

SANITIZED COPY — ALL EMBEDDED OBJECTS, SCRIPTS, AND NON-CONTENT STREAMS REMOVED

■ PRIVILEGED & CONFIDENTIAL — FORENSIC RESEARCH WORK PRODUCT ■

PROHIBITED: Google (all), Microsoft cloud, OneDrive, iCloud, Dropbox, any third-party cloud

APPROVED STORAGE: Encrypted local drive only | TRANSMISSION: ProtonMail / Signal

What NIJ Research Tells Us About Domestic Terrorism

Steven Chermak, Matthew DeMichele, Jeff Gruenewald, Michael Jensen, Raven Lewis, and Basia E. Lopez

NIJ Journal | Issue No. 285 | June 2024

File Provenance & Verification

URLs in this document appear in the reference section only (pages 10–13) — plain text citations, not hyperlinks or embedded actions. XMP metadata in the binary contains standard Adobe/W3C namespace URIs and one Shutterstock image license URL — all benign.

Field	Value
Filename	What NIJ Research Tells Us About Domestic Terrorism.pdf
File Size	247,634 bytes (242 KB)
PDF Version	1.7
Page Count	13
Creation Date	2025-09-28 19:41:04 (PDFium — no timezone offset)
Creator / Producer	PDFium
Hybrid Analysis URL	https://hybrid-analysis.com/sample/6bb50a9d9890fbd39b918cb4853b500452e9afb56b4b5655c5e56e71d888a03f/6
SHA-256	6bb50a9d9890fbd39b918cb4853b500452e9afb56b4b5655c5e56e71d888a03f
Embedded hyperlinks/annotations	NONE — no clickable links or URI action objects
In-text URLs	Reference citations only, pages 10–13 (nij.ojp.gov, doi.org, ojp.gov, start.umd.edu, dhs.gov, jstor.org)
Sanitized by	Allison Critten Disinfo Forensics 2026-04-21

Overview

NIJ-funded research projects have led to a better understanding of the processes that result in violent action, factors that increase the risk of radicalizing to violence, and how best to prevent and respond to violent extremism. Militant, nationalistic, white supremacist violent extremism has increased in the United States. The number of far-right extremists involved in violence has also increased, and these individuals tend to commit more lethal acts of violence than left-wing extremists.

One of the More Common Conclusions: Characteristics of U.S. Extremists

One of the more common strategies, criminal justice policy, and community-based prevention programming. conclusions of recent research The Characteristics of U.S. Extremists on radicalization is that no single and Individuals Who Commit Hate Crimes profile accurately captures Over the past two decades, research that seeks to the characteristics of the understand individual-level engagement in violent individuals who commit extremism has grown tremendously. However, as the research field has developed, a gap has emerged extremist and hate crimes. between the increasingly sophisticated arguments that scholars use to explain extremism and the availability of data to test, refine, and validate theories of radicalization. The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) has played a unique role in the evolving literature on terrorism and In 2012, NIJ funded the Empirical Assessment of violent extremism. NIJ has promoted the development Domestic Radicalization project to address the data of comprehensive terrorism databases to help inform gap in radicalization research.⁶ The project created the criminal justice responses to terrorism, address Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States the risk of terrorism to potential targets, examine (PIRUS) database, a cross-ideological repository of the links between terrorism and other crimes, and information on the characteristics of U.S. extremists. study the organizational, structural, and cultural In 2017, NIJ supported a follow-on project⁷ that dynamics of terrorism. In 2012, the U.S. Congress sought to replicate the PIRUS data for individuals requested that NIJ build on these focal points by in the United States who commit hate crimes. This funding “research targeted toward developing a project yielded the Bias Incidents and Actors Study better understanding of the domestic radicalization (BIAS) dataset, the first data resource for researchers phenomenon and advancing evidence-based and practitioners interested in understanding the risk strategies for effective intervention and prevention.”⁵ and protective factors associated with committing NIJ has since funded more than 50 research projects hate crimes. on domestic radicalization, which have led to a better understanding of the processes that result in violent PIRUS and BIAS are designed to provide users with action, factors that increase the risk of radicalizing information on a wide range of factors that can play to violence, and how best to prevent and respond to a role in a person’s radicalization to criminal activity.⁸ violent extremism. These risk and protective factors can be divided into four domains:⁹ This article discusses the findings of several NIJ- supported domestic radicalization studies that

- The situational characteristics of the crimes,

cover a range of individual and network-centered including whether the acts were premeditated or risk and protective factors that affect radicalization spontaneous, involved co-conspirators, or were processes, including military involvement and online committed while under the influence of drugs environments. The article also explores factors that and alcohol. shape the longevity of radicalization processes and their variation by group structure and crime type, and • The characteristics of the victims, including examines factors that affect pathways away from whether targets were “hard” (for example, military domestic extremism. It concludes with a discussion bases, secure facilities) or “soft” (for example, of how these findings can inform terrorism prevention businesses, public areas, private civilians) and National Institute of Justice | NIJ.ojp.gov

Factors Shaping Radicalization

whether the individuals had prior relationships with or sub-ideological movement, and nearly 15% of the their victims. individuals in BIAS selected the victims of their hate crimes because of multiple identity characteristics,

- Factors that produce the social bonds that may

such as race and sexual orientation.¹² protect against mobilization to violence, such as marriage, military service, work experience, and Diversity in Behaviors advanced education. Although radicalization to violence has been a primary

