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Project Title: Exploring the Social Networks of Homegrown Violent Extremist (HVE)  
Military Veterans

Final Research Report

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## **PROJECT BACKGROUND**

The January 6 Capitol Attack (J6) has generated significant interest in radicalization and homegrown violent extremism (HVE) among people with a military background (hereafter referred to as veterans). This research area is still in its infancy. However, prior to J6, seminal veteran studies provided insights into the unique contribution and dynamic interplay of individual, group, and societal factors that could explain the radicalization process of veterans. By and large, these pioneering studies forewarned the rise of HVE among veterans. The current project is situated within this literature and builds on the early work, to which we now briefly review.

### **Historical Markers**

#### **Civil War and World War I**

Waller (1944), a World War I veteran, pointed out the pattern of experiences and grievances that have fueled what he termed 'counterrevolutions' or rebellions among veterans starting from the Revolutionary War up to World War I (pp. 6-16). In some cases, these counterrevolutions are modern-day equivalents of terrorism, as exemplified by the rise of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) in the aftermath of the Civil War. Broadly, Waller (1944) observed that veterans are faced with challenges during the military-civilian transition process that includes meeting basic needs (e.g., housing, employment, access to healthcare services especially for war-related injuries) as well as psychological needs (e.g., persistence of military identity and values, camaraderie). Failure to secure these needs generates a sense of bitterness against institutions (e.g., government, military) that culminates in seeking like-minded others, with the goal of disrupting the status quo even through violent means. Waller (1944), however, was well

aware of the variance within the veteran population with the majority being able to reintegrate successfully. Hence, he advocated for a social science of *Veteranology*, an interdisciplinary approach to veteran studies that includes an examination of the interactive effects of civilian temperament (premilitary), military service, and veteran experience (postmilitary). Finally, written during the rise of fascism in Europe during the early part of the last century, Waller (1944) cautioned that veterans are a ready tool for a demagogue (p. 188) who will capitalize on veteran grievances and offer to provide solutions to their problems.

## **World War II**

As World War II drew to a close, Bettelheim and Janowitz (1950a) set out to examine the wartime experiences as well as the anti-Semitic and anti-Black attitudes of a sample of U.S. veterans. The focus on a veteran sample was based on historical accounts that World War I German veterans who faced reintegration challenges in civilian society were the “chief promoters and followers of the anti-Semitic movement” (p. 4) and “had a strong desire to see violent change in the structure of a society which they felt had let them down” (p. 5). More than seventy years ago, the study authors were aware that preventing Nazism from taking root on U.S. soil required assessing the attitudes and situations of veterans during their civilian reintegration.

Broadly, the results show that subjective deprivation and anxiety were related to racial prejudice and hostility. Specifically, perceived future economic deprivation and downward social mobility were associated with greater intolerance of Jews and Blacks. A closer look at the qualitative results revealed that the reference point for downward social mobility was the premilitary/civilian status. The authors offered the explanation that this group of veterans felt

their military service justified the expectation of better employment opportunities, and not receiving special treatment for their military service was perceived as a mistreatment by society. Specifically, Jews and Blacks were perceived as threats to the veteran's own economic advancement.

Other notable findings reported revealed that the intensely prejudiced and outspoken subgroup of veterans (1) held stereotypical attitudes and beliefs about Jews and Blacks *prior* to their military service, (2) had a history of poor adjustment in civilian society prior to military service, (3) avoided reality testing by adopting stereotypic thinking through the acceptance of conspiracy theories, (4) held anti-government beliefs, (5) felt the government was not doing enough for veterans, and (6) did not identify with national symbols or felt disconnected from the broader society.

In a follow-up study (Bettelheim & Janowitz, 1950b), this group of intolerant veterans were also found to be susceptible to fascist propaganda and demagogic appeals. What is alarming is that these findings among U.S. veterans who were outspoken and intensely intolerant were echoed in the historical accounts of people who supported and enacted violence in Nazi Germany, as well as many of the J6 attackers.

### **Vietnam War**

Retzer (1976), a Vietnam War Veteran, conducted an in-depth examination of the radicalization of his veteran peers. The findings revealed that while all the veteran participants were not radicals prior to military service, their post-war experience equally divided them between non-radicals and radicals. Among the radical veterans, a pattern of results emerged for the civilian (premilitary) phase and military phase. Prior to military service, the radical veterans

were already experiencing a growing sense of community alienation, and their coping strategy was to challenge community norms and practices based on alternative principles or values. In other words, they were already on the fringe and learned to navigate life from this marginalized standpoint. During their military service, they found themselves betrayed by their leaders and appalled at their own complicity as executioners of amoral orders (p. 355). Hence, the war experience was the impetus for engaging in previously learned attitudes and behaviors (from the civilian phase). Radicalization among veterans, then, appears to be a product of civilian norms and values that interacts with military combat experiences, values, and norms.

### **Summary**

The aforementioned veteran studies laid the groundwork for understanding potential risk factors (e.g., need for significance and mattering, need to belong, exposure to radical narratives and networks) similar to those found in previous NIJ studies (Smith, 2018). In addition, it appears that the radicalization process follows a trajectory similar to the military lifecycle, with initial exposure to radical narratives and beliefs occurring before entering the military, during military service, and after leaving the military, typically when the veteran is having difficulty in the transition process.

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

The research project borrows from several lines of research that have a direct bearing on the present studies. First, we consider the Quest for Significance Theory (QST; Kruglanski et al., 2019), one of the most robust theories of radicalization and deradicalization. The QST identifies three overarching drivers – *needs, narratives, and networks* – that interact with each other to move an individual along the pathway leading up to violence. The theory stipulates that

radicalization begins with the preeminent social *need* known as a quest for significance, or the need to have social worth. One's sense of significance comes from two sources, one's individual attainments and talents, and one's social identity or group membership. Regardless of whether it stems from personal or group sources, the significance need is activated when a person experiences or perceives a loss of worth.

Violence becomes a viable path when a person subscribes to an ideological *narrative* that promotes and rewards violent behavior. Ideological narratives function to legitimize the use of violent means. Narratives, moreover, need to be reinforced by a social *network* that endorses violence. Social networks function to legitimize violence by developing behavioral norms. In other words, violence is considered normative, not deviant.

Second, we consider several theories from the military and veteran literature including Military Transition Theory (Castro & Kintzle, 2018), which aims to describe, explain, and predict important aspects of transitions that occur throughout the military lifecycle (premilitary, military, postmilitary); research on the social networks (e.g., family, civilian, military, veteran) across the military lifecycle (Atuel...& Castro, 2016); Veteran Identity Theory (i.e., past military identity operating in present civilian space and time; Atuel & Castro, 2018a); and the dual process model of moral injury and traumatic illness (Atuel, Barr...& Castro, 2021; Barr, Atuel...& Castro, 2022) to guide in identifying possible contributing factors in HVE among veterans.

## **THE MILITARY RADICALIZATION (MRad) PROJECT**

### **USC Project Team**

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## **Summary of Studies**

In two studies, the Military Radicalization (MRad) Project comparatively explored veterans (i.e., person with military background) and civilians (i.e., person with no military experience) who engaged in HVE. This comparison allows for an examination of similarities and differences in risk factors between HVE veterans and civilians. Of greater import for the project is understanding the unique contribution of having a military background in the context of HVE.

