KIN AND PEER CONTEXTS AND MILITANT INVOLVEMENT: A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

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The importance of kin and peer networks in facilitating recruitment is taken for granted in existing scholarship on militant groups. Largely focused on plotting the composition of such networks, much of this work leaves a number of assumptions about the influence of these relationships unchallenged and fails to consider their impact over the entirety of individuals' engagement in militancy. An exclusion of the voices of militants themselves also contributes to a tendency for 'kin' to refer only to connections underpinned by genetic ties – or links that whilst objectively measurable are nevertheless only constitutive of a narrow reading of kinship. This thesis takes an alternative approach, viewing kin and peers through the lens of contemporary anthropological understandings of 'relatedness', or simply how individuals create similarity between themselves and others, to explore the influence of these relationships in a more nuanced manner. To do so, a new framework for systematically applying narrative analysis to a dataset of militant autobiographies published between 1945 and 2015 is developed and employed to understand how these authors draw upon kin and peers in constructing their narrative storyworlds. In doing so, this thesis argues that the complex means by which militants constitute their kinship and the role of peer networks in shaping their personally held meanings are as significant as the practical openings these relationships provide in terms of understanding individuals' participation, continued involvement and desistence from violence. At the same time, it also contributes valuable methodological innovations for the study of the self-accounts of those involved in political violence.

Declarations

I declare that the thesis is my own work, and has not been submitted in substantially the same form for the award of a higher degree elsewhere.

I confirm that this thesis does not exceed the permitted maximum and that its total length is 79,826 words.

Signed:

Acknowledgements

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, whose support has been unwavering throughout, and my grandmother who sadly did not get to see it finished.

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Acronyms

ALN   Algerian National Liberation Army

ARM   Arab Nationalist Movement

DA   Direct Action

DA   Deutsche Alternative (German Alternative)

ELN   Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army)

FARC   Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia)

FSLN   Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (Sandinista National Liberation Front)

INLA   Irish National Liberation Army

IPLO   Irish People's Liberation Organisation

IRA   Irish Republican Army

JeM   Jaish-e-Moḥammed (Army of Muḥammad)

JRA   Japanese Red Army

KFC   Khalistan Commando Force

LTTE   Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

M-19   Movimiento 19 de Abril (19th of April Movement)

PFLP   Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine

PIRA   Provisional Irish Republican Army

PLO   Palestine Liberation Organization

RAF   Red Army Faction

SNA   Social Network Analysis

UDA   Ulster Defence Association

UVF   Ulster Volunteer Force

WUO   Weather Underground Organization

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Introduction

In October 2013 Amer Deghayes left the UK for Syria, eventually joining the militant group then known as Jabhat al-Nusra. Three months later, his childhood best friend and two of his younger brothers followed suit. Media reports claim that police had identified 20 other young people in the boys' immediate social circle also deemed likely to attempt to travel to Syria. Adding further complexity to the case, the Deghayes' uncle had been detained in Guantanamo Bay for five years after being arrested in Pakistan in 2002. This example, as well as other recent high-profile acts of terrorism perpetrated by brothers, groups of friends and spouses, have refocused attention on the place of family, kin and peers in individuals' engagement in political violence. Amongst both scholars and analysts, there is consensus that these networks contribute to individuals joining militant groups.

In beginning to unpick the case of the Deghayes brothers and their circle of peers, a number of important questions that demonstrate the complexities of kin and peer influence in such networks quickly arise. For example, how were ideas, values and beliefs that related to travelling to Syria collectively shaped and shared between members of the friendship network that the Deghayes boys were included within? Can it simply be taken for granted that Amer's standing as the eldest brother afforded him credibility with his siblings? How did his standing shape their beliefs? Did the Deghayes consider their own actions to be a continuation of a family legacy of fighting for a cause, just as their uncle had done? Existing scholarship fails to provide the tools to satisfactorily address such questions. It also regularly rests heavily on untested assumptions about how older kin and peers influence younger members, that influence in such circumstances is necessarily unidirectional and that close relationships can facilitate the transmission of 'extremist' ideologies in full without contradiction, ambiguity or conflict.[1]

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[1] For a notable exception of research that empirically analyses how ideology shapes action see Youngman, 2019.

Also largely absent from scholarly work on militancy are nuanced understandings of how individuals within such networks relate to one another. For the most part, research oversimplifies complex kinship dynamics, focusing solely on genetic ties as the basis of any such relationships. Amer's statement, that 'the Muslim nation is one body…If one part is in harm then all the other parts go to rescue' (Penhaul, 2014), however, not only echoes those of many others who have travelled to distant conflicts, but expresses an entirely different form of kinship not necessarily linked to biological ties. Relatedly, the idea that members of militant groups often develop kin or kin-like relationships with one another is widely accepted but similarly under explored within existing scholarship. Moreover, existing approaches are little equipped to answer questions such as how Amer and his fellow members of Jabhat al-Nusra became, at least in some sense, 'kin' and how these relationships impacted upon his decision to stay in Syria even after his brothers and friend were killed in the fighting. Little light is then shed on the means by which kinship develops or breaks down within militant groups.

