability. Generally, this theme described animals as being more intellectually-developed than one would expect. The most prominent code associated with this theme was humanization, which was used to describe animal thoughts and/or behaviors that mimic those of a human being. For example, in many of the stories, animals were given the power of speech to communicate with the reader (as a narrator) or to develop relationships with other characters in the story. Humanization was widespread throughout the narratives, appearing in 37 (51%) of them. Depictions of animal intelligence, which related to an animal's ability to figure, determine, or use logic to solve complex problems, were also relatively prevalent. They appeared in 27 (38%) of the narratives.

The humanization and intelligence codes were far more prevalent than the third code associated with the mental capacity of animals—animal naivety. Illustrations of animals' naivety were in stark contrast to depictions of their intelligence, and were marked by an animal's inability to understand concepts that are naturally foreign to it. Naivety showed up in only three (4%) of the narratives. The ALF narratives leaned heavily on the *mental capacity of animals* theme; it was the most prevalent of all the themes, emerging in 43 (60%) of the narratives.

*Animal relationships.*

The *animal relationships* theme was marked by characters within the stories developing bonds with other characters. Typically, these bonds were developed between two animals, but depictions of relationships between animals and humans were not uncommon. The most frequent occurrence of this theme was characterized by



illustrations of animals developing friendships with others within the story. Interestingly, there were several narratives that depicted the development of a friendship between animals from different species. This seemed to be motivated by a desire to illustrate animals as less concerned with superficial differences than humans, thus depicting them as comparatively more accepting, caring, and warm-hearted. Friendships were portrayed in 16 (22%) of the narratives. Familial relationships were also common. Often illustrated by a relationship between a mother animal and her offspring, portrayals of animals' love for their young were present in six (8%) of the narratives. Overall, the depiction of animal relationships were present in 21 (29%) of the ALF online stories.

*Spiritual power of animals.*

There were four codes that comprised the *spiritual power of animals* theme: the resilience of the animal spirit, the supernatural power of animals, the unspoken spiritual connection that animals have with human beings, and the angelification of animals. The resilience of the animal spirit was the most common of these, appearing in 11 (15%) of the 72 stories. This captured those narrative elements that depicted animals' strength of will, which typically emerged in situations in which the animal was near death. Much of the narrative data used to describe the resilience of the animal spirit emphasized the animal's drive to heal after being mistreated by humans.

Segments of the ALF narratives that were related to the supernatural power of animals typically described some otherworldly energy that the animal possessed. For example, in a narrative titled "Freedom, the Eagle," the eagle was described as having the power to heal those that were sick by way of physical contact. In this story, one individual was described as being able to "feel [the eagle's] power course through his

body.” The spiritual power of animals was described in seven (10%) of the narratives. Similarly, the depiction of otherworldly connection between animals and humans was used to show that animals “just seemed to know” what their human counterparts are thinking or feeling. This was used in seven (10%) narratives. Finally, six (8%) of the narratives referred to animals as angels, gods, or some other type of benevolent spirit. This seemed to be done to illustrate a deep sacred admiration that a human owner had for his/her pet. For example, a pet owner in “Jonah’s Story” named their dog after a biblical character because they perceived the dog to possess the same spiritual features as that character. In sum, themes of spirituality appeared in 20 (28%) of the ALF’s online narratives.

*Victimization of animals.*

Generally, the *victimization of animals* theme was characterized by descriptions of animals being mistreated, captured, or killed as a means to benefit humans. Descriptions of animals living in bad conditions were the most prominent representations of victimization, appearing in 28 (39%) of the 72 ALF narratives. The bad conditions in which animals were forced to live were typically found in shelters, pounds, or research facilities. Typically, depictions of poor conditions were accompanied by language describing animals as despondent:

Just to rub it in more, he went on to tell us how some of the farm animals got to run and play in the fields, and were not kept in small veal pens like us. I wanted to run away, but there’s only just enough room to stand up in a veal crate, so I had to stand there and listen to him describing our fate in detail.

In addition to portraying animal victimization through poor living conditions, the ALF narratives also relied heavily on the death of animals as a motif with which to describe their poor treatment. Two codes related to animals dying—death and slaughter—were very closely related, but with an integral difference. Whereas the animal death code was characterized by depictions of animals dying either violently or nonviolently, the slaughter code related only to those portrayals of animals dying as a result of purposeful human action. As such, all segments of the narratives that depicted slaughter were also coded as death, but not all segments that depicted death could be coded as slaughter. Both death and slaughter were relatively well-represented within the narratives; depictions of animal death were present in 27 (38%) of the narratives, 13 (18%) of which could be attributed to a scene depicting slaughter. The least common device used to describe the victimization of animals was the portrayal of animal capture. Although several parts of the ALF website chastise those that capture animals for food or research purposes, depictions of animal capture were present in only six (8%) of the narratives. In total, the victimization theme was the second most prevalent to emerge, appearing in 39 (54%) of the narratives on the website.

*Animal rescue.*

Another prevalent theme within the ALF narratives concerned animals being somehow saved from captivity, maltreatment, or death. This theme was present in a large proportion of the narratives (35, 49%), and often took the form of adoption, food provision, or other “traditional” modes of assistance. Interestingly, representations of liberation activities, which are arguably the most recognizable of all ALF actions, were much less common. To illustrate, 19 (26%) of the narratives contained depictions of

nonviolent direct action to liberate animals, and just two (3%) narratives contained mention of violent direct action for the sake of animal rescue. In 20 (28%) of the narratives, the efforts of human beings to save animals provided the animals with a second chance at life after being returned to a positive or comfortable existence. This typically followed removal from negative conditions or danger.

*Animal kindheartedness.*

The vast majority of the animal characters were often defined by demonstrations of positive, warm, or caring feelings for other living creatures. The *animal kindheartedness* theme was widespread, appearing in 37 (51%) of the ALF stories. All told, there were six different codes associated with the *animal kindheartedness* theme: compassion for other animals, compassion in spite of human cruelty, compassion in spite of human indifference, heroism, forgiveness, and loyalty. In some stories, animals were described as genuinely concerned for the well-being of other animals, even those that were not of their own species. This occurred in 17 (24%) of the ALF narratives. Animals were also shown to demonstrate compassion for their human counterparts, even in the face of abuse. To illustrate, in two (3%) of the narratives, animals were depicted as to demonstrating continued compassion for their owners, even after being treated with cruelty. Similarly, animals were compassionate towards their human masters in spite of being treated with indifference (e.g. being abandoned) in three (4%) of the stories. Although the animal compassion codes seem closely linked to emotional sentiment and thus, could be argued for inclusion under the *animal emotions* theme, they were distinct in that they illustrated manifest demonstrations of compassion rather than the internalized

feeling of it. For example, in a story called “Blind Dog,” the author describes the compassionate actions of one dog toward another:

In a remarkable tale of friendship among animals, a blind lap dog in southern California has its own guide dog—a German Shepherd which refuses to leave his disabled pal’s side...

Related to animals’ continued compassion in the face of maltreatment by humans, animals were also often described as willing to forgive nearly any human slight against them. In three (4%) of the ALF narratives, animals were described as explicitly forgiving their masters for abuse, abandonment, or other maltreatment. As further evidence of the unyielding positive nature of animals, seven (10%) of the stories contained text related to their heroism and 22 (31%) of the stories depicted animals as possessing an uncompromising sense of loyalty to those for whom they care about.

*Harmful nature of humans.*

Throughout the entire ALF website, there exists visual and textual content geared towards illustrating the ways in which humans mistreat animals. This content often demonizes several types of human beings, casting researchers, meat-eaters, hunters, and others as villains. The narratives on the website are no exception, as there is a large amount of text dedicated to describing humans in altogether negative terms. Thirty-five (49%) of the ALF narratives featured negative depictions of humans in some way. Whereas animals were universally described as compassionate and forgiving creatures, humans were depicted as indifferent to animal suffering (21 narratives, 29%), cruel (19 narratives, 26%), fundamentally flawed (eight narratives, 7%), and arrogant (six narratives, 8%). Humans were also portrayed as making negative and incorrect

assumptions about animals in eight (11%) of the stories. For example, human characters were shown to suspect pit bulls as being abnormally aggressive—an assertion that the ALF adamantly opposes. In addition, in those instances in which a narrative featured an animal behaving badly (e.g. a dog defecating on the floor), humans were identified as being responsible for the bad behavior. Although animal misbehavior was described in only three (4%) stories, humans were described as being somehow responsible for that behavior in each instance.

*Morality of animals.*

Despite the value-laden nature of the narratives and the arguments contained therein, references to right and wrong behavior on the part of animals were mentioned in only 16 (22%) of the stories. In eight (11%) of them, the primary function of mentioning morality was to express the moral superiority of animals over humans. This was typically done by illustrating a scene in which an animal behaved kindly toward another animal, and the author outwardly questioned why humans could not behave similarly. Additionally, animals were portrayed as having simple, uncomplicated desires (e.g., food, a warm bed, more room to play) for themselves. In this way, they were depicted as lacking the material greed that is often demonstrated by humans. For example, in a narrative entitled “Boys Don’t Cry,” a calf to be slaughtered for veal expressed that while other calves hoped for new food, he only wished to have “more room to live in.” Seconds for being slaughtered, the same calf screams his now-lost hope to “run free in a field and eat grass in [his] short life” and rhetorically questions whether that was too much to ask for. Excerpts such as these appeared in seven (10%) of the ALF narratives.

*Practical behaviors for the promotion of animal rights and care.*

This theme focused on the practical steps that the reader could follow to enact behaviors advocated by the group. Appearing in 24 (33%) of the narratives, this theme was typified by three codes: instructions for proper animal care, obligation to pets, and the advocacy of vegetarianism or veganism. Instructions for proper animal care was often defined by a human character describing the optimal (or suboptimal) ways of providing food, shelter, and love for animals. For example, in a story called “Autumn Sun,” the human narrator of the story detailed how she cared for her pet as it grew older:

We watch for pain and treat it, watch for changes in vision and hearing and do what we can to help preserve those precious senses for as long as possible. We take care of their teeth, and make sure their food is a manageable texture for them. We remind them of the need for a potty walk when they seem to forget.

Text such as this appeared in 19 (26%) of the narratives. Similarly, story elements related to an owner’s general obligation toward his/her pets were present in 10 (14%) of the narratives. In contrast to text related to proper animal care, segments related to a human’s obligation to his/her pets were worded much more generally and were often present when an animal had been abandoned and another human (typically, the narrator), expressed anger at the animal’s owner for doing so. In a story called “Heaven and Hell,” it was suggested that those who “leave their best friends behind” (i.e. abandon their pets) are not worthy of entry into Heaven. Finally, representing only a small portion of the ALF narratives, three (4%) of the stories featured characters promoting vegetarianism or veganism.

***Research Question 4: Replicating the results.***

To determine the extent to which the current study could be replicated by independent coders, an estimate of intercoder reliability was needed. Cohen's kappa (Cohen, 1960) served as the index with which to estimate intercoder reliability for each of the 43 codes. Landis and Koch (1977) suggested the following standards for interpreting Cohen's kappa: less than .20 indicates poor agreement; .21-.40 indicates fair agreement; .41-.60 signifies moderate agreement; .61-.80 indicates good agreement; and over .81 signifies very good agreement. Intercoder agreement for each of the individual codes ranged from poor (-.03) to very good (.85). The average intercoder reliability was .45, indicating moderate agreement between the two coders across all codes. Kappas for the each of the 43 codes can be found in Table 11.

### **Discussion.**

This investigation was exploratory in nature—a preliminary attempt to provide a descriptive account of the content within the ALF's narratives. Taken together, the complementary qualitative and quantitative aspects of the study provided an interpretation of the ways in which the ALF thinks and communicates about its constituents, enemies, goals, and activities.

The qualitative part of the study provided an in-depth and nuanced view into the themes used by the ALF in their narratives. Through a close reading of the stories, I identified and extracted the primary ideas that the ALF disseminates. As a result, I was able to speculate how those themes may affect the beliefs, attitudes, and intentions of those that are exposed to them. However, the qualitative aspects of the study only demonstrated which themes were inherent in the narratives. It did not give any information related to the extent to which the respective themes were employed. Though



mere identification of salient themes was critical, an account of which themes were most readily employed would provide some insight into which beliefs, attitudes, and intentions are most extensively targeted.