Study 1 leveraged existing data collected on people indicted by the U.S. government for terrorism. Utilizing the American Terrorism Study, 1980-2002 (Smith & Damphousse, 2007) datasets, we posed the following research question:

1. Are there differences in demographic characteristics (e.g., race, education), extremist ideology (e.g., White Supremacy, Anti-Government), and targets of terrorism (e.g., particular ethnic group, government office) between HVE veterans and civilians?

Study 2 compared veterans and civilians' trajectory toward HVE from the perspectives of informants in various social networks (i.e., family, premilitary peers, military peers, postmilitary peers). Among veterans, this trajectory was across key transition timepoints (premilitary, military, postmilitary). We posed the following overarching question:

2. Among HVE veterans and civilians, what were the needs, narratives, and networks that put them at-risk for violence, as informed by people from their various social networks (i.e., family, civilian peers, military peers, veteran peers)?

To strengthen the research design, we added a group of non-HVE veterans to serve as a comparison group. Unlike the HVE sample, we interviewed the non-HVE veteran comparison group after screening for their exposure to and resistance against violent ideologies (e.g., White Supremacy, Anti-Government). For this non-HVE veteran group, we posed the following overarching question:

3. Among non-HVE veterans, what were the needs, narrative, and networks that made them resist violent ideology across the military lifecycle?

## **PROJECT OUTCOMES**

### **Study 1: Secondary Analyses of American Terrorism Study, 1980-2002 Data**

#### **Methods**

The American Terrorism Study, 1980-2002 (Smith & Damphousse, 2007) databases (<https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/NACJD/studies/4639>), housed at the University of Michigan's Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, contain court-based information on people who have been indicted of terrorism within the U.S. from 1980-2002. All datasets have omitted or masked information that can be linked directly to a particular person.

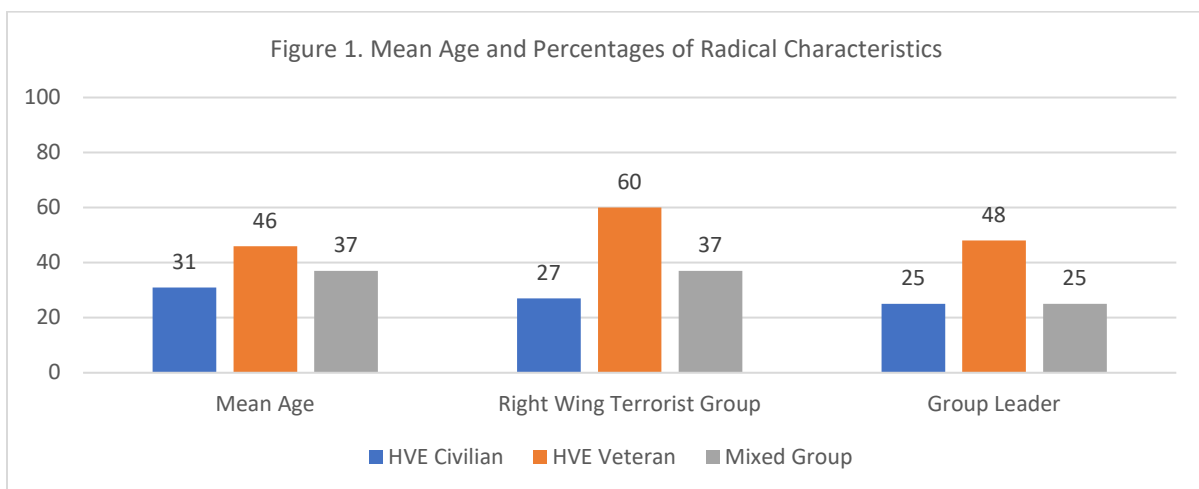
**Sample.** The Indictees Data (N=574) has 52 people with a military background (military group), 42 with no military background (civilian group), and 474 with unknown military background (mixed group). We recategorized the unknown military background group as a

mixed group under the assumption that this category reflects both military personnel and civilians.

***Statistical Analyses of Select Demographic and HVE Characteristics.*** The following variables were included in the analyses: age (at indictment), type of terrorist group (e.g., left-wing, right-wing), and role in group (e.g., leader, cadre). Means or frequencies of age, type of terrorist group, and role in group were obtained for each of the groups (military, civilian, mixed).

### Key Findings

As shown in Figure 1, the military group ( $M = 46$ ) was older than the civilian ( $M = 31$ ) and the mixed ( $M = 37$ ) groups. Regarding type of terrorist group, 60% of the military group belonged to right-wing terrorist groups compared to 27% of the civilian and 37% of the mixed groups. In terms of role in a terrorist group, 48% of the military group held leadership roles in a terrorist group compared to 25% of the civilian and 25% of the mixed groups.



## Study 2: Exploring Risk and Protective Factors of Military HVE, 2003-2019

### Methods

**Sample.** The HVE civilians (N=30) and HVE veterans (N=30) that comprise the sample committed or planned and was subsequently apprehended by law enforcement (e.g., FBI) between 2003-2019. Meanwhile, the non-HVE veterans (N=10) comparison group was screened for their exposure and resistance to various violent ideologies (i.e., White Supremacy/Neo-Nazi, Anti-Government, Black Nationalism, Radical Islam). The non-HVE veteran group was recruited from a combination of snowball sampling (i.e., one veteran knew of another veteran who was exposed to and resisted violent ideology), outreach to various community-based veteran organizations (e.g., Veterans Village), and social media outreach to active-duty and veteran forums.

**Social Network Informants.** As shown in Table 1 (see Appendix A), there were a variety of social network informants. In sum, there were 92 family informants, 108 civilian/premilitary informants, 64 military informants, and 31 postmilitary informants. In addition, we found 25 HVE civilians and 26 HVE veterans who self-disclosed through interviews (e.g., case study research, investigative journalism) or writings (e.g., screeds, books).

**Measures.** For the HVE civilian (N=30) and veteran (N=30) samples, a combination of primary and secondary data sources was utilized. Primary data includes semi-structured interviews with key informants (e.g., family) as well as the veterans' own self-disclosures (e.g., books, screeds). Meanwhile, secondary data from open sources includes court documents (e.g., transcripts) and information from various media outlets (e.g., investigative journalism). For the

non-HVE veteran sample (N=10), a semi-structured interview was developed and administered. All interviews were transcribed prior to analysis.

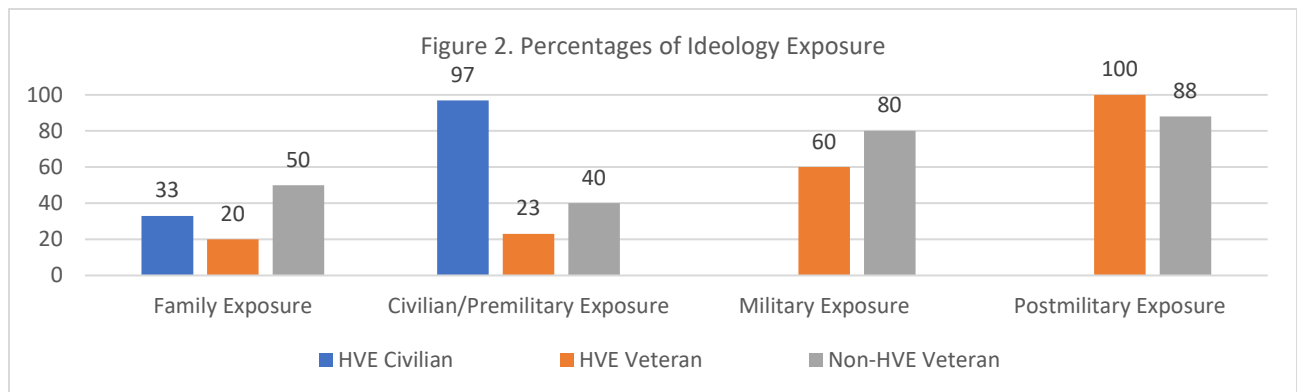
**Data Analytic Strategy.** After culling through all available primary and secondary data, the research team utilized directed content analysis (DCA; Hshieh & Shannon, 2005) to analyze the available data. Using DCA allowed for the development of *a priori* coding categories and to create emergent/new coding categories during the analysis (see Table 2, Appendix A).

