Behavioral Sciences and the Law
Behav. Sci. Law 23: 485–506 (2005)
Published online in Wiley InterScience (www.interscience.wiley.com). DOI: 10.1002/bsl.653

Social Psychology, Terrorism, and Identity: A Preliminary Re-examination of Theory, Culture, Self, and Society

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This article relies upon structural symbolic interactionism and five of its organizing concepts (i.e. symbols, the definition of the situation, roles, socialization and role-taking, and the self) to put forth a novel conceptual framework for understanding the terrorist identity. In order to demonstrate the practical utility of the framework, applications to various terrorist groups around the globe are incorporated into the analysis. Overall, both the theoretical and application work help reorient the academic and practitioner behavioral science communities to the importance of culture, self, and society when investigating one's membership in and identity through militant extremist organizations. Given the unique approach taken by this article, several provisional implications are delineated. In particular, future research on terrorism, strategies linked to counter-terrorism, legal and public policy reform, and the relevance of utilizing a sociologically animated social psychology in the assessment of other forms of criminal behavior are all very tentatively explored. Copyright © 2005 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

This article endeavors to deepen and extend society's understanding of how terrorist identities are created, embraced, and maintained, as well as how they influence the behavior of members in a militant extremist subculture. This is accomplished by exploring the delicate relationship that exists among culture, self, and society in the formation and preservation of the terrorist self-concept. To be clear, the suggested framework is not meant to be a comprehensive explanation for militant extremist conduct as no single discipline or theory can accomplish this feat. Instead, the

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proposed framework explores one facet of the complex phenomenon known as terrorism.[1] Furthermore, this article endeavors to go beyond the vilification to which terrorist individuals and collectives have been subjected, given their calculated acts. To this end, the ensuing study does not represent an apology for such nefarious conduct; rather, it signifies a novel contextual basis from within which to understand individual and group participation in such behavior.

During the past several decades, there have been numerous scholarly attempts to explain terrorism from a variety of social and behavioral science perspectives (Hudson, 1999; Stout, 2002). A large portion of this extant literature utilizes the psychological approach, which typically views the motivations for militant extremist behavior as a product of the person's psyche. These inquiries endeavor to specify the underlying psychological traits that compel an individual to engage in such violent conduct. Recognized as the "search for the terrorist personality," Horgan (2003) explains that, statistically, psychodynamic accounts have been the most popular when examining the behavior of terrorists. Within contemporary studies addressing identity and terrorism, the application of Erikson's (1968) theory of psychosocial development has been the most recurring.[2]

One of the earliest applications of Erikson's theory to militant extremist behavior was Böllinger's (1981) explanation of the violence committed by left-wing and right-wing West German terrorists during the 1970s and 1980s. Böllinger contended that the subjects of his inquiry failed to effectively negotiate Erikson's eight stages and, as a result, assumed a negative identity. The negative identity prompted these individuals to turn to the collective identity of the extremist organization in order to experience purpose and meaning in their lives. Knutson (1981) offered a similar conclusion after examining incarcerated terrorists. She contended that subjects adopted the negative identity when they perceived themselves as having been disenfranchised by others following membership in a marginalized community or collective and placed, without support, on the fringes of society.

These studies led Crenshaw (1986) to conclude that individuals are drawn to totalitarianism or totalitarian movements because they lack a strong sense of identity and find comfort in an organization's authoritarian dogma. Moreover, elaborating on the early psychoanalytic application studies, Post (1984) contended that terrorists suffer from a partial or fragmented psychosocial identity and that political

[1]In an effort to move past the debate over what is and what is not terrorism, the definition developed by Alex P. Schmid and Albert J. Jongman (1988) is embraced. In pertinent part, the definition reads as follows: "... [terrorism is] an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi-) clandestine individual, group or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal or political reasons, whereby—in contrast to assassination—the direct targets of violence are not the main targets. The immediate human victims of violence are generally chosen randomly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative or symbolic targets) from a target population, and serve as message generators. Threat- and violence-based communication processes between terrorist (organization), (imperiled) victims, and main targets are used to manipulate the main target (audience(s)), turning it into a target of terror, a target of demands, or a target of attention, depending on whether intimidation, coercion, or propaganda is primarily sought" (Schmid and Jongman, 1988, p. 28).

[2]Erikson (1968) theorized that in order for an individual to develop into a healthy, well adjusted adult with a fully integrated personality and positive identity the person had to successfully master a "crisis" within each of eight stages of psychosocial development. The failure to appropriately navigate through or successfully complete these crises would result in developmental delays and the acquisition or formation of a "negative identity." As Erikson (1968, p. 174) explained, this is "... an identity perversely based on all those identifications and roles which, at critical stages of development, had been presented ... as [the] most undesirable or dangerous and yet also as [the] most real."

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violence is driven by an individual's search for identity. Building upon this perspective, Shaw (1986) developed what he termed the "Personal Pathway Model." According to Shaw, terrorist behavior was the result of unresolved narcissistic injuries and unexamined (and traumatic) personal setbacks. As such, Shaw's Personal Pathway Model fundamentally assumed that there was some profound psychological scarring that accounted for why individuals engaged in terrorist acts, traceable to low self-esteem, a disorganized identity, or the inability to cope with the significant frustrations of life.

As the foregoing research exemplifies, the link between identity and terrorism has been well established in the literature. However, as Horgan (2003) notes, studies such as these are seriously flawed for at least two reasons. First, psychological researchers have been guilty of committing the fundamental attribution error (Fiske & Taylor, 1984; Ross & Fletcher, 1985). In short, they overestimate the internal causes for terrorist behaviors. Indeed, research supporting the notion that those who commit such acts are intra-psychically flawed, abnormal, and/or psychopathic is mostly rare and typically of poor quality (Atran, 2003; Silke, 1998). Second, research based on the psychoanalytic paradigm often suffers from methodological deficiencies. For example, the explanatory power of Böllinger's examination of West German terrorists was limited because subjects were unwilling to meet with researchers, cooperation from local officials was lacking, and interviewees were only *suspected* terrorists (Horgan, 2003). Consequently, while previous research has distinguished identity as an integral factor in comprehending terrorist behavior, relying purely upon psychological explanations appears wholly inadequate. Indeed, given much of this research to date, the identity construct remains a fundamental, but elusive, dimension to society's efforts to successfully understand this deeply disturbing phenomenon.