The quantitative aspects of this study accomplished that goal. They demonstrated not only that the ALF incorporates certain themes into its narratives, but also that some themes were more prevalent than others, making for a body of narrative data that targets certain beliefs, attitudes, and intentions more than others. By illustrating what themes are most prevalent, the quantitative results create a profile of the ALF's narrative arguments that could be compared with other groups if analogous analyses were conducted in the future.

To be sure, the qualitative and quantitative results of this study illuminate the content contained in the narratives in a number of ways. However, a critical question remains: How do the themes within the narratives induce adoption of ALF beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions (i.e. radicalize)? The answer to this question rests on a consideration of extant persuasion theory.

### **Mechanisms of ALF narrative persuasion.**

Earlier in this chapter, it was established that because they were (a) developed and/or disseminated by a genuine terrorist entity and (b) situated in a local context geared towards the propagation of ALF values, the purpose of the ALF narratives is to encourage radicalization on the part of audience members. Although the intent of the narratives has been established, the degree to which they may fulfill that intention has not. A consideration of various theories of persuasion in conjunction with the narrative themes identified in response to Research Question 3 would be useful in determining how

the themes may bring the beliefs, attitudes, and intentions of audience members into closer alignment with those of the ALF. Specifically, there are four principal ways in which the themes from the ALF narratives may contribute to radicalization: encouraging identification with story characters, arousing emotional responses, instilling perceived behavioral control, and defining strong boundaries between the in-group and out-group. Each of these narrative mechanisms for promoting radicalization will be explored in turn.

*Encouraging identification with story characters.*

Many researchers have theorized that narratives are persuasive to the extent that they promote identification with relevant characters in the story (Green, 2006; Slater & Rouner, 2002). Identification has been described as an experience in which readers assume the perspective of a character and experience events in the narrative through the character's eyes (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2008; Cohen, 2001). It is thought that as readers simulate the events that happen to a character in their own minds, they may come to understand what it may be like to experience the described events, and as a result, their attitudes may become more consistent with those experienced by that character (De Graaf, Hoeken, Sanders, & Beentjes, 2011; Iguarta, 2010; Mar & Oatley, 2008). Some studies have provided correlational support for the relationships between empathy and perspective taking and story-consistent attitudes (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009; de Graaf, Hoeken, Sanders, & Beentjes, 2009). Subsequent research went further, demonstrating a *causal* relationship between perspective-taking, identification, and the adoption of story-consistent beliefs (De Graaf, Hoeken, Sanders, & Beentjes, 2011). Given the supporting evidence, it appears that identification is a positive predictor of story-consistent beliefs and attitudes.

For the ALF narratives, however, achieving belief and attitude change by prompting identification presents a unique challenge. Given that individuals tend to identify with those they perceive as similar to themselves (Bandura, 1986; Slater & Rouner, 2002), the widespread use of non-human animals as main characters and/or narrators in the ALF narratives may make belief and attitude change difficult through identification. However, the non-human nature of many of the ALF narratives' characters may be overcome by humanizing the animals in other ways. In particular, four themes were present in the ALF narratives may prompt identification with story characters: *animal emotions, mental capacity of animals, animal relationships, and animal kindness*. All four of these themes represent distinctly human experiences. We know what it is like to experience emotion; we know what it is like to have unique thoughts; we know what it is like to be involved in a socioemotional relationship; and we know what it is like to demonstrate compassion and loyalty to another individual. By imparting these characteristics on non-human story characters, the narratives provide a way for humans to feel similar to those characters, thus clearing a path towards belief, attitude, and intention change in the absence of human characters with whom readers would more easily identify.

***Arousing emotional responses.***

Functional theories of emotion, though widely variable in their foci, have the same four principles at their core. First, emotions have inherent adaptive functions. Second, emotions result from stimuli that are personally relevant. Third, each emotion has a unique goal represented by a specific action tendency that is meant to stimulate and guide cognitive and/or physical activity. Fourth, emotions organize and motivate

behavior (see Arnold, 1960; Frijda, 1986, 1988; Izard, 1977; Lazarus, 1991; Nabi, 2002; Plutchik, 1980; Scherer, 1984; Tomkins, 1962). Based on the action readiness and visceral physiological changes that result from the experience of an emotion, perceptions, cognitions, and behaviors are organized in accordance with that emotion's action tendency (Nabi, 2002). It is these effects that make the experience of emotions persuasive.

Lazarus (1991) identified seven emotions as having unique action tendencies: fear, guilt, disgust, anger, sadness, envy, and happiness. Of these, the ALF narratives seem to focus on five: disgust, anger, sadness, compassion, and guilt.

First, much of the vivid imagery evoked from the text of the ALF narratives could arouse feelings of disgust in the reader. Disgust is induced by closeness to objects or ideas that are organically or psychologically "spoiled" (Rozin, Haidt, & McCauley, 1993). When experiencing disgust, individuals typically feel nauseous, and as a result, are motivated to escape or defend against the object of that disgust (Izard, 1977; Lazarus, 1991; Rozin, et al., 1993). Given the mental imagery that may be induced by graphic descriptions of animal experimentation and slaughter (which are indicative of the *victimization of animals* theme) in the ALF narratives, it is likely that some readers may experience feelings of disgust and the action tendencies associated with it. For example, in "He Didn't Even Cry," a dog named Febo escapes his yard and is found by his owner at a research laboratory. When Febo was found, "he was lying on his back, his stomach exposed and a strobe buried in his liver." Readers who feel disgusted as a result of reading portions the ALF narratives such as this may be motivated to defend against that which caused their disgust- those individuals who are perceived as harming animals.

There is some empirical evidence to this effect; Nabi (1998a) found that message-induced disgust yielded negative attitudes towards animal experimentation. In spite of the persuasive power of disgust in the ALF narratives, the scarcity of research on disgust warns against accepting its persuasive efficacy wholesale. Although the disgust elicited by scenes of victimization in the ALF narratives is likely persuasive, its co-occurrence with other emotions may change the nature of the persuasion process.

One emotion that may affect the way disgust persuades is anger. Generally, anger is elicited in response to (a) the interference of achieving one's goals or (b) demeaning offenses against oneself or one's loved ones. Accordingly, it is related to a desire to strike out at, attack, or in some way gain retribution against the source of the anger (Averill, 1982; Izard, 1977; Lazarus, 1991). The experience of anger has been demonstrated to be positively associated with attitude change towards advocated issues (Butler, Koopman, & Zimbardo, 1995; Dillard & Peck, 1998; Nabi, 1998b; Dillard, Plotnick, Godbold, Freimuth, & Edgar, 1996). For example, Nabi (1998b) discovered that the elicitation of anger in response to matters related to juvenile crime and domestic terrorism were positively correlated with the approval of legislative proposals designed to address those issues. In accordance the functional perspective of anger, some language in the ALF narratives that may evoke anger by portraying the *victimization* of animals, thus causing the reader to feel inclined to strike out at or attack those they perceive as causing that anger. Additionally, scenes in which the animals are described as *experiencing emotion* or as having an *enhanced mental capacity* may also elicit strong feelings of anger. Both the *animal emotions* theme and the *mental capacity of animals* theme humanize animal characters in the narratives. Maltreatment of sentient, emotional beings (to whose

emotions and cognitions we are privy) will likely arouse greater feelings of anger than would be expected for maltreatment of unthinking, unfeeling beings.

A third emotion that may be evoked by a proportion of the ALF narrative elements is sadness. Typically sadness is elicited by physical or psychological loss or separation, or by failure to achieve a valued goal (Izard, 1977; Lazarus, 1991). It results in an action tendency to withdraw into oneself, solicit comfort, or dwell on that which was lost (Frijda, 1986). Although sadness may be thought to be discouraging, it has been shown to provoke careful information processing. As such, it allows the target to reflect on solutions to the problem caused by the perceived loss and to solicit advice from knowledgeable others (Nabi, 2002). Further, experimental research from multiple contexts has shown that sadness is positively correlated with attitude change (Dillard & Peck, 1998; Dillard, Plotnick, Godbold, Freimuth, & Edgar, 1998; Nabi, 1998b). As with disgust and anger, the *victimization* theme plays a key role in the elicitation of sadness through scenes in which an animal is mistreated through experimentation, confinement, or physical abuse. Similarly, ALF narrative scenes that feature *animal relationships* may also cause sadness. Because the *animal relationships* theme highlights the socioemotional bonds between animals, and readers may identify with that experience from their own relationships, maltreatment or abuse that breaks those socioemotional bonds can emphasize feelings of loss, thus evoking sadness on the part of the reader. When experiencing sadness, an individual will be motivated to engage in introspective problem-solving as well as solicit help and advice from others (Izard, 1977; 1993). Therefore, an individual who feels sadness as a result of “experiencing” mistreatment of animals may seek advice on how to relieve that sadness. Information and propaganda conveniently

located on the ALF website may serve as that advice. Whether through the portrayal of *victimization* or animals' destroyed *relationships*, the narratives may elicit sadness that can render audience members more open to ALF-consistent beliefs and attitudes.

Although many of the emotions elicited from the ALF narratives are negative, positive emotions can be equally effective in influencing beliefs and attitudes. Some themes within the ALF narratives may evoke one such emotion, compassion.

Compassion is indicated by an altruistic concern for another's suffering and the aspiration to relieve it (Lazarus, 1991). Correspondingly, compassion's action tendency is to approach those in need and assist them in their struggles. Researchers have generally assumed that the promotion of compassionate attitudes would have a positive impact on behavioral intentions and subsequent behavior (Shelton & Rogers, 1981; Warden & Koballa, 1995). A great number of the ALF narratives seem geared towards arousing compassion in the reader through some of the above-mentioned themes. The *animal kindness* theme, for example, is characterized by demonstrations of animal kindness and loyalty to humans and non-humans alike. By depicting animals as steadfast in their support of those around them, the ALF narratives can be persuasive in two ways. First, it becomes a greater crime to mistreat, trap, experiment on, or otherwise abuse animals that are capable of demonstrating compassion. Second, it provides the human readers with a model for beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behavior that reciprocates those of the animal character. If an animal is depicted as being kind towards humans, perhaps humans will feel obligated to return the favor. Although compassion in response to animal benevolence may drive an individual's adoption of ALF-consistent beliefs and

attitudes, it borders closely on a final motivating emotion that the ALF seeks to evoke from its narratives—guilt.

Guilt arises from an individual's violation of an internalized moral or ethical code (Ausubel, 1955; Izard, 1977, Lindsay-Hartz, de Rivera, & Mascolo, 1995). It has a strong action-motivation tendency to repair past harms or make amends for not correcting injustices (O'Keefe, 2000, Tangney, Miller, Flicker, & Barlow, 1996). This is exploited by the ALF through two of the themes that emerged from the narratives: *morality of animals* and *animal rescue*. The *morality of animals* theme functioned in much of the same way as the *animal kindheartedness* and *harmful nature of humans* themes—to contrast the positive attributes of animals with the negative attributes of humans. Unlike the *animal kindheartedness* and *harmful nature of humans* themes, however, the *morality* theme explicitly compared the moral strengths of animals with the moral weaknesses of humans. In this way, it makes the moral distinction between humans and animals more interpretable, and places the onus of responsibility for thinking, feeling, and acting in accordance with ALF values squarely on the human reader. In doing so, the narratives suggest that failure to adopt beliefs, attitudes, and intentions in accord with those of the ALF to “make things right” would be a failed moral imperative. The *animal rescue* theme could also achieve a similar outcome. Those narrative segments that were defined by animals being saved featured actions that were framed as relatively simple deeds to perform. The uncomplicated ways in which the authors portrayed the adoption and manifest effects of ALF values conveyed that any person, if properly motivated, would be capable of saving animals. Inaction becomes comparatively intolerable if saving animals requires only a few simple steps.



The ALF narratives have the potential to arouse a number of emotions in those reading them. As a result, the themes inherent in the ALF narratives likewise have the potential to prompt action tendencies consistent with those promoted by the ALF. Although there are several other factors at play within the ALF narratives, the degree to which the narratives are effective in getting audience members to adopt ALF beliefs, attitudes, and intentions is substantially impacted by the narratives' respective and collective abilities to evoke disgust, anger, sadness, compassion, and/or guilt.

