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DOMESTIC EXTREMISTS AND LEADERLESS RESISTANCE

by

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DOMESTIC EXTREMISTS AND LEADERLESS RESISTANCE

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

Leaderless resistance, as a model for terrorism, is used to overcome the collective action problem to varying degrees of success. Originally exploited by various White Power groups (WPG) in the second half of the 20th century, leaderless resistance was then used by the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) to commit hundreds of non-lethal attacks. After the turn of the century, this model was again used for violence, as the involuntary celibate (Incel) movement has inspired members to commit mass murder. Conversely, the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement uses leaderless resistance to champion a legitimate cause, and generally without violence. However, despite the prevalence of attacks committed by groups using this model, no theory of leaderless resistance has been proposed.

Through examination of these four case studies, the theory of leaderless resistance presents itself as isolation, flexible ideology, urgency and exogenous events, and inspiration: the correct balance results in violence. Failure to properly address these components of the theory of leaderless resistance prevents effective mobilization of group members, limiting action and violence. This thesis examines these components individually through their employment by WPG, ELF, Incels, and BLM.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BLM	Black Lives Matter
ELF	Earth Liberation Front
GTD	Global Terrorism Database
Incel	Involuntary Celibate
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
START	Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism
WPG	White Power group

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. PROBLEM STATEMENT—BACKGROUND

In the 1990s, both the radical right white supremacists and elements of the radical left turned to leaderless resistance models to motivate violence on behalf of an organization.¹ Both efforts led to destruction, as Timothy McVeigh and accomplices detonated a truck bomb in Oklahoma City, while the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) committed upwards of 600 non-lethal attacks.² However, both groups approached their use of leaderless resistance differently; right-wing groups largely failed to convince their followers to take violent measures, and the left-wing ELF's activities declined sharply in the years following 9/11.

With the widespread internet penetration since the late 1990s, new threats have emerged with violent and inflammatory rhetoric now easily accessible anywhere. While the ELF and White Power groups faced publicity and recruitment issues, the internet allows communication to anyone curious enough to follow a hotlink. The involuntary celibate (Incel) movement exists almost entirely online, luring like-minded individuals down a path of radicalization and potential mobilization. Meanwhile, Black Lives Matter (BLM), a racial justice movement, uses the internet not for radicalization but justifiable coordination in protests that often result in violence influenced by BLM webpages.

Leaderless resistance, enabled by both mass and directed communication, is a dangerous means that a collective group can use to achieve violent ends. This is “a strategy of opposition that allows for and encourages individuals or small cells to engage in acts of political violence entirely independent of any hierarchy of leadership or network of support.”³ A leaderless resistance centers around a core group of ideological leaders who

¹ Paul Joosse, “Leaderless Resistance and Ideological Inclusion: The Case of the Earth Liberation Front,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19, no. 3 (2007): 351–52.

² George Michael, “Leaderless Resistance: The New Face of Terrorism,” *Defense Studies* 12, no. 2 (June 2012): 259, 69, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14702436.2012.699724>.

³ Paul Joosse, “Elves, Environmentalism, and ‘Eco-Terror’: Leaderless Resistance and Media Coverage of the Earth Liberation Front,” *Crime, Media, Culture* 8, no. 1 (April 1, 2012): 351, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741659011433366>.

outline political grievances and disseminate those grievances to an audience. Most rhetoric is protected by the First Amendment (unless it calls for specific action from its audience), with no significant connection between the leader(s) and the audience.

The Earth Liberation Front and other ecoterrorism groups centered first around the romanticized character George Hayduke in Edward Abbey's *The Monkey Wrench Gang* and his dramatic efforts to protect the natural world.⁴ Many followed Hayduke's example, launching—of their own volition—hundreds of ecoterrorism attacks across the United States. White Power groups had William Pierce's racist *The Turner Diaries*, which inspired over 200 murders, including McVeigh's bombing of the Oklahoma City Federal Building, taking 168 lives.⁵ Today, organizations often exist online rather than novels, using an unending flow of forum posts to disseminate grievances that motivate actors to kill. The Incel movement, a "loosely organized, virtual community," has already killed almost 50 people in the last decade with no leader or ideological figurehead to guide the movement, only the online hateful rhetoric behind screen names.⁶ Black Lives Matter, an essential departure from terrorist groups, employs leaderless resistance in protest organizations. The internet has helped coordinate protests and made a valuable social stand against police brutality and social injustices; however, these gatherings sometimes turn violent. The political stances taken by recognized leadership have profound impacts on group identification, membership, and action. Like the Incels and unlike White Power groups and ELF, there is no recognized central literature outlining grievances writ-large for mobilization's sake.

Leaderless resistances are challenging to defeat. The First Amendment protects literature like *The Monkey Wrench Gang* and *The Turner Diaries*, while the deep recesses of the internet and user profiles help mask those fueling violence online. Law enforcement has dismantled plots developed online, but this does little to stop individuals on the cusp

⁴ Peninah Neimark and Peter Rhoades Mott, *The Environmental Debate* (Amenia, NY: Grey House Publishing, 2017), 147, ProQuest.

⁵ J.M. Berger, "The Turner Legacy: The Storied Origins and Enduring Impact of White Nationalism's Deadly Bible," *Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism Studies*, 2016, 30, <https://doi.org/10.19165/2016.1.11>.

⁶ Bruce Hoffman, Jacob Ware, and Ezra Shapiro, "Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 43, no. 7 (July 2, 2020): 565, 9, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1751459>.

of taking violent action and mobilizing. With some groups reaching membership in the tens of thousands, the risk of one individual conducting an attack on behalf of their group only grows. This space between the emergence of rhetoric and action must be explored and understood. How do leaderless resistance groups disseminate a message impactful enough to inspire people to commit an act of terrorism? How is this one act of terrorism then used to propagate and inspire more acts of terrorism until it is a movement? Understanding this—a theory of leaderless resistance—will help law enforcement agencies produce counter-messaging and understand target audience populations and enhance their ability to identify potential attackers before they act.

B. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This thesis examines four case studies (Earth Liberation Front, White Power groups, Involuntary Celibates, and Black Lives Matter) and analyzes their approach to leaderless resistance. This study identifies how attacks are inspired, and the reaction of the group post-attack.

Primary Question: What must be understood is why some models of leaderless resistance succeed and others fail. What is the theory of leaderless resistance with various components, including objectives, means, ideologies, recruitment, and inspiration?

Secondary Question: How can the theory of leaderless resistance be disrupted to minimize or mitigate group members from committing attacks or suppress others from conducting follow-on attacks?

C. HYPOTHESIS

Domestic terrorist groups exploit a combination of isolation, flexible ideology, urgency and exogenous events, and inspiration to mobilize self-identified group members to conduct terrorist attacks. In the correct balance, these elements render potential members more vulnerable to radicalization, enhance recruiting, inspire members to take timely action, and then serve to glorify the members who act to inspire and mobilize other members to carry out further attacks with the expectation of similar glorification.

D. METHODOLOGY

Establishing a theory of leaderless resistance across various domestic extremist groups demands various information and data. How individual groups use leaderless resistance has been studied, but a model of what makes leaderless resistance effective has not.

This study will use four different cases of domestic extremists, spanning the political spectrum, to identify how each case approaches the leaderless resistance problem. Two well-studied, polarizing cases, the Earth Liberation Front and White Power groups, will be analyzed through existing literature to refine an initial hypothesis on the characteristics and components of leaderless resistance. This hypothesis will then be examined against two emergent movements: the Involuntary Celibates and Black Lives Matter.

Both sets of case studies present different research requirements. Time has allowed significant academic study on White Power groups and ELF, while both the nascent Incels and BLM will require a different approach than synthesizing existing literature. Analysis of known attacks will illuminate how these two groups propagate aspects of leaderless resistance: isolation, flexible ideology, urgency, exogenous events, and inspiration.

This analysis is then compared to the Global Terrorism Database to determine a correlation between digital rhetoric and attacks. Identified perpetrators will be used to measure elements of the hypothesis: that inspiration is a critical component of effective leaderless resistance. This reaction to attacks, and potential follow-on attacks, will yield the best insights into the effectiveness of the leaderless resistance model approached by each group.

The theory of leaderless resistance will be identified by its critical components through the comparison of the four case studies and examined by component. Through this cross-section of components against the four cases studies, the effectiveness and importance of each component will be assessed to validate the theory of leaderless resistance.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of leaderless resistance theory is multifaceted, requiring literature examining leaderless resistance in terrorism, radicalization and mobilization, and the four case study groups themselves. Much of the literature on leaderless resistance focuses on the Earth Liberation Front (ELF), or its history in the context of White Power groups (WPG), without recent academic attention to the Involuntary Celibates (Incel) or Black Lives Matter (BLM). Previous attempts have been made to model leaderless resistance through the limiting lens of only describing general elements of the approach without presenting a theory. A preponderance of literature concludes that leaderless resistance models are the most likely form most terror groups will pursue yet diverge in conclusions on why groups will seek that model. This review will first discuss the gaps in the current literature on leaderless resistance, then transition to literature about ELF, WPG, Incels, and BLM to exemplify current understandings of organization, structure, successes, and failures.

A. LEADERLESS RESISTANCE AS STRUCTURE

The emergence of international and domestic terrorism in the United States prompted extensive interest from scholars and law enforcement to understand the threat. This interest turned inward and reached a consensus regarding White Power groups for their use of “leaderless resistance” as a strategy propagated by Louis Beam in his racist propaganda of the same name; considered the founding document of this type of organization.⁷ There are several variations on the definition of leaderless resistance; however, the following is most prominent: “a kind of lone wolf operation in which an

⁷ George Michael, “Leaderless Resistance: The New Face of Terrorism,” 263; Brian C Low and Justin Hsu, “The Leaderless Social Movement Organization: Unstoppable Power or Last-Ditch Effort?” (Monterey, CA, Naval Postgraduate School, 2010), 6; Jeffrey Kaplan, “Leaderless Resistance,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 9, no. 3 (September 1997): 85, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546559708427417>; Matthew M. Sweeney, “Leaderless Resistance and the Truly Leaderless: A Case Study Test of the Literature-Based Findings,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 42, no. 7 (July 2019): 618, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2017.1407480>.

individual, or a very small, highly cohesive group, engage in acts of anti-state violence independent of any movement, leader or network of support.”⁸

The literature has reached two different conclusions on leaderless resistance as a threat. Many conclude that a terrorist group’s transition to leaderless resistance limits their threat as an “admission of failure,” and is only used as “a last-ditch effort to keep a struggle alive.”⁹ This assumption may apply to several failing or failed movements in the past but fails to address groups that emerge as leaderless resistances from their conception. Others have reached a different—and far more valid—conclusion that “terrorism in the West appears to be moving in the direction of leaderless resistance... [it has] become the most common tactical approach of political violence in the West.”¹⁰ With the expansion of leaderless resistance attacks, the latter belief is now more prevalent and must be accepted as threats grow exponentially.

