

2012-01-01

Al-Shabaab's American Recruits: A Comparative Analysis of Two Radicalization Pathways

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AL-SHABAAB'S AMERICAN RECRUITS:
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF TWO RADICALIZATION PATHWAYS

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A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF TWO RADICALIZATION PATHWAYS

by

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THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at El Paso

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

May 2012

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1. INTRODUCTION

The House Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs convened a hearing in March 2009 to discuss al-Shabaab recruitment in America. In that hearing, Somalia expert Ken Menkhaus discussed the historical antecedents of Somalia's premier terrorist organization, known as al-Shabaab, meaning "the youth." For over 22 years Somalis have endured "complete state collapse, periods of civil war, chronic insecurity, lawlessness and warlordism, massive displacement" and associated tragedies. In lieu of a viable central government, Somalis over time created for themselves informal local systems of governance. Many of these local systems of governance came to rely on clan-based sharia courts to provide law and order, and Islamic charities to provide basic social services. Due to the success of the sharia courts and Islamic charities, many Somalis began to feel that Islamic governance was the solution to Somalia's crisis.

Al-Shabaab appeared on the scene at a time when Somalia was on the verge of forming a stable central government. In 2006, "a loose coalition of Islamists and local sharia courts" coalesced to govern Somalia. Known as the Islamic Courts Union, or the ICU, this coalition relied heavily on one of its militia wings, al-Shabaab, to defeat Mogadishu's warlords. Initially, it appeared the ICU was going to provide Somalia with much needed stability. Unfortunately, Islamist hardliners within the ICU soon overpowered the moderates and compelled the ICU to adopt radical policies. These hardliners repeatedly provoked Ethiopia, prompting Ethiopia to invade Somalia in December 2006. In the face of an overwhelming military offensive, the ICU leadership and al-Shabaab were forced to flee.

Not surprisingly, the Ethiopian invasion produced a tremendous backlash. Relations between Somalia and Ethiopia "have historically been rancorous"; the two countries fought a

bloody war from 1977-1978, and Ethiopia is, of course, a Christian nation. Thus, from both a nationalist perspective and a religious perspective, the Ethiopian occupation was infuriating. Within weeks an insurgency, which included al-Shabaab, began attacking Ethiopian forces and the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), “a weak Somali government widely perceived at the time to be a puppet of Ethiopia.” Instead of treading lightly, Ethiopian forces and the TFG employed harsh counterinsurgency tactics, which “inadvertently fueled a dramatic rise in radicalism and violent extremism in the country and among the diaspora.”¹

Al-Shabaab capitalized on these sentiments by conflating its jihadist rhetoric with Somali nationalism. Even though most Somalis were opposed to al-Shabaab’s radical Islamist ideology, they believed al-Shabaab’s armed resistance to the Ethiopian occupation was justified and hence supported al-Shabaab’s actions. Burgeoning popular support allowed al-Shabaab to break away from the old ICU leadership in 2007 and proclaim itself the leader of the insurgency. Since that time al-Shabaab has been, without question, the strongest militia force in Somalia.

An estimated one million Somalis have fled the country since the late 1980s and now live in communities all over the world. About 150,000 Somalis live in the United States, concentrated mostly in Minneapolis, Minnesota and Columbus, Ohio.² Al-Shabaab realizes that to succeed in establishing an Islamic state in Somalia it needs the assistance of these diaspora communities. It should come as no surprise, then, that young Somalis residing in diaspora communities, including ones in the United States, are being targeted for recruitment.

In 2011, the House Committee on Homeland Security conducted yet another investigation into the threat posed by al-Shabaab and its efforts to radicalize and recruit Somali-

¹ Ken Menkhaus, *Violent Islamist Extremism: Al-Shabaab Recruitment in America*, Statement before the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, House of Representatives, March 11, 2009.

² Ibid.

Americans. After interviewing dozens of current and former counterterrorism officials, scholars, diplomats, and other experts the committee presented these findings:

- 1) At least 40 or more Americans have joined al-Shabaab
- 2) At least 15 Americans have been killed fighting with al-Shabaab
- 3) At least 21 Americans remain unaccounted for and pose a direct threat to the U.S. homeland

Al-Shabaab's recruitment of Americans is particularly worrisome because, according to the Committee, al-Shabaab has openly pledged loyalty to al-Qaeda and has cemented "alarming" operational ties to it. The Committee warns that al-Shabaab has the intent and capability to conduct attacks or aid al-Qaeda in striking U.S. interests and the U.S. homeland.³

In his testimony before the Committee, W. Anders Folk raised four concerns regarding al-Shabaab recruitment of U.S. citizens:

- 1) The possibility that recruits might receive military training, combat experience, and religious indoctrination justifying violence against innocent people, and then return to the United States to either put those experiences to use or to recruit others to do the same.
- 2) The strong social and family networks that individuals leaving the United States maintain when they travel to Somalia to join al-Shabaab enhances the reach-back capability of al-Shabaab to continue recruiting and fund-raising in the United States, thus enhancing the organization's ability to function.
- 3) The recruiting of U.S. citizens allows al-Shabaab access to identification and travel documents that permit travel and access to and within the United States.
- 4) Recruiting U.S. persons provides international terrorist organizations with inside knowledge about the United States that makes it easier to operate within the United States and to teach others to do the same.⁴

Counterterrorism officials rightly fear that American al-Shabaab fighters who have not been identified could return to the U.S. undetected. Al-Shabaab's American recruits clearly present a

³ U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Homeland Security, Majority Investigative Report, *Al Shabaab: Recruitment and Radicalization within the Muslim American Community and the Threat to the Homeland*, July 27, 2011, <http://homeland.house.gov/sites/homeland.house.gov/files/Investigative%20report.pdf> (accessed August 31, 2011).

⁴ W. Anders Folk, *Al Shabaab: Recruitment and Radicalization within the Muslim American Community and the Threat to the Homeland*, Statement before the Committee on Homeland Security, House of Representatives, July 27, 2011, <http://homeland.house.gov/sites/homeland.house.gov/files/Testimony%20Folk.pdf> (accessed September 3, 2011).

significant threat to the homeland. Academics can help counterterrorism officials prevent radicalization of Americans for jihad in Somalia by researching and explaining the radicalization process. Al-Shabaab radicalization is a phenomenon unlike anything the U.S. has ever encountered. Because al-Shabaab is such a unique terrorist organization, past radicalization models may not apply. This study seeks to explain radicalization specifically as it relates to al-Shabaab.

In terms of the radicalization of Americans for jihad in Somalia, this study seeks to answer two questions:

- 1) What are the most important factors in the radicalization al-Shabaab's American recruits?
- 2) How do the radicalization pathways for Somalis and non-Somalis compare?

The first question examines the radicalization process for the sample as a whole. The second question examines the radicalization processes for two sub-samples. The methodology section of this thesis will explain how each question will be addressed.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholars and analysts have come up with various conceptual frameworks for examining the factors that lead to radicalization. The most prominent among these divides the radicalization process into three categories: situational, psychological, and social. In his landmark work, *Understanding Terror Networks*, Sageman profiled 172 terrorists using social, psychological, and situational variables.⁵ Bakker used the same variables as Sageman to profile 242 terrorists in Europe from September 2001 to August 2006. Bakker then compared these terrorists to the 172 terrorists in Sageman's study.⁶ Gartenstein-Ross and Grossman collected data on 117 homegrown terrorists in the United States and the United Kingdom through the end of 2008. However, instead of examining the data using situational, psychological, and social variables, Gartenstein-Ross and Grossman focused on specific behavioral changes that terrorists went through as they radicalized.⁷

An oft-cited 2007 NYPD study, titled *Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat*, divided radicalization into four phases: pre-radicalization, self-identification, indoctrination, and jihadization. In this study, pre-radicalization was synonymous with situational variables, self-identification with psychological variables, and indoctrination and jihadization with social variables.⁸ A 2007 study conducted by the Danish Ministry of Justice developed a four-phase process of radicalization that is practically identical to the process

⁵ Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), vii.

⁶ Edwin Bakker, *Jihadi Terrorists in Europe* (Netherlands Institute of International Relations, December 2006), 7-8, 52, http://www.clingendael.nl/publications/2006/20061200_cscp_csp_bakker.pdf (accessed October 22, 2011).

⁷ Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Laura Grossman, *Homegrown Terrorists in the U.S. and U.K.: An Empirical Examination of the Radicalization Process* (Center for Terrorism Research, FDD, April 2009), 27, 29, http://www.defenddemocracy.org/stuff/uploads/documents/HomegrownTerrorists_USandUK.pdf (accessed February 17, 2012).

⁸ Mitchell D. Silber and Arvin Bhatt, *Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat* (NYPD Intelligence Division, 2007), 6-7, http://www.nypdshield.org/public/SiteFiles/documents/NYPD_Report-Radicalization_in_the_West.pdf (accessed October 18, 2011).

developed by the NYPD, with the phases as follows: pre-radicalization, conversion and identification, conviction and indoctrination, and action. As in the NYPD study, the first phase looked at situational factors, the second phase looked at psychological factors, and the third and fourth phases looked at social factors.⁹

Usually scholars and analysts attempt to work within the standard conceptual framework, or at least some aspect of it, while focusing on a certain radicalized population. In a notable work titled *Radical Islam Rising*, Wiktorowicz conducted a detailed case study of al-Muhajiroun—a radical Islamic movement based in the United Kingdom. Wiktorowicz found that joining the al-Muhajiroun movement is a multi-step process. First an individual must experience a “cognitive opening,” which opens him up to alternative belief systems. With an open mind the individual begins a process of religious seeking, and at some point during this process he is exposed to the movement. If the individual accepts the movement’s sacred authority as legitimate, he undergoes a process of socialization whereby he learns the movement’s ideological tenants. Once the individual accepts the movement’s ideology he is eligible for formal membership.¹⁰

Often the radicalized communities in question are ethnic diaspora. Past radicalization studies have focused on ethnic diaspora in Europe, although a few of them have singled out the Somali-American diaspora for investigation. Weine and others examined radicalization and recruitment of Somali-American youth and young adults from a psychological perspective. The

⁹ Thomas Precht, *Home Grown Terrorism and Islamist Radicalisation in Europe: From Conversion to Terrorism*. (Danish Ministry of Justice, December 2007), 34, http://www.justitsministeriet.dk/fileadmin/downloads/Forskning_og_dokumentation/Home_grown_terrorism_and_Islamist_radicalisation_in_Europe_-_an_assessment_of_influencing_factors__2_.pdf (accessed October 27, 2011).

¹⁰ Quintan Wiktorowicz, *Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 206-209.

researchers identified various “push” and “pull” factors competing for the attention of vulnerable youth and young adults.¹¹

Within the framework described above, scholars and analysts have developed a multitude of specialized theories to explain radicalization. Typically these theories model radicalization within a specific community—usually an ethnic diaspora. As such, these theories are not always applicable to radicalized communities across the board. In reality, there is no one-size-fits-all theory; different combinations of theories must be assembled to explain radicalization in different contexts. The “right” combination varies depending on the community in question. This study attempts to find a suitable combination of theories to explain al-Shabaab radicalization among U.S. citizens. Since al-Shabaab’s recruits are not a homogenous bunch, just one theory package will not suffice. There are several suitable radicalization theories to draw upon when examining al-Shabaab’s American recruits—some are based on situational variables, some on psychological variables, and some on social variables.

2.1 Situational Theories

Situational theories, although they have been in use for quite some time, are still hotly-debated. Sageman empirically tested popular situational explanations of radicalism by focusing on the background of a group of global Salafi mujahedin. Sageman found that, contrary to popular belief, members of the global Salafi jihad were generally middle-class, well-educated, married young men. However, Sageman also found that, although most of the mujahedin had strong occupational skills, few were employed full-time. Sageman suggests that the mujahedin’s

¹¹ Stevan Weine and others, “Community and Family Approaches to Combating the Radicalization and Recruitment of Somali-American Youth and Young Adults: A Psychological Perspective.” *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict* 2, no. 3 (November 2009): 192, <http://0-web.ebscohost.com.lib.utep.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=3&hid=111&sid=d66a10af-90b1-4901-9ac9-c0b0ffb4053a%40sessionmgr113> (accessed September 4, 2011).

underemployment supports relative deprivation theory, a psychological theory which the author will discuss later.¹²

Bakker found, in contrast to Sageman's findings, that most jihadi terrorists in Europe were from low-class backgrounds, which makes sense given most of them were migrants. He also found that although most jihadi terrorists in Europe had poor occupational skills, many were employed full-time. Finally, Baker found that a substantial proportion of jihadi terrorists were single, as opposed to married.¹³ Gartenstein-Ross and Grossman, in their study on homegrown terrorists in the U.S. and U.K., discovered that the terrorists in their sample were less privileged and less educated than terrorists in Sageman's sample. Like Bakker, the authors also found that the majority of terrorists in their sample were unskilled laborers.¹⁴ The results of both of these studies seem to contradict those of Sageman.

Situational theories, due to their controversial nature, are difficult to employ in academic settings. A report by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) titled *Radicalization: A Guide for the Perplexed* highlights certain popular situational theories that remain controversial. For example, the notion that poverty and lack of education breeds terrorism may not be entirely true—all of the eight suspects behind the botched 2007 Glasgow International Airport attack were professionals, and all of the members of the 9/11 the Hamburg Cell were enrolled at German universities.¹⁵

Bergen and others also question the accuracy of certain popular situational explanations of radicalization. The researchers cite Faisal Shahzad and Umar Farouq Abdulmuttalab as

¹² Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, 69-80, 91-96.

¹³ Bakker, *Jihadi Terrorists in Europe*, 45-49.

¹⁴ Gartenstein-Ross and Grossman, *Homegrown Terrorists in the U.S. and U.K.*, 56-57.

¹⁵ Royal Canadian Mounted Police, *Radicalization: A Guide for the Perplexed* (National Security Criminal Investigations, June 2009), 5, <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/pubs/nsci-ecrsn/radical-eng.pdf> (accessed October 22, 2011).

examples of terrorists who do not fit any particular economic, educational, or social profile.

Shahzad had a degree in computing, an MBA, a job, and a wife and two children.

Abdulmuttalab, the son of a wealthy Nigerian banker, had a degree in engineering from University College, London—one of Britain’s best universities.¹⁶ Bergen and others also take exception to the idea that terrorists display a certain ethnic profile. To substantiate this claim, the researchers examined the ethnicity of 57 Americans who were charged or convicted of Islamist terrorist crimes between January 2009 and September 2010. Out of this group, 31 percent were Somali-Americans, 21 percent Caucasian-Americans, 18 percent Arab-Americans, 14 percent South Asian-Americans, 9 percent African-Americans, 4 percent Hispanic-Americans, and 2 percent Caribbean-Americans.¹⁷

2.2 Psychological Theories

Scholars have developed a plethora of psychological theories to explain terrorist radicalization. While most of these theories are useful to some degree, like situational theories of radicalization they remain highly controversial. Individual motivations for participating in terrorism are so varied that it is a pointless endeavor to construct a psychological profile for all would-be terrorists. Renowned terrorism expert Martha Crenshaw declared that “the outstanding common characteristic of terrorists is their normality.”¹⁸ Jerrold Post, another expert in the field, agreed with Crenshaw that terrorists exhibit no major psychopathology.¹⁹ An oft-cited NYPD report concludes that “there is no useful profile to assist law enforcement or intelligence to

¹⁶ Peter Bergen, Bruce Hoffman, and Katherine Tiedemann, “Assessing the Jihadist Terrorist Threat to America and American Interests,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 34, no. 2 (2011): 77, <http://0-www.tandfonline.com.lib.utep.edu/doi/full/10.1080/1057610X.2011.538830>

¹⁷ Bergen, Hoffman, and Tiedemann, “Assessing the Jihadist Terrorist Threat,” 78.

¹⁸ Martha Crenshaw, “The Causes of Terrorism,” *Comparative Politics* 13, no. 4 (July 1981): 390, <http://0-www.jstor.org.lib.utep.edu/stable/421717> (accessed January 19, 2012).

¹⁹ Jerrold M. Post, “When Hatred is Bred in the Bone: Psycho-cultural Foundations of Contemporary Terrorism,” *Political Psychology* 26, no. 4 (2005): 617, <http://0-www.jstor.org.lib.utep.edu/stable/3792578> (accessed January 19, 2012).

predict who will follow this trajectory of radicalization.” The report goes on to state that “the individuals who take this course begin as ‘unremarkable’ from various walks of life.”²⁰ Brian Jenkins concurs with the statements of other experts that “there is no easily identifiable terrorist-prone personality.”²¹

Although the idea of a universal terrorist personality is nothing short of a myth, radicalization is still fundamentally a psychological process. Individuals have to adjust their thinking at some point to embrace Islamist doctrines and eventually pledge their allegiance to terrorist organizations. Instead of categorizing terrorists according to personality, then, it makes more sense to step back and look at the events that might prompt individuals to start down the path to radicalization in the first place. Social identity theory can be highly useful when taking this approach. According to social identity theory, individuals begin to investigate radical Islamist ideologies after they experience a “cognitive opening.” Any number of events can spark a cognitive opening, but usually these events are related to individuals’ social identity.