For purposes of this article, we turn our attention to social psychology, a field of inquiry that does not portray human behavior as necessarily flawed or abnormal but as a manifestation of social interaction. More specifically, sociologically animated social psychology[3] is an orientation that largely relies upon Symbolic Interactionism.[4] This school of thought studies, "how we use and interpret symbols not merely to communicate with one another but to create and maintain impressions of

[3]A distinction exists between psychological social psychology (PSP) and sociological social psychology (SSP) (Boutilier, Roed, & Svendsen, 1980). The PSP perspective can be defined as an "attempt to understand and explain how the thought, feeling, and behavior of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined or implied presence of others" (Allport, 1985, p. 3). A pivotal concept within PSP is Tajfel's conception of the social identity, which he defined as, "that part of the individual's self-concept which derives from [one's] knowledge of [one's] membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1981, p. 225). *Social Psychology Quarterly* (2000), a journal largely recognized as embracing SSP, defines the field, "as the study of the primary relations of individuals to one another, to groups, collectivities, and institutions. It also includes the study of intra-individual processes insofar as they substantially influence, or are influenced by, social structure and process" (p. 3). While the number of studies applying PSP and Social Identity to terrorism are limited (e.g. Brannan, Esler, & Strindberg, 2001; Stevens, 2002), the SSP perspective has all but been ignored in the relevant research.

[4]Two approaches are discernible within contemporary symbolic interactionist thought: the situational (or processual) or Chicago School and the structural or Iowa School (Longmore, 1998). Although both approaches claim to draw upon Mead's seminal work for theoretical grounding, they differ considerably when studying the human experience. The Chicago School focuses on the processes through which people construct meaning, given the situations in which they find themselves. Conversely, the Iowa School views human conduct as more predictable and stable. Relying upon James' contention that the self is multifaceted, people have as many selves as do those who know them (McCall and Simmons, 1978; Stryker, 1980).

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ourselves, to forge a sense of SELF, and to create and sustain what we experience as the reality of a particular social situation'' (Johnson, 1995, p. 144). Expounding upon this construct, Stryker and Burke (2000) explain that identities are considered, ''parts of the self composed of meanings that persons attach to the multiple roles they typically play in highly differentiated contemporary society'' (p. 284). Identities are cognitive self-schemas consisting of the internalized role expectations and positional designations incorporated and organized within our sense of self (Stryker & Serpe, 1994).

This article offers an alternative conceptual model for understanding the identity construct and its relationship to terrorism than previously supplied. To achieve this end, five organizing concepts from structural symbolic interactionism (SSI) are employed. These include symbols, the definition of the situation, roles, socialization and role-taking, and the emergence of the self (Hewitt, 1976; Stryker, 1980). In order to demonstrate the practical utility of the proposed theoretical framework and its five organizing concepts, a number of applications to terrorist organizations[5] around the globe are incorporated into the overall analysis. Several implications stemming from the proposed theoretical framework are very tentatively outlined. Specific areas considered include future behavioral and social science research on terrorism, strategies to combat terrorism, legal and public policy reform, and the broad appeal of sociologically based social psychology for investigating other forms of criminal conduct.

STRUCTURAL SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM: FIVE ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES

Symbols

A symbol is conceptualized in two ways. First, a symbol is a concrete object consisting of physical matter that can be referred to, designated, or acted toward. In reference to terrorism, a concrete symbol may be a target such as a bank or embassy. Each of these physical objects may be emblematic of capitalism or Western influence. A more abstract interpretation of a symbol is as a social object. In these instances, the symbol is a socially constructed thing that may represent the goal of action. For example, justice, truth, and autonomy are all socially constructed objects that direct or invite us to respond (i.e., behave) in some fashion or another. For many

[5]Illustrations are drawn from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, racist skinheads, Hamas, Shining Path, and the Provisional Irish Republican Army. All of these organizations have been designated by the U.S. Department of State (2003) as having engaged in acts of terrorism except for racist skinheads. Many ideologically based racist skinheads are attempting to promote a right-wing political/social agenda (i.e., antigovernment, anti-multiculturalism, White supremacy) through fear and intimidation (Anti-Defamation League, 2002). Although an unsophisticated and loosely affiliated organization, the violent acts (i.e., assault, arson, murder, and vandalism) committed by racist skinheads are not simply crimes but politically motivated terrorist attacks with the purpose of instilling fear in the civilian populations of immigrants, gays and lesbians, Jewish Americans, and people of color (Hamm, 1993; Quarles, 1999). Furthermore, the five violently extremist organizations are themselves heterogeneous, representing various regions of the globe (i.e., Asia, North America, Middle East, South America, and Europe) and four different types of terrorism (i.e., racial/ethnic, religious, nationalist/separatist, and revolutionary). As such, exploring these distinct groups furthers our ability to assess the interpretative model's explanatory and predictive properties.

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in the United States, the American flag represents a symbol of a socially constructed non-physical object (e.g., freedom and liberty), eliciting patriotic action. As Hewitt (1976, p. 49) describes, "social objects are created as people engage in social acts.... [S]ocial acts depend upon social interaction and interpretation. That is, in order for individuals to cooperate with one another in the creation of social objects, they must orient their conduct to one another."

Both concrete and abstract objects are significant in their environment when they are designated by symbols. Structural symbolic interactionists focus on symbols in relation to their power to categorize and classify the social world. Language and symbolic systems are seen in terms of the way in which they represent meanings for human action. Moreover, shared meanings are passed on through history, culture, and socialization. As Stryker (1980, pp. 56–57) explains it,

> Symbols focus attention upon salient elements in an interactive situation, and permit preliminary organizations of behavior appropriate to it. Culture may be thought of, from this perspective, as a specification of what is important for interaction by being relevant to goal-oriented activity, a specification representing the cumulative experience of a social unit. As this observation implies, there are frequently ready-made definitions available as quickly as appropriate cues are perceived.

As such, symbols help us interpret and situate the individual in the interactive environment. In addition, they play a pivotal role in defining and constructing the situation one encounters.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and Symbols of Oppression: Anti-Tamil Riots and Discriminatory Policies

For the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka, there are several symbols that play an important part in the identities of the organization's militants. One particularly salient symbol is the discriminatory policies enacted by the Sinhalese-dominated government (Tamil Information Centre, 2001). Passed in June 1956, the "Sinhala Only Act" was the first of many initiatives that adversely impacted the Tamil minority. Specifically, the Act provided that Sinhalese would be the island's sole official language to be used in all government proceedings, including civil service, courtroom, tribunal, and other legal affairs, as well as in all administrative reports, pleadings, judgments, and orders (Swamy, 1994). The Sinhala Only Act was intended to win favor among the upper echelon of the Sinhalese community and the vernacular-educated villagers who spoke only Sinhalese, persons who would otherwise have little chance of securing admission to universities, civil service jobs, or professional positions (Pfaffenberger, 1994).