The designed purpose of leaderless resistance is also well studied with consensus: to distinguish the public component of an organization from the violent to protect itself while still achieving violent ends.¹¹ In addition to protection (by preventing infiltration by counterterrorism forces or informants and subsequent prosecution), leaderless resistance is far more prone to inclusion because of inherent ideological flexibility. A rigorous examination into known members of ELF demonstrated how leaderless resistance could recruit, radicalize, and mobilize attackers from an extensive range of economic, educational, political, and religious backgrounds for a shared violent purpose.¹² This

⁸ Kaplan, ““Leaderless Resistance,”” 80.

⁹ Michael, “Leaderless Resistance,” 258; Simson Garfinkel, “Leaderless Resistance Today,” First Monday, March 3, 2003, <https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v8i3.1040>.

¹⁰ Michael, “Leaderless Resistance,” 276–77.

¹¹ Garfinkel, “Leaderless Resistance Today”; Phillip W. Gray, “Leaderless Resistance, Networked Organization, and Ideological Hegemony,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 25, no. 5 (November 2013): 655–71, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2012.674077>.

¹² Joosse, “Leaderless Resistance and Ideological Inclusion,” 352.

feature of leaderless resistance allows propagandists to operate freely under the First Amendment, and the rest of the group is uninvolved in attacks.¹³

While the literature understands the appeal of leaderless resistance, there are significant shortfalls in determining its success or failure. A theory of leaderless resistance is barely evident and only exists in terms relevant to the radicalization and mobilization of terrorists: grievances, exogenous events, and inspiration. As discussed in a subsequent portion of this literature review, these components of the theory can be applied to the transition of any actor from recruitment to attack, not leaderless resistance alone. Collectively, a theory of leaderless resistance coalesced from various case studies has not been attempted.

B. RADICALIZATION AND MOBILIZATION

Scholars have dedicated a substantial study to the process of radicalization and mobilization: turning an otherwise participant in societal norms into a terrorist. There is an essential distinction between radicalization and mobilization, as many radicalized will never act (mobilize). While the term “radicalization” is often referred to as the entire process of terrorist-development from recruitment to attack, the actual behaviors of the radicalized individual determine whether there will be violence.¹⁴ However, other scholars use the terms in reverse, citing the “mobilization” to “radicalization,” or the initiative of potential terrorists to take the first steps in the process of joining a terrorist or extremist

¹³ Garfinkel, “Leaderless Resistance Today”; Michael, “Leaderless Resistance,” 277; Jeremy Pressman, “Leaderless Resistance: The Next Threat?,” *Current History* (Oakland, United States: University of California Press, Journals & Digital Publishing Division, December 2003), 424–25, ProQuest.

¹⁴ Crimando, Steven “Alone Together and Angry: An Incel Revolution,” accessed September 15, 2021, http://www.asisonline.org/security-management-magazine/articles/2019/03/alone-together-and-angry-an-ince-revolution/?_t_id=8yEa3b8FuoYiSDOGiKOD8A%3d%3d&_t_uid=rdUJdd1tSraiHmFE3fJRSg&_t_q=in cel&_t_tags=language%3aen%2csiteid%3ab1140b07-9e31-4808-809a-878911c7f3f1%2candquerymatch&_t_hit.id=ASIS_Models_Pages_SMArticleDetailPage/_0ccede18-76d9-4e4c-b45b-5cf685221fcf_en&_t_hit.pos=1; Jessica Stern, “Radicalization to Extremism and Mobilization to Violence: What Have We Learned and What Can We Do about It?,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 668 (2016): 104, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26361939>; Pressman, “Leaderless Resistance,” 422.

group, typically associated with the mass mobilization of a social movement.¹⁵ Throughout this thesis, the term “mobilization” will be used only in the former context; as the final step from radicalization to committing acts of violence.

The processes of recruitment and radicalization have also been studied, with consensus on how a terrorist is made. Additional attention has been afforded to how the internet is exploited to recruit potential terrorists, especially after the rise of the Islamic State (ISIS) and their success in recruiting. This examination on the internet’s role in recruitment and radicalization is critical, as traditional limitations (recruitment as a clandestine act) and “indoctrination,” or radicalization, can now take place en-masse and in the relative open of the web.¹⁶ Scholars largely agree with “Moghaddam’s Staircase,” which illustrates a narrowing staircase. This model describes the path taken through radicalization, through a perception of fairness, initiative to improve an individual’s situation, a shift in injustice perception, through the specialized selection and training required to prepare an attack.¹⁷ Though the staircase model hinges largely on individual psychology, researchers diverge on where academic study must be directed: political grievances or unique traits and attributes.¹⁸ This gap in the literature regarding the individual traits of radicalized and mobilized members of violent organizations is being explored in terms of groups like the Incels, where psychological characteristics are often a bonding agent for the network.¹⁹

¹⁵ Stern, “Radicalization to Extremism and Mobilization to Violence,” 103; Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 20, 33, ProQuest.

¹⁶ Bruce W. Don et al., “Network Technologies for Networked Terrorists: Assessing the Value of Information and Communication Technologies to Modern Terrorist Organizations” (RAND Corporation, September 16, 2007), 12, https://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/TR454.html; Low, “The Leaderless Social Movement Organization Unstoppable Power or Last-Ditch Effort,” 9; Alyssa M. Glace et al., “Taking the Black Pill: An Empirical Analysis of the ‘Incel,’” *Psychology of Men & Masculinities* 22, no. 2 (April 2021): 296, <http://dx.doi.org.libproxy.nps.edu/10.1037/men0000328>.

¹⁷ Fathali M. Moghaddam, “The Staircase to Terrorism: A Psychological Exploration,” *American Psychologist* 60, no. 2 (February 2005): 161–62, <http://dx.doi.org.libproxy.nps.edu/10.1037/0003-066X.60.2.161>.

¹⁸ Stern, “Radicalization to Extremism and Mobilization to Violence,” 104.

¹⁹ Hoffman, Ware, and Shapiro, “Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence,” 568.

After September 11, 2001, social network analysis (SNA) has been critical in understanding how terrorist networks are structured, behave, and most critically, how they can be targeted.²⁰ SNA, expanded from the initial use of a link-node diagram used by the French Army to understand Algerian terror cells, now examines every possible facet of the social ties in an organization: trust, financial links, education, family, experiences, and roles. Combined with other social sciences, how these actors (or nodes) interact with each other matters; decisions, such as the decision to conduct an attack, do not happen independently of other nodes.²¹ What is missing, however, is how small networks or lone wolves in leaderless resistances make decisions, a task not well suited for SNA.²²

SNA relies on other social sciences to explain network behavior, the development of trust and influence, and the effects of isolation and radicalization amongst group members that assist in understanding effective leaderless resistance. “Groupthink” is well studied, explaining why group members want to achieve consensus rather than protest the prevalent ideas as members of lesser network standing default to defective decision-makers.²³ In concert with the effects of group polarization, the concept of Groupthink is agreed by scholars to be a critical contributor to radicalization and mobilization.²⁴ These two factors, coupled with the baseline understanding of the results of isolation and self-identification with the group’s self-asserted identity, provide a general sense of how

²⁰ Daniel Cunningham, Sean Everton, and Philip Murphy, *Understanding Dark Networks: A Strategic Framework for the Use of Social Network Analysis* (London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2016), 9; Arie Perliger and Ami Pedahzur, “Social Network Analysis in the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence,” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 44, no. 1 (January 2011): 45–50, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096510001848>.

²¹ Cunningham, Everton, and Murphy, *Understanding Dark Networks*, 14.

²² Perliger and Pedahzur, “Social Network Analysis in the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence,” 46.

²³ Keith Vore, “Understanding Groupthink,” *Small Wars Journal*, accessed September 19, 2021, <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/understanding-groupthink>; Paul’t Hart, “Irving L. Janis’ Victims of Groupthink,” *Political Psychology* 12, no. 2 (1991): 248, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3791464>.

²⁴ Cass R. Sunstein, “The Law of Group Polarization,” *Journal of Political Philosophy* 10, no. 2 (2002): 175–95, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9760.00148>; Moghaddam, “The Staircase to Terrorism,” 165.

networks can radicalize or indoctrinate new members who may later commit violent action on behalf of their network.²⁵

This established baseline on how members are radicalized into terrorist organizations frames the individual psychological process, resulting in violence. However, an individual's motives are still little understood in the context of leaderless resistance, when the ideological or operational leader of a network will not dictate, fund, or equip an attack, nor other members who vow to carry on follow-on attacks. The theory of leaderless resistance, while baselines have been studied and established, remains unstudied.

C. CASE STUDIES

The Earth Liberation Front has been studied for its leaderless resistance in propagating hundreds of attacks. One component of ELF's leaderless resistance approach, ideological flexibility, is well documented as successful while manipulating the media is regarded as a general failure.²⁶ The Earth First! and other contemporary ecologically concerned groups, including ELF, were widely published across newsletters and early websites, offering an array of primary sources to assess the impact of recruiting and prestige before and after attacks.

White Power groups have also been the subject of rigorous study due to their pervasive violence and hate. Tantamount to this is the research into William Pierce's *The Turner Diaries*, which has been thoroughly examined as one of the bloodiest books in American literature, with over 200 associated murders.²⁷ While the various White Power

²⁵ Cass R. Sunstein and Adrian Vermeule, "Conspiracy Theories: Causes and Cures*," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 17, no. 2 (June 2009): 202–27, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9760.2008.00325.x>; Sunstein, "The Law of Group Polarization"; Moghaddam, "The Staircase to Terrorism"; Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*.

²⁶ Gary A. Ackerman, "Beyond Arson? A Threat Assessment of the Earth Liberation Front," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 15, no. 4 (October 2003): 356, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546550390449935>; Paul Joosse, "Elves, Environmentalism, and 'Eco-Terror': Leaderless Resistance and Media Coverage of the Earth Liberation Front," *Crime, Media, Culture* 8, no. 1 (April 1, 2012): 75–76, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741659011433366>.