Quintan Wiktorowicz, in *Radical Islam Rising*, provided one of the most detailed applications of social identity theory to date. Wiktorowicz used social identity theory as a framework for studying al-Muhajiroun, a transnational Islamic movement based in the United Kingdom. While not an Islamist movement in the vein of al-Qaeda, al-Muhajiroun nevertheless supports “a number of violent causes and is considered part of the radical fringe of the Muslim community.”²² Thus, al-Muhajiroun is close enough to a terrorist organization for the purposes of this study.

²⁰ Silber and Bhatt, *Radicalization in the West*, 8.

²¹ Brian Michael Jenkins, *Would-Be Warriors: Incidents of Terrorist Radicalization in the United States since September 11, 2001* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2010), 7, http://www.rand.org/pubs/occasional_papers/2010/RAND_OP292.pdf (accessed September 8, 2011).

²² Wiktorowicz, *Radical Islam Rising*, 5.

Wiktorowicz's central argument is that "individuals are initially inspired by a cognitive opening that shakes certitude in previously accepted beliefs."²³ A cognitive opening gives individuals the desire to expose themselves to new ways of thinking and makes them more receptive to radical Islamist doctrines. Any number of crises can trigger a cognitive opening, so it would be a futile exercise to attempt to compile a comprehensive list.²⁴ However, the literature on Islamic movements brings up several recurring themes, including the loss of a job, blocked mobility, a sense of cultural weakness, racism, humiliation, political repression, torture, and political discrimination. Wiktorowicz adds to that list a death in the family and victimization by crime.²⁵

In his study, Wiktorowicz found that racial and religious discrimination caused some young Muslims to question their identity. University students, in particular, suffered from a sense of blocked social mobility. The vast majority of these students were South Asians who grew up in Britain, but were not considered British by mainstream society. They believed that a discriminatory system prevented them from realizing their potential. Not surprisingly, these university students became the dominant recruitment pool for al-Muhajiroun.²⁶

Wiktorowicz is careful to note that personal crises are not the only trigger that can generate cognitive openings. Activists can also prompt cognitive openings through their outreach efforts. Naturally, activists target established social networks—family, friends, and colleagues—for outreach. During the process of hanging out and socializing, activists attempt to

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 20.

²⁶ Ibid., 90-91.

“break down calcified preconceptions about the role of Islam so that individuals become amenable to discussing the possibility of new interpretations.”²⁷

A cognitive opening, whether prompted by a crisis or facilitated by a friend, does not automatically lead to radicalization. Wiktorowicz makes it clear that not every individual who experiences a cognitive opening will engage in religious seeking, and not every individual who becomes a religious seeker will explore radical Islamic groups. Nevertheless, in many cases a cognitive opening is enough to prompt an individual to explore radical Islamist groups. According to Wiktorowicz, those religious seekers who end up exploring radical Islamic groups are typically part of social networks that tie them to the group.²⁸ (The author will discuss social networking theory and social movement theory in the next section.)

As mentioned previously, any number of events can spark a cognitive opening. In Wiktorowicz’s study, young South Asian Muslims in Britain experienced a cognitive opening as a result of an identity crisis. The notion of an identity crisis prompting a cognitive opening is actually quite common in the radicalization literature. After reviewing the current research literature, Choudhury concluded that “the path to radicalization often involves a search for identity at a moment of crisis.”²⁹ Likewise, Jenkins, in his testimony before the House Homeland Security Committee, stated that potential jihadist recruits in Western countries are vulnerable when they “are at a stage of life where they are seeking an identity.”³⁰

²⁷ Ibid., 93.

²⁸ Ibid., 5.

²⁹ Tufyal Choudhury, *The Role of Muslim Identity Politics in Radicalization: A Study in Progress* (London: Department for Communities and Local Government, April 2007), 21, <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/452628.pdf> (accessed October 22, 2011).

³⁰ Brian Michael Jenkins, *Building an Army of Believers: Jihadist Radicalization and Recruitment* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, April 2007), 3, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/testimonies/2007/RAND_CT278-1.pdf (accessed October 22, 2011).

As Wiktorowicz's study demonstrates, social identity theory is often used to explain radicalization within immigrant communities. Oliver Roy delivers a masterful explanation of social identity theory as it relates to immigrant communities in his landmark work titled *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*. According to Roy, the nature of religiosity—how believers experience and formulate their relationship to religion—changes when Muslims immigrate to Western countries. Muslim immigrants living in the West find that religious practice has to be elaborated upon because it is no longer embedded in culture and society. In the absence of legitimate religious authorities to define the norms of Islam, immigrants must reformulate their religious identity on their own.³¹ Roy argues that immigrants typically construct a “deculturalized” Islamic identity, or an Islamic identity that is not linked to any given culture.³² Unfortunately, immigrants who select a deculturalized version of Islam as their identity are vulnerable to neofundamentalism, an ideology which itself rejects culture and seeks to rebuild the Muslim *ummah* on a purely religious basis.³³

Stroink also employs social identity theory to examine radicalization among Muslim immigrant communities. According to Stroink, second-generation immigrants identify culturally with one of three groups: the ingroup, the outgroup, or the transitional outgroup. The path to radicalization varies depending on the group with which the individual identifies.

Second-generation immigrants who identify with the ingroup embrace mainstream culture. Although it is hard to imagine these individuals engaging in terrorism, there are instances when such is the case. For example, second-generation immigrants may consider

³¹ Oliver Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 149-152.

³² *Ibid.*, 23.

³³ *Ibid.*, 258.

themselves to be members of the mainstream culture, but still perceive this culture be flawed in certain ways. In their attempts to change the culture they may resort to violent means.

Second-generation immigrants who identify with the outgroup never embrace the mainstream culture. Despite growing up surrounded by mainstream culture, these individuals reach late adolescence without ever considering themselves a part of it—either they identify with the heritage culture or they do not identify with any culture at all. Individuals who do not identify with any cultural group are particularly vulnerable to radicalization because they are searching for somewhere to belong.³⁴

Finally, there are second-generation immigrants who at one time identify with the mainstream culture, but later reject it as they escalate toward violence. Individuals in this group manage to turn an ingroup into a hated outgroup. Stroink goes on to outline three theories that might explain radicalization among second-generation immigrants with transitional outgroup identification: Phinney's three-stage model of ethnic identity development, optimal distinctiveness theory, and ingroup exclusion theory.³⁵

2.3 Social Theories

Unlike situational and psychological theories of radicalization, social theories of radicalization are not that controversial. Sageman's social networking theory, as introduced in *Understanding Terror Networks*, is the most important social theory for the purposes of this study. After extensively examining two terrorist cells—the plotters of the unsuccessful millennial bombing of the Los Angeles airport and the Hamburg cell responsible for the 9/11 attacks—Sageman concluded that “the formation of a network of friendships . . . solidified and

³⁴ Mirella L. Stroink, “Processed and Preconditions Underlying Terrorism in Second-Generation Immigrants,” *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 13, no. 3 (2007): 301-302, <http://0-www.tandfonline.com.lib.utep.edu/doi/full/10.1080/10781910701471322> (accessed October 22, 2011).

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 303.

preceded formal introduction into the terrorist organization.”³⁶ Sageman found that friendship bonds played a role in the formal affiliation of 68 percent of his sample, and that kinship bonds played a role in the formal affiliation of 14 percent. After he combined the statistics for friendship and kinship and eliminated the overlap, Sageman found that “about 75 percent of the mujahedin had preexisting social bonds to members already involved in the global jihad or decided to join the jihad as a group with friends or relatives.”³⁷

Sageman published a follow-up book to *Understanding Terror Networks*, titled *Leaderless Jihad*, in 2008. In *Leaderless Jihad*, Sageman identified two major radicalization pathways for the individuals in his sample. The first pathway involved a “bunch of guys” who collectively decided to join a terrorist organization. The second pathway involved individuals who decided to join childhood friends. When these individuals emigrated to the West they looked up their former friends, and, if these friends were part of a terrorist group, the individuals ended up joining that group.³⁸ In both *Leaderless Jihad* and *Understanding Terror Networks*, Sageman makes a persuasive argument for the importance of friendship and kinship bonds in the radicalization process.

In the section detailing psychological theories of radicalization, the author pointed out that individuals need to experience some sort of cognitive opening to consider adopting radical terrorist ideologies, and that this cognitive opening is often preceded by an identity crisis. While cognitive openings can prepare individuals to embrace Islamist ideologies, by themselves they are not enough. A 2007 study conducted by the NYPD states that, while individuals generally

³⁶ Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, 108.

³⁷ Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, 112-113. The results of Bakker’s study were not as supportive of social networking theory as those of Sageman’s study. Bakker found that social affiliation only played a role in about 35 percent of the sample, a much lower percentage than that reported by Sageman. Bakker, *Jihadi Terrorists in Europe*, 49.

³⁸ Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 66-67.

begin the radicalization process on their own, as they progress through the stages of radicalization they invariably seek out like-minded individuals and form groups and clusters.³⁹

The results of Sageman's study gel with the findings of the NYPD study; to wit, that potential jihadists need like-minded associates to progress to the next level of violent radicalization. As Sageman puts it, "Only other people . . . who are further along the path to violence or who are willing to explore it with them, can help them cross the line from venting their anger to becoming terrorists." The global Islamist terrorists in Sageman's study began their journey in informal groups. Sageman explains how these informal groups experienced simultaneously a process of in-group love and out-group hate. On the one hand, the group acted as a support mechanism, encouraging members to sacrifice for the cause. On the other hand, the group acted as an "echo chamber," encouraging members to escalate their grievances to the point of hatred. In the end, a "natural and intense loyalty to the group . . . transformed alienated young Muslims into fanatic terrorists."⁴⁰

Social movement theory essentially operates on the same premise as social networking theory, namely, that informal group ties play an important role in the process of mobilization. Neumann and Rogers used social movement theory as a framework for looking at recruitment to the militant Islamist movement in Europe. They found that, "in the vast majority of cases, the transition to violence takes place within the confines of tightly-knit groups, and that the social forces which unfold here have a strong influence on their judgment and behavior."⁴¹

³⁹ Silber and Bhatt, *Radicalization in the West*, 9.

⁴⁰ Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad*, 84-88.

⁴¹ Peter R. Neumann and Brooke Rogers, *Recruitment and Mobilisation for the Islamist Militant Movement in Europe* (King's College London, 2007), 70-71, http://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/doc_centre/terrorism/docs/ec_radicalisation_study_on_mobilisation_tactics_en.pdf (accessed October 22, 2011).

In *Radical Islam Rising*, Quintan Wiktorowicz meticulously applied social movement theory to radicalization, using al-Muhajiroun as a case study. As mentioned previously, al-Muhajiroun is a transnational Islamic movement based in the United Kingdom. After conducting extensive research, Wiktorowicz found that individuals, even if they were predisposed to al-Muhajiroun and its message, rarely attended activities unless they knew someone in the movement.⁴² In line with social movement theory, al-Muhajiroun activists turned to their established social networks when attempting to persuade others to join the movement because these networks gave activists an atmosphere of trust in which to discuss controversial topics. Activists discussed religious and political issues with their friends, hoping to convince them that these issues were important and that Muslims needed to do something about them. Wiktorowicz believes that individuals in the network, because they were friends, felt a certain social pressure to take a stand on the issues and to be “real” Muslims.⁴³

Social networking and social movement theory both state that individuals need social interaction with other like-minded individuals to make the leap to violent radicalization. In the past such fraternizing might have taken place in person, but today much of it takes place online via social media. A joint report by the Homeland Security Policy Institute and the Critical Incident Analysis Group, titled “NETworked Radicalization: A Counter Strategy,” argues that the Internet is a potent recruiting tool because it “brings together people—friends, family members, or complete strangers—with similar interests and values and fosters a sense of affiliation and identity.”⁴⁴ The International Centre for the Study of Radicalization and Political Violence echoes these sentiments in a report titled “Countering Online Radicalisation.” The

⁴² Wiktorowicz, *Radical Islam Rising*, 86.

⁴³ Ibid., 93-94.

⁴⁴ Homeland Security Policy Institute and Critical Incident Analysis Group, *NETworked Radicalization: A Counter-Strategy* (May 3, 2007), 2, <http://www.gwumc.edu/hspi/policy/NETworkedRadicalization.pdf> (accessed January 18, 2012).

report states that the Internet “has made it easier to find people and create networks among like-minded individuals, across great distances and beyond national borders.”⁴⁵ In the digital age, the Internet, due to its convenience and unlimited reach, seems to be replacing traditional social forums like mosques. That trend is likely to continue.

Sageman devotes an entire chapter of *Leaderless Jihad* to examining the role of the Internet in mobilizing terrorists. After reviewing global Islamist terrorist networks, Sageman discovers a clear shift in the modes of interaction starting around 2004. Around that time terrorists began to rely less on face-to-face interaction and more on online interaction.⁴⁶ Sageman makes an important distinction between the Internet’s two major systems, a distinction that will be important for this study. The first system is the World Wide Web, which is a collection of all websites. People access websites to find information, but websites are passive, meaning they do not provide a means of social interaction. Sageman claims that passive websites are not the engine of radicalization because “people in general do not change their minds or harden their views by reading newspaper articles or books.” The Internet’s second system is an active system of communication between individuals and groups. It includes e-mail, listservs, forums, and chat rooms. According to Sageman, this second system is the real engine of radicalization; the “bunch of guys” phenomenon that once took place offline is now taking place online through this system.⁴⁷

Although the Internet is increasingly playing a larger role in the process of radicalization, it has yet to play a dominant role. Self-radicalization on the Internet with no face-to-face

⁴⁵ The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, *Countering Online Radicalisation: A Strategy for Action* (King’s College London, 2009), 11, <http://www.icsr.info/news/attachments/1236768445ICSROnlineRadicalisationReport.pdf> (accessed January 18, 2012).

⁴⁶ Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad*, 109.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 114-116.

interaction is a rare phenomenon indeed.⁴⁸ Sageman admits that “the Internet can help bridge the gap from the isolated potential mujahed to the global mujahed,” but adds that the Internet is not persuasive enough by itself.⁴⁹ In fact, none of the mujahed in Sageman’s sample went straight from interacting on the Internet to joining the global Salafi jihad. Although the Internet can familiarize an individual with the global Salafi ideology, the Internet cannot prove the individuals commitment to the cause. The individual needs a period of intensive face-to-face interaction in which to demonstrate loyalty.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, *Countering Online Radicalisation*, 12-13; Royal Canadian Mounted Police, *Radicalization: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 10.

⁴⁹ Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, 163.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

This thesis is a case study that examines radicalization empirically using data from open source literature. The variables chosen for measuring radicalization in this study are essentially that same as the variables chosen by Sageman and Bakker for measuring radicalization in their respective studies. These variables fall into one of three categories: situational, psychological, or social (see table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Variables used in Previous Studies Versus Current Study

Variable category	Previous studies	Current study
Situational	Geographic origin	Ethnicity
	Place of recruitment	Place of recruitment
	Age	Average departure age
	Level of education	Level of education
	Occupation	Occupation
	Employment status	Employment status
	Family status	Family status
	Criminal record	Criminal record
	Faith as youth	Religious background
	Socioeconomic status	N/A
	Relative deprivation	N/A
	Religious devotion	N/A
	Mental illness	N/A
Psychological	Terrorist personality	N/A
	Other	Cognitive opening Ideology
	Friendship	Self-radicalized Group-radicalized
Social	Other	Internet-radicalized
	Kinship	Relative-radicalized
	Worship	Mosque-radicalized
	Discipleship	N/A

Most of the variables chosen for this study are straightforward. However, each variable deserves a thorough explanation to avoid any confusion in measurement or interpretation.

3.1 Situational Variables

In previous studies “geographic origin” referred to country of origin. In this study, since the entire sample comes from the United States, “ethnicity”—specifically whether or not a recruit is Somali-American—will be used in the place of “geographic origin.” In previous studies “place of recruitment” referred to the country in which an individual was recruited. However, in this study “place of recruitment” refers to whether or not an individual was recruited within an immigrant community. “Age” in this study refers specifically to the age at which recruits departed for Somalia.

The variable “level of education” is simple—recruits are categorized as high school dropouts, high school graduates, college dropouts, or college graduates. “Occupation” in this study has the exact same meaning as it does in previous studies; recruits are categorized as unskilled, semiskilled, or skilled laborers. As in previous studies, “employment status” in this study refers to whether or not individuals are employed. “Family status” also has the same meaning in this study; recruits are categorized as single, married, or divorced. “Criminal record” needs no explanation—recruits either have a criminal record or they do not. Finally, previous studies measured “faith as a youth” by categorizing individuals as either religious or secular. This study measures “faith as a youth” by categorizing recruits as either converts or non-converts.