- Factors that may act as radicalization mechanisms

topic in extremism and hate crime research, the and risk factors for violence, such as previous PIRUS and BIAS data indicate that U.S. extremists and criminal activity, membership in extremist or hate individuals who commit hate crimes often engage in groups, substance use, and mental illness. a range of violent and nonviolent criminal activities. Indeed, 42% of PIRUS and nearly 30% of BIAS The PIRUS and BIAS data have been used to generate individual actors engaged exclusively in nonviolent insights on a range of important topics related to crimes, such as property damage, financial schemes, hate crime and extremism; however, there are three and illegal demonstrations.¹³ Moreover, the violent overarching findings common to both datasets: outcomes represented in the PIRUS and BIAS data diversity in beliefs, diversity in behaviors, and diversity vary in scope and type. For instance, approximately in characteristics. 15% of those in BIAS committed or planned to commit mass casualty crimes, while the remaining subjects Diversity in Beliefs targeted specific victims.¹⁴ Similarly, nearly 50% of Although it is not uncommon for a particular ideology those in BIAS did not premeditate their crimes but to dominate the public discourse around extremism, rather acted spontaneously after chance encounters the PIRUS and BIAS data indicate that U.S. extremists with their victims.¹⁵ and individuals who commit hate crimes routinely come from across the ideological spectrum, including Diversity in Characteristics far-right, far-left, Islamist, or single-issue ideologies. One of the more common conclusions of recent These ideologies break down into particular research on radicalization is that no single profile movements, or sub-ideologies. For instance, in 2018, accurately captures the characteristics of the the PIRUS data identified extremists associated individuals who commit extremist and hate crimes.¹⁶ with several anti-government movements, Second The PIRUS and BIAS data support this finding, Amendment militias, the sovereign citizen movement, revealing that background characteristics vary white supremacy, ecoterrorism, anarchism, the anti- considerably depending on ideological affiliations. abortion movement, the QAnon conspiracy theory, and For instance, white supremacists in PIRUS tend others.¹⁰ The prevalence of particular movements can to be older and less well-educated and are more ebb and flow over time depending on political climate likely to have criminal histories than those who and law enforcement priorities, but at no point in were inspired by foreign terrorist groups, such as recent U.S. history has one set of beliefs completely al-Qaida or the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, or dominated extremism or hate crime activity.¹¹ those associated with the extremist environmental or Furthermore, the PIRUS and BIAS data reveal that anarchist movements.¹⁷ Despite these differences, U.S. extremists and individuals who commit hate some risk and protective factors tend to separate crimes are often motivated by overlapping views. violent from nonviolent individuals, regardless of For instance, it is common for individuals from the ideology.¹⁸ In the PIRUS data, individuals with criminal anti-government militia movement to adopt views records, documented or suspected mental illness, of white supremacy or for those from the extremist and membership in extremist cliques are more often environmental movement to take part in anarchist classified as violent, while those who are married violence. Nearly 17% of the individuals in PIRUS with stable employment backgrounds are more likely were affiliated with more than one extremist group National Institute of Justice | [NIJ.ojp.gov](https://nij.ojp.gov)

Criminal Histories and Social Networks

to engage in nonviolent crimes.¹⁹ Similarly, in BIAS, the role of military service in radicalization to violent violent individuals are more likely to co-offend with extremism still requires study. peers, have criminal histories that include acts of violence, and offend while under the influence of Differences in Violent Extremist Characteristics drugs or alcohol.²⁰ Between Military Veterans and Civilians In 2019, NIJ funded researchers at the University of Military Experience and Domestic Southern California to investigate the link between Violent Extremism military service and violent domestic extremism. They are also examining the differences between According to current statistics, individuals with military military veteran and civilian extremists in terms of backgrounds represent 11.5% of the total known their characteristics and social networks.²⁶ Although extremists who have committed violent and nonviolent this study is ongoing, preliminary findings have been crimes in the United States since 1990.²¹ Although drawn from a secondary analysis of the American this percentage seems small, there has been a

Terrorism Study data, which contain information growing trend of (former) military members engaging on people federally indicted for terrorism-related in extremist offenses in recent years. An average crimes by the U.S. government between 1980 and of seven people with U.S. military backgrounds per 2002.²⁷ With these data, the researchers compared year committed extremist crimes between 1990 and the demographic and homegrown violent extremist 2010. That rate has risen to an average of 29 people characteristics among military veterans and civilians. per year over the past decade. Also worth noting is The demographic characteristics considered were that more than half (52%) of extremists with military age, race, sex, marital status, and education level. The experience are identified as violent. homegrown violent extremist characteristics consisted of the length of group membership, type of terrorist Given the growth of violent domestic extremism group, role in the group, mode of recruitment into the among military personnel, the relationship between group, primary target, and the state of indictment. military service and radicalization has become a major concern. Prior NIJ-funded studies have identified The research team observed significant differences military experience as a potential risk factor for between military veteran and civilian extremists across attempted and actual terrorism.²² The likelihood of both demographic and homegrown violent extremist radicalization and radicalization to violence increases characteristics. First, they found that military veteran when individuals have already left military service.²³ and civilian extremists differed with respect to age, This research suggests that military service is not a sex, and marital status. Specifically, individuals with social bond that inhibits extremist violence. military service who engaged in homegrown violent extremism were more likely to be older, male, and NIJ studies have also shown that individuals with in marital or cohabiting relationships than civilians military experience may be susceptible to recruitment who engaged in homegrown violent extremism. by domestic violent extremist groups due to their Second, analyses revealed that, compared to civilian unique skills, which an extremist group may perceive extremists, military veteran extremists had greater as contributing to the success of a terrorist attack.²⁴ affiliations with right-wing terrorist groups (versus Also, transitioning from military to civilian life appears left-wing, international, or other terrorist groups) to be a pull factor for engaging in violent extremism.²⁵ and were more likely to hold leadership positions Indicators for potential involvement in extremism may within these groups and either initiate a terrorist include a lack of a sense of community, purpose, group or unite groups together. Finally, other than and belonging. If these indicators are identified government/federal officials or buildings, which were early, community stakeholders — in partnership the primary targets across all groups, the primary with military agencies — could have an opportunity targets of veterans were diverse social groups, such to intervene. Although such knowledge is valuable, National Institute of Justice | NIJ.ojp.gov