²⁷ Berger, "The Turner Legacy," 1; Credo Reference, "The Turner Diaries: Literature of Propaganda," accessed June 16, 2021, https://search-credoreference-com.libproxy.nps.edu/content/entry/galelp/the_turner_diaries/0; Renee Brodie, "The Aryan New Era: Apocalyptic Realizations in The Turner Diaries," *Journal of American Culture* 21, no. 3 (Fall 1998): 21, ProQuest; Mark S. Hamm, *In Bad Company: America's Terrorist Underground* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2002), 288.

groups of the latter 20th century struggled with a unified front, the concept of leaderless resistance was born of the overall racist movement.²⁸ While ELF had difficulties managing the press to advance their narrative, the Oklahoma City Bombing severely damaged White Power groups' messaging.²⁹ The aftermath failed to directly inspire follow-on attacks, indicating a failure in their model of leaderless resistance component of prestige. The resurgence of nationalism has renewed academic interest in White Power groups, including their online presence and the increase in "alt-right" attacks, but the totality of their leaderless resistance approach has not been studied.³⁰

The Involuntary Celibate movement, while nascent, has already been the subject of several studies due to its unique structure. Existing almost entirely online, Incels communicate predominantly via forum in the open and have developed an extensive vocabulary of Incel-specific vernacular.³¹ There is consensus for what is believed to be the Incels' political end-state: the sexual subjugation of women and the promoted social status of Incel members regardless of personality or physical appearance (a substantial base for the groups' grievances).³² Unlike ELF and White Power groups, the Incel movement is a movement, not an organization, with no identified leaders; as an amorphous network, this flat network of online personas is closest to a leaderless resistance.

Black Lives Matter, the newest group, has been subject to the least academic study on their organization and is reasonably the most positively viewed. The majority of information regarding BLM is available on social media websites and receives a mix of

²⁸ Pressman, "Leaderless Resistance," 8; Michael, "Leaderless Resistance," 264.

²⁹ Berger, "The Turner Legacy," 29.

³⁰ James A. Piazza, "The Determinants of Domestic Right-Wing Terrorism in the USA: Economic Grievance, Societal Change and Political Resentment," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 34, no. 1 (January 2017): 52–53, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0738894215570429>; Lorraine Bowman-Grieve, "Exploring 'Stormfront': A Virtual Community of the Radical Right," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32, no. 11 (October 30, 2009): 991, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100903259951>; Noemie Bouhana et al., "Background and Preparatory Behaviours of Right-Wing Extremist Lone Actors" *Perspectives on Terrorism* 12, no. 6 (2018): 151; Seth G Jones, "The Rise of Far-Right Extremism in the United States," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, 2.

³¹ Glace et al., "Taking the Black Pill," 288.

³² Glace et al., 288; Hoffman, Ware, and Shapiro, "Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence," 566; Crimando, "Alone Together and Angry."

reactions largely dependent on political lines.³³ As a case study in this thesis, BLM is used to test the theory of leaderless resistance of violence conducted by BLM activists, who may or may not be confirmed members of the organization. Unlike terrorist organizations, a distinction in violence is necessary: the violence during a protest or riot, while politically motivated, bears little resemblance to the bombings of White Power groups, the sabotage of ELF, or the mass shootings of the Incels; instead, the messaging of BLM will be examined for its affects (pre and post) on violence and subsequent reactions in the media and other BLM events.

An important note is required for the database of terrorist attacks. The Global Terrorism Database (GTD), managed by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), is based on open-source information regarding terrorist attacks.³⁴ During the research process, several errors have been found by the author of this thesis, albeit small. The labeling of violent action may have caused errors in the GTD's database, so not all attacks perpetrated by these groups may be included, rather only those officially labeled "terrorism." Hate crimes conducted by White Power groups, or the increase in targeted assassinations of law enforcement personnel, may not be reflected, yet are critical to understand and prescribe a theory of leaderless resistance.

³³ Alexander H. Updegrave et al., "Red States and Black Lives: Applying the Racial Threat Hypothesis to the Black Lives Matter Movement," *Justice Quarterly* 37, no. 1 (January 2, 2020): 87, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2018.1516797>.

³⁴ START, "About the GTD," accessed September 19, 2021, <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/about/>.

III. THEORY OF LEADERLESS RESISTANCE

Any organization attempting to achieve any goal is beset by the collective action problem: how do leaders motivate people to join their cause, and then act? Particularly, terrorist organizations face the collective action problem that militaries do, in that they must overcome the problem to commit coalition aggression, or violence. Leaders “invariably stand at the center of a collective action problem,” to manage the organization to conduct violence, however a leaderless resistance is faced with particular problems in that there is no one central leader, thus a different solution must be reached.³⁵

Coalition violence relies on four solutions to the collective action problem: how to mitigate an individual’s risk to an achievable tolerance, how to distribute the risk across the group, the balance of risk and reward, individual formidability, relative numbers, and the perceived probability of success.³⁶ Terrorist organizations, by virtue of their approach, can adjust (to an extent) the level of individual risk, individual formidability, and relative numbers by using sabotage, bombings, attacking vulnerable civil targets, and more. However, a leaderless resistance can further reduce these risks: across the group, there is no risk assumed by other ideologue attackers because there is no structure, only disconnected members who generally agree in the same approach and goals of the group.

A leader’s role in the collective action problem is twofold: they must set the agenda and group goals, and they must coordinate the power of the group through motivations and expectations of group membership.³⁷ However, in a leaderless resistance, only one of these is ever accomplished by propagandists, if at all. The closest thing to a “leader” experienced in the case studies is that of the propagandists in publicizing the agenda, and in generic terms, the approaches towards that agenda. The propagandists do not coordinate the power

³⁵ Anthony C. Lopez, “Making ‘My’ Problem ‘Our’ Problem: Warfare as Collective Action, and the Role of Leader Manipulation,” *The Leadership Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (April 2020): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2019.05.001>.

³⁶ Lopez, 3.

³⁷ Lopez, 4.

of the group; however, they may outline (as in ELF or BLM) the expectations of *how* to conduct acts of violence on behalf of the group.

This thesis proposes that the theory of leaderless resistance is built on four components to successfully overcome the collective action problem in the absence of a leader. This theory states that effective leaderless resistance requires isolation, an ideology that is flexible enough to draw recruits, an urgency framed by exogenous events (or the belief of future catastrophic events), and inspiration drawn from previous attacks. Through the combination of these four components, individuals are successfully influenced to change their preferences regarding personal safety and mobilize; that coalition action is then initiated. Individual risk and collective risk are resolved by completely voluntary mobilization, independent (with some exceptions in the case studies) of other actors. Risk and reward, while dependent on the mode of attack, are assumed by the individual, however influenced by the degree of inspiration granted by the propagandists and the inspiration actors may perceive themselves as bestowing on the group. In the context of collective action problem and coalition violence, leaderless resistance grants more autonomy to the individual to circumvent the problems faced by organized cells, and without a leader. However, these four components must work in tandem to achieve the groups' aims of violence by independent, leaderless cells. As propagandists approach these four independent variables, the dependent variable (violence) measures the effectiveness of the propagandists' approach. Thus, the theory of leaderless resistance presents itself as:

$$\text{Isolation} + \text{Flexible Ideology} + \text{Urgency and Exogenous Events} + \text{Inspiration} \\ = \text{Violence}$$

Measuring these independent variables is difficult—how individuals perceive them is subjective—some may reject one variable yet accept another in the same leaderless resistance. Undoubtedly, the case studies demonstrate the inconsistencies of these variables amongst even their mobilized followers to conduct attacks. However, the dependent variable is measurable in terms of associated violence that results from some combination of the independent variables. Otherwise, an examination into notable attacks helps inform how the attackers were influenced regarding the individual components of the theory of leaderless resistance.

The degree to which the components interact to yield the number of attacks is another area of study. Each component can negate the others entirely; if an individual is not isolated, then it is significantly more likely that the other three components will not mobilize the individual with an attack. Likewise, mobilization has occurred without a strong ideological commitment to the leaderless resistance motivated by the attack. Furthermore, inspiration may be a driving factor from radicalization to mobilization, or it may be entirely self-driven, drawing no inspiration from previous attacks for the leaderless resistance movement.

With these four components, this theory of leaderless resistance offers a solution to the collective action problem in which there is no leader, contrary to other's assertions that leaders are central to solving the problem. This theory is how that problem is solved, and with violent consequences.

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IV. ISOLATION

A. FRAMEWORK

Individuals are more likely to radicalize and mobilize if they are isolated from their existing social networks before recruitment.³⁸ In hierarchal terrorist networks requiring physical connection and infrastructure, this phase starts at Moghaddam's "third floor;" however, the penetration of the internet and its exploitation by extremist groups has allowed isolation to begin much earlier.³⁹ Given that the most likely terrorist recruits are young, and 99% of 18–29 year olds regularly use the internet, and 84% use social media, the internet presents opportunities for groups to propagate leaderless resistance online.⁴⁰ Previously, potential terrorist recruits gathered in places like Eugene, Oregon, and anti-logging forts, or Elohim City, a white-supremacist haven; now, any keyboard can grant isolation through web forums.⁴¹ This chapter will evaluate the effects of isolation and its role in the four case study groups. Both ELF and White Power groups will be assessed in a brief narrative for how this component of resistance functioned (successfully or otherwise), and then apply these conclusions to Involuntary Celibates and Black Lives Matter.

³⁸ Moghaddam, "The Staircase to Terrorism" 165.

³⁹ Moghaddam, "The Staircase to Terrorism," 165; Bruce W. Don et al., "Network Technologies for Networked Terrorists: Assessing the Value of Information and Communication Technologies to Modern Terrorist Organizations" (RAND Corporation, September 16, 2007), 13, https://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/TR454.html.

⁴⁰ Susannah Fox and Lee Rainie, "25th Web Anniversary," Pew Research Center, *Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech* (blog), February 27, 2014, <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2014/02/27/the-web-at-25-in-the-u-s/>; PEW, "Demographics of Internet and Home Broadband Usage in the United States," *Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech* (blog), accessed September 14, 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/internet-broadband/>.

⁴¹ "Eco-Terrorism in the West: A Who's Who of the Convicted, the Arrested, the Missing," OregonLive.com, accessed September 21, 2021, <https://www.oregonlive.com/news/erry-2018/08/3cc02205f06447/ecoterrorism-in-the-west-a-who.html>; Berger, "The Turner Legacy," 27.