However, as a result of the Act, urban middle-class Tamils were devastated by the country's efforts to redistribute jobs among the Sinhalese majority. As Shastri (1994) notes, the proportion of Tamils in public service rapidly dropped following the legislation. Moreover, those Tamil civil servants who refused to study or do business in Sinhala—despite offers of promotion and other incentives—were summarily dismissed from their positions (Swamy, 1994). Indeed, the Tamil community backlash to the Sinhala Only Act was intense. For example, Sinhalese Ministry of Transport officials dispatched buses to Tamil-dominated areas that displayed the Sinhala-language "Sri" lettering on their license plates

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(O'Ballance, 1989; Wilson, 2000). Angry Tamils began painting over the Sinhala lettering when it appeared on bus license plates or on public signs, writing in their place the same letter in the Tamil script (Swamy, 1994). These exchanges initiated what was to be known as the anti-*Sri* campaigns: guerilla efforts that sparked acts of civil disobedience eventually resulting in violence against Sri Lankan Tamils.

A second symbol was the anti-Tamil pogroms that took place in 1956, 1958, 1977, 1981, and 1983 (Ponnambalam, 1983). The most infamous of these pogroms occurred in July 1983. The initial riot was ignited by the killing of 13 Sri Lankan Army soldiers following their ambush by a cadre of LTTE militants in Jaffna on the night of July 23, 1983. Hordes of Sinhalese rioters armed with axes, poles, iron rods, clubs, knives, daggers, petrol bombs, and firearms beat, murdered, and raped innocent Tamils (Swamy, 1994). Representatives in the Tamil community accused the Sri Lankan government of playing a covert role in the riots. Tamil citizens believed the mob's use of government vehicles and electoral lists to systematically comb the area, as well as to locate and destroy Tamil residences and businesses, were evidence of official complicity (Hoole, Somasundaram, Sritharan, & Thiranagama, 1990; Senaratne, 1997). Although the Sri Lankan government did not hold a public inquiry, making the exact casualty figures and material losses impossible to cite with accuracy, investigators estimated that the week-long violence resulted in the death of over 4,000 Tamil citizens with damages to Tamil homes and businesses in excess of several million rupees (Wilson, 2000). Regrettably, hundreds of Tamils were left homeless and forced into refugee camps (Senaratne, 1997; Swamy, 1994).

Senaratne (1997) describes the anti-Tamil riots of July 1983 as a watershed event in postcolonial Sri Lankan history. The horrific accounts of victimization spread quickly throughout the Tamil community: women had been sexually assaulted in the streets; passengers on a minibus had been murdered when trapped inside while it was set ablaze, despite their cries for mercy; thousands of Tamil homes had been ransacked and burnt, some while women and children were still inside; and hundreds of thousands of Tamils had become refugees. These unconscionable acts occurred while police and Sri Lankan military personnel allegedly looked on and even participated in the devastation (Piyadasa, 1984; Swamy, 1994).

Given these atrocities and what they symbolized, the Tamil community found a new appreciation for the militants' struggle for nationalism. According to Swamy's (1994) estimation, none of the Tamil militant groups had more than 50 active members prior to the event; however, "[a]fter the riots, hundreds of young Tamils—school and college students—in Sri Lanka's northeast began approaching local militant leaders whom they had shunned until then, clamoring for membership and arms. Many boys ran off from their homes, leaving terse notes that they were going away to fight for Eelam" (p. 104). The symbolic nature of the ensuing violence against Tamils served as yet another impetus for people to become involved in the struggle for Tamil Eelam (Hoole et al., 1990; Joshi, 1996).

Definition of the Situation

The symbolic transformation of the social environment is closely related to the development of a second major component of structural symbolic interactionism, namely the definition of the situation. Proposed by W. I. Thomas in the 1920s, the

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concept is epitomized in his now classic statement: "If men [and women] define situations as real, then they are real in their consequences" (Thomas & Thomas, 1928, p. 567). In essence, individuals do not necessarily respond to the objective environment they experience but to the symbolic transformation of that environment. As Lauer and Handel (1983, p. 129) state,

> To understand how people define situations, then, is to understand the meaning that the situation has for them and thereby to understand why they behave as they do in the situation. Much behavior that is otherwise perplexing can be understood when we know the definition of the situation that the actor holds. Furthermore, to know how people define situations is to understand why they behave differently in the same situation.

The phrase "definition of the situation" can be regarded as a process through which people assign meanings to and exchange meanings for the symbols in their environment. As such, these are the significations to which people respond. However, individuals do not passively accept the definitions they create or have created for them; instead, there is a certain degree of self-activity, resulting in either the acceptance or rejection of these definitions (Waller, 1970). The definition of the situation also can be used, "... to denote the actual concrete situation as it has been defined, or to denote certain psychic products of group life which are left as residua from the definition of many situations" (Waller, 1970, p. 162). Eventually, the individual's whole life history and ongoing personality can be based on the accumulation and synthesis of such serial definitions.

Racist Skinheads and the Definition of the Situation: White as the Endangered Species, the Northwest Imperative, and RaHoWa

The way in which racist skinheads in the United States define their situation can be categorized into three major themes: the problem, the goal, and the means to obtain the goal (Arena & Arrigo, 2000). As understood by members of this collective, the problem is that those of Aryan descent are in danger of losing their racial purity and integrity, given the rapid influx of non-whites into the United States, increased acceptance of race mixing, and the waning existence of traditional white male hegemony (Daniels, 1997; Dobratz & Shanks-Meile, 1997). Proponents of this perspective argue that, as an endangered group, whites are subjected to discrimination, loss of rights, and the inability to express personal and collective pride in their racial heritage (Berbrier, 2000). In its most extreme form, the white man's freedoms are perceived as being forcibly and wrongfully removed by the government. To white supremacists such as racist skinheads, evidence of this practice was provided in those events linked to the August 1992 stand-off between Randy Weaver and U.S. federal agents at Ruby Ridge, and the April 1993 siege on David Koresh and the Branch Davidians in Waco, TX (Dees & Corcoran, 1996).

Many racist skinheads share the belief that the inevitable race war in America, "...will lead to an autonomous 'Aryan homeland in the Northwest' (as the Volksfront newsletter describes it).... [T]he ultimate goal is an America that has been ethnically cleansed of all enemies, including White race traitors" (Blazak, 2001, p. 986). As one member of the Confederate Hammer Skinheads (predecessor to the Hammerskin Nation) reported,

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> To me, the term white separatism is simply a statement of our objectives. Any rational person must accept the fact that other races and cultures are not going to simply disappear; therefore, in order to continue our own cultural and perhaps genetic evolution, separatism represents the best interests of our people (Dobratz and Shanks-Meile, 1997, p. 106).

Statements such as this typify that for racist skinheads the definition of the situation (i.e., the devastating and likely extinction of Aryan racial purity and integrity) necessitates a response. For this collective, the ultimate solution is to create a sovereign community in which the survival of the white race is assured (Arena & Arrigo, 2000). Referred to as the Northwest Imperative, white separatists plan to carve out a homeland in the Pacific Northwest within the borders of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming. Their goal is to re-establish White Aryan sovereignty where members are free to practice self-determination.