Implications of Transitioning Out of Militant Groups

as those belonging to racial, ethnic, and religious In 2013, NIJ funded researchers at the University of minority groups. Arkansas' Terrorism Research Center to study the sequencing of precursor behaviors for individuals Implications of Transitioning Out of Military who have been federally indicted in the United States Service for charges related to terrorism and domestic violent The University of Southern California researchers extremism.²⁸ Based on preliminary analyses, the intend to supplement these results by interviewing researchers somewhat serendipitously observed members from the social networks of military lifespan differences between lone actors and those veterans and civilians who committed homegrown operating in small cells or more formalized groups. violent extremism between 2003 and 2019. The Consequently, it warranted a more comprehensive findings produced thus far are important, especially examination of the factors that increased the because the association between military experience likelihood of terrorists and violent extremists and terrorism is understudied. Ultimately, these evading arrest. NIJ funded the researchers to results suggest that people who transition from identify behaviors that improved the chances of active duty to veteran status experience a nuanced, plot longevity — or the ability for terrorists to complex, and potentially lifelong process. Veterans commit acts of terrorism and evade capture by law who encounter difficulties during this transition and enforcement — for individuals federally

indicted on desire — but lack — a sense of community, purpose, terrorism-related charges.²⁹ and belonging after leaving the military may be Data on the longevity of terrorism and violent attracted to the pull of domestic extremist groups. In extremism plots come from the American Terrorism these groups, veterans can lead and collaborate with Study, the longest-running project on terrorism and others of similar ideologies to accomplish a shared violent extremism in the United States. With NIJ mission akin to what they did in the military. For funding that began in 2003,³⁰ the American Terrorism example, the military veterans in this study largely Study maintains the most comprehensive dataset on endorsed right-wing values; thus, perhaps something temporally linked precursor behaviors and outcomes about the narratives of right-wing extremist groups of terrorism and violent extremism plots. To examine compensates for the void felt when leaving military plot longevity, the Arkansas researchers³¹ limited their service. With such insights in mind, researchers analyses to 346 federally indicted individuals who recommend forming partnerships among civilians, were linked to the planning or completion of a terrorist the military, and veteran communities to identify and attack in the United States from 1980 to 2015. prevent violent extremism among U.S. veterans. Longevity, or duration of their “terrorist lifespan,” is Longevity of Terrorist Plots in the based on the date of a person’s involvement in their first preparatory activity and their “neutralizing” date United States (usually the date of arrest). A major question for researchers and counterterrorism One of the key findings from this research is a officials is how to prevent the next act of terrorism correlation between significant declines in the lifespan or violent extremism from occurring. As such, much of individual terrorists and major changes to the U.S. attention has been paid to disrupted plots and Attorney General guidelines established to combat successful interdiction tactics that ultimately led to terrorism and violent extremism in the United States. arrest and indictment. Less attention has been given For example, those who began in the mid- to late to what those responsible for acts of terrorism and 1970s, following Watergate, COINTELPRO, and the violent extremism do to successfully evade detection Privacy Act, had a median longevity of 2,230 days. In and arrest. In other words, the focus has not been on contrast, the median lifespan of terrorists who began what terrorists and violent extremists are doing “right.” operating in the mid-1980s decreased to 1,067 National Institute of Justice | NIJ.ojp.gov

Attack Planning and Operational Security

days. Later, in the early 2000s, it fell even further with accomplices and necessitate extra preparation. to 99 days, which reflects the FBI’s tighter focus Importantly, both the number of meetings and on terrorism and violent extremism and guidelines preparatory activities have been found to be negatively granting law enforcement more discretion in the related to the successful completion of terrorist investigative techniques employed. incidents, suggesting that early intervention or arrest are also linked to these two factors. The researchers also found that the lifespans of terrorists and violent extremists vary significantly How Domestic Terrorists Use the depending on key attributes, such as ideology, Internet sex, and educational attainment. For example, environmental and extreme left-wing violent Terrorists and terrorist groups use the internet to extremists tend to sustain themselves for relatively share propaganda and recruit new members. The long periods of time (5.4 and 4.3 years, respectively), internet provides a platform to strengthen their while the longevity of extreme right-wing and radical members’ commitment to the cause, encourage Islamist terrorists is, on average, two years or less. radicalized individuals to act, and coordinate legal and illegal activities. A recently published meta- Females federally indicted on charges related to analysis concluded, “Exposure to radical content terrorism and violent extremism also tend to have online appears to have a larger relationship with increased longevity compared to male terrorists and radicalization than other media-related risk factors (for violent extremists, perhaps because of females’ example, television usage, media exposure), and the disproportionate representation in longer-lasting impact of this relationship is most pronounced for the extreme left-wing and environmental movements, as behavioral outcomes of radicalization.”³² well as increased representation in left-wing group leadership roles. Females involved in terrorism and In 2014, NIJ funded a study to develop a deeper extremism are usually more educated, which is