The resulting database contains three relational data files with information about demographics, radical experience, and military experience. The final database includes 42 demographic variables, 29 radical experience variables, and 67 military experience variables (see Table 3, Appendix A).

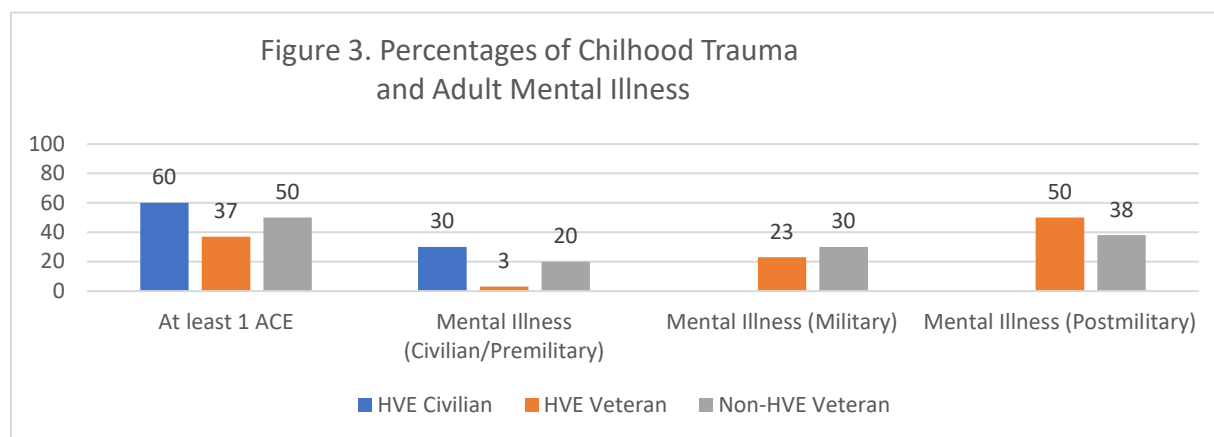
## Key Findings

### **Demographic Characteristics: Cumulative Effect of Ideology Exposure, Trauma, and Criminality**

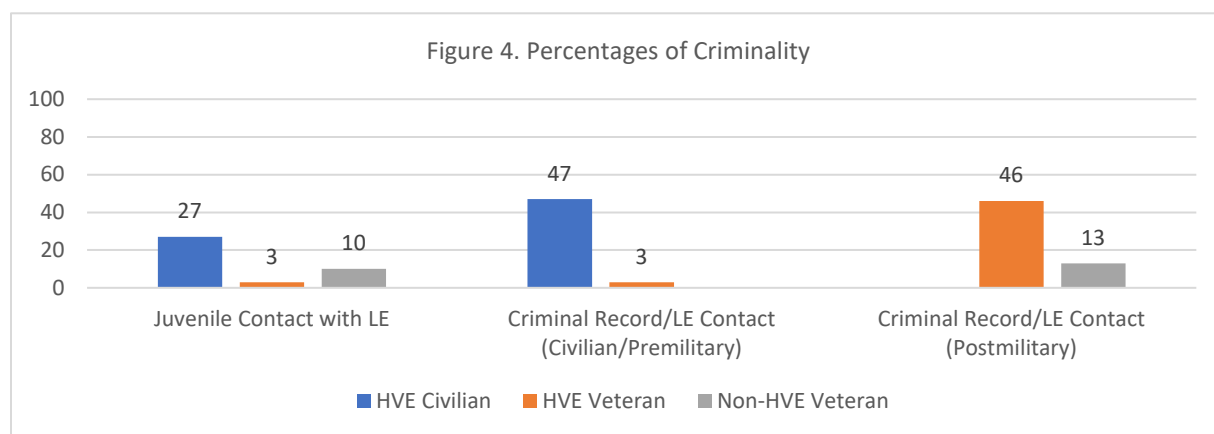
Exposure to various ideologies occur in different contexts and at different timepoints in a person's life. While ideology exposure within the family and civilian contexts occurred among all three groups, ideology exposure continued into the military and postmilitary contexts for the HVE veteran and non-HVE veteran groups (see Figure 2).



People experience trauma across their lifetime starting with adverse childhood events (e.g., abuse). Over time, childhood trauma can be compounded with adult trauma (e.g., deployment) that can result in mental illness. This seems to be the case for HVE veterans who have higher rates of postmilitary mental illness (50%) compared to the non-HVE veteran (38%) and the civilian group (30%).

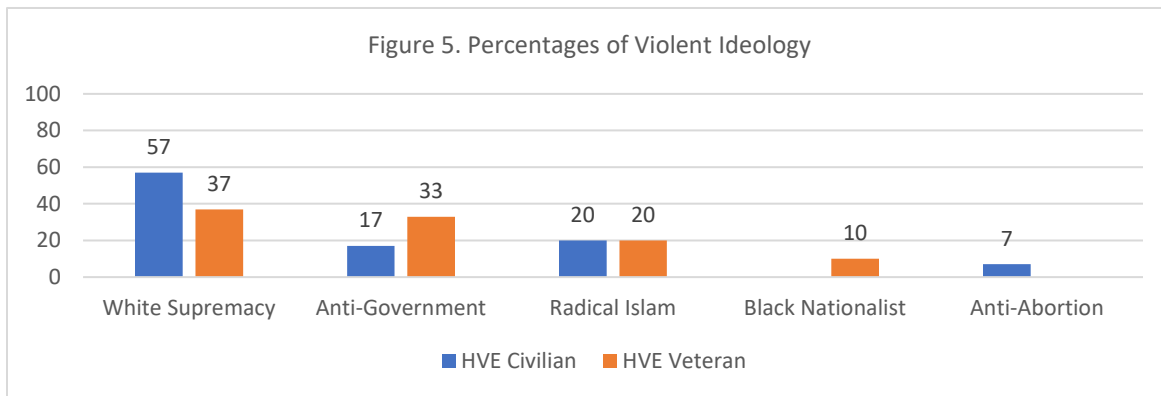


Finally, criminality can manifest early on when juveniles come into contact with law enforcement. For HVE civilians, criminality appears to increase into adulthood. For HVE veterans, military service seems to suppress criminal behavior, increasing after military service. It is noteworthy that HVE civilians and HVE veterans (postmilitary) have similar criminal record rates (47% and 46%, respectively, see Figure 4).