The means by which racist Skinheads plan to achieve their objective is by preserving the white race. This sentiment is expressed in the phrase "the 14 Words," made popular by David Lane, who was a member of the domestic terrorist group known as the Order. It reads as follows: "We Must Secure the Existence of Our People and a Future for White Children" (Flynn & Gerhardt, 1989). The White Aryan Resistance (WAR), a white supremacist group run by John Metzger, issued a similar proclamation but espoused a more reactionary approach: "The Great White Aryan race must be advanced and protected at all costs and above all other issues" (as cited by Dobratz & Shanks-Meile, 1997).

Influenced by divisive collectives such as WAR, racist skinhead groups have come to believe that violence is the only feasible means by which to safeguard the purity of the white bloodline. Moreover, books such as *The Turner Diaries* (MacDonald, 1978) have galvanized racist skinheads, wherein they fully embrace the belief that a race war will emerge, forcing whites to fight for their lives against the evil non-white hordes. Indeed, from this perspective, if whites are prepared to stand united they will defeat their adversaries and create an Aryan homeland. In support of their cause, many racist skinhead groups have adopted the RaHoWa rallying slogan which stands for Racial Holy War (Anti-Defamation League, 2002). As one Skinhead member noted, "...since the beginning of time, it's been an ongoing 'holy' war waged by the Jews against Nature's most magnificent Creature, the Noble White Race. Therefore, we wish to fight fire with fire, and we make no bones about it. RAHOWA is our battle cry!" (Metareligion, n.d.).

By defining the situation of white supremacy and its protection as necessitating violence (i.e., terrorism), skinheads have become foot soldiers for the racist right. As Christensen (1994, p. 17) observed,

> Racist skinheads created a subculture of people whose purpose is to act as soldiers assigned the task of cleaning America of unwanted elements, and they even have the power to decide which elements. They have been taught by the upper-echelon white supremacist organizations that the white culture is on the decline, a result of minorities having large families and whites being manipulated by the Jewish-controlled government to abort their children. They have been brainwashed to believe the white working man is duty-bound to fight to return America to the white men who built it.

Indeed, as Robert Miles, a longtime leader of white supremacist groups, concluded, "If there's a future for the right wing, [skinheads] will be the first racial wave. They're what Nazi stormtroopers were in the early [19]20s" (Moore, 1993, p. 5).

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Roles

A third major component of structural symbolic interactionism is the way in which roles, as a feature of social structure, influence individual behavior. Role theory contends that, "the role is a basic building block of social systems.... [To a] considerable degree a social system can be thought of as a network of statuses and their associated roles" (Johnson, 1995, p. 237). Roles can be understood as the means by which people are connected to social systems (e.g., schools, sports leagues, religious groups). Social roles encompass a set of societal expectations associated with the occupation of a particular social status or position in relation to other statuses or positions. Structural symbolic interactionism focuses on this "positional" aspect, as roles are perceived to be socially recognized categories adopted by individuals (Stryker, 1980). Furthermore, these positions serve to cue behavior, functioning as predictors for one's conduct when placed in certain categories. In this sense, social roles, much like behavior, are symbols of social structure.

With the adoption of roles comes an adherence to specific values, norms, attitudes, codes of conduct, and obligations. Typically, these assorted commitments and beliefs are infused with the interpretation of concrete and abstract symbols, as well as specific definitions of a given situation. As such, role performance entails conformity to behavioral expectations with the goal of acquiring positive sanctions and avoiding negative prescriptions (McCall & Simmons, 1978). Roles, then, are the site where behaviors and expectations converge (Weigert, Teitge, & Teitge, 1986).[6] In addition, social roles provide society with a certain degree of stability and predictability, as people are expected to perform in a predefined manner once they assume them. Occupying a role also provides for particular role relationships manifested in kinships, social networks, and role-sets. Finally, roles exist prior to the individual; that is, they are historically, socially, and culturally rooted. Therefore, roles provide an underlying framework where interaction can occur and where shared meanings within this framework can exist. Without such predictability and organization, society would be chaotic and precarious (Lauer & Handel, 1983).

Role Identities Within the Membership of Hamas: Palestinian, Islamic Fundamentalist, and Martyr

Within the membership of the Islamic Resistance Movement or Hamas, there are several roles that are important with respect to influencing behavior. Three particularly influential roles include being a Palestinian, an Islamic fundamentalist, and a martyr. Similar to many forms of identity, the nationalist-oriented Palestinian identity is firmly rooted in history and has developed over many years. Khalidi

[6]It is important to note that roles are not static or fixed; they are constantly constructed and modified. In this context, positional or cultural role expectations serve merely as guidelines for behavior or as starting points for interaction; however, it is rare for people to actually "stick to the script" (McCall & Simmons, 1978; Turner, 1962). Instead, role performances are filtered through one's personality and self-conception. Moreover, by defining the situation people experience, they categorize themselves and label each other through the assignment of roles. This process activates the reflexive nature of the self (Stryker, 1980).

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(1997) catalogued the emergence of a uniformed Palestinian identity into three stages. The first stage took place prior to World War I, when the Palestinian identity was composed of a relatively restricted membership, consisting of the urban, the literate, and the educated. Having proliferated under Ottoman rule during its last decades, this elite group included middle class teachers, clerks, government officials, and businessmen. The Palestinian identity entered a second stage of development during the Mandate years, when it expanded beyond the conventional boundaries of social status. In particular, the Palestinian Arabs' losing struggle with Zionism and British control deepened their shared sense of unity with the rural and underprivileged populations. The third stage followed the events of 1948 (e.g., the war, the declaration of the state of Israel, a massive influx of Jewish immigrants, and growing collection of dispossessed refugees in surrounding areas) and served to erase the gaps between the affluent and the poor, minimizing the importance of pre-1948 conflicts, and crystallized the Palestinian identity. As Khalidi (1997, p. 194) explains, "...in spite of their dispersion and fragmentation among several new successor states and forms of refugee status, what the Palestinians now shared was far greater than what separated them; all had been dispossessed, none were masters of their own fate, all were at the mercy of cold, distant, and hostile new authorities".