also understanding of what domestic terrorists discuss associated with extended longevity. Further, females on the internet.³³ The study analyzed 18,120 posts who play support roles in terrorism and extremist from seven online web forums by and for individuals groups — as is more often the case for right-wing interested in the ideological far right. The research extremists and radical Islamist terrorists — also team read each post's content and coded it for either appear to have longer lifespans. In contrast, males quantitative or qualitative analyses depending on the have been more likely to engage in overtly criminal project's objective. preparatory behavior and actual incident participation than females. Both types of behavior are significantly The project provided several important insights into more likely to attract the attention of law enforcement terrorist use of the internet. First, the web forums and would be expected to shorten the longevity of included discussions about a variety of beliefs, both male and female terrorists and violent extremists. such as gun rights, conspiracy theories, hate-based sentiments, and anti-government beliefs; however, Finally, longevity also depends on a plot's the intensity of ideological expression was generally sophistication and the extent of the planning required weak. The nature of the online environments that to carry it out. Less sophisticated plans or executed far-right groups use likely facilitates the diffusion of plots, or those using simpler and less advanced ideological agendas. weapons, are generally associated with longer lifespans for terrorists and violent extremists. More Second, the amount and type of involvement in these sophisticated plots may provide greater potential forums played a key role in radicalization. Posting for missteps by terrorists and violent extremists behaviors changed over time. Users grew more and leads for law enforcement. Additionally, more ideological and radical as other users reinforced sophisticated plots are associated with more meetings their ideas and connected their ideas to those from National Institute of Justice | NIJ.ojp.gov

Online Mobilization and Far-Right Extremism

other forums. (It is important to note that the study are consistent with other recent work comparing focused on online expression and not conversion to online mobilization after the 2012 and 2016 offline violence.) presidential elections.³⁵ Third, far-right extremists were primarily interested Entering and Exiting White Supremacy in general technology issues. Discussions focused on in the United States encryption tools and methods (such as Tor), internet service providers and social media platforms, and An NIJ-funded research team led by RTI International law enforcement actions to surveil illicit activities examined the complex social-psychological processes online. These far-right extremists appeared more involved with entering, mobilizing, and exiting white interested in defensive actions than sophisticated supremacy in the United States.³⁶ The researchers schemes for radicalization or offensive actions such conducted in-depth life history interviews with as criminal cyberattacks. 47 former members of white supremacist groups in 24 states and two provinces in Canada.³⁷ The study used social network analyses to visualize user communications and network connections, For this project, white supremacy referred to groups focusing on individuals' responses to posts made that reject essential democratic ideals, equality, and within threads to highlight interconnected associations tolerance. A key organizing principle is that inherent between actors. The social network analyses indicated differences between races and ethnicities position that far-right forums have a low network density, white and European ancestry above all others. Those which suggests a degree of information recycling interviewed were authoritarian, anti-liberal, or militant between key actors. The redundant connections nationalists who had a general intolerance toward between actors may slow the spread of new people of color. They had used violence to achieve information. As a result, such forums may inefficiently their goals and supported a race war to eradicate the distribute new knowledge due to their relatively insular world of nonwhite people.³⁸ nature. They may also be generally difficult to disrupt, as the participants' language and behaviors reinforce The study led to several key findings about entering others and create an echo chamber. These networks and exiting white supremacy in the United States. are similar to others observed in computer hacker communities and data theft forums,³⁴ which suggests Hate as Outcome that there may be consistencies in the nature of online The study found that most people do not join white dialogue regardless of the

content. supremacist groups because they are adherents of a particular ideology. Rather, a combination of The study also indicated that extreme external events background factors increases the likelihood that usually did not affect posting behaviors. However, someone will be susceptible to recruitment messaging there were significant differences associated with (for example, propaganda).³⁹ Previous research has conspiratorial, anti-Islamic, and anti-immigrant highlighted that hate or adherence to racist violence posts after the Boston Marathon bombing. It may be was an outcome of participation in white supremacist that violence or major disruptive events inspired by groups.⁴⁰ The commitment to white supremacist jihadist ideologies draw great responses from far- groups lacked a preexisting sense of racial grievance right groups relative to their own actions. The same or hatred that motivated an individual to join the racist appears to be true for the 2012 presidential election; movement.⁴¹ One former member reported having “no the study observed increases both in the number inking of what [Nazism] really was other than what of posts in the month after the election and in overt you saw on TV.”⁴² The NIJ-funded study found that signs of individual ties or associations to far-right people joined white supremacist groups because they movements through self-claim posts, movement- were angry, lonely, and isolated, and they were looking related signatures, and usernames. These findings for opportunities to express their rage.⁴³ National Institute of Justice | NIJ.ojp.gov