***Instilling perceived behavioral control.***

An individual's emotional responses to a particular narrative scene are not the only predictors of that individual's intention to perform a behavior. According to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB; Ajzen, 1985), one's intention to perform a particular activity is also affected by their perceptions of how easy or difficult it is to perform that activity (i.e. perceived behavioral control; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Perceived behavioral control is a function of two subordinate constructs: control beliefs and perceived power. Control beliefs are those that relate to the availability of resources and opportunity to perform the advocated behavior. Perceived power relates to one's judgments about the possession the necessary skills to perform an action and the performance of that action (Hale, Householder, & Greene, 2002). For example, a baseball pitcher may believe he has sufficient practice to throw a curveball (a control belief) and that having that knowledge will enable him to do so (perceived power). An increase in either control beliefs or perceived power will increase an individual's perceived behavioral control, which in turn, will increase behavioral intentions and volitional behavior (Ajzen, 1985; see also Ajzen,

1991; Godin & Kok, 1996; & Hausenblaus, Carron, & Mack, 1997 for meta-analytic support).

Describing ALF-promoted activities as relatively uncomplicated endeavors may also empower audience members by increasing their control beliefs. This would result in an increase in their perceived behavioral control. As such, narrative text related to the *animal rescue* or *practical behaviors* themes that depicts animal salvation, vegetarianism, animal care or any other activity consistent with the ALF ideology as easy may communicate to audience members that they have sufficient skill to perform those activities. By cultivating the impression that ALF activities are within the capabilities of audience members, they are more likely to develop intentions to do so. Given this, the *animal rescue* and *practical behaviors* themes contain some text that may serve to facilitate radicalization on the part of those that are exposed to them by nurturing the impression that audience members have the technical knowledge (i.e. techne; Kenney, 2007) to engage in activities consistent with the ALF ideology.

#### ***Defining in-group and out-group.***

A final way in which the ALF narratives may promote radicalization is through their in-group and out-group distinctions. Some researchers have argued that during an individual's integration into an extremist group, the group encourages "other-deindividuation," a process by which individuals categorize their social worlds into those who are the same as them (in-groups), and those who are different (out-groups; Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2002; Stahelski, 2004). During this process, an out-group's threat against the values of the in-group is emphasized. Research has shown that this can increase intergroup bias, which in turn, intensifies negative attitudes against the out-

group (Dunbar, Saiz, Stela, & Saez, 2000; Riek, Mania, & Gaertner, 2006). Some groups go further by explicitly identifying out-groups as *enemies* who lack distinguishing characteristics, thus turning them into a homogeneous mass in which there is no identifiable personality or humanity. This process has been demonstrated to not only increase negative attitudes, but also levels of aggression against members of the out-group (Zimbardo, 1969).

Within the ALF narratives, there are emergent themes that emphasize the distinction between the in-group (animals and those that care for them) and the out-group (those that experiment on, abuse, confine, or otherwise mistreat animals). The *harmful nature of humans* theme, which highlights the brutish attributes of human beings that exploit animals, stands in stark contrast to other themes that portray animals as universally loving and loyal, such as the *animal kindheartedness* theme. Taken together, these themes may communicate to the reader that animals and those that care about them are universally “good” members of an in-group, and exploitative humans are universally “bad” members of an out-group. By drawing sharp distinctions between the in-group and out-group, the ALF narratives reinforce negative attitudes toward vivisectionists, hunters, and others perceived as animal abusers, thus increasing feelings of aggression towards them.

#### **Theme analysis replicability.**

Because one of the features of scientific research is replicability, it was desirable to develop a coding scheme that reliably captures themes that underlie radicalization. To this end, Research Question 4 was proposed to examine the extent to which the themes that were identified in this study would be similarly recognized in future iterations of this

research. Reliability estimates showed highly variable kappas for the respective codes (from -.03 to .85). Although the average kappa was .44, some codes demonstrated intercoder reliability estimates that were remarkably low. Determining the source of these low kappas would provide insight into how to improve the codebook development and coding processes, and increase the reliability of results gleaned by identifying themes that underlie radicalization. For the ALF narratives, there appear to be two primary explanations for the emergence of a code's low kappa: low incidence rates or problematic conceptualization.

First, the possibility exists that certain codes' kappas were lowered as a result of their relatively rare occurrence. The nature of kappa's calculation favors prevalent observations. When calculating kappa for a relatively rare occurrence, high agreement will not necessarily translate to a high kappa value (Feinstein & Cicchetti, 1990a). For example, consider the kappa value calculated for the "compassion in spite of human cruelty" code, which was housed under the *animal kindheartedness* theme. That code demonstrated a kappa of -.03, indicating poor reliability between the two coders. However, across the 72 narratives, the coders disagreed on the presence of that code only four times, indicating 94.4% agreement between them. Given that there were only two agreed-upon instances of the "compassion in spite of human cruelty" code in the entire narrative dataset, it is possible that its rare occurrence drove the kappa downward, falsely suggesting low levels of agreement between the two coders. For the 24 codes in which the kappa was below the mean for the entire dataset, 16 (66.7%) appeared in only ten narratives or fewer (mean  $\kappa = .29$ ). Therefore, it is plausible that for the subset of codes for which kappa was below the mean, their relative infrequency was the cause.

Second, some low kappa values could indicate that their codes were ill-conceptualized, ambiguous, or otherwise problematic. The “humanization” code may serve as an example for this issue. From its prevalence within the ALF narratives (appearing in 51% of them), it is clear that rarity is not the driving force behind the low kappa for this code ( $\kappa = .18$ ). Instead, it seems much more likely that the generality of the code’s definition may have caused some confusion on the part of the coders. In the coding scheme, “humanization” was to be applied to any text that was related to animal thought, feeling, or behavior that mimics those of a human being. The classification of any thought, feeling, or behavior as fundamentally “human” assumes that there is a mutually-understood concept of “human nature.” However, coder training did not include details of this type. Oversights such as these may have been responsible for many of the low kappas that could not be attributed to low prevalence.

To facilitate replicability, issues related to the low kappas should be acknowledged in some cases and resolved in others. It would appear that there is little that can be done to resolve low kappa values for codes in which there are few instances of its emergence. If the nature of the data suggests a low rate of incidence for a particular code, then it must be reported. However, to provide a more comprehensive view of intercoder reliability than an artificially-low kappa value may provide, replications of this study may benefit from reporting several metrics of intercoder agreement as companions to kappa. Some of these metrics may include percentage agreement, corrected proportion of positive agreement (corrected  $p_{\text{pos}}$ ), and corrected proportion of negative agreement (corrected  $p_{\text{neg}}$ ; see Cicchetti & Feinstein, 1990 for calculations of corrected  $p_{\text{pos}}$  and corrected  $p_{\text{neg}}$ ). In contrast, for those codes in which the low kappa was not lowered by

infrequent occurrence, reparative steps should be taken. Most obviously, conceptualizations of the codes for which agreement was less than good ( $\kappa < .60$ ) should be reviewed for vague language or ambiguity in light of this study's findings. For this particular dataset, the "humanization" (37 instances,  $\kappa = .18$ ), "loyalty" (22 instances,  $\kappa = .43$ ), and "human indifference" (21 instances,  $\kappa = .43$ ) codes appear to be the most problematic. Despite their prevalence in the narrative data (they were the first, sixth, seventh most prevalent codes, respectively), their associated kappa values were below the mean for the entire dataset. These codes, as well as others were unstable and would require refinement upon re-using the coding scheme on another corpus of data.

#### **Future directions of research and study limitations.**

##### ***Replication with other groups.***

Future research should employ the methods described here to provide descriptive accounts of other terrorist groups' narratives. Doing so would provide two critical benefits. First, as with the current study, exploratory research on the narratives of other terrorist groups opens the door to understanding (a) the content those groups disseminate, (b) the language they use to construct that content, and (c) how that content might affect those that are exposed to it. As such, descriptive analyses of other groups' stories would provide a more nuanced account of their narratives than have previously been available. As with the current analysis, this would allow for inferences regarding the role of other terrorist groups' narratives in the process of radicalization. Second, conducting descriptive analyses of other terrorist groups' narratives allows for comparison across groups. It is presently impossible to know if the themes that emerged in the current study are unique to the ALF or if there may be similarities across groups. If such similarities

exist, theme analyses of other groups' narratives would draw them out and illustrate the consistency with which extremist groups use certain themes to draw audience members to their cause.

***Word counts as predictors of theme emergence.***

Although the current study has done much to illustrate what themes are present in the ALF narratives, it falls short of determining what, if any, specific language is indicative of those themes. It may be that certain themes are defined by particular words or phrases. As a result, it may be possible to predict the emergence of themes based on the presence and prevalence of those words or phrases. Future research in this area should conduct word count analyses on groups of stories that are tied together with a common theme.

For example, the current study showed that there were 11 predominant themes at play within the ALF narratives. To predict the emergence of each of these themes on the basis of specific textual elements, one could organize the 72 narratives by theme and perform a word count analysis on each of the eleven groups. The resulting lists of words for each analysis group would illustrate which terms are most commonly used in those stories in which a particular theme emerged. This information would allow for theorizing about the presence of a certain theme in a story on the basis of (a) what terms are used to comprise that story, and (b) how often those terms are used within the story. This type of analysis would provide a "shortcut" to deducing which themes are present in a particular story, and further, what beliefs, attitudes, and intentions may change as a result of exposure to it.

***Visual supplements to the narratives.***

Many of the narratives that are posted on the ALF website are accompanied by visual material in the form of photographs or illustrations of animals in various scenarios. Although this study has done much to illustrate how the textual material in the ALF narratives may change audience members' beliefs, attitudes, or intentions, exploration of the extent to which the visual material that supplemented some of the stories was persuasive was beyond the scope of the current project. This is a detriment to understanding the overall persuasive efficacy of the ALF narratives; visual material such as photographs have long-been shown to be persuasive. Pictures have been demonstrated to lead to greater message processing (see Finn, 1988), to enhance the memorability of text-based information (Childers & Houston, 1984; Lutz & Lutz, 1977), to influence post-message attitudes (Mitchell, 1986), and to elicit stronger emotional responses (Boholm, 1998; Iyer & Oldmeadow, 2006; Joffe, 2008; Kogut & Ritov, 2005; Radley, 2002) than the presence of text alone. Given this, future research on extremist narratives should implement methods that investigate the persuasive efficacy of complementary text-based and visual content in the context of extremist narrative.

### **Summary.**

The results of this chapter showed (a) what themes were intrinsic to the ALF narratives and (b) how prevalent those themes are. Communication theory suggests that the themes identified in this chapter represent the persuasive content intrinsic to the narratives. By quantifying the results of the theme analysis, this chapter allows for the development of a "narrative profile" that can be compared to other groups and the replicability of the methods described here.



## Chapter 5

**ABSTRACT:** Terrorism is a behavior that can result from the assimilation of an extremist ideology, which is in turn caused by a social and psychological process of belief and attitude change referred to as radicalization. Thus, those that undergo radicalization are at risk for engaging in terrorism. The contributions of this dissertation have been threefold. First, it has proposed definitions for complex constructs that are central to one's trajectory towards terrorism. Second, it has illustrated that independent of context, narratives have the capacity to bring about potent changes in beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions. As a corollary, extremist narratives have the potential to radicalize. Third, this dissertation has detailed the narrative communication strategy of a particular terrorist group, the Animal Liberation Front. Further, the themes communicated through those narratives may be effective in bringing audience members' beliefs, attitudes, and intentions into closer alignment with those espoused by the Animal Liberation Front. These findings have implications for the study of radicalization and the development of strategies to counter those processes through which an individual becomes a greater risk for engaging in terrorism.

## Dissertation Summary

What causes an individual to engage in terrorism when other, less problematic means of social or political protest are available to him? Although this question seems simple enough, there are various ways in which it can be answered. The purpose of this dissertation was to approach the question of terrorism using a communication-based perspective—to understand the motivation behind terrorism in terms of the narrative persuasive strategies that promote its use.

Before any answers could be generated, however, the complexity of terrorism as a phenomenon demanded its conceptualization. Chapter 1 focused on two terms, offering explications of terrorism itself as well as extremism. For terrorism, multiple definitions were reviewed and the implications of each were considered. Some definitions emphasized the persuasive nature of terrorism. Others highlighted the fact that terrorism is conducted by clandestine, non-state actors. Still others stressed that the generation of publicity is the integral feature of a terrorist act. In spite of the differences between the conceptualizations for terrorism, they share a key similarity: their classification of terrorism as a manifest behavior. It was thus defined as *the use of violence or threat of violence against civilians to achieve ideological goals*. Further, terrorism is characterized here as one possible *manifest* result of extremism (and more distally, radicalization). In addition, the definition's focus on ideology results from the concept that ideology is not only a school of thought to which an individual adheres, but also a set of mores that dictate and drive behavior (Borum, 2012; Taylor & Horgan, 2001). As a result, terrorism can be seen as one potential manifest result of adherence to an extremist ideology.