Understanding Kin and Peer Influence Through Applied Narrative Analysis

This thesis moves debate forward by focusing on how militants – taken to be those who use violent methods in support of a political or social cause – themselves conceive of their kin, family and peer connections, and how they understand these ties to have influenced and impacted on the course of their 'militant careers'. Applied narrative analysis is used to interrogate how kin and peers come to be included in accounts written by militants. Stemming from an interpretivist perspective that stories shape the meanings that provide openings for action, this approach holds that narrative accounts are more than merely post-hoc, subjective or objective records of experience. Rather, these narrative accounts themselves are constitutive of, or shape, experience – they offer insight into how one's own actions are understood. The focus then is to explore how kin and peers are employed in the storyworlds that militants weave around themselves and use to give meaning to, and contextualise, their actions.

This approach is beneficial for several reasons. First, examining narrative accounts allow kin and peer relationships to be viewed through the lens of contemporary anthropological understandings of 'relatedness' – that is, simply how individuals create similarity between themselves and others. This

approach allows more nuanced understandings of kinship to be explored in addition to how these forms are constituted and how they change and develop over time. As such, it also makes it possible to interrogate how and where kinship forms *within* militant groups. Second, this thesis makes a number of arguments as to how narrative is important for understanding militancy. Participants are consumers as well as producers of narratives, something that is highlighted by the prominence of written, narrative material found in the possession of suspected terrorists (Ramsay, 2013; Holbrook, 2017, 2019). Relatedly, autobiographical accounts reveal that militants are often captivated by narratives to the extent that the division between the 'real' world and the narrative storyworlds they create becomes disrupted. Attempting to understand this process is central for analysing individuals' participation in militancy.

Finally, this thesis draws from qualitative sociological studies of networks, to explore how meanings not only circulate but are inherently shaped by the cultures and structures embedded in all kin and peer networks. In particular, this approach helps researchers understand how certain stories are adopted, revised, exaggerated or discarded within the milieus that surround militant groups. Additionally, analysing the place of individuals as narrative gatekeepers – who facilitate, restrict and play a central role in shaping stories that relate to militancy – also provides a different way to think about militant networks. This approach for understanding networks may provide valuable insights for law enforcement practitioners in attempting to disrupt or provide effective alternatives to these narratives, understand the context within which militants quit and assess modes of transmission within these settings.

Militants' Self-Accounts

In the study of the impact of kin and peers on individuals' engagement in militancy, the voices of the recipients of this influence, or militant actors themselves, are often excluded. In seeking to approach this question from a different perspective, this thesis draws on a dataset of autobiographical accounts authored by such individuals. Included are works written by those who have been members of various groups or engaged in political violence in different contexts between 1945 and 2015. The decision to examine such a broad temporal, geographic and ideological scope is dictated by two things.

First, I attempt to address a gap in the literature given that contextualised and nuanced studies of the impact of kin and peers are currently confined to those that focus on local contexts only. This approach is then driven by a desire to understand how kinship operates and is relevant across different settings and whether its importance and role in regard to militancy differ by locality, time period, group type or ideological motivation. Second, the number of autobiographies authored by militants remains relatively small and therefore presents the opportunity for a bounded dataset of cases to analyse (Gerring, 2007).

In looking at militants' own accounts, this approach allows the nuances of the transmission of ideology between individuals to be interrogated. In particular, in conceiving these actors as active, albeit inhibited, agents in their own adoption of ideas, values, traditions, beliefs and attitudes it becomes possible to break down both exactly what it is that they are recipients of, and crucially, *how* this transference takes place. Given that the data available for observing these processes is always partial and usually problematic, this approach provides an alternative means to harness and extract value from the limited information that is made available through autobiographies and narrative accounts. Additionally, I also seek to demonstrate how narrative analysis can help understand the individuals that surround these authors and shed light on the degree to which they too share the same views – even where this may appear unclear from an initial reading of these texts.

Despite the benefits of analysing these texts, it is important to acknowledge an inherent tension that comes with using them to investigate the various questions that this study seeks to address. Autobiographies provide an appropriate source for understanding the meaning-making processes undertaken by their authors. However, when turning to address questions as to the broader insights these texts can shed on the nuances of the transmission of ideology between individuals, the object of study is different; explaining – that is looking for causes why – something occurred in the real world, independent of these authors' narratives. It is an uncontroversial assertion that autobiographers make mistakes, deliberately mislead and seek to conceal their true motivations in the process of constructing and authoring accounts of their lives. Why then should we trust these authors to be historically accurate in their recollections? In other words, individuals' storyworlds do not appear to provide a suitable means to explain the real world and events that took place within it.