Certain variables used in previous studies are not used in this study. For example, this study does not measure “socioeconomic status” simply because data on household incomes are not available. This study does not measure “relative deprivation” simply because its measurement is largely subjective. Finally, this study does not measure “religious devotion” per

se, although certain aspects of religious devotion are taken into account later when looking at another variable, “ideology.”

3.2 Psychological Variables

Insufficient data exist to measure the psychological variables “mental illness” and “terrorist personalities.” In any case, experts are of a consensus that terrorists do not suffer from mental illnesses and that there is no such thing as a terrorist personality. However, this study will measure other psychological variables. Specifically, this study looks at whether recruits experience a cognitive opening (see literature review), and also at recruits’ ideology. “Ideology” in this study refers specifically to whether recruits espouse nationalist sentiments, Salafist sentiments, or both.

3.3 Social Variables

All of the social variables used in this study are clear-cut. Individuals who are “self-radicalized” go through the radicalization process alone. Recruits who are “group-radicalized” interact with one or more like-minded individuals during the radicalization process. Recruits who are “relative-radicalized” go through the process together with a family member. Recruits who are “Internet-radicalized” are influenced heavily by propaganda and fellow jihadists online. Finally, recruits who are “mosque-radicalized” spend significant time at mosques where they meet other recruits. (The variable “discipleship” is not applicable to this study.)

As described above, each of the variables in this study can be broken down into two or more categories. The categories for each variable are listed in table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Variable Categories

Variable	Categories
Ethnicity	Somali, non-Somali
Place of recruitment	Immigrant community, non-immigrant community
Average departure age	N/A
Level of education	Some high school, high school graduate, some college, college graduate
Occupation	Unskilled, semiskilled, skilled
Employment status	Unemployed, employed
Family status	Single, married, divorced
Criminal record	Y/N
Religious background	Convert, non-convert
Cognitive opening	Y/N
Ideology	Nationalist, Salafist, both
Self-radicalized	Y/N
Group-radicalized	Y/N
Internet-radicalized	Y/N
Relative-radicalized	Y/N
Mosque-radicalized	Y/N

To facilitate data collection on each of the variable categories listed in table 2, the author came up with specific key indicators. Key indicators are signs or clues that help researchers place data within a certain variable category. Table 3.3 lists key indicators for each variable category.

(Key indicators are not listed for variables that are self-explanatory.)

Table 3.3: Key Indicators

Variable	Category	Key Indicator
Cognitive opening	Yes	Identity conflict Job loss Death of a loved one Victimization by crime Blocked mobility Racism, discrimination Political repression Grievance
Ideology	Nationalist	Motivated by al-Shabaab propaganda Motivated by Ethiopian invasion of Somalia Communicates with al-Shabaab
	Salafist	Motivated by al-Qaeda propaganda Communicates with al-Qaeda Supports Salafism verbally/in writing Interprets Quran literally Supports implementation of sharia law Excessively devout/pious
Group-radicalized	Yes	Calls other extremists Meets with other extremists Travels to Somalia with other extremists
Internet-radicalized	Yes	Reads extremist propaganda online Listens to extremist propaganda online Watches extremist propaganda online E-mails/chats with other extremists Participates in extremist blogs/forums
Relative-radicalized	Yes	Calls an extremist relative Meets with an extremist relative Travels to Somali with an extremist relative

With the key indicators in mind, the author carefully examined local news stories, legal proceedings, and congressional hearings to find pertinent snippets of information.⁵¹ After examining all the available information on individual al-Shabaab recruits, the author analyzed the data to determine if there were, in fact, two different radicalization processes taking place—one for Somalis and one for non-Somalis. The author then modeled these radicalization processes using causal flow diagrams and feedback loops. In the following section, the author

⁵¹ Much of the legal documentation on individual recruits can be accessed through the Nine Eleven Finding Answers (NEFA) Foundation.

will explain how exactly causal flow diagrams and feedback loops work, and how they were applied to this study.

4. METHODOLOGY

After reviewing the available data, the author came up with a list of 41 al-Shabaab recruits from the United States (see appendix). Recruits are defined as individuals who either traveled to Somalia to join al-Shabaab or attempted to do so. Many Americans have been indicted for providing material support to al-Shabaab, but if they did not travel or attempt to travel to Somalia they are not included in this sample. The first al-Shabaab recruit traveled to Somali in 2005, and the last al-Shabaab recruit traveled to Somalia in 2011.

The methodology for this study initially mimics the methodology employed by Sageman and Bakker in their respective studies. First, the author compiled sources containing biographical data on each individual recruit. Second, the author scanned the biographical data for the key indicators listed in table 3. Third, the author recorded relevant pieces of data in a spreadsheet containing the names of all the recruits and the variables listed in table 2. Fourth, the author percentaged the data in the spreadsheet to determine which variables were good predictors of al-Shabaab radicalization in the United States and which variables were not.

Sageman and Bakker terminate their analyses at this point. This study, however, carries radicalization analysis one step further by dividing the recruits into two groups—non-Somalis and Somalis—and looking at each group separately. The reason for dividing the sample is simple: non-Somalis probably join al-Shabaab for different reasons than their Somali counterparts. Considering al-Shabaab is both a localized, ethno-nationalist insurgency and an international, religious terrorist organization, this makes sense. Based on the results of previous radicalization studies, as well as studies on the Somali diaspora in the United States, the author hypothesizes that the radicalization process for non-Somalis will be significantly different than the radicalization process for Somalis (see table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Hypothesis

Variable	Non-Somalis	Somalis
Place of recruitment	Non-immigrant community	Immigrant community
Departure date	?	After December 2006
Average departure age	Mid-20s	Mid-20s
Level of education	?	Some high school, high school graduate
Occupation	?	Unskilled, semiskilled
Employment status	?	Unemployed
Family status	?	?
Criminal record	?	Yes
Religious background	?	Non-convert
Cognitive opening	Yes	Yes
Ideology	Salafist	Nationalist
Self-radicalized	No	No
Group-radicalized	Yes	Yes
Internet-radicalized	Yes	Yes
Relative-radicalized	No	Yes
Mosque-radicalized	Yes	Yes

Even though the author hypothesizes that each group will undergo a unique radicalization process, these processes can still converge at various points. All of the recruits, for example, probably left for Somali in their mid-20s, if results of the studies conducted by Sageman and Bakker are any indication of average departure age.⁵² Similarly, a majority of the recruits were probably radicalized in groups, in line with social networking and social movement theory.

Even though certain areas of overlap are possible, the author nevertheless hypothesizes that, for the most part, the non-Somali recruits followed their own unique radicalization pathway. For instance, the non-Somali recruits were most likely recruited in non-immigrant communities, although it is possible that some came from immigrant communities. In terms of departure date, the author does not assume any particular pattern. Also, because of the controversial nature of the results of previous studies regarding level of education, occupation, employment status, family status, criminal record, and religious background, the author does not make any

⁵² Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, 92; Bakker, *Jihadi Terrorists in Europe*, 48. Sageman found that the average age for joining the jihad was 25.7, while Bakker found that the average age was 27.3.

hypotheses for these variables. However, the author does hypothesize that a majority of the non-Somali recruits, since they had no ethnic ties to Somalia, were motivated by Salafism as opposed to nationalism.

Hypotheses about the Somali recruits are slightly easier to make because of the amount of research that has been done on the Somali immigrant community in the United States. Somalis in general experienced a renewed nationalist fervor after Ethiopian invasion of December 2006. Therefore, the author hypothesizes that a majority of the Somali recruits decided to join al-Shabaab after December 2006. Research reveals that the Somali immigrant community in the United States struggles with high poverty rates, high unemployment rates, high crime rates, and low rates of college graduation.⁵³ Therefore, the author hypothesizes that the Somali individuals in this study struggled with those same issues. Obviously, since the Somali recruits are the children of first-generation immigrants, the majority are presumably Muslim still, although they may not practice their religion.

If, in fact, there are two different radicalization processes—one for non-Somalis and one for Somalis—it should be possible to model both of these processes with causal flow diagrams. Causal flow diagramming represents yet another deviation from previous radicalizations studies that merely look at variables in isolation. For data collection purposes, it will be useful to break the radicalization process down into discrete parts. However, at some point the most important parts of the radicalization process will need to be reassembled to form a complete picture. Few radicalization studies, if any, have employed causal flow diagramming as an analytic technique, yet causal flow diagramming is an excellent technique for visualizing complex processes and for

⁵³ Andrew Liepman, *Violent Islamist Extremism: Al-Shabaab Recruitment in America*, Statement before the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, House of Representatives, March 11, 2009; Abdirahman Mukhtar, *Violent Islamist Extremism: Al-Shabaab Recruitment in America*, Statement before the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, Senate, March 11, 2009.

understanding how variables are related to each other. In this particular study, causal flow diagramming will help the author visualize the likely sequence of events leading to radicalization for each group of al-Shabaab recruits.

Former CIA analyst Morgan D. Jones outlines five steps for defining and analyzing a problem's cause-and-effect system: 1) identify major factors, 2) identify cause-and-effect relationships, 3) characterize the relationships as direct or inverse, 4) diagram the relationships, and 5) analyze the behavior of the relationships as an integrated system. The first step, identifying major factors, is nothing more than highlighting the variables with the most explanatory power. The second step is to identify the cause-and-effect linkages among the factors. Jones suggests using a two-column "Cause-and-Effect Table," with the causal factors in the right-hand column and the affected factors in the left-hand column (see table 4.2).

Table 4.2: Causal and Affected Factors

Causal Factor	Affected Factor
Sales	→ Profits
Profits	→ R&D capability
R&D capability	→ Marketing of new products
Marketing of new products	→ Competitors' marketing of new products
Competitors' marketing of new products	→ Sales

The third step is to characterize these cause-and-effect relationships as direct or inverse. If the affected factor increases as the causal factor increases, the relationship is direct. If the affected factor increases as the causal factor decreases, the relationship is inverse. Jones uses a "D" for direct relationships and an "I" for indirect relationships (see table 4.3).

Table 4.3: Direct or Inverse Relationship

Causal Factor		Affected Factor
Sales	D	Profits
Profits	D	R&D capability
R&D capability	D	Marketing of new products
Marketing of new products	D	Competitors' marketing of new products
Competitors' marketing of new products	I	Sales

Once relationships are characterized as direct or inverse, a causal flow diagram can be drawn (see figure 4.1).

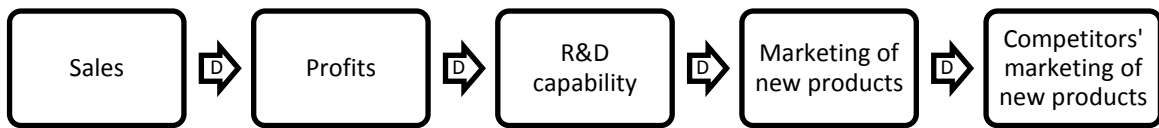


Figure 4.1: Causal Flow Diagram

Jones states that the most powerful driving force in any cause-and-effect scheme is the feedback loops in which two or more factors are linked circularly. If all of the linkages are direct relationships, or if there is an even number of inverse linkages, the loop is inherently unstable (see figure 4.2).

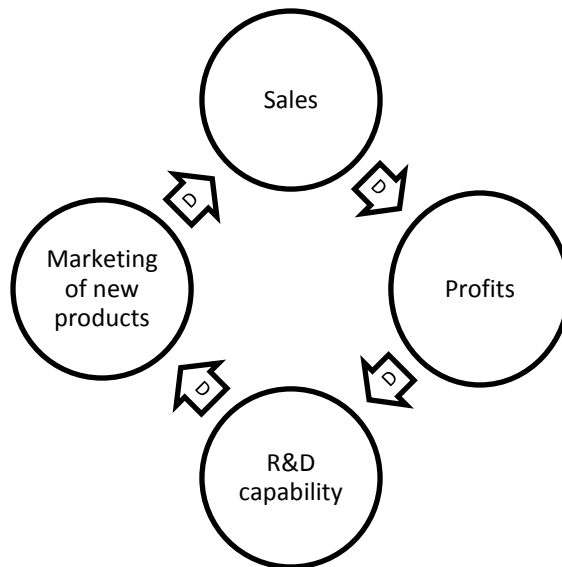


Figure 4.2: Unstable Feedback Loop

If there is an odd number of inverse linkages, the loop is inherently stable (see figure 4.3).



Figure 4.3: Stable Feedback Loop

The fifth step is to analyze the behavior of the system as an integrated whole, determining which factors are the most influential and validating that cause-and-effect relationships are portrayed accurately.⁵⁴

Few radicalization studies, if any, have employed causal flow diagramming as an analytic technique. However, some studies in the broader social science realm have employed causal loop diagramming, a closely associated analytic technique commonly used in the field of system dynamics (SD). SD is a way to model and depict factors contributing to the behavior of a system and the causal relationships that exist among these factors. To employ SD, the first step is to create a causal loop diagram that shows these factors and their causal linkages. Ezell and others demonstrate how causal loop diagramming works by using it to model behavioral change in an

⁵⁴ Morgan D. Jones, *The Thinker's Toolkit: 14 Powerful Techniques for Problem Solving* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1998), 94-105.

insurgent population.⁵⁵ Gil and others briefly use causal loop diagramming to explore the effects of policies aimed at reducing acts of terrorism against the U.S. in the Middle East.⁵⁶

Causal flow diagramming is essentially the same as causal loop diagramming; the major difference is that causal flow diagramming is simpler to perform because it does not require sophisticated SD software. The reason for employing causal flow diagramming in this study is to help the reader visualize the radicalization process, not to overwhelm the reader with complex computer-generated graphics. Two modest causal flow diagrams—one for each group of al-Shabaab recruits—should be sufficient to visualize each group’s radicalization process. Once the causal flow diagrams are in place, the author will attempt to identify any feedback loops, if they exist.

Data for this study comes from several sources. Much of the data on al-Shabaab recruiting comes from non-profit think tanks. Important U.S. think tanks include the American Enterprise Institute, the Anti-Defamation League, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the Council on Foreign Relations, the Foreign Policy Research Institute, the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, the Investigative Project on Terrorism, the Jamestown Foundation, and the RAND Corporation. Important overseas think tanks include the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, the Institute for Security Studies, the International Centre for the Study of Radicalization, and the Netherlands Institute of International Relations.

⁵⁵ Barry Charles Ezell and others, “Probabilistic Risk Analysis and Terrorism Risk,” *Risk Analysis* 30, no. 4 (2010): 585, <http://0-onlinelibrary.wiley.com.lib.utep.edu/doi/10.1111/j.1539-6924.2010.01401.x/full> (accessed November 18, 2011).

⁵⁶ Benigno R. Gil Alcantara, Masahiro Matsuura, Carlos Molina Monzon, and Ioannis Samothrakis, *The Use of Systems Dynamics Analysis and Modeling Techniques to Explore Policy Levers in the Fight against Middle Eastern Terrorist Groups* (Naval Postgraduate School, June 2005), 28-31, <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA435682> (accessed November 17, 2011).

Several academic institutions publish valuable information on al-Shabaab recruiting, including the George Washington University Homeland Security Policy Institute, the West Point Combating Terrorism Center, the University of North Carolina Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security, and the U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute. A few theses written by Naval Postgraduate School students also offer valuable information on al-Shabaab recruits. Open source intelligence for this study comes exclusively from STRATFOR.

Local news outlets provide first-rate biographical information on individual recruits. Most of the information on the Minnesota recruits comes from *Minnesota Public Radio News* and *TwinCities.com*, while most of the information on the Washington recruits comes from the *Seattle Times*. Some of the most authoritative sources of information on al-Shabaab recruits are congressional hearings. Thus far the House Committee on Homeland Security has convened two separate hearings on al-Shabaab recruitment in the United States. The first hearing, titled *Violent Islamist Extremism: Al-Shabaab Recruitment in America*, took place in March 2009. The second hearing, titled *Al Shabaab: Recruitment and Radicalization within the Muslim American Community and the Threat to the Homeland*, took place in July 2011.

Without a doubt, the most detailed and nuanced sources of biographical information on recruits are official legal proceedings. The NEFA Foundation is an excellent resource for obtaining original legal documents relating to terrorist activities. U.S. district court documents—including criminal complaints, affidavits and indictments—describe recruit’s offenses in exquisite detail. These documents are absolutely essential to form a complete picture of a recruit’s background, thought process, and social network.

5. RESULTS

After examining local news articles and court documents for the key indicators listed in table 3, the author recorded biographical information on each individual recruit for the variables listed in table 2. Next, the author calculated percentages for each variable to uncover any patterns that might exist (see table 5.1).