B. EARTH LIBERATION FRONT

The Earth Liberation Front originated as a violent off-shoot of the Earth First! movement popularized in the United Kingdom and shortly thereafter the United States.⁴² Unlike Earth First!, ELF members shied away from peaceful protesting and toward direct action, forming their brand of ecological protection with the intent of physical action. Members' grievances were the same as Earth First!'s; however, they were more willing to commit violent acts on behalf of political cause under the guise of collective self-defense for the environment.⁴³

ELF activities (numbers in the hundreds of attacks) require far less extremism than other terrorist operations because people are not deliberately targeted.⁴⁴ It is psychologically easier to burn down an empty ski resort than detonate a bomb in a marketplace; thus, ELF did not require recruits to go through Moghadam's complete staircase of radicalization. Isolation wasn't necessary to radicalize recruits; instead, just a steady stream of propaganda and a few like-minded individuals inspired by others'. Rather, its members were not isolated from society; even the most prolific ELF operatives still held high-earning jobs and were active in the orthodox environmentalist community throughout their tenure of activity.⁴⁵ Because ELF did not struggle with the problem of isolating recruits, they successfully circumvented one component of the leaderless resistance theory. However, one cell, influenced by the charismatic William Rodgers, exhibits elements of isolation that helped "The Family" become the most notorious group of ecoterrorists in the United States.

⁴² Joosse, "Leaderless Resistance and Ideological Inclusion: The Case of the Earth Liberation Front," 354.

⁴³ Gary Ackerman, "Beyond Arson? A Threat Assessment of the Earth Liberation Front," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 15, no. 4 (2003): 146.

⁴⁴ Stefan H. Leader and Peter Probst, "The Earth Liberation Front and Environmental Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 15, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 40.

⁴⁵ Ackerman, "Beyond Arson? A Threat Assessment of the Earth Liberation Front," 145.

The Family, a network of 19 individuals, conducted over 20 attacks, including some of the highest-profile ecoterrorist attacks recorded.⁴⁶ Examining the individual members of this network reveals several subgroups of which those members experienced periods of isolation with each other. Seven, including the most central and active members of the Family, participated in the Cascadia Forest Defender Protests, which saw the creation of a physical fort where activists lived, in isolation, for almost a year. While not all Cascadia Forest Defenders went on to become eco-terrorists, the environment likely served as an echo chamber, achieving the same effects of isolation in Moghadam's staircase of radicalization. The closest thing to a "leader" of the Family, William Rodgers, was among this group. Joseph Dibee, another highly active member of the Family, was also a Cascadia Defender and participated in the Makah Whale Hunt Protests. Other future members met at these Makah protests, indicating Dibee's primary social contacts were those willing to participate in violence for environmental causes: social isolation.⁴⁷ The romantic relationships (which led to the name "Family") further increased the group's isolation, as all 19 members, at one point, dated at least one other member. This isolation served to increase members' exposure to propaganda in an echo chamber while decreasing their ties to actors outside the network. Later, the Family disbanded as the more radicalized (and those who experienced more isolation) started advocating attacks targeting people, not just equipment. Those still active in society—that is, not isolated—were unwilling to conduct this type of attack.

C. WHITE POWER GROUPS

The ideologically racist beliefs held by White Power groups have been primarily driven underground since the Civil Rights movement and the ongoing societal change in the United States. This drive underground has forced strict ideological adherents to retreat from "normal" society to closed social networks of like-minded individuals where hatred

⁴⁶ Alleen Brown, "The Green Scare: How a Movement That Never Killed Anyone Became the FBI's No. 1 Domestic Terrorism Threat," *The Intercept* (blog), last modified March 23, 2019, <https://theintercept.com/2019/03/23/ecoterrorism-fbi-animal-rights/>.

⁴⁷ OregonLive.com, "Eco-Terrorism in the West: A Who's Who of the Convicted, the Arrested, the Missing."

can be openly expressed. Regarded as the first purveyors of a “leaderless resistance,” this organizational approach wasn’t heavily emphasized until the publication of William Peirce’s *The Turner Diaries*, which drew on racial millenarian beliefs from the mid-19th century.⁴⁸ Peirce’s book outlined the steps to form a cohesive social network capable of committing acts of violence on behalf of racist ideologies, relying on an element of isolation to develop the strength of social bonds. Two notable examples of acts of violence conducted by White Power groups were those carried out by Robert Jay Mathews and Timothy McVeigh. Both were avid readers of White Power propaganda, both developed small, cohesive networks, and both carried out lethal attacks.

Since childhood, Robert Jay Mathews isolated himself with like-minded individuals with increasingly extremist ideology. As a young adult, Mathews relocated from Arizona to Metaline Falls, Washington, a region adjacent to Northern Idaho, and a haven for white supremacists to operate openly. There, Mathews joined a local chapter of the National Alliance and consumed as much propaganda as he could; he then established contact with a Hayden Lake, Idaho, chapter of the Aryan Nations.⁴⁹ These small, highly rural communities with an overrepresentation of White Power groups allowed Mathews to isolate and recruit several members into his group, “The Order,” based on *The Turner Diaries* terrorist group of the same name.⁵⁰ Establishing a series of training camps and compounds, the Order used counterfeiting and armed robbery to finance its crime spree. The geographic location facilitated isolation, and the neighboring extremist groups provided constant ideological reinforcement; the members of the Order were surrounded by like-minded extremists and utterly isolated from outside society. Other adjacent groups were likewise plotting attacks across the United States; from disrupting Los Angeles’s water supply to initiating race riots to plotting an overthrow of the U.S. Government, The Order’s neighbors only served to isolate members further. With several bombings in

⁴⁸ Berger, “The Turner Legacy,” 3.

⁴⁹ Gus Martin, “Mathews, Robert Jay (1953–1984),” in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Terrorism*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2011), 379–379, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412980173>.

⁵⁰ L. J. Davis, “Ballad of an American Terrorist,” *Harper’s* (New York: Harper, July 1, 1986), 53, ProQuest.

Spokane, WA, and Seattle, WA, and the murder of a popular Jewish radio show host, Alan Berg, the group rose to national prominence. Repeated success and over \$3 million of stolen money in the bank helped draw additional members into an increasingly isolated network. When a member of the Aryan Nations, Walter West, was believed to have drunkenly bragged about their success, the Order killed him because, according to *The Turner Diaries*, carrying out punishment against members helped build trust.⁵¹ After their series of successful robberies, Mathews had custom medallions for “The Bruders Schweigen” (a German translation for “The Silent Brotherhood,” another name for the Order) to further cement network ties and isolation; only members of the in-group were privileged to have earned these. These tangible symbols of membership identified true followers as a badge of honor compared to the out-groups.

By 1984, the Federal Bureau of Investigation had identified Mathews and several other members of the Order, eventually cornering them on Whidbey Island, Washington. Mathews, while attempting to shoot down a police helicopter, was killed.⁵² Mathews had used a region of extremists to isolate his recruits socially; The Order’s members were surrounded by other extremists, isolated from open society, which allowed Mathews to incite them to a series of violent attacks.

Timothy McVeigh’s radicalization happened only after his discharge from the U.S. Army. Discouraged by failing U.S. Army Special Forces training and disheartened by what he alleged was needless brutality against the Iraqi Army during the 1990 Persian Gulf War, McVeigh slowly radicalized, albeit through gun culture, not white supremacism. However, these two themes merged, notably after witnessing the FBI standoffs at Ruby Ridge, Idaho (not far from Hayden Lake and Metaline Falls, Washington), and Waco, Texas. These events drove McVeigh to embrace a form of anti-governmentalism similar to ones advocated by many White Power groups. McVeigh found camaraderie among White Power groups at gun shows, where he pedaled as many copies of *The Turner Diaries* as he

⁵¹ Davis, 56.

⁵² Martin, “Mathews, Robert Jay (1953–1984).”

could, often using the novel as an introduction to many names within the White Power movement.⁵³

Through these new social networks, McVeigh took an increasingly violent stance as he sought like-minded groups to join, even contacting a Christian Identity movement compound at Elohim City, Oklahoma—a known meeting place for the Order. Drawing his social network from these groups, McVeigh turned outside to recruit two collaborators for his Oklahoma City plot, two like-minded individuals with whom he attended basic combat training several years before: Michael Fortier and Terry Nichols. All three shared ardent anti-gun control views and espoused hatred for the U.S. Government. Fortier was a habitual drug-abuser and did not travel with Nichols or McVeigh to gun shows. Married with children, he did not become as socially isolated as McVeigh or Nichols, and thus did not radicalize as much as they did, which is probably why he did not take an active role in the Oklahoma City Bombing. He refused McVeigh's invitation to participate after learning of his plans.

Upon his discharge from the Army, Nichols turned to McVeigh for social contact and developed the same radicalized views in response to the Branch Davidian Compound standoff. However, Nichols was much more isolated than Fortier; his marriage to a mail-order bride did not provide the same attachment Frontier experienced. He refused any participation on the day of the attack but helped assemble the bomb and attempted to hide the remaining nitrate fertilizer after the attack. The most isolated member, McVeigh, served as the ringleader, convincing a similarly isolated member, Nichols, to actively participate while the non-isolated member, Fortier, refused any material support.⁵⁴

D. INVOLUNTARY CELIBATES

The Incel movement was founded in response to feelings of isolation. As a response to feeling alone as a queer woman, Alana founded a website in the 1990s to find others

⁵³ *Oklahoma City: A Cautionary Tale of Hate in America*, directed by Barak Goodman, (2017; Boston: Public Broadcasting Service, 2017), <http://www.pbs.org>.

⁵⁴ "Profiles of the Three Oklahoma City Bombing Conspirators: Timothy McVeigh, Terry Nichols, and Michael Fortier," University of Missouri-Kansas City, accessed November 14, 2021, <http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/mcveigh/conspirators.html>.

experiencing the same loneliness and social isolation. This original web-based community has since been usurped by men and transformed from a support group to a radicalized networked community espousing anti-women rights hatred and violence.⁵⁵ The Incel movement lacks a specific political ideology but is heavily influenced by the “manosphere”: the belief that women’s rights will continue to erode masculinity while simultaneously making the likelihood of romantic relationships with women even more unlikely.⁵⁶ This physical and emotional isolation lures vulnerable young men into the web forums. They are exposed to Incel propaganda espousing the unfairness of society and how women are to blame.

This informational isolation lends itself to the internet, where radicalization can happen virtually. With many members of the Incel movement harboring strong emotions from their perceived exclusion from society, they are more susceptible to “conspiracy cascades,” which enhances the effectiveness of propaganda and Incel conspiracy theories because of the audience’s emotional state.⁵⁷ Rather than training camps, safe houses, and ungoverned spaces, the Incel radicalization can happen on any laptop in the world. Those who start associating with the Incel movement, searching for camaraderie and shared understanding, are then inundated with terminology unique only to the movement, which strengthens an individual’s belonging to the group. Only by taking the “Black Pill,” can a member see how the world truly is: a sexual marketplace designed to exclude those of “undesirable” physical and emotional traits, forever dooming members to the existence of rejection by society and women.⁵⁸

There are four broad categories of the manosphere: Pick Up Artists, Men’s Rights Activists, Men Going Their Own Way, and Involuntary Celibates. No one category is violent on its own and considering oneself an Incel is not an admission of radicalization

⁵⁵ Glace et al., “Taking the Black Pill,” 288.