Another role-identity feature pertinent to Hamas is their deep spiritual and cultural connection to Islamic fundamentalism. Islamic fundamentalism is a descriptive term that characterizes a desire to establish an Islamic state in which the tenets of the religion and the precepts of the Islamic *shariah* (holy law) are both firmly embraced and espoused (Moussalli, 1998). Davidson (1998) describes the four basic assumptions of this faith commitment. First, the Muslim world is in a state of disorder brought on by political and moral decay. This decay stems from the continued failure of those in the private and public sector to live by the dictates of the Muslim religion. Second, the political and moral bankruptcy of the Muslim world has enabled Western colonialism to infect the region with its own sordid values; namely, beliefs focused on secularism, materialism, and nationalism. This colonization has essentially fractionalized the Islamic *umma* (i.e., community of believers).[7] Third, the way to combat this perceived decay and infection is to "re-Islamize" the Muslim world. This requires the reassertion of Islamic law or *shariah* and the purging of Western culture and its destructive influence. Fourth, "The only way to re-Islamize society is to re-politicize Islam itself. As fundamentalist reasoning goes, Islam began as a religion that preached the rejection of false gods and corrupt

[7]While colonization has been a powerful symbol for many militant extremists throughout the world, Western colonization has assumed a major role in relation to militant Islamic fundamentalism. In large part, this can be traced to Hasan al-Banna, who came to believe that 19th and 20th century colonialism in the Middle East, and the subsequent diffusion of secular ideas and Western values in the region, had served to erode the fabric of Islam. In response, he formed the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in 1928, dedicated to revitalizing the Islamic call (*da'awah*) through education and reform (Abu-Amr, 1993; Mitchell, 1993). During the 1930s, members of the Muslim Brotherhood participated in the Palestinian Arab resistance and remained in the region to found the Palestinian branch. Over the next several decades the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood would lie in wait, avoiding military activities, fortifying its *hardcore* members in the face of Israeli rule, focusing on institution building, and preparing for *jihad* (Abu-Amr, 1993; Mishal & Sela, 2000). In December 1987, at the outbreak of the first *Intifada*, the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood was finally ready and announced to the world that it had become *Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyya* (the Islamic Resistance Movement), more commonly known by its acronym, Hamas (Mishal & Sela, 2000).

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practices. The West and Westernizers now represent precisely these evils ... Islam, representative of a total worldview, is the path to justice and socioeconomic equity" (Davidson, 1998, p. 13).

A third role crucial to understanding membership in and identity within Hamas is the martyr or *shaheed* status. The commission of martyrdom in the name of Islam was first documented 13 centuries ago during the power struggle that followed the death of Muhammad (Kushner, 1996). The most infamous method by which Hamas members achieve such standing is when they become suicide bombers. However, for Hamas, the term "suicide bomber" is not employed; instead, the group invokes the concept *istishhadi.* When translated, this means "self-chosen martyrdom" (Juergensmeyer, 2000). The co-founder of Hamas, Dr. Abdul Aziz Rantisi, suggests that the suicide bomber term implies an impulsive act by a deranged individual. However, for Hamas, the act is carefully chosen and deliberate, emanating from deeply felt religious obligation. Thus, when a person gives his or her life in the holy struggle, the individual is granted lasting symbolic immortality. Indeed, the *shaheed* is elevated to a higher spiritual plane and sits with Allah in the kingdom of heaven (Kushner, 1996).

Hamas recruiters and clerics inform the beliefs surrounding the *shaheed* role. For example, they promise young bombers entrance to a paradise where rivers flow with sweet honey and holy wine, where 72 virgin brides exist for their pleasure, where 70 free passes to this paradise are available for their friends and relatives, where financial stability for their families and scholarships for their siblings are assured, and where compensation for their families' resettlement is guaranteed if Israeli retribution destroys their homes (Bartholet, 1995; Kelley, 2001). Those who volunteer must be profoundly pious and brave; they must be willing to embrace death (Hassan, 2001). For the *shaheed*, self-chosen martyrdom is looked upon as the most honorable of acts. As Sayed Abu Musamah, the Editor-in-Chief of the Hamas newspaper, *Al-watan*, described it, *istishhadi* "is the highest form of courage" (Bartholet, 1995, p. 42).

Socialization and Role-Taking

A fourth major component of structural symbolic interactionism is socialization and role-taking. These components of identity formation emphasize how individuals come to embrace the appropriate interpretation of symbols, definition of situations, and the components of the roles they experience or undertake (Stryker, 1980). Along with the expectations of others, socialization and role-taking influence how a person defines her or his position in society and, subsequently, the development and organization of the self. Johnson (1995, p. 267) defines socialization as, "the process through which people are prepared to participate in social systems .... From the perspective of individuals, socialization is a process through which we create a social SELF and a sense of attachment to social systems through our participation in them and our interaction with others." Symbolic interactionists view socialization as a life-long process: one that involves the acquisition of shared meanings manifested through symbolic systems of groups and the attitudes of group members (Lauer and Handel, 1983). For a potential recruit of a militant extremist organization, agents of socialization may include friends, teachers, writers, schools and ethnic/cultural

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collectives (Merari, 1998). Some groups may include an institutionalized period of indoctrination where individuals are introduced to the basic beliefs, attitudes, or rules of life within a particular social system or unit.

A basic function of role-taking is to imaginatively occupy the place of another in an effort to see and experience the world (which includes the behavior of oneself) from the other's standpoint. This is achieved through the use of symbols and the meaning-making process, where role-taking subjects anticipate the responses of others in an effort to recognize the various possibilities for their own behavior. Moreover, role-taking is acknowledged as a fundamental aspect of all interaction, whether it is based on cooperation or conflict. As Stryker (1980, p. 62) illustrates, "To effectively engage in war, one must anticipate the responses of the enemy in the same manner as a parent must anticipate the responses of a child when seeking to aid the child through a crisis." In both instances, appropriate action requires that the person adopt the perspective of the other—including the other's reference group (i.e., the community of adversaries; the society of children)—to assess how best to respond to the situation at hand (Lauer and Handel, 1983; McCall & Simmons, 1978).

The Shining Path's Use of Socialization and Role-Taking: The Guise of "University" Outreach, Popular Schools, and Facilitating Ideological Conformity

Both socialization and role-taking were crucial aspects of identity for the *Partido Communista del Perú* (PCP), more commonly known as the Shining Path of Peru. The organization's initial socialization campaign began during Abimael Guzmán's tenure at the National University of San Cristóbal de Huamanga, as founder and leader of the group. The charismatic young professor attracted a committed number of student-followers, who fervently absorbed his brand of communist ideology through his many classes, political meetings, seminars, and study groups (McClintock, 1984; Strong, 1992; Tarazona-Sevillano, 1994). Guzmán eventually formed and directed the university's School for Practical Studies, where indoctrinated students returned to their native rural communities and spread the Shining Path's revolutionary message to illiterate peasants under the guise of sound teaching practice (Kent, 1993; Palmer, 1992; Strong, 1992). Many of these student-teachers, "... returned to the countryside to become primary and secondary school instructors for the express purpose of leaving the movement's mark on the upcoming generation" (McCormick, 1990, p. 13). The Shining Path collective viewed children as more open to the wisdom of the group's Maoist philosophy because they had little to no political past. As one document proclaimed, children were encouraged to participate in the popular war and to adopt the ideology of the proletariat (as cited by McCormick, 1990). The goal was for Peruvian youth to take part in the armed struggle and, in turn, to plant the seed of revolution in future generations.