Vulnerabilities as Precondition

Vulnerabilities as Precondition These analyses offer an explanation for how white supremacist organizations maintain solidarity even The former white supremacists had various personal, though many individuals stay in groups after losing psychological, and social vulnerabilities that made their ideological commitment. They also demonstrate them strive for what psychologists have framed that exit from a group is a nonlinear process.⁴⁸ as developing a new possible self.⁴⁴ High levels of Meanwhile, in other analyses, the study team reported negative life experiences — including, but not limited that, even after an individual exits a group, their white to, maladjustment, abuse, and family instability — supremacist identity lingers with a residual effect.⁴⁹ potentially make a person imagine a new, different, That research likened hate to an addiction that creates and more fulfilled self.⁴⁵ They can imagine an an uncontrollable emotional, social, and cognitive hold empowered future self with friends and a purpose. over adherents, which has the ability to pull former Extremist recruiters prey on these desires. The former members back into hate almost against their will.⁵⁰ white supremacists indicated high levels of physical, The former white supremacists shared experiences sexual, and psychological abuse as children; strained in which music, environments, and images created personal relationships; and general difficulties desire, longing, and curiosity about their old lifestyle throughout their lives. These struggles made white within the organization. supremacy seem like an improvement to their sense of self, as the group came with a ready-made set Opportunities of friends, social events, and camaraderie among individuals with similarly rough pasts. Besides these The NIJ-funded study found several blind spots in social benefits, white supremacist groups provided terms of identification and awareness among criminal members with a deeper sense of belonging and legal system practitioners and other responders. explanation for their life troubles, rooted in a sense of This resulted in several missed opportunities for racial pride and empowerment. intervention and practical solutions. Exhibit 1 details four areas in which the study findings can contribute Gradual, Nonlinear Exit to criminal justice policy and practice.⁵¹ Most white supremacists in this country do not Policy Implications remain members for life. Rather, group membership is often temporary (but not always short-lived), and The results of the NIJ-funded studies discussed many become disillusioned and burnt out over time. in this article have several implications for policy The study showed that the exit process is gradual, and practice. First, they illustrate that extremism as the former white supremacists reported slowly is complex and that successfully countering it becoming dissatisfied with the ideology, tactics, will require a unified response that bridges law or politics of a group.⁴⁶ They described an identity enforcement, community partners, health officials, that became filled with negative encounters with and concerned citizens. To facilitate a shared other members, even breeding distrust. White understanding of the

extremist threat, stakeholders supremacy requires the development of a totalizing engaged in counterextremism efforts routinely identify that results in isolating members from use findings from these studies to provide training nonextremists. This marginalization fosters a sense to concerned family and friends about potential of social stigma that makes white supremacy less radicalization warning signs and how best to attractive and further supports disengagement and respond. They also use the findings to educate law deradicalization processes. enforcement, corrections and probation officers, and mental health professionals on the complexity This research reported that emotional dynamics create of radicalization so they can accurately gauge and trajectories of development and decline in white respond to extremism in their communities. These supremacy and the role of disillusionment among types of training initiatives will remain critical to the reasons why members exit the organization.⁴⁷ National Institute of Justice | [NIJ.ojp.gov](https://www.nij.gov)

Missed Opportunities for Intervention

Exhibit 1. Missed Opportunities for Intervention and Practical Solutions Knowledge and Awareness Criminal legal system practitioners and other responders lack knowledge about radicalization and exit processes related to white supremacy in the United States. Missed Opportunities This lack of knowledge and awareness results in missed opportunities. Former white supremacists revealed that, although they wore clothes and exposed tattoos associated with white supremacy, criminal justice stakeholders (who do not always know the meaning of such symbols) did not address their potential affiliation with extremist groups. Community Supervision Extremist group members are highly involved with the criminal justice system, and supervision conditions should be responsive to whether an individual is involved with extremism. Community Partnerships Criminal justice systems cannot respond to radicalization alone. Instead, law enforcement, courts, and corrections need to develop connections with local resources (for example, criminal justice coordinating councils, mental health professionals, social workers, and education professionals). counterextremism efforts as the threat continues Finally, the studies highlight the need for to evolve. communitywide partnerships that link government and nongovernment organizations in support Second, the studies highlight the importance of of community-level prevention and intervention focusing criminal justice resources on domestic programs. Law enforcement and criminal justice extremism. Although international terrorist resources for countering extremism are finite and organizations remain a threat, these studies show that scarce, making it imperative that we focus our domestic extremists continue to be responsible for research and support efforts on understanding most terrorist attacks in the United States. Historically, what occurs before a crime takes place. As the far fewer resources have been dedicated to the studies reviewed in this article show, there is often study of domestic extremism, leaving gaps in our an opportunity to intervene to help individuals exit understanding about terrorist trends, recruitment and extremism before they engage in criminal activity. retention processes, and online behaviors. Due in Similarly, prevention efforts are needed in digital large part to NIJ's commitment to funding research spaces where extremist narratives often flourish. on domestic radicalization, considerable progress has Achieving these goals will require community recently been made in addressing these topics. But members, policymakers, and practitioners to commit this work will need to continue if we hope to keep to supporting counterextremism efforts. pace with the rapidly evolving threat landscape. National Institute of Justice | [NIJ.ojp.gov](https://www.nij.gov)