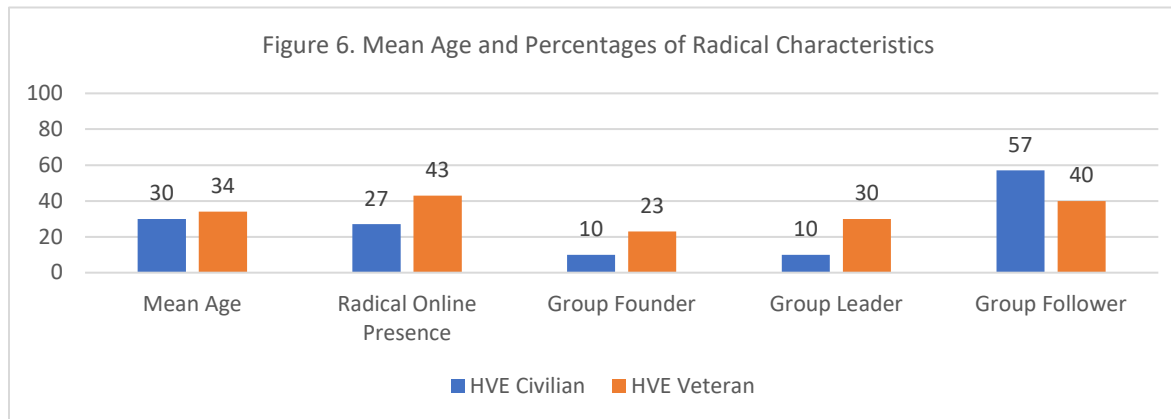


**Radical Characteristics and Experience**

Among HVE civilians and veterans, far-right ideologies (e.g., White Supremacy, Anti-Government) were predominant followed by Radical Islam (see Figure 5). Meanwhile Black Nationalism among HVE veterans could be a historical artifact given the HVE veterans in our sample committed their HVE act in retaliation against high-profile killings of Black/African Americans between 2003-2019. That Anti-Abortion was found only in the HVE civilian group suggests that the termination of life is more of a civilian (vs veteran) concern.

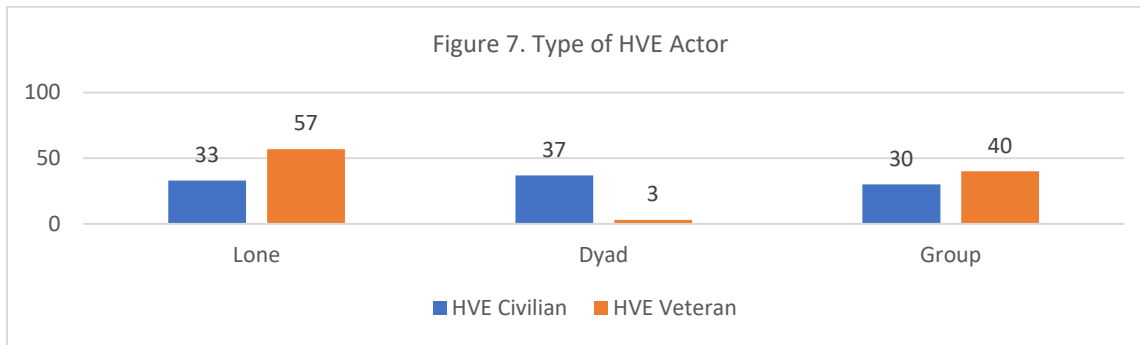


Similar to Study 1 results, HVE veterans continue to be older and hold leadership in radical groups compared to HVE civilians (see Figure 6). However, compared to the mean age in Study 1 (46 years for veterans and 31 for civilians), the age gap seems to be closing as the mean



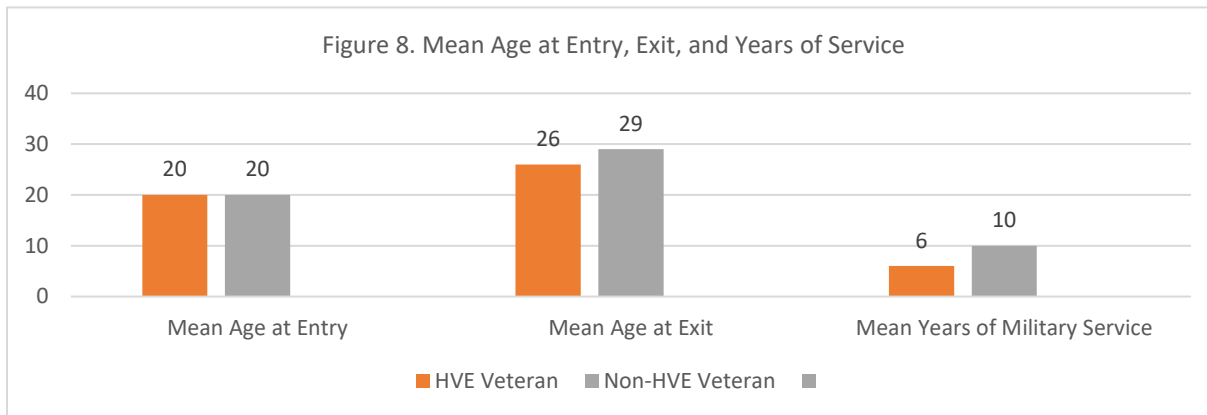
age for both groups are in the 30's. A potential explanation for this shift is easy access to digital media as evidenced by the higher proportion of HVE veterans having an online radical presence compared to HVE civilians.

Lastly, the majority of HVE veterans were lone actors, suggestive of ability likely learned from military training (see Figure 7). On the other hand, HVE civilians tend to be in dyads (e.g., marital, siblings), implying reliance on another person to carry out/plan an attack.



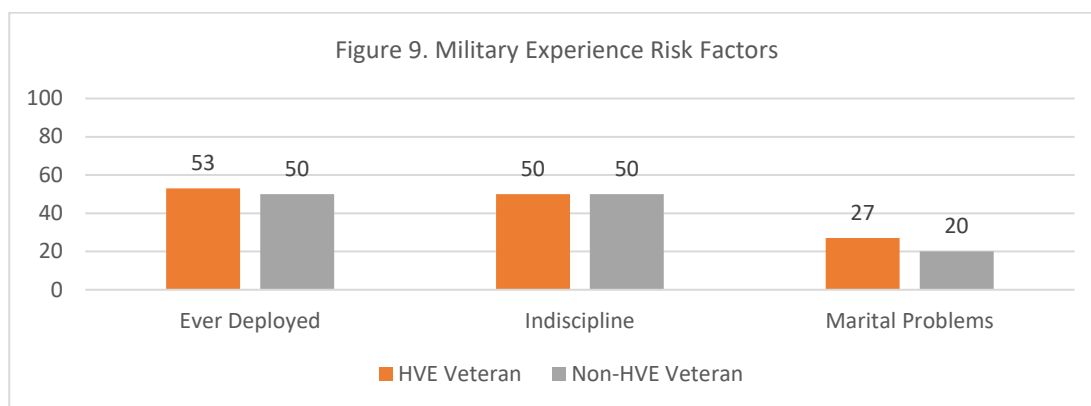
**Military Characteristics and Experience and Postmilitary Protective Factors**

Although the mean age at entry into military service was identical, the non-HVE veterans were slightly older when they exited military service and served relatively longer than HVE veterans (see Figure 8). These results imply that more years in the military appears to serve as a protective factor against radicalization and extremism.