Table 5.1: Percentages

Variable	Categories	Total sample (n=41)	Non-Somalis (n=11)	Somalis (n=30)
Place of recruitment	Immigrant community	76%	18%	100%
	Non-immigrant community	24%	82%	0%
Departure date	Before December 2006	13%	45%	0%
	After December 2006	87%	55%	100%
Average departure age	N/A	23	24	23.5
Level of education	Some high school	24%	12.5%	29%
	High school graduate	28%	37.5%	24%
	Some college	44%	37.5%	47%
	College graduate	4%	12.5%	0%
Occupation	Unskilled	30%	38%	25%
	Semiskilled	61%	63%	50%
	Skilled	9%	0%	17%
Employment status	Unemployed	25%	40%	14%
	Employed	75%	60%	86%
Family status	Single	53%	50%	60%
	Married	40%	50%	20%
	Divorced	7%	0%	20%
Criminal record	Yes	18%	27%	15%
	No	82%	73%	85%
Religious background	Convert	21%	89%	0%
	Non-convert	79%	11%	100%
Cognitive opening	Yes	100%	100%	100%
	No	0%	0%	0%
Ideology	Nationalist	54%	0%	82%
	Salafist	38%	100%	6%
	Both	8%	0%	12%
Self-radicalized	Yes	5%	18%	0%
	No	95%	82%	100%
Group-radicalized	Yes	95%	82%	100%
	No	5%	18%	0%
Internet-radicalized	Yes	100%	100%	100%
	No	0%	0%	0%
Relative-radicalized	Yes	3%	10%	0%
	No	97%	90%	100%
Mosque-radicalized	Yes	46%	11%	65%
	No	54%	89%	35%

5.1 Situational Variables

5.1.1 Ethnicity and Place of Recruitment

Of the 41 recruits, 11 (23 percent) were non-Somali and 30 (73 percent) were Somali. Seventy-six percent of the recruits came from immigrant communities: Minneapolis, Minnesota; Columbus, Ohio; and Seattle, Washington. The rest of the sample came from disparate parts of the United States, including Alabama, California, Illinois, Maryland, New Jersey, Texas, and Virginia.

The non-Somali recruits were extremely ethnically diverse; they included four Caucasians, three Arabs, two Latinos, an Arab-Caucasian, and an African-American-Latino. All of the non-Somali recruits came from different places, with the exception of Mohamed Alessa and Carlos Almonte, who were radicalized together in New Jersey. Troy Kastigar was the only non-Somali recruit to be radicalized within a Somali immigrant community and travel to Somalia with a group of Somali recruits.

Almost all of the Somali recruits came from Minneapolis, Minnesota. Three, however, came from Columbus, Ohio and one came from Seattle, Washington. These cities represent the largest Somali immigrant communities in the United States. Sources indicate that all of the recruits from Minneapolis, Minnesota knew each other to some degree.

5.1.2 Departure Date and Age

Out of all the recruits, only 13 percent left for Somali before December 2006, compared to 87 percent that left after December 2006. These percentages make sense, considering al-Shabaab only gained prominence internationally after the Ethiopian invasion of December 2006. The average departure age of the recruits was 23.

Of the non-Somali recruits, five left before December 2006 and six left after December 2006. Most of these recruits traveled to Somalia alone, with the exception of Omar Hammami and Daniel Maldonado, who traveled to Somalia together from Egypt, and Mohamed Alessa and Carlos Almonte, who attempted to travel to Somalia together from New Jersey. The average departure age of the non-Somali recruits was 24.

All of the Somali recruits traveled to Somalia after December 2006. Based on their departure dates, the Somali recruits appear to have traveled to Somali in four separate waves. The first wave⁵⁷ left around December 2007, the second wave⁵⁸ left around November 2008, the third wave⁵⁹ left around October 2009, and the fourth wave⁶⁰ left around June 2011. The average departure age of the Somali recruits was 23.5.

5.1.3 Level of Education

Results show that 52 percent of the total sample had a high school education or less, and that 48 percent of the total sample had at least some college education. Overall, this sample is much less educated than the sample in Sageman's study. Sageman found that 29 percent of his sample had a high school education or less, and that 71 percent had at least some college education.⁶¹ Whereas 42 percent of Sageman's sample graduated from college, only one recruit in this sample, Jihad Mostafa, graduated from college.

Of the non-Somali recruits, 50 percent had a high school education or less and 50 percent had at least some college education. Many of the non-Somali recruits who attended college dropped out as they became more radical. Omar Hammami, for example, dropped out of the

⁵⁷ Shirwa Ahmed, Salah Osman Ahmed, Kamal Said Hassan, Abdifatah Yusuf Isse, Ahmed Ali Omar, Umar Mohamud Jama, and Khalid Mohamud Abshir.

⁵⁸ Mustafa Ali Salat, Mohamed Abdullahi Hassan, Mohamuod Hassan, Abdikadir Ali Abdi, Abdisalan Hussein Ali, Jamal Sheikh Bana, and Burhan Hussein Hassan.

⁵⁹ Cabdulaahi Ahmed Faarax, Abdiweli Yassin Isse, Farah Mohamed Beledi.

⁶⁰ Nuno Ahmed, Abikar Mohamed, Abdirahman Gullet, Adan Hussein, Abdinassir Osman, Ali Mohamud.

⁶¹ Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, 112.

University of Southern Alabama in December 2002, saying that he could no longer bear to be in the company of women.⁶² Likewise, Zachary Chesser dropped out of George Mason University as a freshman to pursue his mission of propagating Salafism full-time.⁶³

Of the Somali recruits, 53 percent had a high school education or less and 47 percent had at least some college education. Interestingly, the Somali recruits attained approximately the same level of education as their non-Somali counterparts. It is actually quite remarkable that so many second-generation immigrants attended college. Sources indicate that many of the recruits were intelligent and academically motivated. Abdifatah Isse's counselor at Roosevelt High School described him as "very sharp, very verbal. He just had a spark about him."⁶⁴ Burhan Hassan was an "A" student at Roosevelt High School who planned on becoming a doctor or a lawyer.⁶⁵ Abdisalan Ali was an ambitious pre-med student at the University of Minnesota who hoped for an internship at the Mayo Clinic.⁶⁶ His former mentor described him as "a highly motivated kid" who "wanted to change lives."⁶⁷ Although many of the Somali recruits excelled in school, many of them also dropped out. Shirwa Ahmed, for example, struggled at community colleges before dropping out.⁶⁸ Abdinassir Osman also quit school early.⁶⁹

⁶² Andrea Elliott, "The Jihadist Next Door," *The New York Times*, January 31, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/31/magazine/31Jihadist-t.html> (accessed September 4, 2011).

⁶³ Tara Bahrapour, "Out of Suburbia, the Online Extremist," *The Washington Post*, November 2, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/11/01/AR2010110107035.html?sid=ST2010112605232> (accessed January 24, 2012).

⁶⁴ Nina Shapiro, "A Mystery of Violence," *Seattle Weekly*, December 16, 2009, <http://www.seattleweekly.com/2009-12-16/news/a-mystery-of-violence/> (accessed January 1, 2012).

⁶⁵ Joseph Lieberman, *Violent Islamist Extremism: Al-Shabaab Recruitment in America*, Statement before the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, House of Representatives, March 11, 2009.

⁶⁶ Josh Kron, "American Identified as Bomber in Attack on African Union in Somalia," *The New York Times*, October 30, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/31/world/africa/shabab-identify-american-as-bomber-in-somalia-attack.html> (accessed January 24, 2012).

⁶⁷ The New York Times, "Joining the Fight in Somalia," July 12, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2009/07/12/us/20090712-somalia-timeline.html> (accessed October 12, 2011).

⁶⁸ Andrea Elliott, "A Call to Jihad, Answered in America," *The New York Times*, July 12, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/12/us/12somalis.html?ref=alshabab> (accessed September 1, 2011).

5.1.4 Occupation and Employment Status

Out of all the recruits in the sample, 30 percent had unskilled occupations, 61 percent had semiskilled occupations, and 9 percent had skilled occupations. Seventy-five percent of the recruits were employed, and 25 percent were not. Many of the recruits went through several jobs before finally departing for Somalia to join al-Shabaab.

Of the non-Somali recruits, 38 percent had unskilled occupations. Troy Kastigar, for example, earned money giving haircuts and selling shoes.⁷⁰ Carlos Almonte worked for two years at the cash register of a New Jersey computer shop before quitting. A supervisor later informed journalists that Almonte was “not smart” and complained that “the simplest thing he could not do.”⁷¹ Sixty-three percent of non-Somali recruits had semiskilled occupations. Some were students, one was a computer technician, and another was a soldier in the U.S. Army. Not a single non-Somali recruit had a skilled occupation.

Of the Somali recruits, 25 percent had unskilled occupations. Shirwa Ahmed, for example, worked at the airport pushing passengers in wheel chairs and also delivered packages for a medical supplies company, driving a beat-up Toyota. Kamal Hassan worked as a waiter at his family’s restaurant, Zakaria Maruf worked in the stock room of a Walmart, and Jamal Bana worked at Macy’s.⁷² Fifty percent of the Somali recruits had semiskilled occupations; most of these recruits were students with part-time jobs. Somewhat surprisingly, two of the recruits had skilled jobs: Ahmed Omar was an emergency medical technician for an ambulance service, and

⁶⁹ Fatuma Noor, “My Encounter with America-Somali Jihadist in Nairobi,” *The Star*, June 27, 2011, <http://www.the-star.co.ke/lifestyle/128-lifestyle/29535-my-encounter-with-american-somali-jihadist-in-nairobi> (accessed January 24, 2012).

⁷⁰ The New York Times, “Joining the Fight in Somalia.”

⁷¹ Carolyn Salazar and Chuck Bennett, “Jersey Jihadist is Jackass: Ex-Boss,” *New York Post*, June 10, 2010, http://www.nypost.com/p/news/local/nj_warrior_wannabe_was_jihad_clod_eO6wMwKbjxHfUsainuFsyI (accessed January 25, 2012).

⁷² The New York Times, “Joining the Fight in Somalia.”

Abdisalan Ali was a caseworker at the law firm Briggs & Morgan. Again, somewhat surprisingly, 86 percent of the Somali recruits were employed. The Somali recruits who were not employed were either very young still (e.g., Burhan Hassan) or had criminal records that prevented them from obtaining employment (e.g., Farah Beledi).⁷³

5.1.5 Family Status

Out of all the recruits, 53 percent were single, 40 percent were married, and 7 percent were divorced. It should be noted that these percentages for family status are probably inaccurate due to insufficient data. The author could only find data on family status for 15 of the recruits, most of whom were non-Somalis. If additional data on the family status of the Somali recruits were available, the percentage of recruits who were single would likely increase dramatically.

Data on the family status of the non-Somali recruits is abundant. Results show that 50 percent of the non-Somali recruits were married. Most of these recruits married after converting to Islam. Omar Hammami, for example, was “desperate” to marry after converting to Islam, and therefore, in pursuit of his goal, moved to Toronto where he promptly found a Somali wife.⁷⁴ Zachary Chesser met his wife, a fellow convert and the daughter of a Ugandan diplomat, on Anwar al-Awlaki’s now defunct blog.⁷⁵ Ruben Shumpert also married after converting to Islam.⁷⁶ Troy Kastigar married after traveling to Somalia.⁷⁷

⁷³ Laura Yuen, “Family IDs Minn. Man Allegedly behind Somali Suicide Bombing,” *Minnesota Public Radio News*, June 7, 2011, <http://minnesota.publicradio.org/display/web/2011/06/07/farah-beledi-minnesota-man-suicide-attack/> (accessed January 26, 2012).

⁷⁴ Andrea Elliott, “The Jihadist Next Door.”

⁷⁵ Bahrapour, “Out of Suburbia, the Online Extremist.”

⁷⁶ U.S. District Court, Western District of Washington, *United States of America v. Ruben Luis Leon Shumpert*, June 5, 2006, http://nefafoundation.org/file/FeaturedDocs/Shumpert_LetterJudge.pdf (accessed October 22, 2011).

⁷⁷ Richard Meryhew and James Walsh, “Young men: ‘Searching for something Better,’” *Star Tribune*, September 13, 2009, <http://www.startribune.com/local/minneapolis/59087767.html?page=1&c=y> (accessed January 28, 2012).

Despite a lack of data, it is safe to assume that most of the Somali recruits were single at the time of recruitment, with the exception of Kamal Hassan and Mahamud Omar. However, some of the Somali recruits who started out single got married once they traveled to Somalia. Cabdulaahi Faarax, for example, told his friends that after he was done fighting in Somalia he traveled to Nairobi, Kenya and got married to two women.⁷⁸ Zakaria Maruf likewise boasted to his friends in conference calls that he had gotten married and had a child.⁷⁹

Although this study looks specifically at family status in terms of marital status, the definition of family status might be expanded to include whether or not a recruit comes from a single parent household. Researchers routinely portray Somali immigrant families as single parent households. In his testimony before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, Abdirahman Mukhtar stated that “Somali families tend to be large, mostly with single parents who are working to make ends meet.”⁸⁰ According to an article by NPR, “All of [the recruits] were reared by single mothers.”⁸¹ NPR’s reporting is probably an exaggeration, but no doubt many of the recruits were reared by single mothers. This had important implications for recruiting. Community informants suspect that the recruits were manipulated by charismatic male recruiters—men who spoke to the recruits with authority and acted as father figures.⁸²

⁷⁸ U.S. District Court, District of Minnesota, *United States of America v. Cabdulaahi Ahmed Faarax and Abdiweli Yassin Issse*, October 8, 2009, http://graphics8.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/us/20091124_TERROR_DOCS/faarax.pdf (accessed September 23, 2011).

⁷⁹ Elliot, “A Call to Jihad, Answered in America.”

⁸⁰ Mukhtar, *Violent Islamist Extremism*.

⁸¹ Dina Temple-Raston, “Missing Somali Teens may be Terrorist Recruits,” *NPR*, January 8, 2009, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=99919934> (accessed January 25, 2012).

⁸² Weine and others, “Community and Family Approaches to Combating the Radicalization and Recruitment of Somali-American Youth and Young Adults,” 190.

5.1.6 Criminal Record

Only 18 percent of the overall sample, two non-Somalis (Ruben Shumpert and Carlos Almonte) and four Somalis (Abdifatah Isse, Zakaria Maruf, Farah Beledi, and Abdinassir Osman), had a criminal record.

Ruben Shumpert, in a letter to U.S. District Judge Marsha Pechman, admitted that “my life has been peppered with substance abuse, crime, and hardships so severe it would have completely destroyed most people.”⁸³ Al-Shabaab released a statement on Shumpert in October 2008, part of which detailed his criminal activities. According to the statement, Shumpert “grew up in the company of narcotics rings in the state [of Washington] until he became one of the biggest drug traffickers [in the region].”⁸⁴ Carlos Almonte also had a criminal record. He was arrested for assault (twice), possession of a knife on school property, and underage drinking.⁸⁵ Troy Kastigar committed several misdemeanors, ranging from credit card fraud to driving after his license was revoked, before he left for Somalia.⁸⁶

At least four of the Somali recruits had criminal records. Zakaria Maruf was arrested for trying to steal a \$15.99 necklace at a mall and later fell in with the Hot Boyz, a violent street gang.⁸⁷ According to municipal court records, Abdifatah Isse was charged with being a minor in possession of drugs and alcohol and with issuing bad checks.⁸⁸ Farah Beledi was perhaps the most violent of the Somali offenders. In 2007, Beledi pleaded guilty to stabbing a man in the

⁸³ U.S. District Court, Western District of Washington, *United States of America v. Ruben Luis Leon Shumpert*, June 5, 2006, http://nefafoundation.org/file/FeaturedDocs/Shumpert_LetterJudge.pdf (accessed October 22, 2011).

⁸⁴ NEFA Foundation, “Shebaab al-Mujahideen Issues Biography of American Jihadist,” October 4, 2008, <http://www.nefafoundation.org/newsite/file/FeaturedDocs/somaliashebab0109.pdf> (accessed January 28, 2012).

⁸⁵ Samantha Henry, “Mohamed Mahmood Alessa, Terror Suspect, was ‘Danger’ at School,” *Huffington Post*, June 8, 2010, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/06/08/mohamed-mahmood-alessa-te_n_604113.html (accessed January 24, 2012).

⁸⁶ Laura Yuen, “Sixth Minn. Man Reportedly Dies in Somalia,” *Minnesota Public Radio News*, September 11, 2009, <http://minnesota.publicradio.org/display/web/2009/09/11/somali-death/> (accessed January 26, 2012).

⁸⁷ The New York Times, “Joining the Fight in Somalia.”