⁵⁶ Hoffman, Ware, and Shapiro, “Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence,” 568; Glace et al., “Taking the Black Pill,” 288–89; Crimando, “Alone Together and Angry.”

⁵⁷ Sunstein and Vermeule, “Conspiracy Theories,” 215–16.

⁵⁸ Jia Tolentino, “The Rage of the Incels,” *The New Yorker*, May 15, 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/the-rage-of-the-incels>.

(though many are). However, it does indicate significant isolation from society which can lead to mobilization—an act of violence. There have been several attacks thus far, starting with Elliot Rodger, who in 2014 attacked a sorority house in 2014, leaving six dead and fourteen wounded, explaining his “Day of Retribution” in a lengthy manifesto.⁵⁹ The Incel community has since dubbed Rodger as “The Supreme Gentleman,” and has termed the will to attack women as “going ER.”⁶⁰

The Involuntary Celibate movement and self-identification cater explicitly towards isolated individuals and offer a virtual place for companionship that has been usurped by anger and hatred. This self-imposed isolation is reinforced by propaganda and the constant message that Incels will never fit in and belong in the world. When the only space in which individuals feel like they belong encourages hate and violence, members are likely to conduct acts of violence on behalf of the group in leaderless resistance.

E. BLACK LIVES MATTER

Distinct from the other three case studies, the Black Lives Matter movement is widely popular with broad social and political support. Since its inception in 2013 and notably after the murder of George Floyd in May 2020, BLM has organized significant protests nationwide. Despite most of its participants acting peacefully, several protestors have turned to violence through looting and arson, while others have committed murder, citing membership to BLM. And although BLM aim is “combating and countering acts of violence...” violence still occurs in its name.⁶¹ How were those members isolated enough to mobilize, even isolated from the core messages of BLM?

The collective behavior of many BLM protestors, including those who turn protests into violent riots, cannot be described through the same isolating factors as McVeigh, Rogers, or Rodger, but rather through the concept of *Brutalization thesis*. This thesis posits that stigmatized, impoverished, and minority communities can become more prone to

⁵⁹ “Elliot Rodger: How Misogynist Killer Became ‘Incel Hero,’” *BBC News*, April 25, 2018, sec. U.S. & Canada, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-43892189>.

⁶⁰ Hoffman, Ware, and Shapiro, “Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence,” 570.

⁶¹ “About,” Black Lives Matter, accessed December 27, 2021, <https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/>.

higher crime rates and self-inflicted violence. The effects of the Brutalization thesis are exacerbated when those communities perceive they are being unjustly profiled and targeted by authorities, which is a prominent theme of the BLM movement.⁶² The locations of BLM protests support this: protests are much more likely to occur where a police-involved death has happened, although there is a strong correlation between protest locations and high rates of violent crime.⁶³

Individual isolation, leading to radicalization and mobilization, is replaced by a communal perception of isolation. Entire communities, with support from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and races, have participated in BLM protests and activities (including those turning into violence) without the same isolation described by Moghaddam and the theory of leaderless resistance. And while there are three listed terrorist events associated with the BLM movement in the GTD, only one explicitly cites the perpetrator as shouting “Black lives matter!” in an attack leaving one dead.⁶⁴ Micah Xavier Johnson, who is often listed as a BLM associate, claimed no membership to any group and did not carry out his attack (which killed six and wounded nine, mostly police officers) at a BLM protest but rather a rally hosted by a different racial justice organization.⁶⁵

White Power groups, ELF, and the Incels encourage acts of violence or terrorism through their literature through leaderless resistance; BLM, despite violent protests, does not espouse violence or terrorism. Its messaging does not require isolation, though it resonates strongly through black communities as the Brutalization thesis would predict, replacing the need for isolation.

⁶² Richard B. Duque, Robert Rivera, and E. J. LeBlanc, “The Active Shooter Paradox: Why the Rise of Cancel Culture, ‘Me Too’, ANTIFA and Black Lives Matter... Matters,” *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, Extremism, 60 (September 1, 2021): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2020.101544>.

⁶³ Vanessa Williamson, Kris-Stella Trump, and Katherine Levine Einstein, “Black Lives Matter: Evidence That Police-Caused Deaths Predict Protest Activity,” *Perspectives on Politics* 16, no. 2 (June 2018): 405, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592717004273>.

⁶⁴ “GTD Search Results,” START, accessed December 27, 2021, <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?chart=overtime&search=black%20lives%20matter>.

⁶⁵ “Incident Summary for GTDID: 201607070001,” START, accessed December 27, 2021, <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/IncidentSummary.aspx?gtdid=201607070001>.

F. ASSESSMENT

White Power groups and Incels exhibit the highest degrees of isolation of these case studies. Individual retreat from mainstream society and messaging from the group both advance the individual through radicalization and mobilization without an effective out-group to disrupt the process. These groups' propaganda effectively severs the individual's out-group to prevent this disruption. The other critical components of the theory of leaderless resistance allow the continued development of the will to conduct violence on behalf of the group.

ELF and BLM must be explained differently. ELF emerged from existing networks and community beliefs; the case of the Family did witness isolation, but isolation as a closed network in-group, which only allowed the development of radicalization and mobilization to the extent of vandalism and property destruction, not murder. The same is true for BLM, where the in-group are those suffering from the factors identified by the Brutalization thesis on a community level; ties to out-groups still exist where normative behavior restrains violence from acts of terrorism at the threshold of riots and arson if events turn violent at all.

White Power groups and Incels actively espouse violence in their propaganda; ELF and BLM do not. To achieve violent ends, the former must achieve a much more extreme level of isolation, while the latter can achieve results in small-group or community isolation with restrained violence.

V. FLEXIBLE IDEOLOGY

A. FRAMEWORK

Though it is unknown the exact causal mechanism ideology has in acts of terrorism and violence, ideology does play a role in the social fabric of terror organizations, including leaderless resistance.⁶⁶ Not all terrorists are ideologues prepared to sacrifice themselves for an ideology; however, many still use ideology to justify violence. In many cases, ideology doesn't grow terrorist cells; instead, that occurs through recruitment and familiarization through friendship networks, but the latter can introduce ideological content.⁶⁷ However, ideology does attract members in leaderless resistance; the consumption of the movement's propaganda, by nature, is ideological and finds purchase in some audiences, which in turn pushes them through Moghaddam's staircase towards radicalization and mobilization.

Ideology must inform potential followers of the spectrum of action: "what is the problem, who is the enemy, what is the solution, what are the legitimate means to achieve the desired ends, and how does the current fight fit into a larger context?"⁶⁸ Effective propaganda for leaderless resistance must inform all of these to frame individuals' actions to affect change. Failure to adequately outline any of these five components can risk delegitimizing the intent of mobilization; different groups have different solutions for this.

Not all groups are equally successful; if an ideology is too strict (as we will see, many of the White Power groups suffered recruiting issues because of too strict an ideology) or too broad (as exemplified by Black Lives Matter's numerous ideological goals), membership and affiliation will decrease, lowering the likelihood of acts of violence. If the ideology is flexible enough to attract a large and diverse group while maintaining its original purpose (like the Earth Liberation Front's propaganda), an

⁶⁶ Donald Holbrook and John Horgan, "Terrorism and Ideology: Cracking the Nut," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 13, no. 6 (2019): 2, 8, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26853737>.

⁶⁷ Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, 156.

⁶⁸ Michael Freeman, "The Headless Horseman: A Theoretical and Strategic Assessment of Leadership Targeting," *Faculty and Researchers' Publications*, 6.

optimization exists that expands beyond one target demographic to many, increasing membership and the likelihood of acts of violence.

B. EARTH LIBERATION FRONT

Perceived failures in Earth First!’s ideology led to the creation of the more action-oriented Earth Liberation Front; the original ideology was too inflexible to address the concerns of many devout conservationists.⁶⁹ The original *Deep Ecology* movement focused on eight tenants of idealistic human behavior to achieve an altruistic lifestyle rooted in Taoism.⁷⁰ The complexity of the message and the perception that a member’s entire lifestyle must be altered made it difficult to attract followers. ELF’s ideology was far more flexible, requiring only some form of action be taken against those damaging the natural world, and through this, educate the public of the damage being done to the earth, all while protecting human life.⁷¹

ELF’s ideological flexibility, to exact costs against those harming nature, appealed to a wide range of the population, such as hunters, outdoors people, and animal rights activists. All those who usually may be at odds with one another now had propaganda that appealed to each equally. Hunters want to protect the forests and prairies and thus their game, outdoors people wish to preserve the wild places in general, and animal rights activists (typically opposed to hunting) want to protect habitats.⁷² In the ELF cell, the Family, this diversity yielded from flexible ideology is exemplified amongst the members. Jennifer Kolar, a central figure in the Family, was a successful software developer with Microsoft. In contrast, Jacob Ferguson, another central figure, was a methamphetamine addict from an entirely different socioeconomic background.⁷³ Both previously

⁶⁹ Joosse, “Leaderless Resistance and Ideological Inclusion,” 354.

⁷⁰ Arne Naess, “The Deep Ecological Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects,” in *Deep Ecology for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. George Sessions (Boston and London: Shambhala, 1995), 68.

⁷¹ Joosse, “Leaderless Resistance and Ideological Inclusion,” 40.

⁷² Ackerman, “Beyond Arson? A Threat Assessment of the Earth Liberation Front,” 356.

⁷³ Kim McDonald, “The Geekiest Arsonist,” accessed September 22, 2021, <https://crosscut.com/2008/07/the-geekiest-arsonist>; “Operation Backfire,” Story, Federal Bureau of Investigation, accessed September 17, 2021, <https://www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field-offices/portland/news/stories/operation-backfire>.

participated in ELF's ideologically driven mission of exacting costs for damaging nature; Kolar participated in the Makah Whale Hunt Protests while Ferguson was a Cascadia Forest Defender.