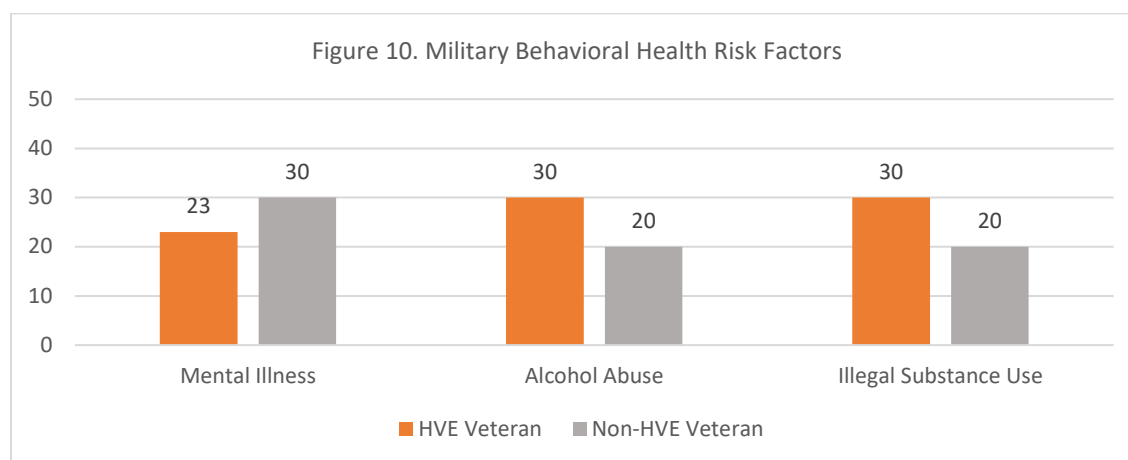




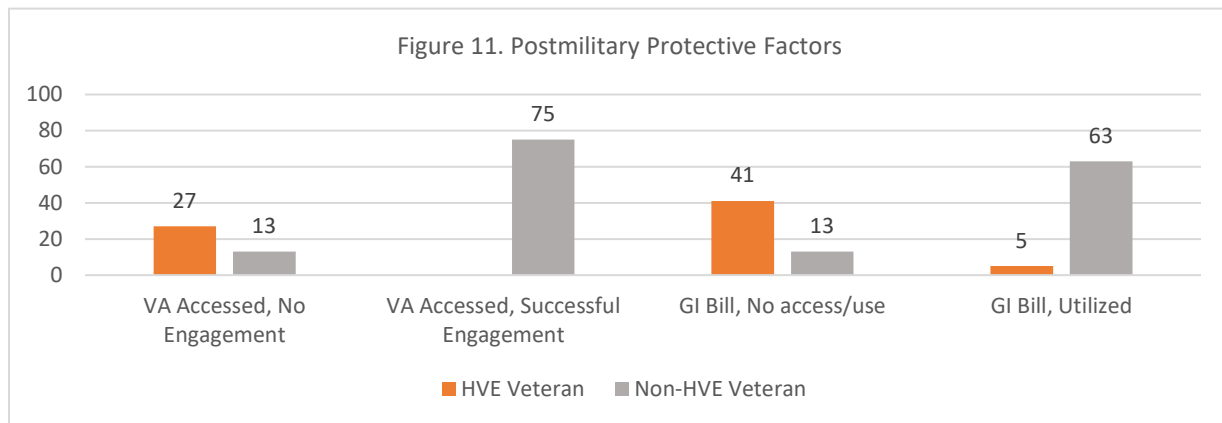
The HVE and non-HVE veteran groups had similar percentages of deployment (e.g., combat zone) and indiscipline (e.g., receiving an Article 15 for violation of a military code) experiences (see Figure 9). However, marital problems were slightly higher for the HVE veteran (vs non-HVE veteran) group, which implies that personal problems are a compounding factor to work problems, increasing the risk for radicalization and extremism.



While mental illness was slightly higher among the non-HVE veteran, the HVE veteran group was slightly higher on alcohol abuse and illegal substance use (see Figure 10). These findings suggests that the HVE veteran group could be using alcohol and illegal substances recreationally and/or to self-medicate. Either way, both alcohol abuse and illegal substance use while in the military serves to increase risk for radicalization and extremism.



Finally, a greater proportion of the non-HVE veteran group successfully engaged with the VA and utilized their GI Bill compared to the HVE veteran group. This suggests that access and use of post military benefits serves as protective factors against radicalization and extremism. The presence of mental health professionals and being situated within an educational community could serve to provide alternatives to radical groups.



### Recommendations

There are several recommendations for addressing radicalization and extremism among veterans across the military lifecycle. Based on the combined results, we put forward and briefly discuss three overarching factors of the 3T Model – Transmission of Prejudice, Addressing Trauma, and Navigating Transitions (see Table 4 below) – and provide examples of actionable items that serve as protective factors.

Violent ideologies are rooted in prejudicial attitudes toward others who are different from the self in terms of social categories such as race/ethnicity, religion, gender, or sexual orientation. What this means for veterans is that family, premilitary, military, and postmilitary

Table 4

*Military Cultural Factors across the Military Lifecycle as applied to Radicalization and Extremism: 3T Model (Transmission of Prejudice, Addressing Trauma, Navigating Transitions)*

Stage	Transmission of Prejudice	Addressing Trauma	Navigating Transitions
<b>Premilitary</b>	<p><u>Moral foundation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Family resistance</li> <li>-Community norms</li> <li>-Wide-reader/Reading as a habit</li> </ul> <p><u>Intergroup contact</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Friendships</li> <li>-Empathy</li> </ul>	<p><u>Overcoming adversity and trauma</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Persistence</li> <li>-Emergence of the true self</li> <li>-Learning who you can trust</li> </ul>	
<b>Military</b>	<p><u>Moral foundation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Military values and norms (incentivized suppression of radical beliefs)</li> <li>-Courage (doing the right thing)</li> </ul> <p><u>Intergroup contact</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Perspective taking</li> <li>-Openness to learning</li> <li>-Outgroup heterogeneity</li> <li>-Political and historical awareness of inequities</li> </ul>	<p><u>Overcoming adversity and trauma</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Mental health and sobriety. In these instances, courage (doing the right thing) means asking for help.</li> </ul>	<p><u>Pivoting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Learn what it takes to get the job done</li> </ul> <p><u>Understanding tradeoffs</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Choose what you can live with</li> </ul> <p><u>Navigating military discipline</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-You made a mistake. Learn, change, and move on.</li> </ul> <p><u>Good mentor</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Find one</li> </ul> <p><u>Separating military and civilian life</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Have one foot out the door.</li> </ul>
<b>Postmilitary</b>	<p><u>Moral foundation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Humanity (think bigger picture)</li> <li>-Justice (know the right thing)</li> <li>-Temperance (avoid extremes because they contain untruths or half-truths)</li> </ul> <p><u>Intergroup contact</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Reconnect with old or make new friendships</li> <li>-Address inequities (speak up; do something)</li> </ul>	<p><u>Overcoming adversity and trauma</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Mental health and sobriety programs at the VA (if you can find it). Military cultural competence matters.</li> <li>-Decompressing means destressing from military life.</li> </ul>	<p><u>Finding the new you means:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Revisit old dreams or pursue new ones. Dreams change.</li> <li>-Be Gumby if need be</li> <li>-Try or learn new things.</li> </ul>

networks are sources of normative information on prejudicial attitudes and behaviors. Military service, however, appears to be a significant timepoint that can shape or reshape prejudice. For example, one non-HVE veteran shared that, "...quite frankly, my first experience in dealing with people of other races, ethnicities [was in the military]...I had experiences that I never would have had otherwise...it was really illuminating....Learned a little bit about their lives". Along those same lines, another non-HVE veteran pointed out that, "I have a lot of experience that other people don't. I've lived in Africa, I was stationed there, and I probably don't have the same prejudices, but also those life experiences made a lot of difference. I learned right from the beginning almost". *Openness to learning* about others who are different from the self appears to be a protective factor in the Transmission of Prejudice, whether this occurs within one's own unit or when stationed in another country. And the diversity within the military and the diversity of military life experiences provides ample opportunities for servicemembers to learn and appreciate cultural differences.