⁸⁸ Shapiro, “A Mystery of Violence.”

neck and his side during a soccer game at Central High School in St. Paul. He served more than a year in prison, and was on supervised release until May 2009.⁸⁹

5.1.7 Religious Background

Of the total sample, 21 percent of the recruits were converts to Islam. Not surprisingly, all of the converts were non-Somalis. Each of these recruits converted to Islam for different reasons. Omar Hammami grew up in a mixed-religion household—his mother took him to Perdido Baptist Church on Sundays and his father urged him to study Islam. Hammami did not know whether to be Christian or Muslim until he traveled to Damascus to visit his extended family. In Damascus, Hammami was impressed by the “cohesiveness of brotherhood” his male cousins shared and started to incline toward Islam.⁹⁰ Another recruit, Zachary Chesser, converted to Islam while playing on a soccer team organized by a member of the Islamic proselytizing group Hizb al-Tahrir.⁹¹ Ruben Shumpert was the only recruit to convert to Islam while in prison.⁹²

5.2 Psychological Variables

5.2.1 Cognitive Opening

As mentioned in the literature review, during the radicalization process individuals typically experience a cognitive opening that makes them amenable to radical ideologies. All of the recruits in this sample experienced a cognitive opening. Although identity conflict often triggers a cognitive opening, other phenomena can also act as triggers. Scholars typically cite discrimination and blocked mobility as important triggers.⁹³ Most of the recruits in this sample

⁸⁹ Yuen, “Family IDs Minn. Man Allegedly behind Somali Suicide Bombing.”

⁹⁰ Elliott, “The Jihadist Next Door.”

⁹¹ Jarret Brachman, “My Pen Pal, the Jihadist,” *Foreign Policy*, July 29, 2010, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/07/29/my_pen_pal_the_jihadist (accessed October 18, 2011).

⁹² U.S. District Court, Western District of Washington, *United States of America v. Ruben Luis Leon Shumpert*.

⁹³ Wiktorowicz, *Radical Islam Rising*, 20.

seemed to be affected by discrimination and blocked mobility to some degree. However, only the Somali recruits seemed to experience an identity conflict. Political grievances contributed to a cognitive opening for both groups of recruits. On the one hand, U.S. foreign policy seemed to be a strong trigger for the non-Somali recruits. On the other hand, the Ethiopian invasion of Somalia seemed to be a strong trigger for the Somali recruits.

Discrimination. Most of the non-Somali recruits experienced some form of religious discrimination after converting to Islam. Ruben Shumpert, in a letter to Judge Marsha Pechman, wrote: “I can’t count how many times I’ve been called Usama bin Laden. Or my wife has been told it looks like she is going to blow up.”⁹⁴ In a handwritten statement, Daniel Maldonado wrote that he left the United States because of anti-Muslim sentiment following the September 11, 2001 attacks: “[In Somalia] I would be able to live, pray, act, dress, and be a Muslim without anyone yelling at me, calling me names, refusing me jobs or apartments.”⁹⁵ Craig Baxam also complained that living an Islamic way of life in the United States was oppressive. In particular, he found the constant playing of music and the constant display of pictures disrespectful.⁹⁶

Most of the Somali recruits also experienced discrimination, although this discrimination was racial as opposed to religious. Abdirahman Mukhtar stated in his testimony before the House Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee that “Somali youth report a high level of discrimination and prejudice across the board.”⁹⁷ The story of Shirwa Ahmed is just one example of such discrimination. Ahmed tried to fit in at school but could not. His

⁹⁴ U.S. District Court, Western District of Washington, *United States of America v. Ruben Luis Leon Shumpert*.

⁹⁵ Eagle Tribune, “Terror Suspect: Anti-Muslim Bias made me leave U.S.,” February 23, 2007, <http://www.eagletribune.com/local/x1876327339/Terror-suspect-Anti-Muslim-bias-made-me-leave-U-S?page=0> (accessed January 25, 2012).

⁹⁶ U.S. District Court, District of Maryland, Southern Division, *United States of America v. Craig Benedict Baxam*, January 9, 2012, http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/1874.pdf (accessed January 26, 2012).

⁹⁷ Mukhtar, *Violent Islamist Extremism*.

African-American peers taunted him for not being “black” and told him to go back to Africa, prompting Ahmed to ask, “How can they be mad at me for looking like them? We’re from the same place.”⁹⁸ Abdinassir Osman also complained of discrimination: “Everywhere I would go, I would be treated differently because I am a Somali. I can understand if I can’t get a good job and I accept that fact as I quit school early, but even a cleaning job? It does not make sense!”⁹⁹

Abikar Mohamed recalled his experience with discrimination in similar terms. When Mohamed and his siblings got citizenship he said, “I thought I would enjoy the same treatment and rights as any other U.S. citizen, but that was never to happen.” Mohamed said it was impossible to get a job or even a scholarship to further his education after high school. “In as much as we are citizens, we are never treated equally. What is the use of granting us citizenship if they don’t treat us equally?” Mohamed explained that when he finished high school he was among the top five students. “All the rest got scholarships to go to college; most of them did not deserve because they come from rich families. I was in need and I did not get it even when it was clear I deserved the scholarship.” This incident, he said, opened his eyes to the flagrant discrimination that the system meted out to Somali-Americans and other refugee minorities.¹⁰⁰

Blocked Mobility. Many of the non-Somali recruits complained of blocked mobility. Omar Hammami, for example, and his friend Bernie Culveyhouse took inventory at Walmart dressed like Salafis with their pants tucked into their socks. Their boss tolerated their odd look, but had trouble understanding why Hammami and Culveyhouse refused to touch alcohol, pork, Christmas cards, and even dolls. Eventually, their boss assigned them to the women’s clothing section, at which point Culveyhouse said to Hammami, “Man, we can’t do anything in life, can

⁹⁸ Elliot, “A Call to Jihad, Answered in America.”

⁹⁹ Noor, “My Encounter with America-Somali Jihadist in Nairobi.”

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

we?” Unable to continue working in such an environment, Hammami and Culveyhouse quit that day.¹⁰¹

Blocked mobility seemed to produce a feeling of unfulfilled ambition among the non-Somali recruits. Omar Hammami, for example, wrote the following in August 2006: “Where is the desire to do something amazing? Where is the urge to get up and change yourself—not to mention the world and other issues further off? Stop sticking to the earth and let your soul fly!” Later, in a December 2006 e-mail message, Hammami wrote that he wanted to help his captive brothers and sisters [in Somalia] while helping himself “obtain the highest rank available” as a Muslim.¹⁰²

Carlos Almonte expressed a similar longing to do something important. In a criminal complaint, Almonte declared that any chance to wage violent jihad abroad was worth the risk, “Because what’s better than sitting back here and working like a dog and . . . being somebody’s puppy . . . than moving forward to, yanni, a life of honor, life of dignity, once Allah . . . takes your soul upon that.”¹⁰³ Ruben Shumpert also hoped to enhance his status by joining al-Shabaab. A biography of Shumpert, released by al-Shabaab in October 2008, states that Shumpert “could not accept having been so powerful prior to converting to Islam, and yet being so weak as a follower of Islam, even though he had only recently become a Muslim.”¹⁰⁴

Some of the non-Somali recruits thought joining al-Shabaab would be a chance for renewal. Troy Kastigar, for example, “was searching for something better, a better life.”¹⁰⁵ Shaker Masri, in an intercepted telephone call to his girlfriend, complained that “Life is not

¹⁰¹ Elliott, “The Jihadist Next Door.”

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ U.S. District Court, District of New Jersey, *United States of America v. Mohamed Alessa and Carlos E. Almonte*, June 4, 2010, http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/1295.pdf (accessed January 25, 2012).

¹⁰⁴ NEFA Foundation, “Shebaab al-Mujahideen Issues Biography of American Jihadist.”

¹⁰⁵ Meryhew and Walsh, “Young men: ‘Searching for something Better’.”

worth living for me. I cannot enjoy life. I have not enjoyed it since I was eighteen. I have not enjoyed life since I was a child. I lost that innocence. I need to regain it back.”¹⁰⁶

Like their non-Somali counterparts, many of the Somali recruits complained of blocked mobility. Mohamud Hassan, for example, seemed hesitant about traveling to Somalia until a close friend was shot dead outside a youth center—the fifth slaying of a young Somali in the Twin Cities that year. This seemed to be the tipping point for Hassan. “I used to think that death only happens to old people,” Hassan told his friend Ruqia Mohamed. “But he was young—my age. I guess I could die tomorrow.”¹⁰⁷ Zakaria Maruf experienced blocked mobility in a different way. Maruf’s criminal record foiled his search for a job, and then his plans for marriage were stymied. When Maruf proposed to a young woman in 2005, her parents scoffed. They did not want their daughter winding up “on welfare,” they told Maruf, who worked at Walmart.¹⁰⁸

Blocked mobility seemed to produce a feeling of unfulfilled ambition among the Somali recruits, and, by default, a desire to do something notable and become someone important. Nuno Ahmed, for example, told a journalist that “Young people like me are needed there [in Somalia] to protect our country. I can do something important over there compared to what I was doing back in the US.”¹⁰⁹ Zakaria Maruf must have envisioned himself taking on an important role within al-Shabaab before leaving Minneapolis. After arriving in Somalia, Maruf, in conference calls to his friends, boasted that he had become a governor for al-Shabaab.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ U.S. District Court, Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division, *United States of America v. Shaker Masri*, August 3, 2010, http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/1353.pdf (accessed January 25, 2012).

¹⁰⁷ Elliot, “A Call to Jihad, Answered in America.”

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Noor, “My Encounter with America-Somali Jihadist in Nairobi.”

¹¹⁰ Elliot, “A Call to Jihad, Answered in America.”

Political Grievance. U.S. foreign policy was the most significant contributor to a cognitive opening in the non-Somali recruits. A biography of Ruben Shumpert released by al-Shabaab in October 2008 states that Shumpert “became confused after seeing the injustice of the crusader forces in Muslim lands, and their massacre of Muslims. The conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq ignited the light of faith in his heart . . . He began searching for weapons and jihad.”¹¹¹ Omar Hammami had dismissed politics as a worldly distraction until one afternoon when he dropped by an Islamic bookstore and the owner, an Afghan, told them to “pray for the people of Fallujah” (the U.S. has just invaded Fallujah for the second time). Over the next few months, Hammami became consumed with the events in Iraq and Afghanistan and began to rethink his nonmilitant Salafi stance. Convinced that his Salafi mentors had been “hiding many parts of the religion that have a direct relationship to jihad and politics,” Hammami began searching for guidance on the Internet, and, in the process, discovered a documentary about the life of Amir Khattab, a legendary jihadist who fought in Chechnya. According to the documentary, Khattab gave up a life that “any young man would desire” to embrace a higher purpose. Hammami was mesmerized. Hammami’s friend, Bernie Culveyhouse, explained that “Once you’ve made that step, it’s a gateway. Once you’ve legitimized the jihad in Chechnya, you’re compelled to legitimize the jihad in other places as well.”¹¹²

For the Somali recruits, the Ethiopian invasion of December 2006 was highly significant in terms of triggering a cognitive opening. The invasion brought to the fore a lifetime of identity conflict among the Somali youth, who for the first time began to think seriously about returning to Somalia. Journalist Andrea Elliott describes the effect the invasion had on Somali youth in Minneapolis:

¹¹¹ NEFA Foundation, “Shebaab al-Mujahideen Issues Biography of American Jihadist.”

¹¹² Elliott, “The Jihadist Next Door.”

[The invasion] triggered a political awakening among young Somalis in Minneapolis. They had viewed their problems as hopelessly clan-based, but the Ethiopian campaign simplified things. Here was an external enemy against which young Somalis could unite. Spurred by a newfound sense of nationalism, college students distributed T-Shirts emblazoned with the Somali flag and held demonstrations during a frigid Minnesota winter. . . . If the Ethiopians were seen as infidel invaders, an insurgent group known as the Shabaab—‘youth,’ in Arabic—was emerging as ‘freedom fighters.’ In its online propaganda, the Shabaab conflated nationalist sentiments with religious ideology, following a tactic honed by Al Qaeda.¹¹³

Based on Elliott’s description of Somali youths’ reaction to the Ethiopian invasion, it is easy to understand why the invasion was such a pivotal moment for the recruits from Minneapolis. It seemed to resolve the Somali youths’ identity conflict once and for all—they were Somalis and they would join al-Shabaab to prove it.

Identity Conflict. Several experts point to identity conflict when discussing the radicalization of Somali youth. Many of the Somali recruits in this sample experienced an identity conflict as a result of their plight as immigrants, having to balance American culture with Somali culture. Abdirahman Mukhtar, in a testimony before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, stated that “Identity crisis and cultural conflict are a reality for Somali youth. . . . Parents expect you to keep your culture, while the American education system and way of life forces you to assimilate. . . . As a result of identity crisis and frequent challenges, many youth lose hope and start making poor choices.”¹¹⁴ Shirwa Ahmed, for example, experienced rejection at school, and at the same time faced disapproval from his relatives for mixing with “ghetto people.”¹¹⁵

Mohamud Galony, a science tutor who was friends with Shirwa Ahmed and is the uncle of another boy who left, said the root of the problem was a “crisis of belonging.” Young Somalis had been raised to honor their families’ tribes, yet felt disconnected from them. “They want to

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Mukhtar, *Violent Islamist Extremism*.

¹¹⁵ Elliot, “A Call to Jihad, Answered in America.”

belong, but who do they belong to,” said Mr. Galony.¹¹⁶ Omar Jamal, who runs a legal aid society for the Somali community in Minneapolis, says the children who came to America had to straddle two worlds. “Most of those kids are going through an identity crisis. They don’t know who to belong to.”¹¹⁷

Despite their efforts to embrace mainstream society, the Somali recruits were constantly reminded of their ethnic identity by their parents. According to Abdirahman Mukhtar, a Minneapolis youth program manager, “[Somali] parents maintain a lifestyle that essentially is like living from a suitcase, they hope to return.”¹¹⁸ Many in the Somali community refer to first generation Somali immigrants as “Starbucks dads,” because every day men gather at Starbucks to argue about the politics of their homeland. To some young Somali-Americans, the Starbucks dad is a metaphor for absent parents too mired in the affairs of their home country to pay attention to their children here.¹¹⁹

Remittances are yet another reminder to Somali youth of their ethnic heritage. In a testimony before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, Professor Ken Menkhaus of Davisdon College explained the importance of remittances for the Somali diaspora:

Remittances are by far and away the most important source of income in Somalia. . . . The diaspora keeps much of Somalia—especially households in urban areas—alive. . . . As a corollary, the Somali community is under enormous pressure to remit as much money as it can to extended family members back home. The ethical obligation to assist the extended family is absolute; a diaspora member who rejects this obligation would be renounced by his or her clan.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Temple-Raston, “Missing Somali Teens may be Terrorist Recruits.”

¹¹⁸ Mukhtar, *Violent Islamist Extremism*.

¹¹⁹ Laura Yuen, “Years after Somali men left Minn., Youth Decry Extremism,” *Minnesota Public Radio News*, November 8, 2011, <http://minnesota.publicradio.org/display/web/2011/11/08/young-minnesota-somalis-decry-extremism/> (accessed January 28, 2012).

¹²⁰ Menkhaus, *Violent Islamist Extremism*.

Based on the testimony of Professor Menkhaus, it would be safe to assume that all of the Somali recruits remained tied to Somali through remittances. Shirwa Ahmed, for example, sent half of his income to relatives in Somalia, according to his friend Nimco Ahmed.¹²¹

Due to the influence of parents and remittances, the Somali recruits all shared a desire to return to their homeland and experience it for themselves. A friend of Abdisalan Ali acknowledged that “There was a desire in all of us, that our parents always talk about, the great Somalia.”¹²² Mohamoud Hassan, like his fellow recruits, “longed to return to his homeland, both to experience it for himself and to rebuild it.” His friend Ruqia Mohamed explained that “It’s just this missing piece of us.”¹²³

5.2.2 Ideology

Out of all the recruits, 54 percent of espoused a nationalist ideology, 38 percent espoused a Salafist ideology, and 8 percent espoused both. The non-Somali recruits all used Salafist language, often in the form of virulent anti-Americanism. Craig Baxam declared that if he were living with al-Shabaab or the Taliban and the United States invaded or the host country tried to institute a democratic government he would fight against it. He also stated that he would fight to defend Sharia law if required and that his loyalties were to Islam and not to the United States.¹²⁴ Daniel Maldonado admitted that he had “no problem” killing or fighting Americans because he was angry with America, and added that he had “no problem” with the September 11, 2001 attacks. Maldonado also admitted that “if Americans came [to Somalia], I would fight them

¹²¹ Elliot, “A Call to Jihad, Answered in America.”

¹²² Kron, “American Identified as Bomber in Attack on African Union in Somalia.”

¹²³ Elliot, “A Call to Jihad, Answered in America.”