From here, it was possible to begin theorizing about why terrorism occurs. Based on previous empirical and anecdotal evidence related to the performance of terrorism, it is clear that the phenomenon is, at least in some cases, contingent upon the actor's development of beliefs and attitudes that justify the use of violence against civilians. Research in this area has often referred to this mental state as extremism. The subjective nature of extremism has yielded a literature on the topic that is largely inconsistent. From this literature, however, it is clear that many researchers assert that extremism is somehow characterized by the adoption of a dangerous ideology and that it can serve as a precursor to the use of physical violence in support of that ideology. Drawing from this, extremism was defined as *a psychological state in which an individual rigidly adheres to an ideology that is characterized by behaviors that marginalize other-minded individuals through a variety of means, up to and including the use of physical violence.*

Considering the proposed definitions in conjunction with previous research on the relationship between extremism and participation in terrorism, a model depicting extremism as a psychological antecedent to engaging in terrorism was constructed. However, just as it was necessary to provide a theoretical account about the origins of terrorism (i.e., extremism), it was equally important to provide a theoretical account about the origins of extremism. Extremism does not spontaneously occur; it results from a process by which beliefs and attitudes are progressively altered such that they come into closer alignment with an extremist ideology. Chapter 2 provided an explanation as to how this may occur—a social and psychological process called radicalization.

As with terrorism and extremism, radicalization has been the subject of significant academic attention and as a result, has been assigned a variety of definitions. Some

definitions have emphasized one's loss of personal identity as a central facet of radicalization while others have stressed the acquisition of ideological knowledge from individuals who are already involved with a terrorist organization. At the definition's respective cores, however, radicalization has been shown to fundamentally represent a process of belief and attitude change toward an extremist ideology. Horgan's (2005; 2007; 2008) work best captures the process-based nature of radicalization, and thus served as the basis for the definition of radicalization to be used here. Radicalization was defined as *an incremental social and psychological process prompted by and inextricably bound in communication, whereby an individual develops increased commitment to an extremist ideology resulting in the assimilation of beliefs and attitudes consistent with that ideology.*

Although this definition follows in the traditions of past radicalization research by referencing belief and attitude change, there is a notable issue associated with the definition proposed here that distinguishes it from past conceptualizations. This definition for radicalization explicitly mentions the role of *communication* in the development of a terrorist. This is significant because a large amount of research has demonstrated that an individual's dedication to an extremist ideology is largely contingent on his exposure to and assimilation of it through communication. Some researchers argue that interactions with valued others (e.g., friends, family) who are involved with a terrorist group induces and sustains radicalization (Sageman, 2004; 2008). Others argue that individuals are taught about an extremist ideology from authoritative figures (Forest, 2006; RCMP, cited in Pressman, 2008). Although there may exist a number of paths toward extremism (and

potentially terrorism), they are all affected by communication. This idea served as the cornerstone to this dissertation.

Extremist ideas can and have been communicated using a number of methods. One communicative method that a large number of terrorist groups have developed as a vehicle for delivering their ideologies is *narrative*. Narratives are not unique among terrorist methods of communication in their capacity to carry a message, but the extent to which they resonate with audiences render them a particularly potent form of persuasive communication. There is significant evidence that stories influence our ability to remember past events, to motivate us to action, regulate our emotional responses to events, cue heuristics and biases, affect how we solve problems, and possibly constitute our very identities (Casebeer & Russell, 2005; Dennett, 1992; Juarero, 1999; Thomas, Kiser, & Casebeer, 2005; Wong, 2004), all of which can be used to incite radicalization. Despite the widespread use of narratives by terrorist organizations (see Casebeer & Russell, 2005; Tretheway, Corman, & Goodall, 2009; Weimann, 2006) and narratives' powerful effects, the role of these narratives in the radicalization process has been understudied. To address this gap and contribute to our understanding of belief and attitude change in the context of violent extremism, this project was designed to investigate the role of *narrative communication* in the radicalization process.

Specifically, the driving question behind this dissertation related to the effect of extremist narratives on one's tendency to adopt beliefs, attitudes, and intentions consistent with those of a terrorist organization. Answering this question required two complementary approaches: first determining the persuasive efficacy of narratives in general and then analyzing a specific corpus of narrative data developed and presented by

a genuine terrorist organization. Chapter 3 took the former approach; Chapter 4, the latter.

Because the literature on narratives has historically failed to provide conclusive evidence of its effect on beliefs, attitudes, and/or intentions, a collective evaluation of related empirical research was needed to make that determination. To achieve this, Chapter 3 featured a meta-analysis of research concerning the relationship between exposure to narratives and changes in beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions. The results of the meta-analysis showed that exposure to narratives positively influences beliefs ( $r = .20$ ), attitudes ( $r = .21$ ), and intentions ( $r = .19$ ). Through this analysis, it was demonstrated that narratives, independent of context, have measureable effects on the psychologies of those exposed to them. It follows that extremist narratives can influence the beliefs, attitudes, and intentions of audience members such that they are brought into closer alignment with those espoused by a terrorist group. In short, the meta-analysis demonstrated that extremist narratives have the power to promote radicalization.

Although the meta-analysis provided general knowledge regarding the persuasive effects of narratives, it did not offer specific information related to any particular terrorist group, its narratives, or how those narratives may affect those exposed to them. As a result, Chapter 4 featured a theme analysis of an online set of narrative data disseminated by a genuine terrorist entity, the Animal Liberation Front. This theme analysis showed that the ALF utilizes ten central themes in their stories: the emotional states of animals, the mental capacity of animals, the relationships of which animals are a part, spirituality, victimization, animal salvation, compassion, the negative nature of human beings, morality, and proper animal rights and care. These thematic elements have the potential

to bring readers into closer alignment with the ALF's advocated beliefs, attitudes, and intentions by promoting identification, arousing emotions, instilling perceived behavioral control, and developing detailed perceptions of in-groups and out-groups. Given the intention and construction of the ALF narratives, coupled with the narratives' persuasive efficacy as established in Chapter 3, it follows that the ALF narratives are effective tools for bringing audience members to adopt the group's ideology.

In terms of our general understanding of narratives, this project suggests that they are an efficacious means with which to affect beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions. More specifically, however, this project has shown that narratives that espouse and promote extremist viewpoints can to radicalize those who are exposed to them, thus putting them at greater risk for engaging in terrorism. These findings, however, seem to run contradictory to rates of participation in terrorism. Despite the extent to which extremist ideologies are disseminated via a number of media in a number of contexts, very few individuals are radicalized to the point that they engage in terrorism. Therefore, we should not assume that extremist narratives inevitably produce radicalization despite narrative's potency as a tool for belief, attitude, and intention change. Only a small portion of those who are exposed to extremist narratives actually goes on to adopt the terrorist group's ideology. If narratives are so potent, why isn't terrorism more common?

The answer to this question hinges on a consideration of multiple individual and environmental factors as well as the relatively small effect sizes associated with narrative persuasion. First, recall that radicalization, violent radicalization, and involvement with terrorism are processes contingent upon personal factors, setting events, the social/political atmosphere, and the interactions between them (Taylor & Horgan, 2006).

Extremist narratives may affect audience members at the *personal* level by influencing their individual psychologies (e.g., arousing temporary emotional states, promoting identification with victims, etc., Horgan, 2009, p. 11), but will do little to affect *setting events* or the *social, political, or organizational context* in which audience members exist. Thus, extremist narratives, though influential, will only affect one subset of factors of that which moves an individual toward radicalization, violent radicalization, and subsequent participation in terrorism. Second, the effect sizes found in the Chapter 3 meta-analysis suggest that narratives have measurable persuasive effects, but that the effects are limited. With respective effect sizes of .20, .21, and .19, narrative's influences on beliefs, attitudes, and intentions are not likely to influence a large number of individuals.

Given this, it may be reasonable to ask: If narratives (a) only affect individuals at the personal level and do not shape setting events or the social, political, or organizational environment so as to facilitate the emergence of terrorism, and (b) have only modest effects on beliefs, attitudes, and intentions, then why study them? Although limited applicability and small effect sizes may be of limited consequence in some contexts, when they are related to potentially catastrophic events like terrorist attacks, even small persuasive effects can have substantial outcomes. In this way, the study of narrative's (albeit potentially limited) effect on the radicalization process can help lessen the likelihood of a devastating event. In the case of narratives and radicalization, the consequences of small effects are too large to ignore. Fortunately, the results of this study provide some insight in how narratives may not only motivate the adoption of an extremist ideology, but also how they can be used to actively fight radicalization.



To these ends, the results of this study contribute to our understanding of narratives and radicalization in two complementary ways. First, at a basic level, the meta-analysis has shown that in a general sense, narratives can persuade. More specifically, however, the meta-analysis showed that extremist narratives have the potential to induce the adoption of ideologies that can promote the use of terrorism. Recognizing that extremist narratives have persuasive effects is the first step in countering them. Second, the meta-analysis and theme analysis together demonstrated not only that a legitimate terrorist entity could utilize narratives to effectively promote its extremist ideology, but also provided an example of how those narratives may be constructed. Knowing how terrorist groups construct their narratives allows for the development of effective *counter-narratives*. The first issue relates to what Miller (1980) referred to as a “response shaping process, the second to a “response changing process.”

The following section will expand upon the ways in which these issues contribute to discussions surrounding narratives, terrorism, and radicalization. Using Miller’s (1980) classic distinctions on being persuaded as a framework, this section will demonstrate how the findings reported here can be used to show that the persuasive power of narratives can be used to fight terrorism just as easily as it can be used to promote it.

### **Perspectives on Message Effects**

Oftentimes, an individual will have no prior knowledge or pattern of behavior regarding a particular stimulus. When this is the case, Miller (1980) argues that persuasion takes the form of conditioning that individual’s response patterns in a particular way to that stimulus- a process he refers to as response-shaping. Although the assimilation of previously-unknown thoughts or behaviors may commonly referred to as

“learning,” Miller (and Doob [1947] before him) argued that when behaviors or thought patterns that are advocated that are consistent with that of a particular social group, it essentially constitutes persuasion. In the context of the current study, the meta-analysis showed that the introduction of extremist beliefs, attitudes, or intentions through narratives can shape responses so they are consistent with those desired by the terrorist group who constructed the narratives. At the most basic level, this dissertation demonstrated that narratives have persuasive effect, and that terrorist groups can exploit that effect to promote radicalization. There are, however, some qualifications to this conclusion that require further research to resolve.

Although this project was unique in its aim to determine the effectiveness of narratives to influence beliefs, attitudes, behavioral intentions, and volitional behavior without comparison to other forms of evidence, the failure to identify any significant moderators that explain narratives’ persuasiveness shows that there is more work to be done. My ability to identify and test moderators within the narratives used for the meta-analysis in Chapter 3 was restricted by the amount of narrative data available to me. Although several moderator variables were identified and tested, the ratio of expected variance to observed variance was routinely below 75%. This indicates that there are yet untested moderators that explain variation in narratives’ persuasive effectiveness. Determining those aspects of narratives that render them more or less persuasive will be critical for efforts to identify extremist narratives that are more likely to bring about radicalization.

Luckily, new empirical research on narratives is emerging almost daily. Many of these studies are incorporating novel variables that can be tested as moderators for the

relationships between narratives and belief, attitude, intention, and behavior change. With an expanding body of research on narratives, communication scholars will be better equipped to determine those characteristics that drive the variance in narratives' persuasiveness, and thus be better equipped to detect which extremist narratives are most influential.

Although this study is significant in its attempt to determine the persuasive efficacy of narratives in and of themselves and independent of context, it is the targeted contribution of the findings to current discussions on countering violent extremism and deradicalization that demonstrates its practical applications. Just as this dissertation shows how narratives can *shape* responses, it likewise shows how narratives can *change* responses. Miller (1980) argued that this perspective is more consistent with common conceptions of persuasion and consists of altering an individual's thought or behavior patterns in desired ways. This is critical for instances in which an individual is in the process of being radicalized or has already been sufficiently radicalized to the point they may be a threat to engage in terrorism. Given that such individuals will already adhere to an extremist ideology to some degree, it is the changing of their beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions that will assuage their risk for engaging in terrorism.