As mentioned, people experience trauma across their lifetime. When left unaddressed, this can potentially lead to mental illness(es) reflecting compounded trauma stemming from childhood (e.g., abuse, neglect) and military (e.g., deployment, combat) experiences. For veterans, this means seeking out appropriate healthcare services found within the military health system and in some cases, continuing into the veteran health system (VA). Admittedly, one of the significant barriers to help-seeking is the stigma around mental illness, especially while a servicemember is on active duty, yet it needs to be overcome before any therapeutic services are rendered. Hence, access to the VA becomes more imperative in addressing mental health issues. Access, though, is not synonymous to successful engagement, and successful

engagement is not a one-time visit. As one non-HVE veteran shared about their VA experience, “I was recently granted 100 percent service connection...It took 21 years, but as Steve McQueen said, floating on the coconut bag in the movie *Papillon*, ‘I’m still here you bastards’”. The importance of VA services cannot be understated because *military cultural competence* (Atuel & Castro, 2018b) matters when Addressing Trauma among veterans. As another non-HVE veteran shared of their experience with a civilian therapist, “...no understanding of veterans. [The therapist] rated me as impulsive, having a death wish, as a violent person, and it was – I have no idea where [the therapist] got what [the therapist] got. I’ve never committed an act of violence, even on active duty”. When this same non-HVE veteran was able to connect with the VA, they described the experience as “...the VA is what turned things around for me. I was able to get connected with the SARP [Substance Abuse and Rehabilitation Program] Program”. Yet, another non-HVE veteran on describing the VA assistance received, “...this VA guy...did all the groundwork and got me a copy of this new discharge thing [from general discharge to honorable]. [The VA guy] was appalled that I had this thing and that I had met some prejudice along the way”. While gaining access to and successfully engaging with VA benefits are challenging, the VA provides one pathway that will steer veterans away from radicalization and extremism.

Lastly, like their civilian counterpart, veterans who are transitioning to civilian life are preoccupied with meeting the basic necessities and engaged in activities that allow them to lead a meaningful life. And the issues surrounding military-civilian transition represent the full spectrum of daily living that includes housing, employment, education, healthcare, and finances (Castro et al., 2014, 2015). Unlike their civilian counterpart, the military-civilian transition

compels veterans to ask, “Who am I in this civilian world?” (Atuel & Castro, 2018a). Ultimately, the transition process is a solitary experience. Exit from the military means fending for oneself in the civilian world. Unlike the military phase where the military identity was created within the context of a group, forming the veteran identity, for the most part, is an individual activity. One of the ways in Navigating Transitions is to *find the new you*. At times, this requires revisiting old dreams and pursuing new ones. For example, one non-HVE veteran shared their dream of becoming a medical doctor even while serving in the military. While this non-HVE veteran took the necessary coursework, they identified several factors that held back that dream, including bouts with military-related PTSD symptoms. Undeterred to move forward, the next steps entailed, “...I changed course and just said, okay, social justice....I came out of the military and spent my time since, then, social justice. It’s a whole new me and whole new purpose...”. Sometimes, though, it takes another person to point out the way. As another non-HVE veteran recounted, “After working with [the VA therapist] for a while, [the VA therapist] said, ‘You know, if you can get your shit together, you can probably help a few people’...a few years later decided to give it a shot”. Either on one’s own cognizance or with the guidance and support of another person, navigating the military-civilian transition is a process that will involve redefining one’s identity, meaning, and purpose in life.

In sum, the 3T Model (see Table 4) offers an initial roadmap into protective factors across the military lifecycle. No one factor is responsible for alleviating radicalization and extremism among veterans; rather, it is the cumulative and interactive effects of these factors at various timepoints that will steer veterans away from HVE.

### **Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

There are several limitations to the present studies, which should be taken as directives for future research. First, the sample sizes of both studies are small given that HVE has been described as a “low frequency, high impact event”. This means that this type of violence is rare; hence, the study findings are contextualized as “outliers” within the veteran population. Nevertheless, they offer insights into individual-level factors that motivate and situate veterans at-risk for HVE across the military lifecycle. Second, the comparison group of non-HVE veterans outright resisted violent ideologies, which may not be representative of veterans’ radicalization and extremism experiences. Future research should reflect the full spectrum of radicalization and extremism, with comparison groups that include veterans who hold radical and violent extremist beliefs privately, but do not act on them (cognitive radicals), veterans who are not in radical and violent groups, but provide instrumental/financial support (supportive radical), veterans who join radical and violent groups but do not act violently (non-violent radical), and veterans who joined radical groups, participated in violent activities, and later denounced the group and the lifestyle (former radicals).

Ultimately, it is never too early or too late to prevent or intervene HVE among veterans. What it is going to take to make this happen will be a concerted effort among families, civilian communities, the military institution, and the veteran community in tackling the transmission of prejudice, addressing trauma, and navigating transitions across the military lifecycle.

### **PROJECT ARTIFACTS**

#### **Peer-Reviewed Publications**

Atuel, H.R. & Castro, C.A. (2021). Exploring homegrown violent extremism among military veterans and civilians. *The Military Psychologist*, 36(3), 10-14).

### Invited Presentations

Atuel, H.R. & Castro, C.A. (March 29, 2023). The Military Radicalization (MRad) Project: Preliminary Findings on Right-Wing Extremism. 2023 Right-Wing Extremism in the Canadian Armed Forces Symposium. Ottawa, Canada.

Atuel, H.R. & Castro, C.A. (December 14, 2022). The Military Radicalization (MRad) Project: Studies 1 and 2. North Atlantic Treaty Organization HFM-RTG 347 Meeting #2. Ottawa, Canada.

Atuel, H.R. & Castro, C.A. (January 18, 2022). Exploring the Social Networks of Homegrown Violent Extremist Military Veterans. National Institute of Justice Webinar on The Changing Threat Landscape of Terrorism and Violent Extremism: Implications for Research and Policy. <https://nij.ojp.gov/media/video/27866>

### Conference Presentations (*Note: \*indicates student author*)

Atuel, H.R., & Castro, C.A. (2023, August). Military Radicalization Study preliminary findings: White Supremacy and Anti-Government. Poster presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, Washington, DC.

Atuel, H.R., & Castro, C.A. (2023, August). Military Radicalization Study preliminary findings: Black Nationalism and Radical Islam. Poster presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, Washington, DC.