ELF's simple message without ideological complexity inspired 76 separate attacks (including only those resulting in more than \$500,000 in damage to exclude simple vandalism) in the United States alone; however only 43 perpetrators were identified because of ELF's use of leaderless resistance.⁷⁴

C. WHITE POWER GROUPS

Compared to ELF's singular, flexible ideology and its success in spurring leaderless resistance, White Power groups more inflexible ideologies splintered the racist movement overall and yielded lower membership per group. While ELF was an international movement towards one cause, the variances in White Power groups created dozens of smaller, disjunct groups and failed to develop into a national unified face. A survey of current White Power groups throughout the United States exemplifies the drastic variances in ideology, group identity, and the goals and objectives of the groups. For "Neo-Confederacy" groups alone, there exists the League of the South, the Confederate 901, the Southern Cultural Center, the Heirs to the Confederacy (to name only a few), while for Christian Identity movements, there are another ten, such as Our Place Fellowship in Colville, Washington.⁷⁵ There are dozens of White Power groups with unique ideologies, which are unique enough to prevent collaboration and unification across the movement and are inflexible enough to attract relatively low membership.

White Power group leadership, however, has attempted to adopt the ideological flexibility found in *The Turner Diaries*. In this seminal book for White Power groups and leaderless resistance, the chief resistance movement is "The Order," with only references

⁷⁴ START, "Global Terrorism Database," accessed February 7, 2021, <https://www.start.umd.edu/data-tools/global-terrorism-database-gtd>.

⁷⁵ SPLC, "Hate Map," Southern Poverty Law Center, accessed January 6, 2022, <https://www.splcenter.org/hate-map>.

to an ideology without describing what the ideology is.⁷⁶ This allowed *The Turner Diaries* rapid popularity amongst a wide variety of potential followers across the spectrum of White Power groups, helping the book become an everyday staple in acts of terrorism perpetrated by these groups. The Order, in the book, fails again at ideological flexibility concerning strict in-groups and out-groups; people either subscribed to the Order's rigid ideology or were cast out. The flexible ideology of White Power groups, insofar as *The Turner Diaries* is concerned, was only to sell copies without espousing ideology itself.

Timothy McVeigh defied the White Power group's inflexible ideology. McVeigh, unlike those at Elohim City or The Silent Brotherhood, was not a Neo-Nazi; instead, he was anti-government and sought to coopt White Power group's anti-government stance for support.⁷⁷ Perhaps drawing on the overall racial themes of *The Turner Diaries*, McVeigh often used the book to meet other anti-government people at gun shows, with consumption of the propaganda being the primary ideologically shared connection.

White Power groups have suffered this lack of ideological flexibility endemically, with murders and assassinations across groups plaguing senior leadership. While leaderless resistance movements have grown from the overall premise of these groups, the disconnectedness in White Power agendas has failed to unite the movement. It has been unable to spur significant leaderless resistance.

D. INVOLUNTARY CELIBATES

Incel ideology centers around the perceived injustice of young, attractive women refusing to have sexual relationships with self-identified Involuntary Celibates. This premise has developed into a violent political ideology blaming the physical loneliness of Incels on imbalances in the modern "sexual marketplace," preventing rape.⁷⁸ Unlike ELF or even White Power groups, this ideology only applies to those involuntarily in the self-identified Incel community; if you are not an Incel, the ideology cannot apply to you. This

⁷⁶ Brodie, "The Aryan New Era: Apocalyptic Realizations in *The Turner Diaries*," 17.

⁷⁷ Timothy G. Baysinger, "Right-Wing Group Characteristics and Ideology" (Monterey, CA, Naval Postgraduate School, 2006), 4.

⁷⁸ Tolentino, "The Rage of the Incels."

makes it rigidly inflexible and restrictive. Incel membership, radicalization, and mobilization cannot be explained by Incel ideology in any significant way.

Where ideology's link to terrorism is tenuous is exemplified with the Incels. In this case study, ideology must be abandoned as a causal factor and replaced with grievance theory; the grievances individuals have of being an Incel supplant any ideological opinions on the manner, and those that eventually commit acts of violence are influenced (perhaps) by some form of ideological factors online, but more likely from the manifestation of anger at their perceived plight. Here ideology may normalize violence.⁷⁹

Of these five major questions that ideology must answer to effectively spur terrorism, Incel ideology fails to answer all of them: no solution is provided—at least no viable solution.⁸⁰ While several Incel attackers have championed “The Incel Revolution,” they simultaneously espouse they are always doomed to failure because of the self-placed social status they occupy.⁸¹ The online Incel community's lack of a valid ideology (because of its failure to answer the five questions), and its seemingly broken string of posts and discussions, mark the movement as a grievance-based group rather than an ideologically-based group. If the group's ideology can be defined simply as “hatred towards women,” it may be considered some form of underdeveloped ideology. However, it is still a grievance. In terms of leaderless resistance, the Incel movement fails to maintain an ideology to consider.

E. BLACK LIVES MATTER

Black Lives Matter's ideology has evolved over the decade since its inception, originating as a movement to end police violence in the Black community. This simple goal was attractive to most people and garnered tremendous support in protests and social media campaigns, even resulting in clothing brands. BLM achieved an optimized, flexible ideology to attract support.

⁷⁹ Holbrook and Horgan, “Terrorism and Ideology,” 4.

⁸⁰ Freeman, “The Headless Horseman: A Theoretical and Strategic Assessment of Leadership Targeting,” 6.

⁸¹ Hoffman, Ware, and Shapiro, “Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence,” 570.

However, this simple message evolved to include a variety of other causes unrelated to police violence against the Black community, with the addition of civil rights advocacy for six different demographics outside the original mission statement of police brutality against Blacks.⁸² The inclusion of other demographics, while some may be attracted to BLM's size and capacity, can also dissuade participation if ideologies diverge from BLM's original mission. With police brutality still a cultural issue in Black communities, the expansion and subsequent reduction in the ideology's flexibility may reduce support for the original movement and may be supplanted by competing groups who maintain focus on the original mission. BLM's social media posts have caused further harm by reducing ideological flexibility, turning away many Jewish supporters with statements like, "We are a movement committed to ending settler colonialism in all forms... (always have. And always will be)."⁸³ Subsequent, controversial posts have continued to jeopardize BLM's support. Its ideology is further refined and narrowed into an inflexible ideology; each additional stance away from its original mission estranges followers, restricting growth and reducing its capacity as a leaderless resistance.

F. ASSESSMENT

Of ELF, White Power groups, Incels, and BLM, ELF has the most effective flexible ideology to spur leaderless resistance. ELF's ideology was simple, tangible, and attractive to a wide variety of people. BLM began with a similarly flexible ideology, but changes transformed it into an increasingly inflexible one, leading to a reduction in followers. The ideological differences amongst White Power groups have systemically prevented a unification across the movement, even though they originated the use of leaderless resistance as a model for terrorism. Finally, Incels, if the summation of their beliefs can even be considered an ideology, are primarily driven by grievances; across the community, their substitute ideology fails to meet the requirements of a valid ideology.

⁸² Black Lives Matter, "About."

⁸³ Black Lives Matter, "Black Lives Matter Stands in Solidarity with Palestinians. We Are a Movement Committed to Ending Settler Colonialism in All Forms and Will Continue to Advocate for Palestinian Liberation. (Always Have. And Always Will Be). #freepalestine," Tweet, *@Blklivesmatter* (blog), May 17, 2021, <https://twitter.com/Blklivesmatter/status/1394289672101064704>.

Flexible ideology is a component of the theory of leaderless resistance in its purpose of recruiting members, understanding that the more followers exist, the opportunity for radicalization and mobilization increases. Ideology alone will not lead to violence and is still misunderstood in its relationship to terrorism. However, this examination of the case studies illuminates how an appropriately flexible ideology can increase the likelihood of a leaderless resistance carrying out acts of violence and illustrates that an overly defined, inflexible ideology will hinder growth, popularity, and effectiveness.

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VI. URGENCY AND EXOGENOUS EVENTS

A. FRAMEWORK

The sense of urgency often emphasized through exogenous events must be exploited to enhance its leaderless resistance. *The Turner Diaries* helps identify urgency as a component in the theory of leaderless resistance because it's a central theme in the book. Through several discussions in the book, the reader learns that people were too slow to act, and there were "missed opportunities" throughout, which eventually led to the collapse of society.⁸⁴ This sense of urgency, made real by exogenous events, helps motivate people to act; that is, progress from radicalization to mobilization, the final step before committing an act of violence.

Like the other components of the theory of leaderless resistance, each group handles this differently. Some, like ELF, emphasize urgency in the context of global events (logging or whale hunting), while others, like White Power groups, use a millenarian approach, citing the biblical end of days for action. BLM responds immediately to perceptions of unjust police-involved shootings with nationwide protests, often within hours, but the INCEL movement exhibits no palpable sense of urgency.

Urgency and exogenous events will be discussed as related terms, with urgency being the product of exogenous events through manipulation by propagandists. Without exogenous events, the calls for urgency are invalidated for all but the most radicalized adherents. In some cases, the sense of urgency from propagandists is unnecessary, as followers perceive exogenous events independently and self-motivate to mobilization without an intermediary.

B. EARTH LIBERATION FRONT

Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring* was instrumental in popularizing environmental concerns; the advent of nuclear weapons, increased use of chemicals, and

⁸⁴ Berger, "The Turner Legacy," 14.

rampant deforestation helped environmentalism become a popular cause worldwide.⁸⁵ *The Monkeywrench Gang* did the same but with a different emphasis: it emphasized that the individual could take immediate direct action like Abbey's protagonist Heyduke.⁸⁶ Of the four case studies, ELF's urgency is derived from perhaps the most visible exogenous events, allowing any potential members to personally witness the wrong they are committed to stopping on behalf of the organization.

A subset of the Family network within the ELF is representative of such urgency, as well as the Family's most notorious attack. When portions of Oregon's Central Cascades Range was allocated for logging, consumers of ecological material and ELF propaganda recognized this exogenous event with a definable timeline to save that tract of forest, creating urgency for action. Eight members of The Family initially met at this protest, which remained non-violent and delayed the destruction of the forest for over a year.⁸⁷ Then, after the formation of the Family, it carried out an attack against a Colorado ski resort, causing over \$12 million in damage. This attack directly responded to plans to expand the resort into a wilderness area that was a habitat for a species of fox. ELF members do not have a shortage of these events, perceiving the development of neighborhoods, high-emission vehicle sales, or many other signs of pollution as urgent threats to the planet. For the ski resort, it was an exogenous event which created an urgency to act by first radicalizing, and then mobilizing, group members.

With easy direct links between potential members and members of ELF and the perceived destruction of the natural world, it is easy for everyday exogenous events to translate into urgency and mobilization. ELF mastered urgency with its grandiose doomsday narratives of mass extinctions and real-life events such as the construction of

⁸⁵ "A Brief History of Environmentalism," Greenpeace International, accessed January 6, 2022, <https://www.greenpeace.org/international/story/11658/a-brief-history-of-environmentalism>.