Current discussions surrounding soft approaches to fighting radicalization, and by extension, terrorism, center on two key tactics. These tactics are respectively referred to as *countering violent extremism* and *deradicalization*. Although these concepts are closely linked, they are characterized by a subtle distinction that has implications for efforts to employ them. Whereas countering violent extremism (CVE) refers to "efforts aimed at preventing violent radicalization...or social and political radicalization more

generally (not violent)”, deradicalization is “the social and psychological process whereby an individual’s commitment to, and involvement in, violent radicalization is reduced to the extent that they are no longer at risk of involvement and engagement in violent activity” (Horgan, 2009, p. 153). In simpler terms, countering violent extremism is related to efforts to communicate a counter-ideology to those who are at risk for radicalizing, but have not yet engaged in violent activity; and deradicalization is related to weakening an individual’s adherence to an extremist ideology so they are no longer a risk for violent activity. In both cases, Miller’s (1980) taxonomy denotes these as response-changing persuasive processes, albeit applicable at different points in the radicalization process. How this project has informed discussions related to both CVE and deradicalization is discussed below.

With respect to CVE, this project contributes to an understanding about how a counter-narrative strategy intended to fight the effects of extremist stories may be designed. Any overarching counter-terrorism strategy benefits from a comprehensive evaluation of the stories that terrorists tell, as they provide a conception of the ways in which terrorist groups emerge, grow, mature, and transform. Understanding these stories and the themes contained in them help enable the development of strategies for undermining the ability of such narratives to persuade. One strategy for fighting the potentially radicalizing effects of extremist stories involves the development of counter-narratives intended to marginalize the ideas promoted by the terrorists. As Trethewey, Corman, and Goodall (2009) have astutely said, “there is no good reason why we can’t beat the extremists at their own game” (p. 14).

Tretheway and her colleagues suggest that just as extremist narratives may be effective tools for promoting the adoption of terrorists' beliefs, attitudes, and intentions, they can be similarly effective at encouraging the rejection of those same beliefs, attitudes, and intentions. In this way, it is possible to bring about a response-changing process that rejects an extremist ideology before the terrorists are able to contribute to radicalization through narratives. It has been argued that "narrative warfare" such as this is integral tenet of an effective counter-terror strategy (Casebeer & Russell, 2005). This project has provided a blueprint for analyzing extremist narratives and identifying themes within those narratives that can be neutralized by counternarratives comprised of themes that oppose those that may increase the likelihood of radicalization.

A narrative strategy geared towards deradicalization could be similarly effective. Currently, there exist a number of initiatives around the world designed to reverse the radical beliefs and attitudes that motivated the actions of former terrorists (see Horgan & Braddock, 2009 for a summary). Government-regulated programs intended to stem violent extremism through deradicalization have emerged in Northern Ireland, Colombia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, Norway, Sweden, Germany, Egypt, Jordan, Algeria, Tajikistan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and other nations. These programs utilize a variety of approaches to promoting the psychological rehabilitation of former terrorists, but none have incorporated a narrative-based intervention to date. By showing the positive relationships between narrative and belief, attitude, and intention change, this project has demonstrated that narrative communication may be a useful tool for deradicalization. By developing narratives that run contrary to those ideologies that drove

program participants to engage in violence, initiative personnel can exploit an effective method to complement established forms of treatment in extant programs.

As established in the current study, the persuasive effects of narratives can be used to mitigate the influences of extremist narratives in either the case of CVE or deradicalization. The findings reported here suggest that the development of counter-narratives may be useful for preempting radicalization or reversing its trajectory. Both outcomes, though achievable through narrative persuasion at different points in the process, could effectively fight radicalization, and thus lessen the likelihood of terrorist attacks.

### **Concluding Remarks**

In the year following the Chechen siege of the school in Beslan that killed over three hundred people, several students who survived the ordeal were interviewed. Many described horrible scenes: parents and teachers melting under the heat of the fire that engulfed the gymnasium, classmates being torn to bits by rocket-propelled grenades fired by the Chechens, and execution-style shootings in the center of a basketball court. These events have deeply affected those who were subjected to them. Said one student who was no more than ten years old at the time:

I felt pain. And also rage. Since then I have wanted revenge against every terrorist. If I were President, I would order that unarmed terrorists are sent to me, and with a knife in my hands, I would cut their throats...I want to be President, of course, not of countries, but of galaxies. I would battle with terrorists. There would be soldiers, but the soldiers wouldn't appear

very often. Just a sniper. So he'd watch like this, and take aim, and bang!

One shot, and that would be it (Ewart & Woodhead, 2005).

The reverberations of terrorism can be felt for weeks, months, years, and perhaps lifetimes after the fires are extinguished and the dead are buried. These direct and indirect effects of terrorism demand that its genesis be explored and its practitioners understood. This project has strived to provide insight to these ends. Of course, armed violence against civilians is often a complex phenomenon, and no single empirical investigation can comprehensively solve the riddle of terrorism. However, by approaching the study of terrorism and radicalization from novel perspectives, we may be able to help limit the likelihood of another Beslan.

This dissertation approached the problem of terrorism from a communication-based perspective. It has illustrated not only that narratives have the potential to cause changes in beliefs, attitudes, and intentions generally, but also that extremist narratives may play a role in the radicalization process specifically. By investigating a specific terrorist group and its narratives, this project has provided a tangible example of the ways in which thematic elements of extremist narratives may be assimilated and interpreted by those that are exposed to them. As a result, this project has provided greater insight into the radicalization efforts of terrorist groups and how the themes contained in extremist narratives may persuade audience members to adopt their ideologies. Taken together, the various parts of this study suggest that terrorists' use of narratives should be given greater attention as a tool for radicalization and that to stem terrorism, we must approach the problem from perspectives that highlight the various types of communication that drive the psychological processes that precede its practice.

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**APPENDIX A: LIST OF FIGURES**

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**FIGURE CAPTIONS**

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Figure 3: N x effect size (behavioral intentions). Effect size corrected for measurement error. Horizontal line is the mean effect size.

Figure 4: Clockwise from upper left: A scene depicting the capture of torturous animal experimentation evidence at the University of Pennsylvania; An ALF member spraypainting a fur coat; The “father of vivisection” performing an experiment on a dog; Medical experiments on a cat.

Figure 1.

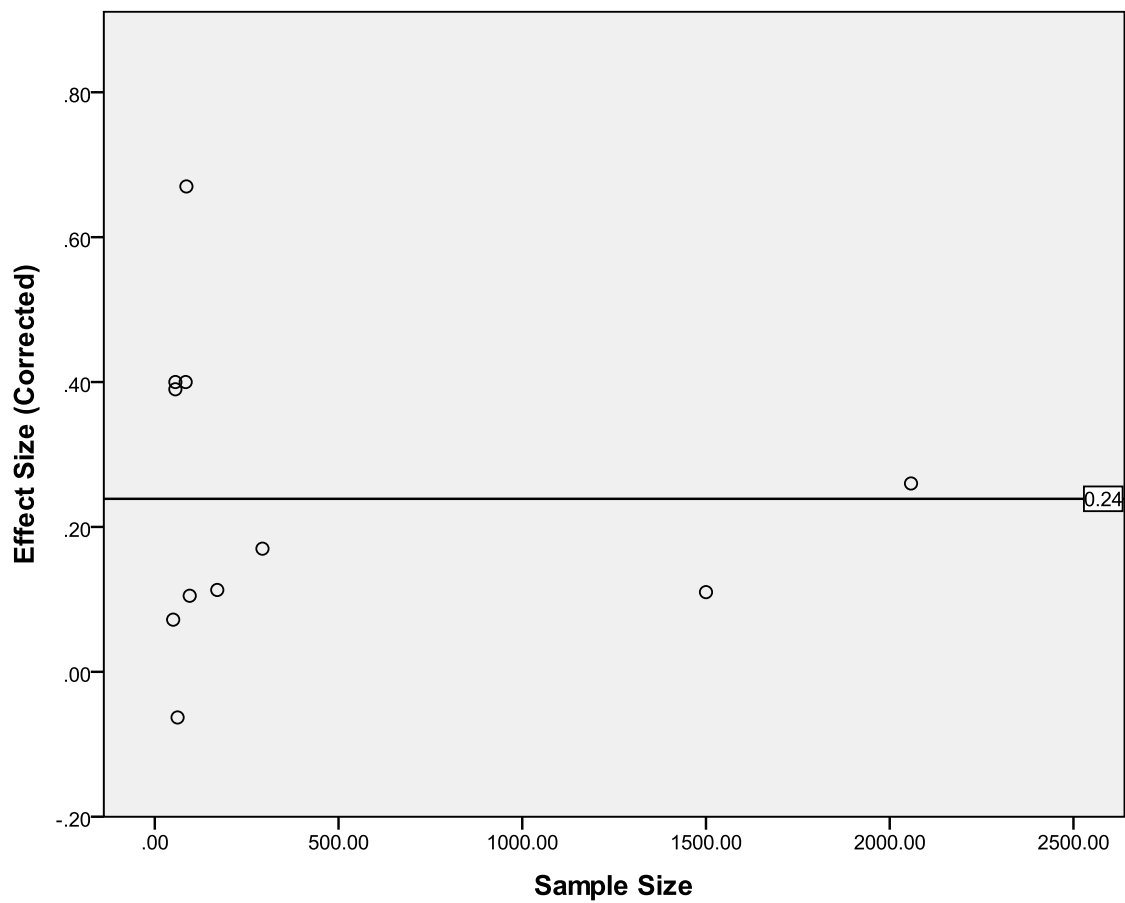


Figure 2.

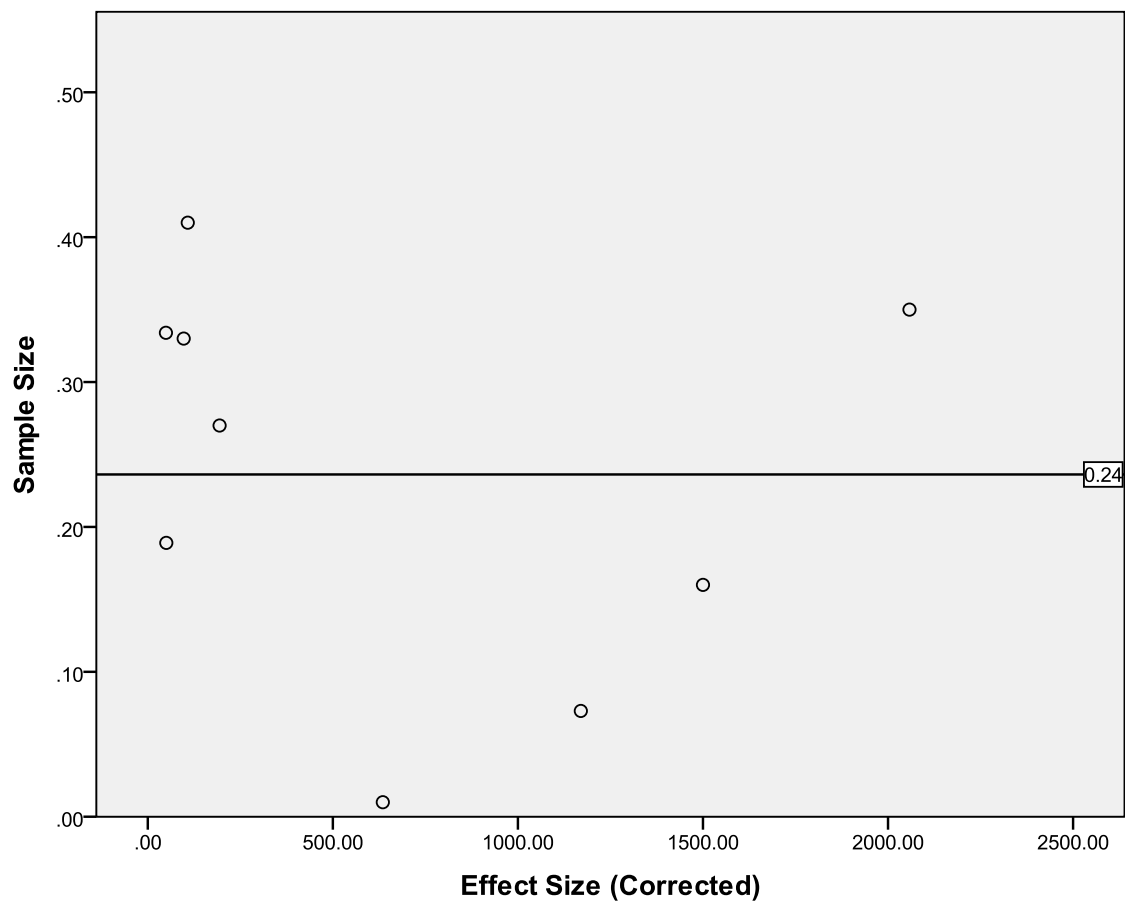


Figure 3.