¹²⁴ U.S. District Court, District of Maryland, Southern Division, *United States of America v. Craig Benedict Baxam*.

too.”¹²⁵ Zachary Chesser, in an Internet posting cited by the FBI, recommended “desensitizing” law enforcement by planting phony bombs: “A cop might walk up to a bag that someone thought might be a bomb, so he assumes it is not. Then he bends over to open it rolling his eyes at this waste of his time. Boom! No more kaafir [unbeliever].”¹²⁶

Mohamed Alessa and Carlos Almonte were among the most violent of the non-Somali recruits. In November 2009, Alessa said the following to Almonte:

A lot of people need to get killed, bro, swear to God . . . I have to get a . . . assault rifle and just kill anyone that even looks at me the wrong way, bro. . . . my soul cannot rest until I shed blood. I wanna, like, be the world’s known terrorist. . . . You don’t worship Allah, so . . . that’s a reason for you to die. . . . Freaking Major-Nidal-shaved-face-Palestinian-crazy guy; he’s not better than me. I’ll do twice what he did.¹²⁷

Shaker Masri espoused a similar type of rhetoric. In a criminal complaint, Masri told a cooperating source that he hoped to become a martyr by wearing a suicide belt: “I will not stay idle . . . I wish to know how the explosive belt is made. . . . I will wear one and I will not take it off.” While making final preparations to travel to Somalia, Masri observed a group of four soldiers in military dress uniform and told the cooperating source that he wished he could walk up to the four men and blow himself up in their presence. In response, the cooperating source asked why Masri would want to sacrifice himself for only four targets. Masri agreed, stating it would be better if there were more, for example, if there was a bus full of soldiers upon which Masri could blow himself up as a martyr.¹²⁸

Of the Somali recruits, 82 percent were nationalist, 6 percent were Salafist, and 12 percent were both. All of the Somalis recruits were understandably distressed by the Ethiopian

¹²⁵ U.S. District Court, Southern District of Texas, *United States of America v. Daniel Joseph Maldonado*, February 13, 2007, http://www.foxnews.com/projects/pdf/Maldonado_Complaint.pdf (accessed October 12, 2011).

¹²⁶ Bahrampour, “Out of Suburbia, the Online Extremist.”

¹²⁷ U.S. District Court, District of New Jersey, *United States of America v. Mohamed Alessa and Carlos E. Almonte*.

¹²⁸ U.S. District Court, Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division, *United States of America v. Shaker Masri*.

occupation. One of the friends of the Minneapolis recruits, Ruqia Mohamed, thinks that her friends saw themselves as “freedom fighters.”¹²⁹ Statements from the recruits themselves seem to verify this point. Mohamoud Hassan, for example, wondered, “Why are we sitting around in America, doing nothing for our people.”¹³⁰ Likewise, Nuno Ahmed informed a journalist that “Young people like me are needed there to protect our country,” and Ali Mohamud told the same journalist that “My services are needed back home, to protect Somalia and Islam.”¹³¹

A few of the Somali recruits espoused Salafist sentiments. A friend of the recruits believes that, while Somali nationalism may have initially driven the recruits, their cause eventually took on a religious cast. According to the friend, the recruits became convinced that Somalia’s years of bloodshed were punishment from God for straying from Islam, and that the answer was to restore the Caliphate, or Islamic rule. “If it was just nationalism, they could give money. But religion convinced them to sacrifice their whole lives.”¹³² Somali community leader Osman Ahmed believes the recruits were told that the Ethiopian occupation was “an act of aggression against the Islamic religion.”¹³³ Judging by their religious zeal, some of the recruits apparently bought into this line of reasoning. Adan Hussein, for instance, acknowledged that “There is a chance I might never come back here and might die protecting my religion,” but admitted that “it’s a price I’m willing to pay.”¹³⁴

¹²⁹ Sasha Aslanian and Laura Yuen, “Phone Calls from Missing Somalis send Mixed Messages,” *Minnesota Public Radio News*, April 15, 2009, http://minnesota.publicradio.org/display/web/2009/04/14/friends_of_the_missing/ (accessed October 12, 2011).

¹³⁰ Elliot, “A Call to Jihad, Answered in America.”

¹³¹ Noor, “My Encounter with America-Somali Jihadist in Nairobi.”

¹³² Elliot, “A Call to Jihad, Answered in America.”

¹³³ Osman Ahmed, *Violent Islamist Extremism: Al-Shabaab Recruitment in America*, Statement before the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, House of Representatives, March 11, 2009.

¹³⁴ Noor, “My Encounter with America-Somali Jihadist in Nairobi.”

5.3 Social Variables

5.3.1 Self-Radicalized

For the purposes of this study, the categories “self-radicalized” and “group-radicalized” are mutually exclusive. Of all the recruits, only two (Amir Meshal and Craig Baxam) were self-radicalized. The rest had at least some interaction with a fellow radical.

Both Amir Meshal and Craig Baxam were radicalized completely on their own, insofar as the available data indicate. There is no evidence to suggest that Amir Meshal had any friendship or kinship ties during the radicalization process. Likewise, Craig Baxam seems to have undergone radicalization without any sort of group ties. Approximately seven to ten days before he left the U.S. Army in July 2010, Baxam converted to Islam. One evening Baxam was surfing the Internet and came across an Islamic website. After reading an article on the website about the Day of Judgment, Baxam immediately realized that Islam was the truth and converted in secret.¹³⁵ One other recruit, Shaker Masri, might have radicalized alone if not, ironically, for the influence of a cooperating source. The cooperating source went out of his/her way to develop a friendship with Masri, and was with Masri for the duration of the radicalization process.¹³⁶

5.3.2 Group-Radicalized

All of the recruits, with the aforementioned exceptions of Amir Meshal and Craig Baxam, were group-radicalized, meaning they had at least some interaction with other radicals during the radicalization process. Most of the non-Somalis met fellow radicals online, and then proceeded to fraternize with those radicals in person. When Omar Hammami moved to Egypt, for example, he joined an online discussion forum called Islamic Networking and began communicating with the administrator of the forum, an American convert who also happened to

¹³⁵ U.S. District Court, District of Maryland, Southern Division, *United States of America v. Craig Benedict Baxam*.

¹³⁶ U.S. District Court, Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division, *United States of America v. Shaker Masri*.

be living in Egypt, Daniel Maldonado. Hammami and Maldonado soon met in person and began venturing into poor neighborhoods to attend underground mosques. That summer Hammami wrote to two Muslim friends, saying he had met “a pious brother” and was planning “a trip [to Somalia].”¹³⁷

Ruben Shumpert developed a social network while in prison and maintained that network after being released. According to the sentencing memorandum, Shumpert operated the Crescent Cuts Barber Shop, which served as a casual meeting place for a group of would-be jihadists in Seattle. The group consisted of mostly African-American men with criminal histories who had converted to Islam, either in prison or after coming into contact with prison converts later. According to the FBI sources, the group often talked about militant jihad against the non-believers and about traveling overseas to fight alongside their Muslim brothers. Shumpert maintained in his computer in the barber shop several jihad motivational DVDs which he encouraged others to view.¹³⁸

All of the Somali recruits were group-radicalized. Several recruits from the first wave attempted to persuade their friends in the United States to come and join them in Somalia, communicating with them via phone calls, listservs, and Facebook. Acting as recruiters, Somalis from the first wave tried to appeal to their friends’ sense of adventure. One of the Somalis wrote to a friend on Facebook, urging him to “Bring yourself over here” to “M-town,” where the men carry “all types of guns.” Mohamoud Hassan told his friends that killing people was “an adrenaline rush,” and joked that he and his fellow jihadists compared “body counts.”¹³⁹ Zakaria

¹³⁷ Elliott, “The Jihadist Next Door.”

¹³⁸ U.S. District Court, Western District of Washington, *United States of America v. Ruben Luis Leon Shumpert*, July 18, 2006, http://nefafoundation.org/file/FeaturedDocs/U.S._v_Shumpert_SentencingMemorandum.pdf (accessed October 22, 2011).

¹³⁹ Elliott, “The Jihadist Next Door.”

Maruf also called his friends in the United States and asked them to join the fight. According to one report, Maruf's friends had trouble resisting his invitation because they looked up to him.¹⁴⁰

Certain Somalis from the first wave actually returned to the United States and tried to recruit their friends in person. According to a criminal complaint, Cabdulaahi Faarax met with his co-co-conspirators at a residential location and told them "that he experienced true brotherhood while fighting in Somalia and that travel for jihad was the best thing they could do. . . FAARAX told the co-conspirators that traveling to Somalia to fight *jihad* will be fun and not to be afraid. FAARAX also explained to his co-conspirators that they would get to shoot guns in Somalia."¹⁴¹ Muhamud Omar also returned to the United States to recruit within the Somali-American community. Having departed for Somalia in January 2008, Omar was the first member of the second wave to join al-Shabaab. Omar returned to Minnesota in April 2008, during which time he remained in contact with members of al-Shabaab. Upon his return, he assisted other Minnesotans in their departure from Minnesota to Somalia.¹⁴²

A few of the recruits explained how their friends recruited them after returning to the United States. Adan Hussein said that he and his fellow recruits attended a mosque where one of the elders kept them updated with the news coming from Somalia. "He had first-hand information about what was going on at home. He would travel to Somalia and back to the U.S. until recently when he was banned from traveling. They stopped him because he would come back and tell us how the U.S., the country we had grown up in, was helping Ethiopia to kill our

¹⁴⁰ CBS News, "Americans Lured Back to Somalia for Jihad," August 25, 2009, <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2009/08/25/national/main5264656.shtml> (accessed September 4, 2011).

¹⁴¹ U.S. District Court, District of Minnesota, *United States of America v. Cabdulaahi Ahmed Faarax and Abdiweli Yassin Issse*.

¹⁴² W. Anders Folk, *Al Shabaab: Recruitment and Radicalization within the Muslim American Community and the Threat to the Homeland*, Statement before the Committee on Homeland Security, House of Representatives, July 27, 2011, <http://homeland.house.gov/sites/homeland.house.gov/files/Testimony%20Folk.pdf> (accessed September 3, 2011).

families.”¹⁴³ Salah Osman Ahmed told a judge in July 2009 that he attended “secret meetings” in Minneapolis starting in October 2007. There, he said, a group of guys talked about returning to Somalia to fight Ethiopians.¹⁴⁴

5.3.3 Internet-Radicalized

All of the recruits were radicalized online to one degree or another. Whereas the non-Somali recruits seemed to begin the radicalization process online, the Somali recruits seemed to end the radicalization process online. On the whole, the Internet seemed to play a much larger role for the non-Somali recruits than the Somali recruits. Daniel Maldonado, for example, posted 2,500 times on the Islamic Network in less than a year, an average of eight times daily.¹⁴⁵

Mohamed Alessa and Carlos Almonte also used the Internet extensively during the radicalization process. According to the criminal complaint, in October 2006 a member of the public sent a tip through the FBI’s website concerning Alessa and Almonte, saying “[e]very time they access the Internet all they look for is all those terrorist videos about Islam holly [sic] war and where they kill US soldiers and other terrible things.” On several occasions, Alessa and Almonte listened to recordings of Anwar al-Awlaki promoting violent jihad, martyrdom, and the killing of civilians. In one of those recordings, “Constants on the Path to Jihad,” Awlaki emphasizes that one does not need a leader in order to wage violent jihad. When FBI personnel conducted a search of Almonte’s computer, they found documents authored by Osama bin

¹⁴³ Noor, “My Encounter with America-Somali Jihadist in Nairobi.”

¹⁴⁴ CBS News, “Americans Lured Back to Somalia for Jihad.”

¹⁴⁵ Houston Chronicle, “Timeline in Case against Maldonado,” February 13, 2007, <http://www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/article/Timeline-in-case-against-Maldonado-1793643.php> (accessed January 25, 2012).

Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, and others advocating violent jihad against the perceived enemies of Islam, including the United States.¹⁴⁶

The Internet was important in the radicalization process for most of the recruits, but for Zachary Chesser it was central. Jarret Brachman, a counterterrorism analyst at North Dakota State University, states that “Chesser was positioning himself as a stand-alone al Qaeda propaganda machine in the United States.”¹⁴⁷ In one interview, Chesser even bragged that “I might be mistaken, but my impression is that I was at one point operating the #1 jihadi YouTube channel in terms of daily views.”¹⁴⁸ Chesser explained in an affidavit that once he became interested in Islam he began watching online videos, discussions, and debates, and over-the-counter CDs almost obsessively. He sent several e-mails to Anwar al-Awlaki, one of his idols, and Awlaki apparently replied to two of them.¹⁴⁹ An article by the Anti-Defamation League lists the numerous sites on which Chesser was active: the 7th Century Generation forum, the al-Faloja forum, the al-Qimmah forum, the Islamic Awakening forum, the Islamic Emirate forum, the Mujahid blog, the YouTube Jihad blog, Anwar al-Awlaki’s blog, Revolution Muslim, Scribd, Facebook, Twitter, and the YouTube—AQWAHProductions Channel.¹⁵⁰

The Somali recruits were arguably less influenced by terrorist propaganda online, but they nevertheless sought out propaganda at times. Joseph Lieberman, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, confirmed that “we know [Internet] videos—some produced by al-Shabaab—are being watched in the Somali community

¹⁴⁶ U.S. District Court, District of New Jersey, *United States of America v. Mohamed Alessa and Carlos E. Almonte*.

¹⁴⁷ Brachman, “My Pen Pal, the Jihadist.”

¹⁴⁸ Bahrapour, “Out of Suburbia, the Online Extremist.”

¹⁴⁹ U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Virginia, *United States v. Zachary Adam Chesser*, July 2, 2010, http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/1343.pdf (accessed January 25, 2012).

¹⁵⁰ Anti-Defamation League, “Abu Talhah Al-Amrikee: An Extensive Online Footprint,” May 17, 2011, http://www.adl.org/main_Terrorism/abu_talhah.htm (accessed October 12, 2011).

in Minneapolis.”¹⁵¹ Mohamoud Hassan, for example, searched the Internet for jihadist videos and chat rooms, and also listened to “Constants on the Path to Jihad,” the lecture by Anwar al-Awlaki.¹⁵²

Many of Somali recruits who became suicide bombers made recruiting tapes for their friends back home before they died. An al-Shabaab radio station, for example, aired a recruiting tape by Farah Beledi, who was fatally shot in May 2011 trying to detonate his bomb vest in Mogadishu. “Brothers, come, come to jihad. You know in this world, everybody is going to die one day. Every life goes. Some people die in car accidents. Some people, you know, they die on a bed . . . Brothers, die like lions, you know, die for your religion.”¹⁵³ Al-Shabaab also posted an audio recording online of Abdisalan Ali’s suicide message in October 2011. In the recording, Ali exhorts, “Don’t just sit around, you know, and be, you know, a couch potato and just like, just chill all day. Today jihad is what is most important. It’s not important that you become a doctor, or some sort of engineer.”¹⁵⁴

5.3.4 Relative-Radicalized

Zachary Chesser was the only recruit to be influenced by a relative during the radicalization process. As it turns out, that relative was Chesser’s wife, Proscovia Nzabanita. Chesser’s wife helped distribute his online materials about *South Park* by reposting them on various social networking sites and forums. In addition, she posted her own commentary on the controversy, including one post on Facebook saying “may Allah humiliate them THE SOUTH

¹⁵¹ Lieberman, *Violent Islamist Extremism*.

¹⁵² Elliot, “A Call to Jihad, Answered in America.”

¹⁵³ U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Homeland Security, Majority Investigative Report, *Al Shabaab: Recruitment and Radicalization within the Muslim American Community and the Threat to the Homeland*.

¹⁵⁴ Kron, “American Identified as Bomber in Attack on African Union in Somalia.”

PARK CREATURES.”¹⁵⁵ Chesser’s wife eventually pled guilty to making a false statement to a special agent investigating her husband and his attempt to travel to Somalia to join al-Shabaab. Her plea agreement requires Nzabanita to leave the United States within 120 days and relinquish her legal status in the United States.¹⁵⁶

Remarkably, none of the Somali recruits were influenced by kinship ties during the radicalization process. This runs counter to previous studies on radicalization, in which kinship ties played a role, albeit a minor one. In Sageman’s study, for example, kinship played a role in the affiliation of 14 percent of the mujahedin.¹⁵⁷

5.3.5 Mosque-Radicalized

Of all the recruits, 46 percent were mosque-radicalized. Mosques featured prominently in the radicalization process for only 11 percent of the non-Somali recruits. In fact, some of the non-Somali recruits chose to withdraw from the local mosque after adopting Salafism. Daniel Maldonado, for example, chose to leave the Selimiye Mosque in Methuen, Massachusetts after leaders warned him to tone down his zealotry.¹⁵⁸ Leaders of the Islamic Center Northern Virginia in Fairfax said they were relieved when Zachary Chesser, another zealous convert, chose to leave the mosque in November 2009.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵ Anti-Defamation League, “Abu Talhah Al-Amrikee: An Extensive Online Footprint,” May 17, 2011, http://www.adl.org/main_Terrorism/abu_talhah.htm (accessed October 12, 2011). Chesser garnered national attention in April 2010 after he threatened the creators of South Park on a number of online platforms for satirizing issues surrounding the depiction of the Prophet Mohammed in an episode.