By 1978, Guzmán's power within the university began to diminish and the group went underground, relocating to relatively inaccessible areas of the countryside (McCormick, 1988). Its efforts to indoctrinate people into the movement continued during the 1980s in the form of the "popular schools" it established throughout Ayacucho and in the neighboring towns of Apurimac and Huancavelica (Niksch &

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Sullivan, 1993). The group is also rumored to have established education camps specifically designed for children identified as "orphans of the revolution" (McCormick, 1990). Secondary school students were especially susceptible for recruitment into the popular schools, as the eroding economy left them with dismal educational and employment opportunities, as well as a wealth of pent-up hostility toward the existing order (Andreas, 1990/1991; Tarazona-Sevillano, 1994). As Tarazona-Sevillano (1994) explains, the popular schools served as a forum to increase class-consciousness among peasants, the working class, and students. They spread the Shining Path's ideology, "...by emphasizing the failures and inadequacies of the present state, the unjust and corrupt nature of the existing socioeconomic order, and José Carlos Mariátegui's Marxist interpretation of Peruvian reality" (Tarazona-Sevillano, 1994, p. 197).

Perhaps the most poignant example of how role-taking, as a dimension of identity, contributed to the behavior of Peruvian Shining Path members is located in the group's use of criticism and self-criticism to advance collective ends. As a method of *post facto* analysis designed to learn about and implement the communist party line, individuals, along with their peers, engaged in mutual assessment and self-reflection. Each person was expected to evaluate his or her thoughts and actions by comparing them to the standards set within communist praxis (Whyte, 1974). By criticizing their own shortcomings, accepting the appraisals of others, and pointing out the limits of non-members' behaviors and rationale, participants intensified their indoctrination to the group. As the Moscow trials of the 1930s and the Chinese Cultural Revolution of the 1960s demonstrated, this political ritual represented an efficient form of intellectual policing used to elicit conformity (Gorriti, 1999). Indeed, the intense social pressure associated with criticism and self-criticism persuades individuals to change their beliefs, to adjust their attitudes, and to redirect their conduct in accordance with those in authority, thereby guaranteeing unquestioned obedience.

Similar to the communist movements before it, the Peruvian Shining Path incorporated criticism and self-criticism into its socialization practices as a way to promote uncontested orthodoxy (McCormick, 1990). As Gorriti (1999) notes, the group's version of conformity typically included individuals admitting, "... error, describing their mistakes in the harshest of terms, implacably lashing themselves, thanking others for having attacked them, [and] declaring that their subjection to the party—including its guiding thought and general line, slogans, plans, and programs—was complete [and] absolute" (p. 180). Except for Guzmán, every militant had to endure this process of self-degradation and personal reflection in order to affirm their role-taking status as a "true" Communist (Strong, 1992). In order to successfully complete this process, the Shining Path faithful cognitively embraced the role of their reference group, enabling them to recognize their errors, to modify their thoughts, and to behave in concert with the party's expectations (Gorriti, 1999).

Emergence of the Self

The fifth essential component of structural symbolic interactionism is the self. From the SSI perspective, the preferred way in which to access the self concept is through

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identity theory (Alexander & Wiley, 1981; McCall and Simmons, 1978; Stryker, 1968, 1980; Stryker & Burke, 2000). Through this unique orientation, identities are recognized as dimensions of the self and formed by the meanings that persons attach to the manifold roles they routinely live out in their everyday interactions (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Even within this seemingly specialized perspective, differing strands of analysis have emerged (e.g., Burke & Reitzes, 1991; Stryker & Burke, 2000). One approach to identity theory focuses on the influence of society on the self, especially the organization of identities (Stryker & Serpe, 1982; Stryker & Serpe, 1994). This framework recognizes that individuals have numerous identities comprising their self; however, these identities are not just thrown together in a haphazard fashion. Instead, they are hierarchically ordered into a structured system that engenders aspects of salience and priority. Addressing the structural and organizational components of these identities, Stryker (1980, 1981) promotes the notion that in certain situations one identity may be more salient and, hence, more readily activated than others. With an increase in salience comes an increase in commitment, leading to that identity's domination over others (Stryker & Serpe, 1982). Stryker's identity theory, then, focuses on the specific linkages between social structures and identities, and how the two influence behavior.

The second orientation to identity theory focuses on the internal processes of the self and how they shape society through behavior (Burke, 1980; Burke & Reitzes, 1981, 1991; Burke & Tully, 1977). In contrast to the position developed by Stryker, Burke's theory relies on an "Identity Control model" to describe the way in which self-meanings or identities translate into behavior. Essentially, the model envisions an active self that seeks to align society's meanings for roles with one's self-relevant meanings for roles. This is known as the "self-verification process" and is facilitated through a variety of strategies such as identity cues and interpersonal prompts (Burke & Stets, 1999; Swann, 1987). *Identity cues* are appropriated when a person claims a unique identity (e.g., wearing a specific style of clothing in order to "look the part"). *Interpersonal prompts* are employed when the individual acts in a particular manner in order to elicit a reaction that brings the self-relevant meanings in line with the identity standard (e.g., many rock n' roll musicians are known for their incessant drug use and philandering, thereby aligning for others and themselves the meaning of the role with its identity status).

The Provisional Irish Republican Army and Exploring the Self: Friends, Protests, Appearance, and Violence As Self-Defense

Exploring society's influence on the structure and organization of the self through commitment (i.e., Stryker's identity theory) can be observed among the membership and supporters of the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA). As White and Fraser (2000) note, because Republicans advocate revolutionary goals, support political violence, and are in the minority, the governments of Northern Ireland, Great Britain, and the Irish Republic have habitually harassed its membership. As a consequence, PIRA members have been forced to interact almost exclusively with other Republicans. The exchange below, as chronicled by White and Fraser (2000), exemplifies this process, its relationship to the formation of the self-identity, and how both foster the salience of and commitment to the PIRA militant collective.

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> Interviewer: Today would most of your friends be Republicans?
>
> Respondent 1: All my friends are Republicans.
>
> Interviewer: Okay. Is that because of the nature of Republicanism?
>
> Respondent 1: No, it's the nature of censorship and black propaganda... There's a huge effort to isolate and marginalize and demonize Republicans not just in the political sense but also in the very much social and personal sense.... [The authorities want] to crush it—us, to isolate you totally. And they did that in the North. They did that by killing people, of course. ... down here they did it by demonizing you. But also by, like, a whole campaign of anybody that had contact with you would get a visit from the [Special] Branch [of the police], or their workplace [would be visited], or if they were young people their parents would be visited and told, you know, who they're associating with. The IRA—that sort of stuff' (White & Fraser, 2000, p. 328).