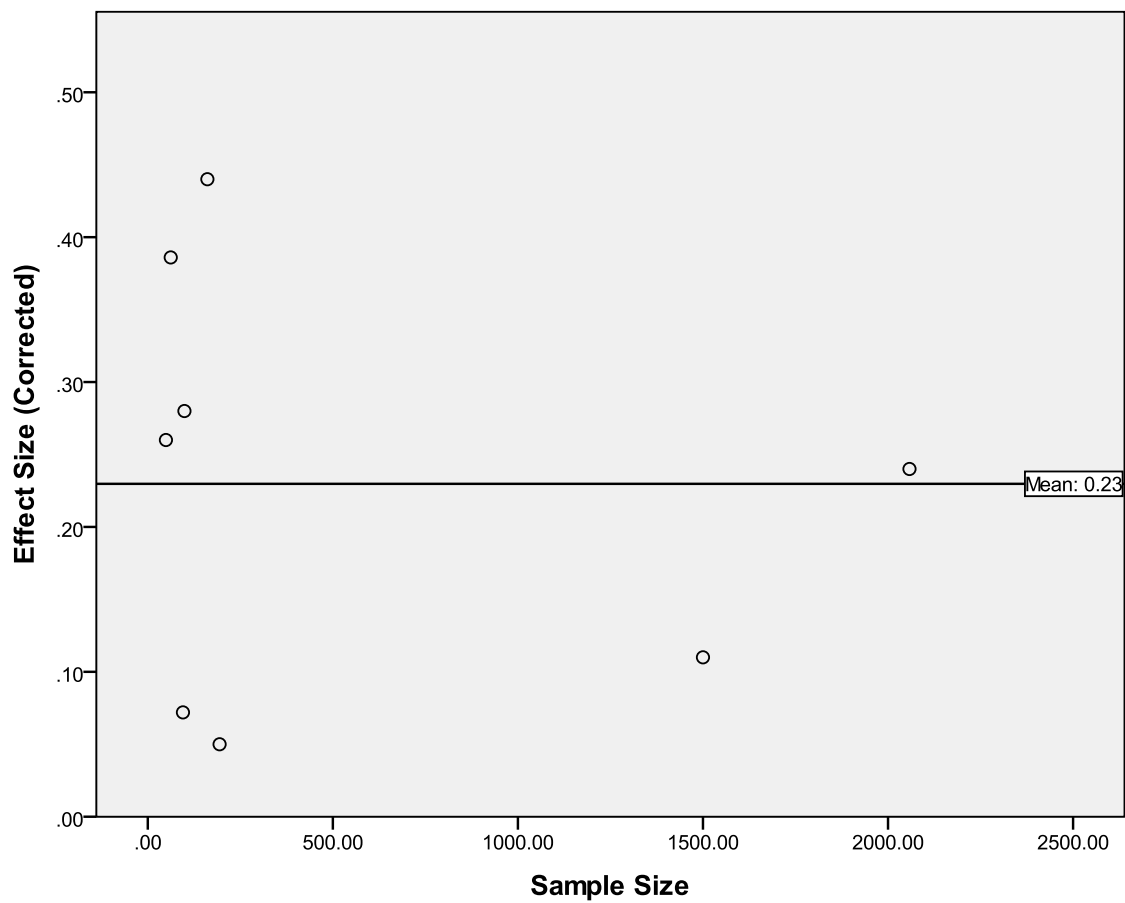


Figure 4.



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Table 1

*Conceptualizations of Terrorism*

Dominant Theme	Definitions of Terrorism	Emphases
Violence as coercion	<p>The unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives (FBI, 2005)</p> <p>A conspiratorial style of violence calculated to alter the attitudes and behavior of multitude audiences... target[ing] the few in a way that claims the attention of the many (Crenshaw, 1995)</p>	<p>Illegality, violence, coercion of government or civilian populations, ideological objectives</p> <p>Motivated by intent to persuade or coerce, small attack target, large target audience</p>
Violence as non-state, clandestine action	<p>Premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational or clandestine agents (CIA, 2007; NCTC, 2008)</p>	<p>Political motivation, violence, civilian targets, rogue/renegade perpetrators</p>
Violence as publicity	<p>The use or threat of use of violence, a method of combat, or a strategy to</p>	<p>Strategic, induction of fear, breaks humanitarian rules,</p>

achieve certain goals... aims to induce publicity

a state a fear in the victim... does not

conform to humanitarian rules...

publicity is an essential factor in the

terrorist strategy (Laqueur, 1987)

...violence against

Social association,

noncombatants/innocents that is

belief/attitude

committed with the intention to

reinforcement

publicize the deed, to gain publicity,

and thereby public and government

attention (Nacos, 2002)

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Table 2

*Conceptualizations of Extremism*

Conceptualization	Definitions of Extremism	Emphases
Statistical outlier	<p>“The normative or ‘statistical’ way is to frame the [belief] spectrum on a linear scale...and arbitrarily determine that beyond a certain point on each end of the spectrum lie the ‘extremists’”</p> <p>(George &amp; Wilcox, 1996, p. 11)</p>	<p>Arbitrary boundaries between extreme and “normal” behavior</p>
Informal heuristic deviation	<p>“...a social definition agreed upon by collective fiat, i.e., what is ‘extreme’ is what the masses collectively decide is ‘extreme’...excessive power in social and political elites, particularly in the opinion-molding sector.” (George &amp; Wilcox, 1996, p. 11)</p>	<p>Socially agreed upon standards for thoughts and behavior</p>
Closed mindset	<p>Taking a political idea to its limits without regard for negative consequences, eliminating opposing ideologies, bigotry against ideologies different than one’s own, adopting means to defend one’s beliefs without regard for basic human rights of others</p>	<p>Lack of regard for repercussions, animosity toward opposing belief structures, belief structure over human rights</p>

(all necessary conditions; Scruton, 1982)

Taking a political idea to its limits without regard for negative consequences, complete assuredness about one's own beliefs, eliminating opposing ideologies, bigotry against ideologies different than one's own, adopting means to defend one's beliefs without regard for basic human rights of others (only one needs to be present; Wintrobe, 2006)

"They represent some attempt to distort reality for themselves and others...; They try to discourage critical examination of their beliefs by...false logic, rhetorical trickery, or some kind of censorship, intimidation, or repression; Some attempt to act out private personal grudges or to rationalize the pursuit of special interests in the name of public welfare, morality, duty, or social

Lack of regard for repercussions, hard-line belief conviction, animosity toward opposing belief structures, belief structure over human rights

Warped reality, "dirty trick" belief defense, personal resentment acted out against and justified on a grand scale

consciousness” (Wilcox, 1996, p. 61)

A political extremist could be defined **Methods**

as one who uses extremist methods,

for example, bombings, inflammatory

language, terrorist activity... (Breton,

Galeotti, Salmon, & Wintrobe, 2002,

p. 25)

---

Table 3

*Conceptualizations of Radicalization*

Conceptualization	Definitions of Radicalization	Emphases
Identity shift	Loss of personal identity, replacement with group identity, ignorance of other-identity, dehumanization, demonization (Stahelski, 2004)  Perception of social injustice, identification of victimized group, identification of aggressor group, denigration of aggressor group (Borum, 2003)	Personal, group, and other identification  Perception of victims and aggressors
Motivational knowledge acquisition	Exposure to a message and belief system that teaches an individual to follow pre-determined thought and behavior patterns consistent with the group's ideology (RCMP, as cited in Pressman, 2008)	Message reception, ideology (teaching and assimilation), thought and behavior modeling
Social network	Exposure to and involvement with an individual (familial, friendly, apprentice relationships) involved with a radical movement can spur a game of "oneupsmanship" within a	Social association and affiliation, belief/attitude reinforcement

social group whereby individuals within the group continuously reinforce one another's spiraling beliefs

"The processes of social affiliation with potential members of the jihad and intensifications of beliefs and faith are necessary...for joining the jihad" (Sageman, 2004, p. 120)

Incremental commitment

"...social and psychological process of incrementally experienced commitment to extremist or political ideology" (Horgan, 2009, p. 152)

Incremental phases, ideological commitment

A change in beliefs, feelings, and behaviors in directions that increasingly justify intergroup violence and demand sacrifice in defense of the ingroup

Progressively increasing justification of violence, personal sacrifice, ingroup

(McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008, p. 416)

A change in beliefs, feelings, and behaviors that increasingly justify and advocate the use of violence in

Progressively increasing dedication to a terrorist group, sympathy toward

response to the failure to resolve a social injustice	terrorist tactics
A group of individuals “progress through a series of events, realizations, and experiences that often culminate in the decision to commit a terrorist act” (Silber & Bhatt, 2007, p. 16)	Social phenomenon, incremental progression, often violent outcomes
Adoption of extremist beliefs and increased willingness to use violence and fear as persuasive tools (Precht, 2007)	Justification of violence, Violence as politics

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Table 4

*Study Characteristics for Narrative Persuasion (Beliefs)*

Author (Year)	Nw <sub>a</sub>	r	r <sub>xx</sub>	r <sub>yy</sub>	r'	Design	DV	Fict/NF <sub>b</sub>	World/Norm <sub>c</sub>
Bae (2008)	1500	.11	1.00	.94	.11	Corr.	Cornea donation beliefs	NF	Normative
Bae & Kang (2008)	2058	.25	1.00	.95	.26	Corr.	Cornea donation beliefs	NF	Normative
Baesler (1997)	50	.06	1.00	.69	.07	Exp.	Internship beliefs	Fict.	Normative
Dahlstrom, Study 1 (2008)	56	.30	1.00	.55 <sub>d</sub>	.40	Exp.	Perceived truthfulness	Fict.	World
Dahlstrom, Study 2 (2008)	86	.50	1.00	.55 <sub>d</sub>	.67	Exp.	Perceived truthfulness	Fict.	World
Dahlstrom (2010)	56	.29	1.00	.55 <sub>d</sub>	.39	Exp.	Perceived truthfulness	Fict.	World
De Wit, Das, & Vet (2008)	62	-.06	1.00	.90	-.06	Exp.	Perceived risk of Hep B <sub>e</sub>	NF	World
Greene & Brinn (2003)	95	.09	1.00	.74	.11	Exp.	Perceived risk of skin cancer	NF	World
Lee (2001)	84	.30	1.00	.55 <sub>d</sub>	.40	Exp.	Perceived persuasiveness	Fict.	World
Mazor et al. (2007)	170	.10	1.00	.78	.78	Exp.	Story-consistent beliefs <sub>f</sub>	NF	World
Wilkin et al. (2007)	293	.17	1.00	1.00	1.00	Corr.	Breast cancer knowledge	Fict.	World

<sup>a</sup>Weighted sample size. <sup>b</sup>Moderator variable: Narrative stimulus presented as fiction or nonfiction. <sup>c</sup>Moderator variable: DV relates to beliefs about the world or about social norms. <sup>d</sup>Reliability estimate calculated via artifact distribution. <sup>e</sup>Average of two measures:

Perceived risk for contracting Hepatitis B and perceived severity of Hepatitis B infection. <sup>f</sup> Average of two measures: Belief that an advertised drug is beneficial and belief that lab testing is important in maintaining health.