¹⁵⁶ FBI, “Wife of Zachary Chesser Pleads Guilty to Making False Statement,” November 8, 2010, <http://www.fbi.gov/washingtondc/press-releases/2010/wfo110810b.htm> (accessed January 6, 2012).

¹⁵⁷ Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, 112.

¹⁵⁸ Eagle Tribune, “Terror Suspect: Anti-Muslim Bias made me leave U.S.”

¹⁵⁹ Bahrapour, “Out of Suburbia, the Online Extremist.”

Of the Somali recruits, 65 percent were radicalized in mosques. Abdifatah Isse reportedly indicated that he was recruited “at a house of worship” to fight in Somalia.¹⁶⁰ Cabdulaahi Faarax and others met at a mosque in the fall of 2007 to call a co-conspirator in Somalia.¹⁶¹ Likewise, Omer Mohamed attended meetings at a Minneapolis mosque where he and his co-conspirators formed a secret plan for Somali men residing in Minneapolis to travel to Somali to fight.¹⁶² Not all of the Somali recruits were mosque-radicalized. Adan Hussein, for example, denied that he and his fellow recruits had been brainwashed by elders at the mosque.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Anti-Defamation League, “Two Somali American Terror Suspects Indicted in Minneapolis,” July 20, 2009, http://www.adl.org/main_Terrorism/terror_suspects_indicted_minneapolis.htm (accessed October 12, 2011).

¹⁶¹ U.S. District Court, District of Minnesota, *United States of America v. Cabdulaahi Ahmed Faarax and Abdiweli Yassin Issse*.

¹⁶² FBI, “Minneapolis Man Pleads Guilty to Terrorism Offense,” July 18, 2011, <http://www.fbi.gov/minneapolis/press-releases/2011/minneapolis-man-pleads-guilty-to-terrorism-offense> (accessed February 17, 2012).

¹⁶³ Noor, “My Encounter with America-Somali Jihadist in Nairobi.”

6. CAUSAL FLOW DIAGRAMS

Causal flow diagramming is a technique for visualizing complex cause-and-effect relationships. In this study, causal flow diagramming will be used to visualize the radicalization processes for two groups of al-Shabaab recruits: non-Somalis and Somalis. The first step in causal flow diagramming is to identify major factors in a cause-and-effect system. In the results section, the author identified the major factors contributing to radicalization for non-Somalis and Somalis. With the major factors identified, the next step is to identify cause-and-effect relationships among the factors. Table 6.1 and table 6.2 show the cause-and-effect relationships among the most important factors in the radicalization process for non-Somalis and Somalis, respectively.

Table 6.1: Causal and Affected Factors for Non-Somalis

Causal Factor		Affected Factor
Non-immigrant community	➔	Salafist propaganda online
Salafist propaganda online	➔	Adoption of Salafism
Adoption of Salafism	➔	Conversion
Conversion	➔	Increased religiosity
Increased religiosity	➔	Discrimination
Discrimination	➔	Blocked mobility
Blocked mobility	➔	Unfulfilled ambition
Unfulfilled ambition	➔	Quit job/drop out of school
Quit job/drop out of school	➔	Political grievances
Political grievances	➔	Cognitive opening
Cognitive opening	➔	Virulent anti-Americanism
Virulent anti-Americanism	➔	Extremist social media
Extremist social media	➔	Travel to Somalia alone

Table 6.2: Causal and Affected Factors for Somalis

Causal Factor		Affected Factor
Immigrant community	➔	Attempts to assimilate
Attempts to assimilate	➔	Discrimination
Discrimination	➔	Blocked mobility
Blocked mobility	➔	Unfulfilled ambition
Unfulfilled ambition	➔	Identity conflict
Identity conflict	➔	Cognitive opening
Cognitive opening	➔	Interest in remigration
Interest in remigration	➔	Secret group meetings
Secret group meetings	➔	Increased religiosity
Increased religiosity	➔	Isolation
Isolation	➔	Travel to Somalia in groups

The third step in causal flow diagramming is to characterize the cause-and-effect relationships as direct or inverse. Unfortunately, the literature on radicalization rarely addresses the issue of deradicalization among terrorist recruits, making it difficult to find any inverse relationships that might exist. An inverse relationship might exist between certain Somali recruits' aversion to violence and their hesitancy to travel to Somalia. However, any information on this aversion to violence, and other deradicalization factors for that matter, are circumstantial at best. Regardless of whether relationships can be characterized as direct or inverse, causal flow diagrams can still be developed. The causal flow diagrams in this study display four types of lines: bolded, normal, dashed, and colored. Bolded lines represent the primary radicalization pathway, normal lines represent secondary radicalization pathways, dashed lines represent radicalization inputs, and colored lines represent feedback loops.

6.1 Non-Somalis

The causal flow diagram for the non-Somali recruits is depicted in Figure 6.1.

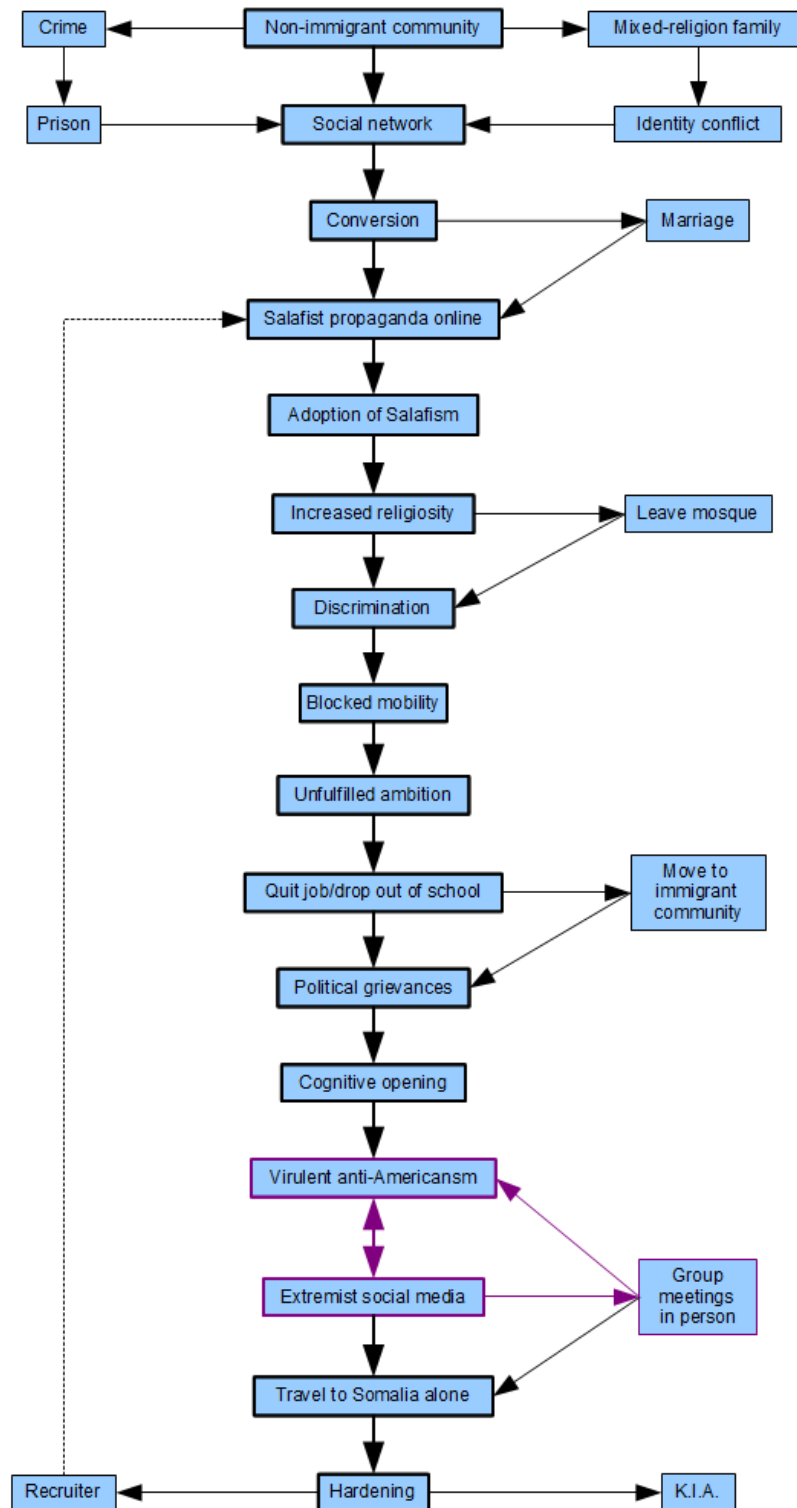


Figure 6.1: Causal Flow Diagram for Non-Somalis

Almost every non-Somali recruit begins the radicalization process in a non-immigrant community. At some point the individual is introduced to an Islamic, though not necessarily a radical, social network. Introduction to an Islamic social network typically happens through friendship ties, although it may also happen through kinship ties or prison ties. Once the individual is introduced to an Islamic social network, newfound feelings of acceptance, camaraderie, and brotherhood induce the individual to convert to Islam. Marriage into the Islamic social network often follows conversion.

After converting to Islam, the individual endeavors to follow the tenants of Islam zealously. However, over time orthodox Islam fails to meet the individual's religious needs, and, as a result, individual turns to the Internet in search of a more rigorous version of Islam. While on the Internet, the individual discovers Salafist propaganda, which the individual begins to devour obsessively. With enough exposure, the individual becomes convinced that Salafism is the purest expression of Islam. Thereafter the individual commits to Salafism whole-heartedly, adopting Salafist dress, appearance, and rhetoric. Inevitably, this outward display of religiosity brings discrimination upon the individual from the mainstream society. In certain instances, the individual's fanaticism even creates conflict with the individual's local spiritual leaders.

Maintaining a Salafist lifestyle in the United States proves extremely difficult for the individual. In most cases, a Salafist lifestyle makes it difficult for the individual to hold down a job and focus on scholastic endeavors. His professional and academic progress stymied, the individual realizes he cannot function in secular society anymore, and promptly quits his job and drops out of school to dedicate himself to the pursuit of Salafism full-time. Sometimes the individual even moves to an immigrant community to live closer to fellow Salafists. In any case, at this stage the individual begins to look at Salafism for the first time through a political lens.

Embittered by his recent series of setbacks, the individual becomes convinced that American society is the source of all his problems. The individual begins to identify with the suffering of the global *ummah*, especially those Muslims in Iraq and Afghanistan who oppressed by their American occupiers. This political grievance triggers a cognitive opening, allowing the individual to countenance violent Salafism for the first time. If American society is intrinsically opposed to Islam, the individual reasons, then American society must be destroyed.

Not surprisingly, the individual becomes virulently anti-American at this point. With a politically-charged mindset and growing angst, the individual joins social networking forums online to meet other extremists. Sometimes the individual arranges face-to-face meetings with these extremists. Whatever the case, conversations with other extremists ultimately persuade the individual that *jihad* is the only way to right the injustices heaped upon Muslims by the United States. When the individual learns that al-Shabaab is on the verge of creating a true Islamic state in Somalia, he concludes that al-Shabaab is at the vanguard of the Salafist movement and, hence, an organization worthy of his support. As furtively as possible, the individual travels to Somalia by himself and attempts to join al-Shabaab. If the individual is lucky, he survives long enough to become a recruiter for al-Shabaab, in which capacity the individual develops Salafist propaganda for other potential jihadists in the United States to view online.

6.2 Somalis

The radicalization process for Somalis is altogether different than the radicalization process for non-Somalis, as the following causal diagram demonstrates (see figure 6.2).

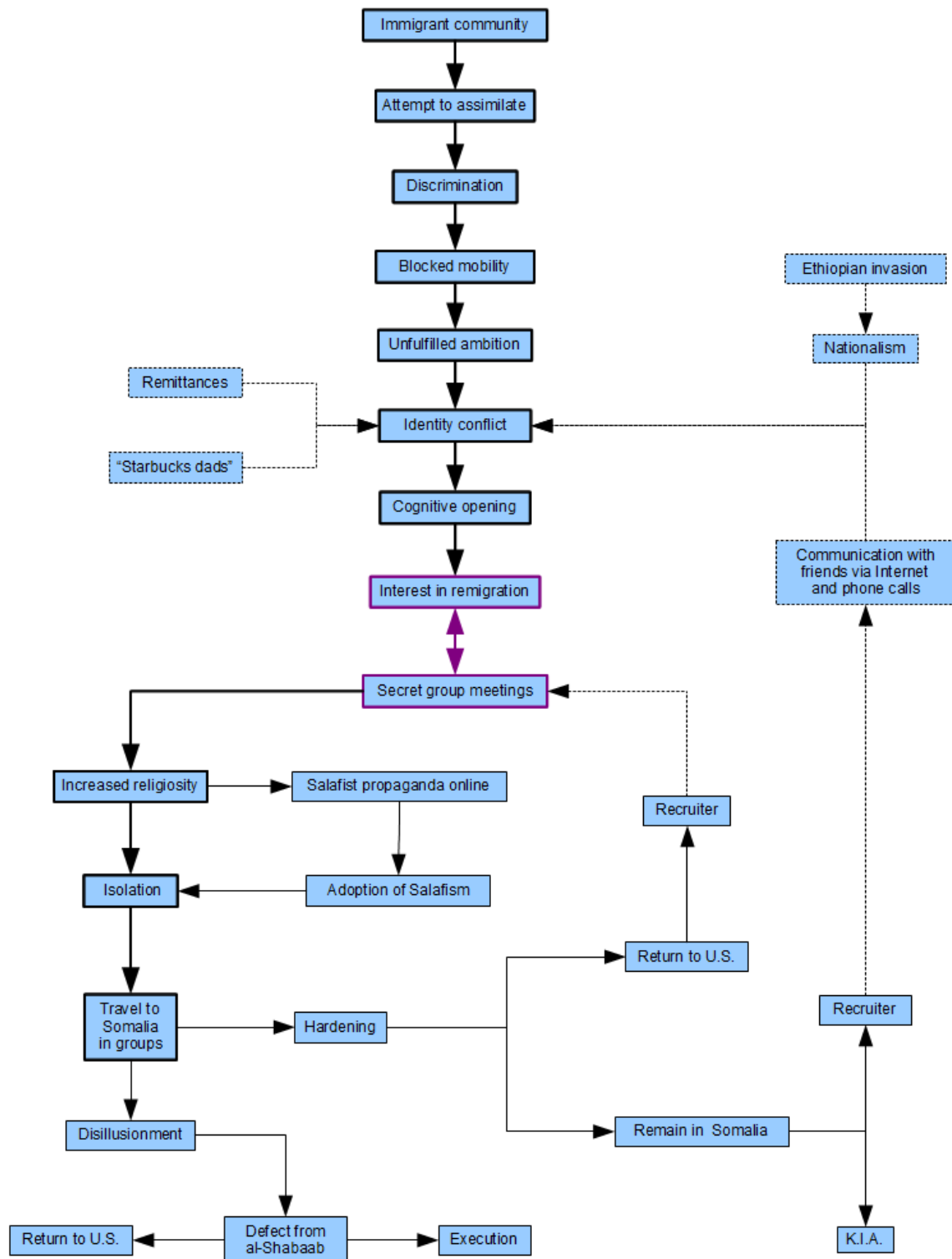


Figure 6.2: Causal Flow Diagram for Somalis

Unlike their non-Somali counterparts, the Somalis recruits start out in immigrant communities. In their communities, the Somali youth attempt to blend into mainstream society, imitating American behavior and dress while avoiding drugs, gangs, and the more unsavory aspects of the urban experience. Despite their earnest attempts to fit in, the Somali youth face routine discrimination from their peers. Nevertheless, many of the youth perform well in high school and make it to college, all the while working odd jobs to support their families. Eventually, however, the youth grow tired of what they perceive to be a stagnant situation and they develop a desire to do something more meaningful with their lives.

At this point the youth are primed to experience an identity conflict. Although they appear to be headed in the right direction academically and professionally, the youth continuously struggle to balance their Somali identity with their American identity. On the one hand, the youth are constantly reminded of their Somali heritage: their parents incessantly discuss Somali affairs, and, on a regular basis, the youth send remittances back to distant relatives in Somalia. On the other hand, the youth are constantly treated like outsiders at school and at work, despite the fact that they have lived most of their lives in the United States.

Unbeknownst to the youth, a solution to their identity conflict is at hand. In December 2006, news of the Ethiopian invasion spreads rapidly throughout the community, and, in an instant, the youths' ethnic identity becomes supremely relevant. Spurred by deep-seated nationalism, the youth feel an overwhelming urge to return to Somalia and liberate their country. The thought of traveling to Somalia as freedom fighters makes the youth feel important for the first time in their lives. Having spent most of their lives hearing about Somalia, the youth now have a chance to experience it first-hand and to reshape their country's destiny. At once the youth begin meeting secretly in groups to discuss what should be done. Together, the youth

convince themselves that the Ethiopian invasion is not just an attack on the government, but an assault on Islam as well. By default, the youths' mission to repel the Ethiopians now becomes a mission to install an Islamic government as well. As the recruits prepare to save their homeland and Islam, they become increasingly religious and withdraw from society. Many of the youth seek out Salafist propaganda to reassure themselves that their cause is just.