\*Calfo, C., Lee, J., Atuel, H.R., & Castro, C.A. (2023, August). Military Radicalization Study preliminary findings: Exploring digital media use. Poster presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, Washington, DC.

Lee, J., \*Calfo, C., Atuel, H.R., & Castro, C.A. (2023, August). Military Radicalization Study preliminary findings: Exploring traumas and transitions. Poster presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, Washington, DC.

\*Nations, M., \*Lin, C., Atuel, H.R., & Castro, C.A. (2022, August). A multi-case study of violent extremism among select NATO countries. Poster presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, Minneapolis, MN.

\*Lin, C., \*Nations, M., Atuel, H.R., & Castro, C.A. (2022, August). A case-study of military veteran violent extremism. Poster presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, Minneapolis, MN.



- Atuel, H.R., & Castro, C.A. (2021, August). Character(s) revealed: Virtues and vices in crisis, consequences, and choices. Poster presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association Convention, San Diego, CA.
- Atuel, H.R., & Castro, C.A. (2021, August). Exploring moral injury from a character domain perspective. Poster presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association Convention, San Diego, CA.
- Castro, C.A. & Atuel, H.R. (2021, August). Exploring homegrown violent extremism (HVE) among military veterans and civilians. Poster presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association Convention, San Diego, CA.
- Castro, C.A. & Atuel, H.R. (2021, August). The beliefs that kill us: Homegrown violent extremist ideologies of civilians and military veterans. Poster presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association Convention, San Diego, CA.
- \*Nations, M., Atuel, H.R., \*Calfo, C., \*Mickle, J., \*Uruburu, K., Darst, M., & Castro, C.A. (2021, August). The terrors that bind: Women who engage in homegrown violent extremism. Poster presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association Convention, San Diego, CA
- \*Mickle, J., Atuel, H.R., \*Uruburu, K., \*Calfo, C., \*Nations, M., Darst, M., & Castro, C.A. (2021, August). Dangerous liaisons: Exploring dyadic homegrown violent extremism among civilians and military veterans, Poster presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association Convention, San Diego, CA.
- \*Uruburu, K., Atuel, H.R., \*Mickle, J., \*Calfo, C., \*Nations, M., Darst, M., & Castro, C.A. (2021, August). The lone wolf terrorists among us. Poster presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association Convention, San Diego, CA.

#### **NACJD Dataset**

The datasets are archived at the ICPSR and can be retrieved by searching for “Exploring the Social Networks of Homegrown Violent Extremist (HVE) Military Veterans” (NACJD-NIJ-194832).

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## APPENDIX A: TABLES

Table 1

*Types and Frequency of Social Network Informants for HVE Civilians (N=30), HVE Veterans (N=30) and Non-HVE Veteran (N=10)*

Type of Social Network	HVE Civilian	HVE Veteran	Non-HVE Veteran
Self <sup>a</sup>	25	26	10
Family <sup>b,g</sup>	48	43	1
Civilian/Premilitary <sup>c,g</sup>	76	32	0
Military <sup>d,g</sup>	N/A	64	0
Postmilitary <sup>e,g</sup>	N/A	31	0
Other <sup>f,g</sup>	44	29	0

Notes: <sup>a</sup>Self data derived from primary interviews or writings (e.g., self-published books, manifestos, screed, suicide notes); <sup>b</sup>Family refers to parents, (ex-)spouses, children, and other relatives; <sup>c</sup>Civilian/Premilitary refers to friends, neighbors, classmates, or teachers in a civilian setting/prior to military service; <sup>d</sup>Military refers to peers, supervisors, friends, or neighbors during the military service; <sup>e</sup>Postmilitary refers to friends, neighbors, supervisors, peers after military service; <sup>f</sup>Other refers to attorney statements, clinical evaluations, unclassified FBI/LE report; <sup>g</sup>Data derived from primary interviews, court exhibits/transcripts or interviews given to various media outlets.

Table 2

*Assessment of Predisposing/Risk Factors and Protective/Preventive/Restorative Factors by Military Lifecycle\**

<b>Predisposing and Risk Factors</b>	<b>Values</b>	<b>Prejudice and Ideology Exposure (Network and Group Narrative)</b>	Family and civilian exposure	Military exposure	Veteran exposure
		<b>Dataset Variables</b>	-Family exposure -Civilian exposure -Primary ideology	-Military exposure -Primary ideology	-Veteran exposure -Primary ideology
	<b>Character and Identity**</b>	<b>Moral Failure (Need and Identity Narrative)</b>	Moral failure experience	Moral failure experience	Moral failure experience
		<b>Dataset Variables</b>	-Triggering event -Primary target	-Military grievance -Triggering event -Primary target	-Triggering event -Primary target
	<b>Adversity***</b>	<b>Adversity (Non-Clinical; Need and Grievance Narrative)</b>	Childhood stressor	Military indiscipline (e.g., demotion; ART 15; extra duty); Promotion (e.g., perceived rejection); Relationship problems; Alcohol and substance abuse	Transition problems (e.g., unemployment, homelessness, alcohol abuse, mental illness)
		<b>Dataset Variables</b>	-Bullying experience -School discipline -Childhood disability -Juvenile contact with LE -Juvenile alcohol/drug use -Other childhood stressor	-Indiscipline -Demotion -Marital problems -Alcohol/drug abuse -Hazed/bullied/discriminated -Discharge status	-Employment history -Employer discipline -Employment status -Housing eviction -Homelessness -Marital problems -Contact with LE -Mental illness -Alcohol/drug abuse
	<b>Trauma****</b>	<b>Trauma (Clinical; Need and Grievance Narrative)</b>	Adverse Childhood Experience	Potentially traumatic events (e.g., deployment, combat)	Potentially traumatic events

		<b>Dataset Variables</b>	-Abuse -Neglect -Family dysfunction	-Deployment -Combat experience -Sexual assault*****	
	<b>Radicalization Characteristics and Experience</b>	<b>Dataset Variables</b>	-Group membership -Group role -Group Founder -HVE actor (e.g., lone) -Radicalization mode -Radical presence online	-Group membership -Group role -Group Founder -HVE actor (e.g., lone) -Radicalization mode -Radical presence online	-Group membership -Group role -Group Founder -HVE actor (e.g., lone) -Radicalization mode -Radical presence online
<b>Protective, Preventive, and Restorative Factors</b>	<b>Values</b>	<b>Resistance to Prejudice and Ideology (Network and Group Narrative)</b>	Family tradition of military service	Inculcation of military values (character development)	Translation of military values to civilian culture
		<b>Dataset Variables</b>	-Military/LE-connected		-Engagement in civic, justice-related, professional, educational, activities via non-radical group
	<b>Character and Identity**</b>	<b>Addressing Moral Failure (Need and Identity Narrative)</b>	Military service expectations	Development of the warrior ethos (Warrior identity)	Adaptation of warrior ethos in civilian society (Open-Minded Veteran)
		<b>Dataset Variables</b>	-Reason for enlistment		-Meaningful civilian career (non-radical career)
	<b>Adversity***</b>	<b>Overcoming Adversity (Need and Identity Narrative)</b>	Social support (e.g., family, community)	Social support (e.g., leaders, peers)	Accessing VA healthcare and benefits; GI Bill
		<b>Dataset Variables</b>	-Connectedness to at least 1 non-radical social support (family, school, religious community)	-Connectedness to at least 1 non-radical social support (e.g., leader, peer)	-Connectedness to at least 1 non-radical social support (e.g., family, friend) -Received VA healthcare -Utilized GI Bill