Table 5

*Study Characteristics for Narrative Persuasion (Attitudes)*

Author (Year)	Nw <sub>a</sub>	r	r <sub>xx</sub>	r <sub>yy</sub>	r'	Design	DV	Fict/NF <sub>b</sub>
Allen et al. (2000)	635	.01	1.00	.93	.01	Exp.	Story-consistent attitude	NF
Bae (2008)	1500	.16	1.00	.95	.16	Corr.	Attitude about cornea donation	NF
Bae & Kang (2008)	2058	.34	1.00	.95	.35	Corr.	Attitude about cornea donation	NF
Brown (1990)	1170	.06	.95	.72	.07	Corr.	Attitude about women's issues <sub>d</sub>	Fict.
Diekman et al. Study 1 (2000)	97	.31	1.00	.87	.33	Corr.	Attitude about condom use	Fict.
Diekman et al. Study 2 (2000)	49	.31	1.00	.86	.33	Exp.	Attitude about condom use	Fict.
Lee & Leets (2002)	108	.39	1.00	.92 <sub>c</sub>	.41	Exp.	Message acceptance	Fict.
Mulligan & Habel (2011)	194	.20	1.00	.54	.27	Exp.	Story-consistent attitude <sub>e</sub>	Fict.
Tal-Or et al. (2004)	50	.16	1.00	.72	.19	Exp.	Attitude about traffic safety	NF

<sup>a</sup>Weighted sample size. <sup>b</sup>Moderator variable: Narrative stimulus presented as fiction or nonfiction. <sup>c</sup>Reliability estimate calculated via artifact distribution. <sup>d</sup>Average of three measures: Attitudes toward equal opportunities for women (relative to men), attitudes toward women's freedom of choice, attitudes toward family planning. <sup>e</sup>Average of two measures: Attitudes toward legalized abortion and attitudes toward following one's own convictions.

Table 6

*Study Characteristics for Narrative Persuasion (Intentions)*

Author (Year)	Nw <sub>a</sub>	r	r <sub>xx</sub>	r <sub>yy</sub>	r'	Design	DV	Fict/NF <sub>b</sub>	Self/Other <sub>c</sub>
Bae (2008)	1500	.11	1.00	.98	.11	Corr.	Intention to donate corneas	NF	Other
Bae & Kang (2008)	2058	.24	1.00	.98	.24	Corr.	Intention to donate corneas	NF	Other
De Wit et al. (2008)	62	.38	1.00	.97	.39	Exp.	Intention to vaccinate	NF	Self
Diekman et al. Study 2 (2000)	49	.25	1.00	.96 <sub>d</sub>	.26	Exp.	Intention to use condoms	Fict.	Self
Greene & Brinn (2003)	95	.07	1.00	.95	.07	Exp.	Intention to protect skin <sub>e</sub>	NF	Self
Mazor et al. (2007)	161	.42	1.00	.92 <sub>d</sub>	.44	Exp.	Intention to lab test	NF	Self
Wilkin et al. (2007)	99	.28	1.00	1.00	.28	Corr.	Intention to encourage mammogram <sub>f</sub>	Fict.	Other
Wilkin et al. (2007)	194	.05	1.00	1.00	.05	Corr.	Intention to get a mammogram <sub>g</sub>	Fict.	Self

<sup>a</sup>Weighted sample size. <sup>b</sup>Moderator variable: Narrative stimulus presented as fiction or nonfiction. <sup>c</sup>Moderator variable: DV relates to behavioral intentions toward oneself or toward others. <sup>d</sup>Reliability estimate calculated via artifact distribution. <sup>e</sup>Average of two

measures: Intention to tan (reverse coded) and intention to protect skin (sunscreen). <sup>f</sup>Male respondents only. <sup>g</sup>Female respondents only.

Table 7

*Study Characteristics for Narrative Persuasion (Behavior)*

Author (Year)	Nw <sub>a</sub>	r	r <sub>xx</sub>	r <sub>yy</sub>	r'	Design	DV	Fict/NF <sub>b</sub>
Diekman et al. Study 1 (2000)	97	.41	1.00	1.00	.41	Corr.	Condom use	Fict.
Greene & Brinn (2003)	95	.19	1.00	1.00	.19	Exp.	Tanning behavior <sub>b</sub>	NF

<sup>a</sup>Weighted sample size. <sup>b</sup>Moderator variable: Narrative stimulus presented as fiction or nonfiction.

Table 8

*Summary of Results and Credibility Intervals for Mean Effect Sizes (Beliefs)*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>k</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>EV/OV</i>	80% credibility interval	
----- ----- ----- ----- ----- -----						
					-.1	.5
<hr/>						
<u>Beliefs</u>						
Main Effect	.20	11	4510	27.14	.09	.30
<u>Moderators</u>						
Sample size						
<1000	.20	9	952	39.92	.03	.37
>1000	.20	2	3558	11.08	.11	.28
Fict./Nonfic.						
Fiction	.26	6	625	38.79	.09	.43
Nonfict	.19	5	3885	21.65	.10	.28
Belief type						
World	.20	8	902	36.22	.03	.38
Norm.	.20	3	3608	16.25	.11	.28
Design						
Meas.	.19	3	3851	16.47	.11	.28
Manip.	.22	8	659	35.95	-.01	.44

Table 9

*Summary of Results and Credibility Intervals for Mean Effect Sizes (Attitudes)*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>k</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>EV/OV</i>	80% credibility interval	
<u>Attitudes</u>						
Main Effect	.21	9	5861	9.81	.06	-----  .37
<u>Moderators</u>						
Sample size						
<500	.32	5	498	100.00	.32	.32
>500	.21	4	5363	4.70	.04	-----  .37
Fict./Nonfic.						
Fiction	.15	5	1618	27.81	.01	-----  .28
Nonfict	.23	4	4243	5.82	.08	-----  .39
Design						
Meas.	.24	4	4825	6.71	.10	-----  .37
Manip.	.11	5	1036	25.09	-.06	-----  .28



Table 10

*Summary of Results and Credibility Intervals for Mean Effect Sizes (Intentions)*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>k</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>EV/OV</i>	80% credibility interval	
----- ----- ----- ----- ----- -----						
					-.1	.5
<u>Intentions</u>						
Main Effect	.19	8	4218	23.32	.09	.29
<u>Moderators</u>						
Sample size						
<1000	.23	6	660	29.90	.05	.41
>1000	.19	2	3558	12.73	.11	.27
Fict./Nonfic.						
Fiction	.15	3	342	70.52	.06	.22
Nonfict.	.20	5	3876	16.08	.10	.30
Orientation						
Self	.19	3	3657	18.09	.11	.27
Other	.22	5	561	28.23	.03	.40

Table 11

*Frequency and Prevalence of Themes and Codes in the Online Narratives of the Animal Liberation Front*

Theme	Code	Instances	Proportion of Narratives	Cohen's $\kappa$
Animal Emotions		33	.45	
	Fear	15	.21	.44
	Helplessness	12	.17	.36
	Remorse	3	.04	.41
	Hopeless	9	.13	.38
	Fun	16	.22	.30
Mental Capacity of Animals		43	.60	
	Animal Intelligence	27	.38	.51
	Animal Naivety	3	.04	.30
	Humanization	37	.51	.18
Animal Relationships		21	.29	
	Animal Love for Young	6	.08	.41
	Animal Friendship	16	.22	.80
Spiritual Power of Animals		20	.28	
	Resilience of Animal	11	.15	.32

	Spirit			
	Spiritual Power of	7	.10	.18
	Animals			
	Angelification	6	.08	.42
	Otherworld Connection	7	.10	.42
Victimization of		39	.54	
Animals				
	Animal Capture	6	.08	.41
	Bad Conditions	28	.39	.66
	Animal Death	27	.38	.61
	Animal Slaughter	13	.18	.81
Animal Rescue		35	.49	
	Salvation	33	.46	.65
	Second Chances at Life	20	.28	.55
	Human Nonviolent	19	.26	.52
	Direct Action			
	Human Violent Direct	2	.03	.66
	Action			
Animal		37	.51	
Kindheartedness				
	Compassion for Other	17	.24	.62
	Animals			
	Compassion in Spite of	2	.03	-.03

	Cruelty			
	Compassion in Spite of	3	.04	.85
	Indiff.			
	Heroism	7	.10	.24
	Forgiveness	3	.04	.74
	Loyalty	22	.31	.43
Morality of Animals		16	.22	
	Animal Lack of Guilt	2	.03	.66
	Moral Superiority of	8	.11	.26
	Animals			
	Simple Wishes	7	.10	.46
Harmful Nature of		35	.49	
Humans				
	Human Arrogance	6	.08	.17
	Human Cruelty	19	.26	.60
	Human Indifference	21	.29	.43
	Human Resp. for Bad	3	.04	.48
	Behavior			
	Human Negative	8	.11	.46
	Assumptions			
	Human Punishment	5	.07	.41
	Human Imperfection	8	.11	.28
Practical Behaviors		24	.33	

for the Promotion of  
Animal Rights and  
Care

Proper Animal Care	19	.26	.29
Obligation to Pets	10	.14	.04
Vegetarian	3	.04	.65

---

## Appendix C

### *Definitions and Examples of Codes that Comprise the ALF Narrative Content Themes*

Theme	Code	Definition	Example
Animal Emotions	Fear	Related to depictions of animals being scared, nervous, or timid	The noise of the oncoming vehicle is piercing and threatening in her normally quiet peaceful harmonious Aussie bush home. It keeps coming louder and louder, closer and closer. <b>She waits and listens anxiously. Her nerves and adrenaline heighten to a point where she can't take it any longer.</b> She has to look. (Little Girl Tortured)
	Helplessness	Related to depictions of animals being unable to improve their own conditions or physically take care of themselves	<b>When I load this hurt and terrified baby into the car, she neither whimpers nor fights; she can't even stand. This is not a good sign; she is obviously in very bad shape.</b> As I drive to Sno-Wood Veterinary Hospital, I constantly look back to check on my very

		special passenger. (Freedom, The Eagle)
Remorse	Related to depictions of animals feeling regret for perceived transgressions	<p><b>But, alas, I am not proud of some of the things I have done.</b> I have willfully disobeyed orders. I have, at times, been too quick to bark, and I have whimpered needlessly. I have gnawed upon things I never should have gnawed. Yes, I have even bitten others in anger. Not often, and only when I felt I had to, but now I see that turning to the tooth never solves anything.</p> <p>(Confessions of a Dog)</p>
Hopelessness	Related to depictions of animals who are resigned to a negative fate of some sort: death, injury, bad treatment, etc.	<p>Before I die, I would like everyone to know how I feel. <b>I am very old now and I have lived and will die alone in a cage in a back room.</b> (A Lonely Bird)</p>
Fun	Related to depictions of animals enjoying themselves through play	<p>I know I have heard that word ‘Time’ before, but I don’t understand. When I was younger, my people would say ‘Time to play!’ <b>They would throw the ball</b></p>

Mental Capacity  
of Animals

Animal  
intelligence

Related to an animal's ability to figure,  
determine, or otherwise use logic.