Eventually the youth persuade themselves that al-Shabaab is a legitimate organization and that the pursuit of *jihad* is a worthy goal. They arrange to travel to Somalia in groups, relying on peer support to maintain their enthusiasm. After arriving in Somalia, some of the youth discover their romanticized vision of al-Shabaab does not match reality. These youth became disillusioned and attempt to flee. Some escape and make it back to the United States, while some fail and are executed for betrayal. For other youth, al-Shabaab becomes the perfect vehicle for self-expression and a source of fulfillment. Some of these youth choose to stay in Somalia and fight, communicating regularly with their friends in the United States through Facebook, phone calls, and listservs. Others return to the United States as recruiters for successive waves of Somali recruits.

7. FEEDBACK LOOPS

Feedback loops, in which two or more factors are linked circularly, are the most powerful force in a causal flow diagram. The author identified two feedback loops for non-Somalis and one for Somalis. The first feedback loop for non-Somalis is between “virulent anti-Americanism” and “extremist social media” (see figure 7.1).

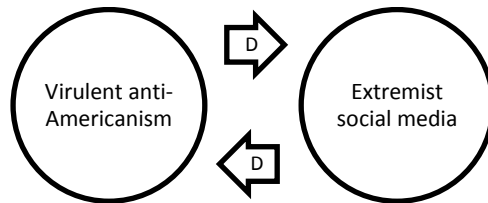


Figure 7.1: Feedback Loop for Non-Somalis

Strong anti-American sentiments motivated the non-Somali recruits to participate in extremist forums online, and the jihadist dialogue in these forums intensified feelings of anti-Americanism. The second feedback loop is between “virulent anti-Americanism,” “extremist social media,” and “group meetings in person” (see figure 7.2).

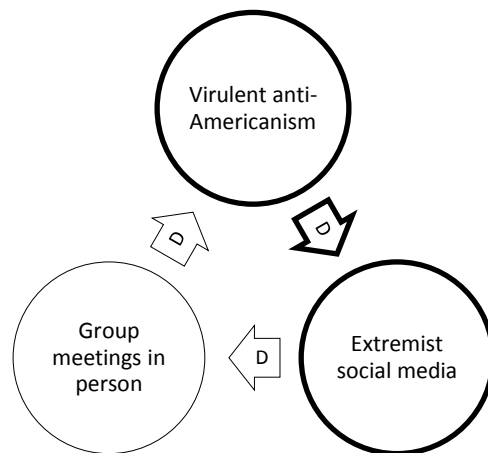


Figure 7.2: Feedback Loop for Non-Somalis

As explained earlier, strong anti-Americanism sentiments motivated the non-Somali recruits to participate in extremist forums online. Sometimes the non-Somali recruits arranged for face-to-

face meetings with their jihadist cyber friends. The result of these meetings was an even greater hatred of America.

The only feedback loop for Somalis is between “secret group meetings” and “interest in remigration” (see figure 7.3).

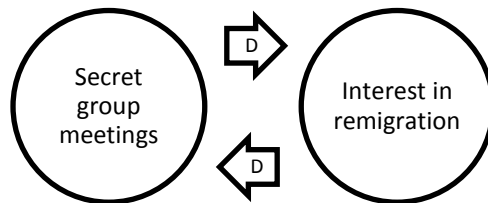


Figure 7.3: Feedback Loop for Somalis

During secret group meetings, the Somali youth discussed the possibility of fighting the Ethiopians, which naturally increased their interest in returning to Somalia. This interest in remigration led to further group meetings in which the youth cemented their resolve to return to Somalia and made the necessary arrangements to do so.

8. DISCUSSION

Taken together, the calculated percentages, causal flow diagrams, and feedback loops reveal two distinct radicalization processes: one for non-Somalis and one for Somalis. An individual's ethnicity largely determined whether the individual would be radicalized within an immigrant community or not, and place of recruitment largely dictated which radicalization pathway the individual would follow. Certain variables that were important in one radicalization pathway were not important in the other, and vice versa.

The educational attainment of the Somali recruits was much higher than expected. The author hypothesized that the Somali recruits, on average, would have no more than a high school education. Ignorance, the author assumed, would make the Somali youth vulnerable to radicalization. Results showed, however, that a much higher percentage of Somalis than expected (47 percent) attended college. This percentage is perplexing because the Somali immigrant community as a whole is notoriously undereducated. The Somali youths' above-average educational attainment refutes any argument that they were brainwashed or that they blindly decided to travel to Somalia for *jihad*. Even so, the decision to wage *jihad* was no doubt an emotional one, as it was made during an epoch of frenzied nationalism. Nationalistic fervor seemed to override the moderating influence of a college education.

Just as more Somali recruits were college-educated than expected, more Somali recruits were also employed than expected. The author hypothesized that a majority of the Somali recruits would be unemployed, and, as a result, that they would be searching for a purpose in life. However, the percentage of Somalis who were unemployed at the time of recruitment was much lower than expected (14 percent). Considering the widespread poverty among Somali immigrant community, this result is again perplexing. Although the Somali recruits did develop perceptions

of blocked mobility and unfulfilled ambition, the source of these perceptions turned out to be discrimination rather than unemployment. Still, most of the Somali recruits were students with either unskilled or semiskilled jobs. Since these jobs were neither high-paying nor permanent, the Somali recruits seemed perfectly willing to quit when a more fulfilling job opportunity arose (i.e., the opportunity to defend their homeland).

Family status was an important variable for the non-Somali recruits, 50 percent of whom were married.¹⁶⁴ Despite the fact that half of the non-Somali recruits were married, it is unclear how marriage affected their radicalization process, except in the case of Zachary Chesser and his wife. The causal flow diagram for the non-Somali recruits reveals that those who married did so after converting to Islam. In every case, the recruit's wife was not nearly as radical as the recruit himself, as demonstrated by the fact that all the married recruits traveled, or at least attempted to travel, to Somalia alone. However, wives probably gave their husbands valuable emotional support throughout the radicalization process.

Criminality did not play a significant role in the radicalization process for the sample as a whole. Although some recruits compiled a criminal record, this was the exception rather than the rule. Moreover, simply having a criminal record did not appear to affect the radicalization process to any significant degree. Crime only affected the radicalization process in situations where it led to prison and association with Islamic social networks inside prison.

Religious background and ideology were immensely important in distinguishing the non-Somali recruits from the Somali recruits. Eighty-nine percent of the non-Somali recruits were converts to Islam, and all of them exposed a Salafist ideology. In contrast, none of the Somali recruits were converts, and only 18 percent of them espoused a Salafist ideology. These results

¹⁶⁴ Unfortunately, a lack of data made it difficult to determine if family status was a significant variable for the Somali recruits. Additional data would more than likely reveal that most of the Somali recruits were single.

confirm author's hypothesis that the non-Somali recruits would be motivated primarily by Salafism and that the Somali recruits would be motivated primarily by nationalism. Based on the fact that all of the non-Somali recruits adopted Salafism after converting to Islam, the author believes that there is a powerful link between religious background and ideology. Simply stated, converts to Islam tend to grow more extreme in their views than individuals who have been Muslims all their life. Many of the Somali recruits grew disillusioned with al-Shabaab after joining, but all of the non-Somali recruits became more extreme in their views. Jihad Mostapha and Omar Hammami, for example, went on to become key leaders within the organization.

Date of departure to Somalia ended up being significant, as hypothesized, for the Somali recruits, all of whom left for Somalia after the Ethiopian invasion of December 2006. From a psychological perspective, this makes sense. The Ethiopian invasion brought out the identity conflict that had been festering inside the Somali youth ever since their migration to the United States. For the non-Somali recruits, the insurgency in Somalia was not significant from a cultural perspective, but rather from a religious perspective. Somalia seemed to be on the verge of becoming a pure Islamic state, and that was enough to entice the recent Muslim convert who wanted to practice Salafism without opposition from mainstream society. When the non-Somali recruit left for Somalia was not important, as long as the recruit made it Somalia at some point.

In line with the author's hypothesis, the vast majority of the recruits were radicalized in groups. The nature of these groups depended on which radicalization pathway the recruits followed. While the non-Somali recruits forged friendship ties with other extremists online, the Somali recruits turned to preexisting social networks within their community. Peer encouragement ultimately persuaded the both sets of recruits that al-Shabaab was a legitimate organization and that its cause was just. The Somali recruits were fortunate in that recruiters

made all the logistical arrangements for their travel to Somalia, whereas the non-Somali recruits had to purchase tickets and fly to Somalia on their own. The results of this study are in line with social networking and social movement theory, which emphasize the importance of social bonds during the radicalization process.

It should come as no surprise that the Internet facilitated radicalization for every single recruit in the sample. Depending on their radicalization pathway, recruits used the Internet in different ways and at different times. For example, after converting to Islam, all of the non-Somali recruits took advantage of passive Internet systems (i.e., reading, listening to, and watching Salafist propaganda online).¹⁶⁵ Only when the non-Somali recruits transitioned from peaceful Salafism to violent Salafism did they turn to active Internet systems—Facebook, Twitter, forums, blogs, and so forth—to communicate with fellow extremists.

The Internet played a different role in the radicalization process for Somalis. The Somali recruits first began using active Internet systems—mostly Facebook—as a means to communicate with friends who had already joined al-Shabaab overseas. Through Facebook posts, Somali recruits overseas tried to persuade their friends back home that *jihad* was exciting and rewarding, thus appealing to their sense of adventure and their need for fulfillment in life. Later on, as the Somali recruits became more religious, some of them turned to passive Internet systems to explore Salafist propaganda. As the foregoing explanation demonstrates, the Somali recruits went from active to passive Internet systems, while their non-Somali counterparts did the opposite.

¹⁶⁵ The non-Somalis refer, in particular, to the videos of Omar Hammami and the lectures of Anwar al-Awlaki as major sources of inspiration online.

9. CONCLUSION

This study examined the radicalization process for al-Shabaab's American recruits. Since 2005, 41 Americans have left the United States to join al-Shabaab for *jihad* in Somalia. While most of these recruits are second-generation Somali-Americans, a substantial proportion are native-born Americans. Although these two groups of Americans ended up in the same place with the same terrorist organization, their pathways for getting there were vastly different. Any policy intended to combat al-Shabaab radicalization in the United States should take into account the radicalization processes for both groups of recruits.

9.1 Implications

Even though this study was limited to al-Shabaab recruitment in the United States, it still has broader implications for terrorist recruiting elsewhere. First, recruits from diaspora communities in general undergo a specialized process of radicalization, the crux of which is an identity conflict. Immigrant youth are caught between two worlds: on the one hand discrimination pushes them away from the host society, and on the other hand nationalism pulls them toward their homeland. Ethno-nationalist terrorist organizations target diaspora communities, knowing that individuals in these communities are struggling to find their identity. These organizations present vulnerable individuals with an alternative identity, one that will make them feel important and give them a purpose in life.

Another implication of the study has to do with the broader issue of terrorist recruiting in the United States. Al-Shabaab's successful recruitment of American citizens proves that the United States is on the same trajectory as Europe. In the past, counterterrorism officials assumed that immigrant communities in the United States were more assimilated than immigrant communities in Europe and therefore immune to radicalization, but al-Shabaab's recruiting

triumph has effectively dispelled that myth. Al-Shabaab's success speaks volumes about the assimilation status of immigrant communities in the United States and the power of the Internet as a recruiting tool. As one of the leading terrorist organizations in terms of online propaganda, al-Shabaab has discovered the secret to attracting recruits from overseas diaspora communities.

Causal flow diagrams like the ones depicted in this study can be beneficial to policymakers who prefer to visualize the radicalization process before deciding where to intervene. By examining the relative importance of each factor in a causal flow diagram, policymakers can determine at which stage(s) counterradicalization measures would be most effective. For example, analysis of the causal flow diagram for Somali-Americans suggests that efforts to mitigate radicalization within this community should start at the discrimination stage. If policymakers work to combat discrimination of Somalis when they are young, those Somalis will be less likely to experience a massive identity conflict as they mature.

9.2 Limitations

One of the limitations of this study was a lack of data regarding individual motivations for joining al-Shabaab. News articles, legal documents, and congressional hearings provided extensive biographical information, but very little information on individual recruits' thought processes. Obviously, such information is critical for assessing the psychological components of radicalization. Perhaps the only way to obtain such personalized information would be to conduct interviews with the recruits themselves. However, due to financial and time constraints, such interviews were not feasible. Scholars looking to expand research on this topic, or one similar to it, would be wise to arrange interviews with recruits to garner information from them regarding their motivations for participating in terrorism.

Another limitation for this study was the small sample size. Previous studies on radicalization gather data on hundreds of recruits, yet this study was restricted to a mere 41 recruits. Such a limited sample size made it difficult to detect patterns and develop models to explain radicalization. A larger sample size might reveal inaccuracies in the author's causal flow diagrams, or at least help the author to further refine the diagrams. One possible avenue for future research would be to expand the sample size to include al-Shabaab recruits in diaspora communities throughout the world, not just those in the United States.

Despite the limitations of this study, the results of this study are at least sufficient to warn counterterrorism officials and policymakers that terrorist recruiting within the United States is taking place at an increased rate. Other immigrant communities, in addition to the Somali immigrant community, might be vulnerable to terrorist recruitment in the future. This study also provides evidence of the trend toward online radicalization. The Internet, in particular social media, is playing an increasingly vital role in the radicalization process. Counterterrorism officials and policymakers should dedicate additional resources toward improving relations with immigrant communities and toward combatting extremism online.

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APPENDIX

Al-Shabaab's American Recruits

Name	Alias	Date of Departure
Jehad Serwan Mostafa	Ahmed, Emir Anwar, Anwar	2005
Omar Shafik Hammami	Abu Mansoor al-Amriki	2006, November
Ruben Luis Leon Shumpert	Amir Abdul Muhaimin	2006, November
Amir Mohamed Meshal		2006, December
Daniel Joseph Maldonado	Daniel al-Jughaifi	2006, December
Cabdulaahi Ahmed Faarax	Adaki, Maradadi, Smiley, Hayakallah	2007
		2009, October 5
Omar Mohamad		2007
Dahir Gurey		2007, October 30
		2010
Shirwa Ahmed		2007, December 4
Kamal Said Hassan	Abshir	2007, December 6
Salah Osman Ahmed	Salman	2007, December 6
Abdifatah Yusuf Isse	Omar	2007, December 8
Ahmed Ali Omar	Mustafa	2007, December 8
Umar Muhammad Jama		2007, December 8
Khalid Mohamud Abshir	Abdul, Abdullah	2007, December 12
Mahamud Said Omar		2008, January
Zakaria Maruf	Abu Muslim	2008, February 23
Mustafa Ali Salat		2008, August 2
Mohamed Abdullahi Hassan	Miski	2008, August 2
Abdikadir Ali Abdi		2008, November 3
Jamal Sheikh Bana		2008, November 3
Troy Matthew Kastigar	Abdirahman	2008, November 3
Abdisalan Hussein Ali	Bullethead	2008, November 4
Burhan Hussein Hassan	Little Bashir	2008, November 4
Mohamoud Hassan	Bashir Maxamed Caydid	2008, November 4
Abdiweli Yassin Isse	Farhan, Walaalo	2009, October 5
Farah Mohamed Beledi	Bloody, Asadullah, Ghetto	2009, October 5
Zachary Adam Chesser	Abu Talhah al-Amriki	2009, November
		2010, July 10
Carlos Eduardo Almonte		2010, June 5
Mohamed Mahmood Alessa		2010, June 5
Shaker Masri		2010, August
Abdinassir Osman		2011, June 27
Abdirahman Gullet		2011, June 27
Abikar Mohamed		2011, June 27
Adan Hussein		2011, June 27
Ali Mohamud		2011, June 27
Nuno Ahmed		2011, June 27
Craig Benedict Baxam		2011, December 20
Abdirashid Omar		?
Abu Muslim		?
Abu Yaxye		?

CIRRICULUM VITA

Matthew W. Richardson enrolled at Brigham Young University in September 2002. While pursuing his bachelor's degree, Matthew interned at BAE Systems, Inc. in 2008 and completed an Arabic language study abroad in Amman, Jordan in 2009. Matthew graduated from Brigham Young University in August 2009 with a bachelor's degree in geography (geospatial intelligence emphasis) and a minor in Arabic. In August 2010, Matthew began the Intelligence and National Security Studies master's program at the University of Texas at El Paso. While pursuing his master's degree, Matthew interned at the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research in 2011.

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