About the Authors & NIJ Research Awards

• “Research and Evaluation on Domestic Radicalization to Violent Extremism: Research To Support Exit USA,” award About the Authors number 2014-ZA-BX-0005 • “An Assessment of Extremist Groups Use of Web Forums, Steven Chermak, Ph.D., is a professor in the School Social Media, and Technology To Enculturate and Radicalize of Criminal Justice at Michigan State University and Individuals to Violence,” award number 2014-ZA-BX-0004 studies domestic terrorism and cyber offending. Matthew DeMichele, Ph.D., is a senior research sociologist at RTI and has conducted research Notes on correctional population trends, risk prediction, 1. Celinet Duran, “Far-Left Versus Far-Right Fatal terrorism/extremism prevention, and program Violence: An Empirical Assessment of the Prevalence evaluation. Jeff Gruenewald, Ph.D., is a professor of Ideologically Motivated Homicides in the United and director of the Terrorism Research Center at the States,” *Criminology, Criminal Justice, Law & Society* 22 no. 2 (2021): 33-49, <https://ccjls.scholasticahq.com/> University of Arkansas and studies domestic violent article/26973-far-left-versus-far-right-fatal-violence-an- extremism and hate crime. Michael Jensen, Ph.D., empirical-assessment-of-the-prevalence-of-ideologically- is a senior researcher at the National Consortium for motivated-homicides-in-the-united-states; Joshua D. the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism at Freilich et al., “Introducing the United States Extremist Crime Database (ECDB),” *Terrorism and Political Violence* the University of Maryland, where he leads the team 26 no. 2 (2014): 372-384, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09> on extremism in the United States. Raven Lewis, M.A., 546553.2012.713229; and William Parkin, Joshua D. is a Ph.D. candidate at Rutgers University in Newark, Freilich, and Steven Chermak, “Did Far-Right Extremist New Jersey, and a former research assistant at the Violence Really Spike in 2017?” *The Conversation*, January 4, 2018, <https://theconversation.com/> National Institute of Justice, where she supported did-far-right-extremist-violence-really-spike-in-2017-89067. research efforts focused on domestic radicalization 2. Duran, “Far-Left Versus Far-Right Fatal Violence”; Freilich et and violent extremism. Basia E. Lopez, MPA, is al., “Introducing the United States Extremist Crime Database a social science analyst at the National Institute of (ECDB);” and Parkin, Freilich, and Chermak, “Did Far-Right Justice, where she leads the firearm violence and Extremist Violence Really Spike in 2017?” mass shootings research portfolio and co-leads 3. U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Homeland Threat the violent extremism and domestic radicalization Assessment: October 2020, Washington, DC: U.S. research portfolio. Department of Homeland Security, 2020, https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/2020_10_06_homeland-threat-assessment.pdf, 4. Allison G. Smith, How Radicalization to Terrorism Occurs This article discusses the following awards: in the United States: What Research Sponsored by the National Institute of Justice Tells Us, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, June • “Exploring the Social Networks of Homegrown Violent 2018, NCJ 250171, <https://www.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/> Extremist (HVE) Military Veterans,” award number xyckuh241/files/media/document/250171.pdf; and Michael 2019-ZA-CX-0002 Wolfowicz, Badi Hasisi, and David Weisburd, “What Are the • “Sequencing Terrorists’ Precursor Behaviors: A Crime Effects of Different Elements of Media on Radicalization Specific Analysis,” award number 2013-ZA-BX-001 Outcomes? A Systematic Review,” Campbell Systematic • “Radicalization and the Longevity of American Terrorists: Reviews 18 no. 2 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1002/cl2.1244>. Factors Affecting Sustainability,” award number 5. Aisha Javed Qureshi, “Understanding Domestic 2015-ZA-BX-0001 Radicalization and Terrorism: A National Issue • “Pre-Incident Indicators of Terrorist Incidents,” award Within a Global Context,” *NIJ Journal* 282, number 2003-DT-CX-003 August 2020, <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/> understanding-domestic-radicalization-and-terrorism. • “Empirical Assessment of Domestic Radicalization,” award number 2012-ZA-BX-0005 6. National Institute of Justice funding award description, • “A Pathway Approach to the Study of Bias Crime Offenders,” “Empirical Assessment of Domestic Radicalization,” at the award number 2017-VF-GX-0003 University of Maryland, award number 2012-ZA-BX-0005, <https://nij.ojp.gov/funding/awards/2012-za-bx-0005>. National Institute of Justice | [NIJ.ojp.gov](https://nij.ojp.gov)

References

The following citations appear as plain text. They are NOT embedded hyperlinks. No URI annotations exist in the sanitized output.