Animal naivety

Related to an animal's inability to

**and I would run fast. Sometimes I brought it back to them, but other times we'd end up chasing each other having fun.** (A Shelter Dog Asks God)

Once the whole story was known, everyone realized just how smart the little chihuahua had been. **He recognized that the Jeep matched his guardian's car. (The color was off a bit, but dogs can't distinguish most colors). He also recognized that the person in the car was the wrong person. He thus decided that the best approach was to keep the car there until the right person came along. It was his intelligence that ultimately enabled the smart little guy to find his way home.** He taught us how smart a dog can be in the process. (A Dog's Life)

Dear God, **what is Time?** I hear the sadness in the



		understand concepts that are foreign to it. Also refers to an animal's innocence—Its inability to be bad due to its innocent nature	voices of the workers here. They say my “time is up”, that they have to make room for yet another dog. (A Shelter Dog Asks God)
	Humanization	Related to animal behavior, thought, or feeling that mimics that of a human being.	[Referring to chickens] Well, why not? <b>They were like people to me. Friends.</b> (Chicken Shit)
Animal Relationships	Animal love for their young	Related to depictions of animal parents caring for or protecting their offspring	<b>When a family of ducklings fell down a Vancouver sewer grate their mother did what any parent would do.</b> She got help from a passing police officer. (Duck Calls Police)
	Friendship between animals	Related to depictions of friendship between animals—same or different species	Then, I was suddenly reminded of one of my favorite childhood movies, Bride of Frankenstein. Elvis' head came up as soon as he saw the trailer and heard Luna's moo. Hers was a guttural alto bray; his was deeper. <b>He</b>

Spiritual Power of Animals	Resilience of the animal spirit	Related to depictions of animals' strength of will, usually related to an animal's drive to continue living or to heal	<b>began to dance around. A friend like me! Maybe a girlfriend! The two animals started talking to each other right away.</b> (Cow Love)
	Spiritual power of animals	Related to depictions of otherworldly power inherent in some animals	Soon our hen was back on her foot, and on her way to recovery. She would suffer three more strokes in the next three years, <b>each of which should have killed her, but she kept going.</b> (Handicapped Hen)
	Animal angelification	Related to depictions of animals that include discussion of them as angels,	I have had people who were sick come up to us when we are out, and Freedom has some kind of hold on them. I once had a guy who was terminal come up to us and I would let him hold her. <b>His knees just about buckled and he swore he could feel her power coarse through his body.</b> (Freedom, the Eagle)
			We named him Jonah. For those of you who know your Bible, Jonah was swallowed by a whale and lived

		gods, or other benevolent spirits	through it. <b>The pit bull reminded [sic] of Jonah</b> because of the artifacts of a past life, a past suffering I could only guess at, were etched into his skin and shined from his eyes. (Jonah's Story)
Otherworldly connection between man and animal		Related to depictions of an unspoken connection between man and animal that is largely unexplainable	When he [a pit bull] saw me, he came directly to me, and sat right beside me, and sat right beside me, as if we had come to the park to sit and talk. <b>This is the part that was hard to explain and it sounds silly to say it out loud. It seemed, though, that he knew immediately that I was interested in helping him, and it seemed as if it's what he had been looking for.</b> (Jonah's Story)
Victimization of Animals	Animal capture	Related to depictions of animals being taken, caged, kidnapped, or otherwise removed from their natural habitat	Exhilarated by the hunt, reveling in the thrill of the chase and amused by the fight of their prey, totally oblivious to her pain and fear without remorse, <b>the</b>

		<b>men mercilessly pull her into the vehicle. They gaffer tape her legs together; tie her arms together behind her back; tape her eyes shut and have her mouth gagged.</b> (Little Girl Tortured)
Bad conditions for animals	Related to negative living conditions made available to animals, including but not limited to: unsanitary, noisy, cold, diseased, or inhumane conditions. Also related to depictions of animals as being restricted in their movements as a result of the space they are provided	<b>Cows were assembled along the wall- like never before, all with ropes around their necks and wall their calves chained to those ropes</b> —all cows had that sad look in their eyes I never saw before—like they were saying to me- “goodbye”... (Cows Do Glow on Midnight)
Animal death	Related to depictions of animals dying, violently or nonviolently	<b>I turned and tried to get away but my way was barred. The man shoved me forward; it was my turn to die.</b> (Boys Don’t Cry)
Animal	Related to depictions of animals dying	“I’m only four months old, please don’t kill me!” I

	slaughter	as a result of purposeful human action.	<b>was pushed towards my fate:</b> “Mummy, I want my mummy.” I turned to catch one last look of the blue sky. (Boys Don’t Cry)
Animal Rescue	Salvation	Related to depictions of saving an animal, whether from sickness, injury, confinement, or perceived abuse	My heart sank inside my chest when I saw the little puppy was cleft-lipped and could not close its little mouth. We had gone through this once before last year with another of our cockers. That experience like to have killed me when the puppy died and I had to bury it. <b>If there was any way to save this animal I was going to give it my best shot.</b> (Cleft Lip)
	Second chance at life	Related to depictions of animals returning to a positive life after they are saved or otherwise removed from the negative conditions in which they were living	When I phoned later in the day to see how he [a field mouse named Gerald] was, they told me that he had had a drink and that they had put some healing gel on his wound and would keep him in over the weekend. When I phoned the vets after the weekend, I was

		overjoyed to hear that <b>the little fellow had survived and was ready to be released back into the wild.</b> (Gerald the Field Mouse)
Human nonviolent direct action	Related to depictions of animal salvation in which a human action to save the animal (donations, fundraisers, etc. do not count) from perceived abuses but does not resort to violent activity to do so	At this, the writer scoffs and informs the man that there are miles and miles of beach and tens of thousands of starfish and he can't possibly believe that what he is doing will make a difference. The young man pauses and gives thought to this observation. <b>Then, picking up another starfish from the beach, he tells the writer as he throws it back into the water...It makes a difference...to this one."</b> (It Makes a Difference)
Human violent direct action	Related to depictions of animal salvation in which a human takes direct violent action to save the animal from	Summer after that I created my first planned liberation action- <b>I even tried to set the farm on fire-</b> but luckily I got caught before I did it. (Cows Do Glow on

		perceived abuses	Midnight)
Animal kindheartedness	Animal compassion for other animals	Related to depictions of animals development of emotional relationships with other animals	In a remarkable tale of friendship among animals, <b>a blind lap dog in southern California has its own guide dog—a German Shepherd which refuses to leave his disabled pal’s side, according to a report on Saturday.</b> (Blind Dog)
	Animal compassion in spite of human cruelty	Related to depictions of animals remaining caring toward their owners and others even after being beaten or otherwise mistreated	I have never known the comforts of family life. <b>I have never been invited inside to enjoy an evening with my family. I have never been for a walk. I see my family for five minutes each day when they bring me food and water; never at the same time.</b> I have so much love in my heart to give them and now that I am near the end of my days, they will never know how much I loved them. I forgive them for the way they treated me. (Lonely Dog)

Animal compassion in spite of human indifference	Related to depictions of animals remaining loyal toward their owners even after being abandoned (does not relate to physical abuse)	[In response to being left at a vet to be put down] With my last bit of energy, I tried to convey to her with a thump of my tail that my “How could you?” was not meant for her. <b>It was you, my Beloved Master, I was thinking of. I will think of you and wait for you forever. May everyone in your life continue to show you so much loyalty.</b> (How Could You)
Unconditional love of animals	Related to depictions of animals caring for their owners (and sometimes other animals) despite the imperfections and negative behaviors of the latter	I am a dog, but I am alive. I feel emotion, I feel physical senses, and I can revel in the differences of our spirits and souls. I do not think of you as a “dog on two feet” – I know what you are. <b>You are human, in all of your quiriness, and I love you still.</b> (I Am Your Dog)
Animal heroism	Related to depictions of animals serving humans in such a way as to	Melmo Varnell is a small mixed-breed dog that belongs to William and Linda Varnell of Oak Ridge.



	protect their physical or emotional well-being	She obviously has some terrier in her background, perhaps some feist, but mostly she is all heart. <b>You see, Melmo has taught herself to alert Linda when she is about to have a grand mal seizure. Without Melmo, Linda would have a restrictive, unsafe life lived in fear.</b> (Lifesaver)
Animal forgiveness	Related to depictions of animals excusing humans for their transgressions against them	You smile at me: I see love in your eyes. What do you see in mine? Do you see a spirit? A soul inside, who loves you as no other could in the world? <b>A spirit that would forgive all trespasses of prior wrongdoing for just a simple moment of your time?</b> (I Am Your Dog)
Animal loyalty to humans	Related to depictions of animals remaining faithful to their owners, without mention of abuse or	My beloved master, great and giving one, <b>my sole purpose on this Earth is to follow at your heels, to come when you call.</b> (Confessions of a Dog)

		abandonment	
Morality of Animals	Lack of guilt	Related to an animal's moral dissociation from an event construed as "bad" through lack of control	My people said there was no time for walks. <b>I tried to hold it all day long—but God, I just couldn't anymore.</b> When I finally had to go, it made my family very angry. (A Shelter Dog Asks God)
	Moral superiority of animals over humans	Related to humans' inherent inferiority to behave morally relative to animals	My friend watched them until they disappeared over the tips of the farthest trees. Only then, in the dusk, which was suddenly deep, did she realize that tears were running down her cheeks and had been for how long she didn't know. This is a true story. It happened. I do not try to interpret it. <b>I just think of it in the bad moments, and from it comes only one hopeful question: "If so for birds, why not for man?"</b> (Goose and Swans)
	Simple wishes	Related to the uncomplicated nature of	They can keep the sea too, I was sick on the ship and I

	of animals	what animals hope to acquire or do	was glad when I heard we didn't have to go on the big boat again. We were all full of hope that day when we heard we were going to a new home in France. <b>Some of the guys hoped for a new diet in a country famed for its food but all I wanted was more room to live in.</b> (Boys Don't Cry)
Harmful Nature of Humans	Human arrogance	Related to human assumption that he/she is inherently a better being than animals	Janna is free now. Blessed by the peacefulness of the heavens...and her son. Her fate was destined before she fell into the clutches of man, <b>for it is man who wrongly thinks he is ruler of the world.</b> (Innocence)
	Human cruelty	Related to depictions of humans mistreating animals in brutal, malicious, or atrocious ways	This man in a heavily blood stained white coat, who held my fate in his hands would not listen to my pleas. I was scared: I could hear the screams of my brothers dying. What kind of life was this to be kept in a small crate, to be force fed milk? Then I heard my friend cry

		out and saw his blood run down the drain before me.
		<b>All this pain and suffering just so they can have white meat, and they call us beasts!</b> (Boys Don't Cry)
Human indifference toward animals	Related to depictions of humans "pushing animals by the wayside", ignoring their responsibilities to take care of animals, or not making an animal or animal care a priority	<b>My family said they didn't have 'Time'. They didn't have time to play, or time to take me to the vet, or time to go for walks.</b> They didn't have time, so they brought me here [to be put down]. (A Shelter Dog Asks God)
Humans responsible for animal bad behavior	Related to the position that animal bad behavior is the result of human mistakes rather than animal malcontent or inherent "badness"	What springs to mind now, though it pains me to recall, is the garbage-can incident. <b>My owner had been gone for hours. I was restless. Perhaps I was even a little angry over being left alone. At any rate, I nudged the kitchen-cupboard door open and overturned the garbage can.</b> (Confessions of a Dog)

Human negative assumptions about nature of animals

Related to notions that humans have about animal nature and behavior

When I saw him, and his behavior, I was instantly curious and touched by the way he was acting. **I had heard all of the stories about pits [pit bulls]. I've always heard it said that they are savage monsters who maul and kill without warning. It's said that they are inherently bad and that they are mean no matter what.** It was obvious to me, even though I had just met this dog that he wasn't looking for someone to bite, but for someone to love and help. (Jonah's Story)

Punishment of humans

Related to the punishment of human beings in response to bad treatment of animals or the environment

[In response to someone witnessing someone else abandoning their dog at a park] The Native Americans have a legend that says that when a person dies, before he or she is admitted into Heaven; they are judged by the animals they knew here on earth. **If I were**

			<p><b>judging you, you would be consigned to the deepest pits of Hell knowing the love and loyalty your best friend had for you.</b> (Abandoned Dog)</p>
Human imperfection	Related to the fallibility of human behavior, ethics, beliefs, or attitudes		<p>They [animals] do nothing to damage the Earth or threaten our environment. <b>As an imperfect human who respects their perfection, and that of all birds, I can only wonder if “dominion over the Earth” was granted to the wrong species. It is human arrogance to suggest that birds do not have souls. How can we flawed humans claim to be the only species created “in His image,”</b> when by their very nature they are surely closer to the Creator than we are? (Birds as Teachers)</p>
Practical Behaviors for the	Proper animal care	Related to discussions of how to provide the best physical care for	<p>We expect to be inconvenienced, and aren't angry when it happens. <b>We watch for pain and treat it,</b></p>

Promotion of  
Animal Rights  
and Care

animals so they live comfortably and  
healthy

**watch for changes in vision and hearing and do  
what we can to help preserve those precious senses  
for as long as possible. We take care of their teeth,  
and make sure their food is a manageable texture  
for them. We remind them of the need for a potty  
walk when they seem to forget.** (Autumn Sun)

Obligation to  
pets

Related to depictions of personal  
responsibility for taking care of pets

[In response to being asked if the guardian to Heaven  
is offended by the guardian of Hell disguising Hell as  
Heaven] No. I can see how you might think so, but it  
actually saves us a lot of time. **They screen out the  
people who are willing to leave their best friends  
behind.** (Heaven or Hell)

Vegetarian

Language related to refusal to eat meat,  
fish, or poultry (includes veganism)

**That summer, I stopped eating Animals- exactly  
the same night I got caught in the “family-web” I  
could not touch the cold flesh and I also get very**

**upset when I see one.** (Cows Do Glow on Midnight)

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## CURRICULUM VITAE

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