⁸⁶ "Edward Abbey Biography," Notable Biographies, accessed June 4, 2021, <https://www.notablebiographies.com/supp/Supplement-A-Bu-and-Obituaries/Abbey-Edward.html>.

⁸⁷ Oregonlive.com, "Eco-Terrorism in the West: A Who's Who of the Convicted, the Arrested, the Missing,"; *If a Tree Falls: A Story of the Earth Liberation Front*, directed by Marshall Curry (2011; Brooklyn, NY: Marshall Curry Productions, 2011).

ski areas, neighborhoods, and even the sale of SUVs, each prompting attacks on those targets identified by the radicalized and mobilized members.

C. WHITE POWER GROUPS

William Peirce was motivated to write *The Turner Diaries* after several exogenous events. Through his narrative, he created a sense of urgency to avoid the collapse of a white-dominated society. These events were not as tangible and urgent as ELF's. However, they were interpreted as indicators of society's eventual demise: the Vietnam War managed by a Jewish cabal, and the Civil Rights movement.⁸⁸ Borrowing from Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and its calls for immediate action, Peirce does the same for his view of the White race.⁸⁹ McVeigh and other adherents rallied to this urgent call.

White Power groups respond to these exogenous events differently. Some are rooted in millenarian belief that humanity must initiate the events that will culminate in the Rapture and the ultimate salvation of those willing to act.⁹⁰ This ideology asserts that during the biblical Tribulation, God unleashes wrath upon the earth, however, devout followers will be saved with the rapture.⁹¹ In these groups, the urgency is to ensure the Rapture happens the way their millenarian interpretation of the Bible states, which often harkens to Peirce's narrative of a global race war. Because of this, mobilization is not urgent, but organizing into cells is; in *The Turner Diaries*, even racist true believers who acted too late were left begging for food. Urgency is required, and leaderless resistance is based on these organized White Power group cells.

Other non-millenarian groups, notably Timothy McVeigh's cell, have used exogenous events to jump-start a sense of urgency and mobilize followers. Initially radicalized by the events at Ruby Ridge, Idaho, and Waco, Texas, McVeigh was motivated to act, though on his timeline. His attack was going to be, in his view, the event that would

⁸⁸ Berger, "The Turner Legacy," 8, 14.

⁸⁹ Credo Reference, "The Turner Diaries: The Literature of Propaganda."

⁹⁰ Brodie, "The Aryan New Era," 13.

⁹¹ "FAQ: What Exactly Is the Tribulation?," Rapture Ready, accessed February 23, 2022, <https://www.raptureready.com/faq-what-exactly-is-the-tribulation/>.

ultimately bring about the downfall of the United States government. Others have attempted to commit a pivotal event like McVeigh; after dragging a Black man to death, three White Supremacists shouted, “We’re starting *The Turner Diaries* early.”⁹²

White Power groups have created, through racist rhetoric, artificial exogenous events through biblical interpretation or conspiracy theories to develop a sense of urgency among members to act. White Power groups have not had the same success in leaderless resistance for widespread acts of violence on their behalf without the tangible, legitimate realization of speed that ELF exploits.

D. INVOLUNTARY CELIBATES

The Incel movement has no discernable action timeline or specific exogenous events, only slow social progress for women’s and minority rights. While much of the group’s rhetoric and propaganda blames the internet for many of its members’ grievances, it is not as rooted in particular events, just societal themes, somewhat like White Power groups. Incels are often anti-Semitic and anti-feminist; recent social movements that can be perceived to be threatening the white, male-dominated society are seized upon by Incels as the potential exogenous conditions responsible for their perceived subjugation.⁹³

Without a framework similar to William Peirce’s for White Power groups, Incel calls for a revolution in which they can realize their ideological goal of subjugating women lacks a sense of urgency, however. When Elliot Rodger attacked a sorority house in 2014, his manifesto helped mobilize Alek Minassian to carry out his 2018 attack in Toronto, proclaiming, “The Incel Rebellion has already been begun!”⁹⁴ Minassian’s intent to initiate an Incel rebellion failed, like McVeigh’s, because of a failure to recognize a near total lack of support for their causes. Neither were framed to create urgency, with no overriding narrative of saving the planet from either ecological destruction or the Biblical rapture.

⁹² Berger, “The Turner Legacy,” 29.

⁹³ Glace et al., “Taking the Black Pill,” 288–90.

⁹⁴ Hoffman, Ware, and Shapiro, “Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence,” 569–70.

Ultimately, because of the nebulous ideology (better described as a grievance), the Incel community only has exogenous themes they feel threatened by, which are not dire enough to be perceived as urgent. This has failed the component of the theory of leaderless resistance and may help explain why the Incel movement has mainly been isolated and inconsequential outside of only a few sporadic attacks.

E. BLACK LIVES MATTER

The death of George Zimmerman in 2013 gave birth to Black Lives Matter as a movement, starting with a Twitter campaign sharing #BlackLivesMatter. A year later, the death of Trayvon Martin catapulted BLM into the prominence it enjoys today.⁹⁵ Few other groups are as responsive as BLM to external events, with an almost immediate response time through social media for social discourse and protests. Unlike the other three cases, however, BLM's responses remain largely legal and outside the realm of terrorism (though some protests have descended into violent riots).

This creates an asymmetry between exogenous events and urgency, as the exogenous events prompt only reactionary responses. The direct link between events and urgency must then be filtered through the models of social change and movement: protests, petitions, and other legal means for change help BLM advance towards the cessation of police brutality towards the Black community. While exogenous events are used to mobilize BLM, the message is carefully crafted to limit violence as an urgent response.

The response time BLM has to exogenous events such as the unlawful shooting of a Black person has placed the onus of urgency on political leadership's shoulders, mobilizing those potentially outside the group to act politically. No other groups have sought this means of change and with such immediate political outcry for new legislation. How BLM balances events and urgency while constraining the actions of its members is an effective and efficient use of leaderless resistance theory, which has so far remained relatively peaceful.

⁹⁵ Updegrave et al., "Red States and Black Lives," 85.

F. ASSESSMENT

How groups manage and exploit exogenous events into urgency to radicalize and mobilize helps determine how successful the leaderless resistance will be. ELF capitalized on a highly tangible and personal series of events and emphasized that the individual could accomplish urgent action in leaderless resistance. White Power groups failed to precisely articulate these events, and their notions of action were too far removed from the end goal (white dominance or the apocalypse) to mobilize enough people effectively. The Incel community likewise failed, with only social themes—no events—to exploit, and similarly no definable or attainable end state. Of these, BLM most effectively uses exogenous events with an expedient response time to events nationwide. By creating a sense of urgency amongst its members and influential policymakers, they can mobilize huge groups and achieve their ends.

The coupling of exogenous events and creating the sense of urgency must be balanced appropriately for effective leaderless resistance, in which members are mobilized to commit acts of violence (or acts of civil disobedience) for a related end state. Groups that fail to do this will not mobilize enough followers to commit acts of violence in leaderless resistance.

VII. INSPIRATION

A. FRAMEWORK

How a group uses the acts of violence of individually motivated participants (those in the leaderless resistance) to incite more attacks will be referred to as inspiration. The publicity attached to attacks on behalf of the group can, if appropriate, spur copycat attacks, bringing further awareness of the group and increasing membership. However, ill-timed attacks or attacks deemed excessive can have the opposite effect and negatively impact the group's ability to inspire.

Amongst the four case studies, there are varying approaches to inspiration offered to those who carry out attacks, resulting in differences in motivating for others to mobilize. White Power groups suffered tremendous backlash for McVeigh's attack, although he assumed it would be considered highly inspirational for follow-on attacks. ELF, conversely, managed it efficiently and incited dozens of attacks, many inspired because the assailants heard of previous attacks and mobilized. Incels have an extreme amount of prestige attached to several attackers which would seem to inspire more attacks; however, this has not led to a successful leaderless resistance writ large. BLM is careful to manage inspiration entirely; only peaceful protests are celebrated, creating a self-regulating culture against violence and outright condemnation for those who commit acts of violence in the group's name.

This chapter uses the Global Terrorism Database to examine the timeline of attacks to determine if a particular attack inspires future attacks. If several other attacks closely follow one attack in chronological time, it assumes they are copycat attacks inspired by the initial attacker. If a significant (albeit subjective) amount of time passes or no other correlating factors exist, then it assumes that later attacks are unconnected with the inspiration of the first attack.

B. EARTH LIBERATION FRONT

The Global Terrorism Database lists 71 different ELF attacks in the United States between 1995 and 2009. On average, an attack occurred every 71 days with a standard

deviation of 106 days. Overall, periods of inactivity (a significant number of days since the last attack) were often followed by several more attacks clustered together before tapering off. There are two clusters of attacks. The first (Cluster 1) is from late November 2001 through early November 2002, the second (Cluster 2) from August 2002 through September 2003. These clusters are notable because they start after a period of relative inactivity; Cluster 1 was initiated with an attack in Eugene, Oregon, the first after a 122-day pause, and only the second attack since January 2000. However, this attack was quickly followed by another three days later, and 13 more attacks were conducted at an average of every 23 days over the following year. Cluster 2 is similar in that a period of inactivity for 140 days was broken by an attack in Irvine, Pennsylvania, and followed by 15 more over the next 400 days for an average attack every 25 days; in some cases, multiple attacks were conducted per week.⁹⁶ These attack clusters suggest that the first attack inspired to motivate and mobilize others to do the same.

Cluster 1 was initiated by ELF attackers in Niwot, Colorado, on November 27, 2000, when they burned down a nearly completed multi-million-dollar home. At the scene, investigators found ELF's claim of responsibility and the political message "Viva la revolution! The Boulder ELF burned the Legend Ridge mansion...we know that the corporate developers No on Amendment 24 campaign is guilty of a \$6 million election buyout."⁹⁷ The Denver Post soon picked up the story and a New York Times article mentioned it in early 2001.⁹⁸ Whereas there had been a month-long pause before the event, it was followed by five more attacks by early January. Cluster 2 began after 140 days of inactivity with an arson attack in Irvine, Pennsylvania, against a U.S. Forest Service Research Station. In a statement sent to the Warren Times Observer, a local newspaper, the

⁹⁶ START, "GTD Search Results," accessed January 27, 2022, <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?search=elf&sa.x=0&sa.y=0>.

⁹⁷ START, "Incident Summary for GTDID: 200011270006," accessed January 28, 2022, <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/IncidentSummary.aspx?gtdid=200011270006>.