	<b>Trauma****</b>	<b>Addressing Trauma (Need and Identity Narrative)</b>	Accessing civilian healthcare	Accessing DOD healthcare	Accessing VA healthcare and benefits; GI Bill
		<b>Dataset Variables</b>	-Received treatment	-Received treatment	-Received VA healthcare -Utilized GI Bill

Notes: \*Builds on the 3N Model of Radicalization (Kruglanski et al., 2019) and the Dual Process Model of Traumatic Illness and Moral Injury (Atuel, Barr...& Castro, 2021; Barr, Atuel...& Castro, 2022); \*\* Character and Identity – A traumatic or non-traumatic event appraised as a moral failure (i.e., violation of a moral code) by self or others that changes a person’s character and identity; \*\*\*Adversity – Stressful or challenging life experiences (e.g., hazed/bullied/discriminated against; alcohol abuse; deployment); \*\*\*\*Trauma – A life-threatening event that has led to a mental health disorder (e.g., PTSD); \*\*\*\*\*Not in dataset, but is considered as potentially traumatic event in the military setting.



Table 3

*Variables in the Military Radicalization Dataset*

Person Demographics	Radical Experience	Military Experience
Person ID	Person ID	Person ID
Person Group	Person Group	Person Group
Gender	Primary Ideology	Primary Ideology
Race	Radicalized by Military Lifecycle	Age at entry
Hispanic	Radicalization Modes	Age at separation
Age	Radical Online Presence	Years or Military Service
Marital Status	Radical Writings	Pre or Post 9/11
Educational Level	Radical Group Association/Membership	Military Status
Employment Status	Radical Group Role	Primary Military Branch
Housing Status	Radical Group Founder	Multiple Branch Service
Military/LE-Connected	Primary Grievance	Occupational Specialty
Presence of at Least 1 ACE	Triggering Event Grievance	Rank
ACE-Abuse	Military Status	Discharge Status
ACE-Neglect	Failed Recruit, Active Duty Months	Hazed/Bullied
ACE-Household Dysfunction	Failed Recruit, Military Separation Years	Ever Deployed
Childhood Stressor	Active Duty, Years Serving	Number of Deployments
School Discipline	Veteran, Years Served	Combat Experience
Childhood Bullying	Veteran, Military Separation Years	Indiscipline
Juvenile Contact with LE	Inspired/Connected to another HVE Event	Specify Military Violation
Childhood Disability	Studied other HVE Person	Demotion
Juvenile Alcohol/Illegal Substance	HVE Event Writings	Military Grievance
Civ/Premil Adult-Emp History	Primary Target of Planned/Enacted HVE	Specify Grievance
Civ/Premil Adult-Emp Discipline	Person Disposition	Mental Illness
Civ/Premil Adult-Emp Lay Off	Type of HVE Actor	Mental Illness DX
Civ/Premil Adult-Eviction History	Family Aware and Report	Mental Illness TX
Civ/Premil Adult-Homeless History	Civilian Aware and Report	Alcohol Abuse
Civ/Premil Adult-Marital Trouble	Military Aware and Report	Alcohol Abuse TX
Civ/Premil Adult-Crim Rec/LE Contact	Postmilitary Aware and Report	Illegal Substance Use
Civ/Premil Adult-History of Violence	Others Awareness and Report	Illegal Substance Use TX
Civ/Premil Adult-Mental Illness History		Postmil Emp History
Civ/Premil Adult-Mental Illness TX		Postmil Emp Discipline
Civ/Premil Adult-Alcohol Abuse History		Postmil Emp Lay Off
Civ/Premil Adult-Alcohol Abuse TX		Postmil Eviction
Civ/Premil Adult-Illegal Substance History		Postmil Homeless
Civ/Premil Adult-Illegal Substance Use TX		Postmil Marital Trouble
Primary Ideology		Postmil Criminal Record
Ideology Exposure-Family		Postmil Violence History
Ideology Exposure-Civilian/Premilitary		Postmil Phys Disability
For HVE Vets, Ideology Exposure-Military		Postmil Mental Illness

For HVE Vets, Ideology Exposure-Postmilitary  
For non-HVE Vets, list ideologies exposed to  
Military Status

Postmil Mental Illness DX  
Postmil Mental Illness TX  
Postmil Alcohol Abuse  
Postmil Alcohol Abuse TX  
Postmil Illegal Sub Use  
Postmil Illegal Sub TX  
Postmil VA Access  
Postmil GI Bill  
Mil/Postmil Group  
Specify Group  
Premil Outgrp Contact  
Specify Group  
Premil Fam Resistance  
Premil Int Resistance  
Premil Ext Resistance  
Premil Reason Enlist  
Premil Other Enlist  
Premil Connectedness  
Mil Outgrp Contact  
Specify Group  
Mil Int Resistance  
Mil Ext Resistance  
Mil Connectedness  
Postmil Outgrp Contact  
Specify Group  
Postmil Int Resistance  
Postmil Ext Resistance  
Postmil Connectedness

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## APPENDIX B: ASSESSMENT OF RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Table 5

*Assessment of Predisposing/Risk Factors and Protective/Preventive/Restorative Factors across the Military Lifecycle*

	<b>Premilitary Phase</b>	<b>Military Phase</b>	<b>Postmilitary Phase</b>
<b>Predisposing and Risk Factors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Prejudice and ideology exposure/formation through family and civilian peers</li> <li>-Membership/affiliation with radical group (e.g., online; in-person)</li> <li>-Childhood stressor/adverse childhood experience</li> <li>-School discipline</li> <li>-Juvenile contact with LE</li> <li>-Juvenile alcohol/drug use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Prejudice and ideology exposure/formation through military peers</li> <li>-Membership/affiliation with radical group (e.g., online; in-person)</li> <li>-Military-related moral failure experience or trauma that fuels military grievance (e.g., hazing/bullying/discriminated against; deployment; combat; military sexual assault)</li> <li>-Military Indiscipline (e.g., ART 15, demotion, extra duty); Perceived rejection (e.g., inability to be promoted)</li> <li>-Marital problems</li> <li>-Alcohol abuse/illegal substance use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Prejudice and ideology exposure/formation through postmilitary peers</li> <li>-Membership/affiliation with radical group (e.g., online; in-person)</li> <li>-Postmilitary moral failure experience or trauma that fuels postmilitary grievance (e.g., discharge status)</li> <li>-Postmilitary transition challenges that fuels postmilitary grievance (unemployment, homelessness)</li> <li>-Marital problems</li> <li>-Alcohol abuse/illegal substance use</li> </ul>
<b>Protective, Preventive, and Restorative Factors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Family tradition of military service</li> <li>-Military service expectations</li> <li>-Access to/engagement with civilian healthcare</li> <li>-Social support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Inculcation of military values (character development)</li> <li>-Development of the warrior ethos (warrior identity)</li> <li>-Access to/engagement with DOD healthcare</li> <li>-Social support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Translation of military values to civilian culture</li> <li>-Adaptation of the warrior ethos in civilian society</li> <li>-Access to/engagement with VA healthcare</li> <li>-Utilization of GI Bill</li> <li>-Social support</li> </ul>