7. National Institute of Justice funding award description, "A 15. Jensen, Yates, and Kane, "A Pathway Approach to the Study Pathway Approach to the Study of Bias Crime Offenders," of Bias Crime Offenders." at the University of Maryland, College Park, award number 2017-VF-GX-0003, <https://nij.ojp.gov/funding/> 16. John Horgan, "From Profiles to Pathways and Roots to awards/2017-vf-gx-0003. Routes: Perspectives From Psychology on Radicalization Into Terrorism," The ANNALS of the American Academy
8. The PIRUS and BIAS datasets are based on the same data of Political and Social Science 618 no. 1 (2008): 80-94, collection methodologies and share similar goals. Both <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716208317539>. contain random samples of individuals who committed crimes in the United States that were motivated by their 17. Jensen, Yates, and Kane, "Profiles of Individual extremist ideologies or hate beliefs. The PIRUS dataset Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS)." includes 2,225 individuals from 1948 to 2018, and BIAS
18. Gary LaFree, "Correlates of Violent Political Extremism in is based on 966 cases from 1990 to 2018. Both datasets the United States," Criminology 56 no. 2 (2018): 233-268, are collected entirely from public sources, including court <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9125.12169>; Michael records, online and print news, and public social media A. Jensen, Anita Atwell Seate, and Patrick A. James, accounts. Both seek to capture individuals who promoted "Radicalization to Violence: A Pathway Approach To Studying a range of extremist ideologies and hate beliefs. PIRUS, for Extremism," Terrorism and Political Violence 32 no. 5 instance, includes those whose crimes were associated (2020): 1067-1090, <https://doi.org/10.1080/> with anti-government, white supremacist, environmental, 09546553.2018.1442330; and Michael A. Jensen et anarchist, jihadist, and conspiracy theory movements. al., "The Link Between Prior Criminal Record and Violent Similarly, BIAS includes individuals who selected victims Political Extremism in the United States," in Understanding based on their race, ethnicity, and nationality; sexual Recruitment to Organized Crime and Terrorism, ed. David orientation and gender identity; religious affiliation; age; Weisburd et al. (New York: Springer, 2020), 121-146, or disability. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-36639-1_6.
9. Michael Jensen and Gary LaFree, "Final Report: Empirical
19. Jensen, Yates, and Kane, "Profiles of Individual Assessment of Domestic Radicalization (EADR)," Final Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS)." report to the National Institute of Justice, award number 2012-ZA-BX-0005, December 2016, NCJ 250481, 20. Michael Jensen, Elizabeth Yates, and Sheehan Kane, <https://nij.ojp.gov/library/publications/final-report-violent-hate-crime-offenders>," College Park, MD: empirical-assessment-domestic-radicalization-eadr; and START, 2020, <https://www.start.umd.edu/publication/> Michael A. Jensen, Elizabeth A. Yates, and Sheehan E. violent-hate-crime-offenders. Kane, "A Pathway Approach to the Study of Bias Crime Offenders," Final report to the National Institute of Justice, 21. Unless otherwise noted, all data reported in this section award number 2017-VF-GX-0003, February 2021, originate from Michael Jensen, Elizabeth Yates, and NCJ 300114, <https://www.ojp.gov/library/publications/Sheehan-Kane-Radicalization-in-the-Ranks>, College pathway-approach-study-bias-crime-offenders. Park, MD: START, January 2022, <https://start.umd.edu/publication/radicalization-ranks>. In this project, extremists
10. Michael Jensen, Elizabeth Yates, and Sheehan Kane, with military backgrounds consisted of active and nonactive "Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States personnel from all military branches and reserves, aside (PIRUS)," Research Brief, College Park, MD: National from the Space Force and Coast Guard Reserves. Individuals Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to who were honorably discharged, dishonorably discharged, Terrorism [START], May 2020, https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START_PIRUS_ResearchBrief_May2020.pdf. were excluded from the study. Also excluded were those discharged through court martial unless information about
11. Jensen, Yates, and Kane, "Profiles of Individual their criminal proceedings was publicly available. Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS)."
22. Allison G. Smith, Risk Factors and Indicators Associated
12. Jensen, Yates, and Kane, "A Pathway Approach to the Study With Radicalization to Terrorism in the United States: What of Bias Crime Offenders." Research Sponsored by the National Institute of Justice Tells
13. Jensen and LaFree, "Final Report: Empirical Assessment Us, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National of Domestic Radicalization (EADR)"; and Jensen, Yates, Institute of Justice, June 2018, NCJ 251789, <https://www.> and Kane,

"A Pathway Approach to the Study of Bias ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/251789.pdf. Crime Offenders."