⁹⁸ Dan Barry and Al Baker, "For 'Eco-Terrorism' Group, a Hidden Structure and Public Messages," *The New York Times*, January 8, 2001, sec. New York, <https://www.nytimes.com/2001/01/08/nyregion/for-eco-terrorism-group-a-hidden-structure-and-public-messages.html>.

group outlined its motives and made further threats.⁹⁹ The next attack occurred only seven days later, and as noted above attacks continued at a rate of one every 25 days for the next 400 days.

ELF attacks were routinely picked up by national media outlets, thanks in part to the uniqueness of its targets (generally refusing to target people) and the damage its arson attacks inflicted. The attack of private citizens, corporations, and even government targets gained more publicity and headlines. This media coverage offered ELF the inspiration to continue mobilizing activists to act themselves. The perceived heroism of being an active member of ELF carrying out attacks surely inspired and mobilized many away from simple radicalization. Whereas individuals were never awarded prestige from ELF publicists, others saw the publicity the attacks received and were inspired to carry out copycat attacks themselves.

C. WHITE POWER GROUPS

Using acts of terrorism committed by “White Supremacists” the GTD identified 115 different attacks from 1970 through 2019. On average, an attack was committed every 158 days. From 1970 through 1971, attacks occurred at an average of one every 20 days, while from 2016 through 2019 attacks occurred at an average of one every 41 days. Unlike the spread of ELF attacks, these clusters exhibit more normalcy, with long periods with no attacks. The longest period between attacks was from November 1980 to 1985, and only five attacks occurred between 1980 and 1995.¹⁰⁰ It does not appear that any individual attack inspired another follow-on attack; however, White Supremacist groups accounted for the largest number of attacks in the study. And unlike the Incels, there are no attackers that were heralded with the prestige bestowed upon attackers like Rodgers; rather, the relative often occurrence (every 158 for almost 50 years) suggests attacks to be the norm, not the exception.

⁹⁹ START, “Incident Summary for GTDID: 200208110011,” accessed January 28, 2022, <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/IncidentSummary.aspx?gtdid=200208110011>.

¹⁰⁰ START, “GTD Search Results,” accessed January 27, 2022, <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?search=white+supremacists&sa.x=21&sa.y=11>.

D. INVOLUNTARY CELIBATES

The Incel movement has only resulted in eight attacks to date, the first in 2009 and the most recent in 2019. With one exception, none of these attacks follow shortly after another; on average they fell 514 days apart, the exception being an attack perpetrated 14 days after a Canadian attack. The follow-on attack may have been inspired by the previous one, as the Incel chatrooms and message boards, fueled by the attention provided by mainstream media, indeed would have been consumed by the attacker. Unlike ELF, attacks do not seem to inspire or mobilize follow-on attacks; however, attackers have been rewarded extremely high levels of prestige for their attacks and regarded in high esteem.

Whereas ELF placed prestige on the attack itself, Incels herald the attackers themselves, elevating them to an almost “hero” status amongst the group. Most notable is Elliot Rodger, whose 2014 attack killed seven and wounded 13. Online forums dubbed Rodgers “The Supreme Gentlemen,” and a subsequent attacker, Alek Minassian, mentioned him by name when he posted to the forum 4Chan, “We will overthrow all the Chads and Stacys! All hail the Supreme Gentleman Elliot Rodger!”¹⁰¹ Because of his attack, the Incel community considers Rodger its “patron saint.” Through this prestige and notoriety amongst the in-group, he inspires others to achieve the same publicity as Rodgers, which can only be accomplished through violence on behalf of the Incels.¹⁰²

E. BLACK LIVES MATTER

It is much more challenging to measure BLM attacks; the GTD lists only five BLM related attacks between 2015 and 2016. However, if those results are expanded to include anti-police violence in totality (with a chronological cap before the creation of BLM), then there are 13 to consider. Considering only the five BLM attacks, they occurred an average every 66 days across a span of only nine months; if we consider the 13, they occurred an average of every 208 days over seven years. It does not appear that any attack inspired follow-on attacks in either assessment. BLM leadership and social media posts espouse anti-violent means for

¹⁰¹ Hoffman, Ware, and Shapiro, “Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence,” 570.

¹⁰² Hoffman, Ware, and Shapiro, 570.

protest and activism; no associated inspiration was drawn from previous attacks by attackers. While attacks, like ELF's, generate nationwide headlines, the public's response is generally negative, further depriving attackers from in-group inspiration.

A counterargument to this is the recent spate of targeted attacks against police officers; while not affiliated with the BLM movement proper, famous slogans of "ACAB" (All Cops Are Bastards) may contribute to these attacks. However, the GTD does not list these as terrorist events and are excluded from the study. If inspiration were derived from this, the attack itself would be the result of inspiration from various supporters rather than the attacker. Media rarely mentions the assailant's name; however, the act itself is widely publicized. This would follow the opportunities afforded to ELF, which successfully garnered inspiration to mobilize.

F. ASSESSMENT

As an element of the theory of leaderless resistance, inspiration seems to only work with the caveat of *survivability*. While attackers have been glorified, as with the Incels, inspiration does not significantly impact the overall occurrence of attacks. When the attack is widely publicized (a precondition of inspiration), and survivability is high, there is an increase in attacks. For White Power groups, there is enough constant violence to perpetuate itself without individual attackers necessarily serving as inspiration for others.

For a leaderless resistance movement to adequately use inspiration to perpetrate attacks and violence, inspiration is best appropriated to the attack itself, not the individual, and the attacker must survive. This is likely one reason for the clusters of ELF attacks; there were rarely attackers identified, leaving media coverage to focus on the group, movement, and attack rather than the individuals involved. Attacks committed in the name of BLM were so criticized by ideologically similar movements (including BLM), that any potential inspiration was negated unless other radicalized individuals claimed to be operating outside of the greater BLM context. Due to the mode of attack, the risk assumed by Incels committing an attack has rendered violent action nearly suicidal, which removes the positive effects of prestige. With the expectation of evading capture, only ELF effectively used inspiration to further mobilization on behalf of their leaderless resistance model.

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VIII. CONCLUSION

A. EVALUATION

The components of the theory of leaderless resistance illustrates how each group approached the problem of generating an effective movement. Some have failed with one component yet excelled at others, achieving mobilization. How these groups managed the components in tandem, as a system, is critical to understanding their attempted solutions to the problem of leaderless resistance.

B. EARTH LIBERATION FRONT

ELF, by the metric of numbers of attacks and attack rate, led the most successful leaderless resistance of the case studies. The waves of attacks over such a short span of time demonstrates their ability to mobilize individuals to their cause, however they failed at maintaining the resistance model. The shared attributes of many members (lifestyle and location) removed the need to emphasize isolation in their model. ELF excelled at flexible ideology, attracting a wide variety of members for the simple cause of trying to slow or stop environmental damage. This ideology required very little for members to adopt, without mandating any general lifestyle changes or adoption of new values; simply the responsibility to act. ELF also capitalized on urgency and exogenous events, as both were evident to even non-members. Lastly, inspiration was easy for propagandists to exploit in conjunction with news media; the simple act of seeing the results of other's mobilization helped mobilize more followers.

C. WHITE POWER GROUPS

This disparate movement failed the employment of an effective balance of the components of a leaderless resistance. While many members had self-isolated amongst their in-groups, ideologies were too different amongst White Power groups to effectively congeal into a united movement. Urgency and exogenous events had to be fabricated and manipulated, which failed to mobilize more actors into racially motivated attacks. Inspiration drawn from previous attacks also failed to lead to the type of rapid attacks that

ELF achieved; while a steady series of attacks were committed, the largest scale event hurt the cause, even amongst the radicalized. The use of a leaderless resistance model, for this movement, suffered the dissonance of key components, preventing a larger movement.

D. INVOLUNTARY CELIBATES

The model of leaderless resistance is similarly unbalanced for the Incels. Its members are significantly isolated and its ideology is extremely broad, however there is no urgency or significant exogenous events to make their grievances tangible. Unlike ELF and identifiable events transpiring, the Incels, like White Power groups, only have broad trends of gender equality to blame; not the destruction of a forest or similar event. Inspiration is more complicated for the Incels. No other group places the level of prestige on its attackers like the Incels, however these attacks have done little to mobilize others in the immediate aftermath. Despite half of the components appearing to be effective towards the total of the leaderless resistance model, the latter two negate the positive effects of the first two. Overall, the movement has had very little success in mobilizing more than a handful of individuals.

E. BLACK LIVES MATTER

Black Lives Matter employs a successful model of leaderless resistance. The movement's popularity and the manner of which it mobilizes does not require isolation for its members; they are not attempting violent attacks, but rather mass protest. However, even with non-isolated members in the sense of radicalization, its members are often drawn from racial and socioeconomic backgrounds that perceive victimization on behalf of police agencies. This serves to meet the isolation component of the theory, en-masse. Ideologically, the original movement's goal is attractive for most; stop racially motivated police brutality. While the senior messaging from BLM has narrowed or expanded this outside the original goal of the BLM movement, many still find the simple ideology appealing. For urgency and exogenous events, BLM's existence stems directly from exogenous events, which is easy to exploit for urgent action with nation-wide protests within hours or days of exogenous events. BLM has developed a massive social media following and can host protests quickly. However, some self-identifying members of BLM

have committed acts of violence, to include murder, on behalf of the group. Unlike the other case studies, BLM condemns these acts of violence, removing any inspiration for future attacks, and denying any prestige to the attacker. This has created a self-regulating mechanism with this component of the leaderless resistance theory that has been used to prevent mobilization in damaging ways. Rather, peaceful protests are used to inspire future protests to maintain political support and influence.

F. ASSESSMENT

As an element of the theory of leaderless resistance, inspiration seems to only work with the caveat of survivability. While attackers have been glorified, as with the Incels, this has not significantly impacted the overall occurrence of attacks. When the attack is widely publicized (a function of prestige), and survivability is high, there is an increase in attacks. For White Power groups, there is enough constant violence to perpetuate itself without individual attackers earning the widespread prestige as other groups have.

For a leaderless resistance movement to adequately use inspiration to perpetrate attacks and violence, this is best appropriated to the attack itself, not the individual, and the attacker must survive. This is likely one reason for the clusters of ELF attacks; there were rarely attackers identified, leaving media coverage to focus on the group, movement, and attack rather than the individual. Attacks committed in the name of BLM were so criticized by ideologically similar movements (including BLM), that any inspiration for follow-on attacks was negated unless other radicalized individuals granted it outside of the greater BLM context. Due to the mode of attack, the risk assumed by Incel committing an attack has rendered violent action nearly suicidal, which removes the positive effects of inspiration. With the expectation of evading capture, only ELF effectively used this to further mobilization on behalf of their leaderless resistance model.

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