The symbols present in one's environment also activate certain role identities, making them more prominent on the salience hierarchy. For example, consider the symbolic nature of such events as the Battle of Bogside and Bloody Sunday. The intent behind these phenomena and their contribution to constructing self-identity interpretations produced a catalytic effect: They activated individual Irish identities, reinforced a sense of unity among Irish peoples, and, subsequently, solidified involvement in the collective's armed struggle to end the oppression of their brothers and sisters. White's (1993) observations here are particularly compelling.

> As their national identity, their sense of Irishness, [wa]s aroused, Southern Irish people examine[d] the existence of Northern Ireland and their own place in the Irish nation. This prompt[ed] involvement in activities like marches and rallies. These [brought] them into contact with active Republicans. Personal connections dr[ew] them into the Republican Movement (p. 127).

Clearly, the disturbing nature of the events listed above served as cues to remind people of their status and social position within the larger social structure of both Northern Ireland and the Republic. For many, the symbols contributed to their shared sense of injustice and hatred, causing many young people to seek out opportunities to engage this salient identity by participating in protests. Indeed, many joined the PIRA, and some would later become the group's most notorious leaders (McKittrick & McVea, 2000; Moloney, 2002, Taylor, 1997).

Burke's identity theory focuses on how role identities are verified and how they subsequently influence society. In addition to being a Republican, the role identities of being a Catholic and a Volunteer play a prominent part in the behavior of PIRA members. The PIRA prisoners' involvement in the 1981 Irish hunger strikes illustrates how the Catholic identity was verified. Whether conscious or not, the strikers used identity cues to confirm this identity. Many of the hunger strikers allowed their hair to grow to shoulder length and their beards were worn long and unkempt. They abandoned their prison-issue clothing and donned blankets in robelike fashion. The hunger strikers became frail and thin, portraying themselves as committed young men—physically weak but spiritually true to their beliefs—who were brutalized by a callous, imperialist power. Their image, broadcast throughout the world, was remarkably similar to that of Christendom's most celebrated martyr, Jesus Christ. For the strikers, donning this garb served to verify their Catholic

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identities and the values of self-sacrifice, suffering, and an unwavering commitment to the ideals of truth and justice. All of these values were ingrained within the Republican movement.

The Volunteer role identity of being a defender of the innocent is consistently verified through interpersonal prompts (e.g. acts of violence perpetrated against the Protestant community and the British establishment). For example, the PIRA perceive their violent struggle to be a righteous one because self-defense is acceptable and justified when a person or community has been and continues to be victimized (Dillon, 1998). Moreover, expressions of force are rationalized because of previous violence perpetrated by the Protestant majority and the British government, designed to oppress Catholic people in Ireland. As such, the use of physical aggression framed as self-defense invariably verifies one's PIRA membership identity as a volunteer fighting for the rights of victims. By attacking government infrastructure, military installations, and local Protestant businesses, members of the PIRA affirm their identities as righteous Irish patriots engaged in extremist militant acts designed to rid themselves of British influence. As members increasingly bolster their Republican, Catholic, and Volunteer identities—becoming emboldened through them—they adopt the PIRA identity assigned to them through their interaction with society and respond as political partisans, activists, and soldiers.

PROVISIONAL IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The contention that identity plays a significant part in the commission of terrorism is not novel. Indeed, prior research has relied upon psychological explanations to assert that individuals engage in militant extremist violence because they are searching for an identity. Regrettably, this line of thinking has led to the false (or, at least, inadequate) claim that there is something profoundly wrong, abnormal, or incomplete about such persons. Conversely, accepting the notion that, "Terrorists are essentially normal individuals" (Silke, 1998, p. 53), this article (mostly) rejected the more popular approach found in academic psychology, especially those inquiries built on psychoanalytic reasoning. This orientation vilifies and demonizes terrorists, and the hostile organizations to which they claim allegiance, without offering more ecologically sound and compelling analysis.[8] In response to these deficiencies, the cognate area of social psychology, animated by sociology, was explored, especially since it offers a more comprehensive depiction of identity's influence on and relation to extremist violence.

In assessing the symbols and meanings pertinent to terrorist organizations, a common theme seems to emerge centered on the identification of some wrongdoing perpetrated against the militant collective. These symbols are more than just representations of grievances situated in the group's rhetorical stylings; instead, they have the power to classify the social world and those who inhabit it. As such,

[8]Admittedly, there are exceptions to this position. For example, Theodore Kaczynski (a.k.a the Unabomber) is certainly a good example of someone who committed acts of terrorism and was identified as mentally ill. He was also found competent to stand trial, pled guilty in the wake of a mental health defect defense that he abhorred, and was convicted for his actions (Mello, 1999).

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these symbols and their significations cast members of a particular ethnic, racial, religious, or political affiliation into a perceived threatened position. Recalling the words of W. I. Thomas is especially poignant here: "If men [and women] define situations as real, then they are real in their consequences" (1928, p. 567). This statement is particularly insightful when attempting to understand identity formation (and maintenance) and the nature of terrorist organizations. If militant extremist affiliates, new recruits, or hard-core faithful embraced these symbols, their meanings, and the corresponding definition of the situations in which they found themselves, they would regard the consequences of their *inaction* as quite grim and unacceptable. This view helps inform and fuel the terrorist organization's contention that it knows what is best for its membership, and that achieving the desired outcome (e.g., freedom, justice) through violent means is worth the sacrifice of human life.

The symbolic interactionist concept of roles is useful for understanding the intensely perceived threat of being under siege or the powerful sense of felt persecution that establishes the victim identity embodied by so many terrorists.[9] Consistent with identity theory, the conventional aspects of such a role include the experience of harm and innocence (i.e., not being responsible for the injury that befalls them), and the belief that a sympathetic response for their plight is merited (Berbrier, 2000; Holstein & Miller, 1990). These sentiments foster the manifestation of a second type of role, namely the martial role. Drawing upon components of the victim-oriented position that defines the person's oppressed status, role-taking here means that some sort of violent response is warranted (even necessary and just): one that is intended to reclaim what has been lost or otherwise endangered. As previously delineated, the way in which individuals learn and adopt these roles is linked to the socialization process. Moreover, why and how subjects live out these identities is a function of society's influence on the self and, conversely, the self's influence on society. Ultimately, one's effort to verify the martial role—a status that seeks to secure justice, equality, and self-determination—is the point at which the act of terrorism is committed, embraced, and endorsed.[10]