23. Jensen and LaFree, "Final Report: Empirical Assessment of
14. Michael Jensen, Elizabeth Yates, and Sheehan Kane, Domestic Radicalization (EADR)." "Characteristics and Targets of Mass Casualty Hate Crime
24. Smith, Risk Factors and Indicators Associated With Offenders," College Park, MD: START, 2020, <https://www.start.umd.edu/publication/characteristics-and-targets-mass-casualty-hate-crime-offenders>. 25. Smith, Risk Factors and Indicators Associated With Radicalization to Terrorism in the United States. National Institute of Justice | NIJ.ojp.gov
26. National Institute of Justice funding award description, 36. Matthew DeMichele, Peter Simi, and Kathleen Blee, "Exploring the Social Networks of Homegrown Violent "Research and Evaluation on Domestic Radicalization to Extremist (HVE) Military Veterans," at the University of Violent Extremism: Research To Support Exit USA," Final Southern California, award number 2019-ZA-CX-0002, report to the National Institute of Justice, award number <https://nij.ojp.gov/funding/awards/2019-za-cx-0002>. 2014-ZA-BX-0005, January 2021, NCJ 256037, <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/256037.pdf>.
27. Unless otherwise noted, all data in this section come from Hazel R. Atuel and Carl A. Castro, "Exploring Homegrown 37. The project included three human rights groups (Anti- Violent Extremism Among Military Veterans and Civilians," Defamation League, Simon Wiesenthal Center, and Southern The Military Psychologist 36 no. 3 (2021): 10-14, <https://Poverty Law Center>) and Life After Hate, an organization www.militarypsych.org/wp-content/uploads/TMP_vol- that assists white supremacists in exiting the movement. 363_Fall_2021-1.pdf. The project partners helped develop a semi-structured interview protocol and provided contact information for
28. National Institute of Justice funding award description, initial interviewees. The study used a snowballing technique "Sequencing Terrorists? Precursor Behaviors: A Crime from these initial interviewees to identify former white Specific Analysis," at the University of Arkansas, award supremacists who were in the public sphere to determine number 2013-ZA-BX-0001, <https://nij.ojp.gov/funding/> if they were interested in being interviewed. The interviews awards/2013-za-bx-0001. were conducted in places where the individuals would be comfortable, including hotel rooms, homes, places of work,
29. National Institute of Justice funding award description, coffee shops, restaurants, and parks. The interviews were "Radicalization and the Longevity of American Terrorists: in-depth accounts (lasting 6-8 hours each) of individuals' Factors Affecting Sustainability," at the University of backgrounds (for example, how they grew up), entry into Arkansas, award number 2015-ZA-BX-0001, <https://nij.ojp.gov/funding/awards/2015-za-bx-0001>. white supremacy (for example, how they learned about the movement), mobilization (for example, rank and use
30. National Institute of Justice funding award description, of violence), and exit process (for example, initial doubts "Pre-Incident Indicators of Terrorist Incidents," at and barriers to exit). The completion of the project was a the Board of Trustees, University of Arkansas, award collaboration with equal contributions from Kathleen Blee, number 2003-DT-CX-0003, <https://nij.ojp.gov/funding/> Matthew DeMichele, and Pete Simi and support from Mehr awards/2003-dt-cx-0003. Latif and Steven Windisch.
31. Unless otherwise noted, all data in this section come 38. Steven Windisch et al., "Understanding the Micro-Situational from Brent L. Smith et al., "The Longevity of American Dynamics of White Supremacist Violence in the United Terrorists: Factors Affecting Sustainability," Final Summary States," Perspectives on Terrorism 12 no. 6 (2018): 23-37, Overview, award number 2015-ZA-BX-0001, January <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26544641>. 2021, NCJ 256035, <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/>
39. DeMichele, Simi, and Blee, "Research and Evaluation on grants/256035.pdf. Domestic Radicalization to Violent Extremism: Research To
32. Wolfowicz, Hasisi, and Weisburd, "What Are the Effects of Support Exit USA." Different Elements of Media on Radicalization Outcomes?"
40. Kathleen M. Blee et al., "How Racial Violence Is Provoked
33. Unless otherwise noted, all data in this section come and Channeled," Socio 9 (2017): 257-276, <https://doi.org/10.4000/socio.3054>. Freilich, "An Assessment of Extremist Groups Use of Web
41. Blee et al., "How Racial Violence Is Provoked Forums, Social Media, and Technology To Enculturate and Channeled." and Radicalize Individuals to Violence," Final Summary Overview, award number 2014-ZA-BX-0004, January 2021, 42. Blee et al., "How Racial Violence Is Provoked and NCJ 256038, <https://www.ojp.gov/library/publications/> Channeled," 265.

- assessment-extremist-groups-use-web-forums-social-media-and-technology. 43. DeMichele, Simi, and Blee, "Research and Evaluation on Domestic Radicalization to Violent Extremism: Research To Support Exit USA." National Institute of Justice | NIJ.ojp.gov
34. Thomas J. Holt and Adam M. Bossler, "Issues in the Support Exit USA." *Prevention of Cybercrime*, in *Cybercrime in Progress: Theory and Prevention of Technology-Enabled Offenses* 44. Hazel Markus and Paula Nurius, "Possible Selves," *American Psychologist* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 136-168. *Psychologist* 41 no. 9 (1986): 954-969, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.41.9.954>.
35. Ryan Scrivens et al., "Triggered by Defeat or Victory? Assessing the Impact of Presidential Election Results on Extreme Right-Wing Mobilization Online," *Deviant Behavior* paragraph come from DeMichele, Simi, and Blee, "Research and Evaluation on Domestic Radicalization to Violent Extremism: Research To Support Exit USA." National Institute of Justice | NIJ.ojp.gov 42 no. 5 (2021): 630-645, <https://doi.org/10.1080/016396>
- 25.2020.1807298. Extremism: Research To Support Exit USA." National Institute of Justice | NIJ.ojp.gov
46. All data in this paragraph come from DeMichele, Simi, and Blee, "Research and Evaluation on Domestic Radicalization to Violent Extremism: Research To Support Exit USA." Image source: Sergey Nivens/Shutterstock.
47. Mehr Latif et al., "How Emotional Dynamics Maintain and Destroy White Supremacist Groups," *Humanity & Society* 42 no. 4 (2018): 480-501, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0160597618802552>.
48. Latif et al., "How Emotional Dynamics Maintain and Destroy Cite this article as: Steven Chermak et White Supremacist Groups." al., "What NIJ Research Tells Us About
49. Pete Simi et al., "Addicted to Hate: Identity Residual Among Domestic Terrorism," *NIJ Journal* 285, June Former White Supremacists," *American Sociological Review* 82 no. 6 (2017): 1167-1187, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122417728719>.
50. Simi et al., "Addicted to Hate."
51. DeMichele, Simi, and Blee, "Research and Evaluation on Domestic Radicalization to Violent Extremism: Research To Support Exit USA." National Institute of Justice | NIJ.ojp.gov