Admittedly, the preceding conceptual framework and the model's application to selected terrorist groups and events around the world are suggestive at best. This notwithstanding, several provisional implications are discernible based on the prior commentary. For example, future research on terrorism, informed by structural symbolic interactionism and identity theory, is sorely needed. Indeed, with further development and refinement, the SSI model could provide a more complete and generalizable interpretive framework for understanding how identity is established and how, given SSI's five organizing concepts, it helps motivate militant extremist behavior. Moreover, precisely because the proposed conceptual framework situates identity at the center of its inquiry, the model's umbrella-like organizing schema

[9]Individuals who adopt the martial aspects of the terrorist identity may not be victims themselves but do identify with the victim. For example, animal and environmental extremists who perpetuate violence may not be victims but see themselves as liberators fighting for victims.
[10]In certain circumstances, the martial aspects of the terrorist identity are not unlike that of the soldier. For example, the U.S. justified going to war in Iraq as a response to the 9/11 attacks. During this conflict, the taking of innocent life was deemed by many as a regrettable, but necessary, evil in order to seek justice, defend freedom, and protect Americans. Clearly, terrorism is a more extreme form of combat as it purposefully targets noncombatants; however, the motivations for terrorism and conventional warfare can stem from the same wellspring.

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could be subjected to hypothesis testing. On this score, the question would be whether the model possesses greater explanatory and predictive properties than any of its theoretical counterparts. Finally, the context-specific nature of militant extremist groups, rooted as they often are in history, religion, and politics, re-orients the behavioral and social sciences to the subtle relationship that exists among culture, self, and society. Here, too, investigators would do well to consider the research salience of the overall conceptual framework for purposes of exploring these sorts of under-examined, but clearly relevant, issues.

As a practical matter, the recommended framework might have considerable utility for the law enforcement, military and intelligence communities. In particular, the model ostensibly represents a more comprehensive portrait of how the identity construct manifests itself in support of extremist subcultures and in the furtherance of terrorist violence. Indeed, security forces and counter-terrorist personnel who track, detect, apprehend, and deter those suspected of perpetrating such acts often rely on outdated and under-developed surveillance and profiling approaches, as well as those that are unduly influenced by individual, disciplinary, organizational, or cultural biases (Turvey, 2002).

Additional sensible usages for the proposed social psychological model are discernible and are worth noting. For example, investigators might find the framework helpful in the context of an interview or an interrogation. Knowledge of important symbols and their subsequent interpretation, familiarity with how the suspects in question define their situation, awareness of the pertinent roles influencing the interviewee's behavior, and sensitivity to how suspects come to learn, express, and embrace these roles can all be used to elicit and interpret useful information. Moreover, the conceptual model could benefit military personnel working to reduce the threat of terrorism to its forces and the civilian population it protects. Specifically, soldiers who plan, develop, and implement civilian affairs and psychological operations might consider incorporating aspects of the conceptual model into their overall peacekeeping strategies. Designing campaigns intended to reduce support for violent extremists and assisting security forces in their ability to penetrate militant movements require insight into how symbols, roles, and situations take on distinct meanings for a terrorist collective. Finally, intelligence analysts charged with connecting disparate pieces of information together and with forecasting future behavior might find the framework useful. In short, the model represents a more accurate prism through which to develop collection plans, to problem solve, to assess threats, to challenge existing assumptions, and to make informed recommendations. In sum, law enforcement, military, and intelligence training emphasizing the symbols, meanings, roles, socialization methods, and self-concepts that underpin identity formation and membership in terrorist groups could go a long way in predicting and preventing unwanted aggression, social disorganization, and the human misery resulting from such heinous acts.

The proposed conceptual framework could also be serviceable in the realm of law and public policy. For example, the recent spread of Islamic extremist violence into the Western world has forced many democratic governments to re-think several constitutionally charged issues such as privacy, detention without trial, and the right of assembly. Arguably, a thoughtful and reasoned assessment of the model's capacity to inform and educate might assist legislators and policy-makers to develop the most appropriate responses to the threat and presence of terrorism. Clearly, this

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suggestion resonates deeply, especially given the post-9/11 climate. This assessment argues that terrorism is, in part, a reaction to the perception of marginalization, disenfranchisement, and/or victimization. In line with this interpretation, terrorists might continue to emerge as certain groups of people repeatedly interpret the symbols of their oppression as staples of their existence and come to believe that the only possible means of achieving a particular solution is violence. As a result, government-sponsored actions that rely upon tactics such as racial, ethnic, or religious profiling, collective punishment, and large-scale violence to excise belligerent extremists and their loyalists may inevitably (and unwittingly) be helping to create the symbolic events and interpretations that serve to fuel and sustain the martial roles. These are roles that inform the terrorist identity and, subsequently, perpetuate the cycle of violence.[11]

Of equal importance in responding to terrorism is the need to focus on its root causes. Hajjar (2002) argued that, "The conditions that give rise to acts of terrorism must be dealt with as urgently as combating those responsible for such acts if the war on terrorism is to be won" (p. 2). Here, the proposed model could further existing work on the development of initiatives that target community responses (Stout, 2002). For example, some militant extremist groups provide much needed social services (e.g., education). However, these school or institutional settings may also double as forums for inculcating hatred and violence (Atran, 2004). Investing in (or supporting governments that promote) only those educational programs that encourage the expression of non-martial aspects of roles can be an effective antiterrorism tool over the long term.

Finally, on a more macrological level, the conceptual framework is suggestive for explaining other forms of criminal or deviant conduct. To illustrate, the study of gang affiliation often relies upon a psychological perspective when accounting for why some youths gravitate toward such groups. A need for belonging, familial-type bonds, and identity are common themes in such assessments (Vargas & DiPilato, 1999). However, the structural symbolic interactionist model also warrants consideration. Indeed, a juvenile's felt sense of victimization, real or imagined, stemming from poverty, racial or ethnic oppression, government-perpetrated injustice, or the threat posed by rival gangs also contribute to one's role-identity as a gang member, or as a recruit or supporter of this collective. Clearly, symbols, the meaning of situations, roles, socialization, and the self-concept figure prominently into this analysis.

The values and insights of academic psychology are pivotal to advancing our understanding of terrorism. This article suggests that the same can (and should) be said of social psychology, especially its sociological variant. If the identity construct is to be more completely understood, particularly in relation to the emergence and maintenance of one's membership in militant extremist subcultures, then the proposed conceptual model warrants much more attention. As such, this conceptually animated undertaking represents one necessary step toward that very objective.

[11]This statement is not to be read as endorsing or opposing the use of military force. However, it is a candid expression of the possible repercussions of such activity. As described throughout this article, interpretations of persecution and victimization have served to swell the ranks of militant extremist groups.

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