To address this apparent tension, it is then necessary to demonstrate the inherent interconnection between life-worlds (real kin and peer networks) and individuals' storyworlds. The starting point for thinking about this division is to recognise that explanation – or an account of the move from one state to another – always includes some form of narration; outlining this transition cannot be made without telling a story (Suganami, 1998:334). With the centrality of narrative to explanation established, it is then necessary to demonstrate how narrative texts we fear might, at least in part, be fictional (autobiographies) can still be employed in this context. Here the work of French philosopher Paul Ricoeur is crucial; one of his significant contributions being to demonstrate how narrative texts provide explanations of the real work (1984). In particular, he argues that both fiction and historical narrative are structurally similar because they are rooted in the individual's experience of time. Without claiming that the two converge entirely, Ricoeur demonstrates that the historical narrative, while factually grounded rather than a work of pure imagination, cannot be taken as an objective sequence of events, but rather must be viewed as an observer's subjective reconstruction as mediated by the historian's selection and prioritisation of certain 'significant' events over others (1984). History is then never a reconstruction of the past, instead taking the form of a new creation that reflects a certain sense of time. Here, the separation between fiction and history then is collapsed.

Significantly, the objects of study at the heart of this thesis that require both explanation (methods of ideological transmission) and understanding (the meaning that militants attribute to the influence of kin and peers) include temporal dimensions; they are processes rather than singular events, as relationships with kin and peers change over time. As such, the division between (intersubjective) storyworlds and the pictures of real-life events drawn up through other supposedly objective observers similarly collapse. Writing in the context of International Relations, Hidemi Suganami then argues that those within the social sciences should take 'advantage of the pragmatic and flexible method of narrative understanding/explanation which in fact thrives on having more than one kind of ingredient [both intersubjective and 'objective' accounts]' (1998:346). The narrative approach adopted in this thesis, then makes it possible to investigate the impact and influence of kin and peers in the understandings of individual militants and make claims as to the broader roles and processes that occur in these settings.

Research Questions and Structure

This thesis is situated around answering the following core question:

- What do narrative accounts reveal about the influence of kin and peer networks in how individuals understand and give meaning to their involvement in militancy?

In addressing this question several sub-questions are also explored:

- What do autobiographical accounts say about the roles and impacts of family, kin and peers on the authors' 'militant careers' and how these individuals conceive these relationships to have facilitated the transmission of ideas, beliefs and values that relate to militant involvement?

- What does applied narrative analysis add to this understanding of these kin and peer roles and impacts and how does it allow us to compare their impact in different contexts?

- What can we learn and apply from this analysis for working with and understanding militants' self-accounts?

This thesis addresses these questions as follows. The first part locates the study within existing scholarship, highlighting how kin and peers have been explored and understood in the literature on militant groups. Chapter one examines the narrow conceptualisation of kinship employed in much of this work and builds a model that draws from contemporary anthropological understandings of 'relatedness' to better capture the nuances of these relationships. Chapter two then defines peers and explores influence and the transmission of ideology, ideas and stories in kin and peer networks. The second part of the study focuses on the method and methodology employed in attempting to understand militants' self-narratives and, crucially, the positions that kin and peers occupy in how these individuals fashion their narrative storyworlds. Chapter three introduces the dataset of militant authored autobiographies that form the subject of the study and provides an overview of trends regarding kin and peers across these accounts. Chapter four develops a

methodology for systematically and rigorously using applied narrative analysis to study these texts. Chapters five and six examine the analytic findings in regard to the influence of family and peers respectively. Chapter seven is comprised of two parts, the first analysing the place of 'metaphorical' kinship – or that which relates to the 'imagined communities' that individuals understand themselves to be members of – whilst the second focuses on the kinship and kinship practices that develop within militant groups. The final chapter concludes by identifying some of the broader insights into the influence of kin and peers in individuals' militant engagement, offers recommendations as to how these findings might be used in policymaking contexts and suggests further avenues for investigation.

Conclusions and Contributions of the Study

This thesis argues that attempting to analyse the influence of kin and peers from an objective, external standpoint can only produce a very limited understanding of the importance of these ties, both in terms of the type of relationships that can be captured and the impacts they exert upon individuals' militant careers. Instead, the complexities of kin and peer dynamics, and how individuals understand these relationships to be constituted through a variety of means, can only be properly appreciated with reference to these actors' own voices. Significantly, this study has found that non-biologically based forms of kinship are shown to be important in how individuals in each of the contexts examined understand their involvement in militancy, despite cultural narratives that downplay the importance of such kinship in certain modern, primarily Western, societies.

Significantly, this thesis argues that the role of kin and peer networks in shaping the personally held meanings of militant actors are as important as the practical openings these relationships provide in terms of understanding individuals' participation, continued involvement and desistence from violence. Whilst instances were relatively uncommon within the accounts examined of the author openly stating that family and peers attempted to directly encourage them to engage in militancy, a narrative analysis of these texts revealed kin and peers nevertheless to be directly or indirectly influential in the move to activism. Crucially, the influence of these figures was also often found to be

contradictory in regard to the use of violence. The same individual or group are frequently responsible for shaping meanings that in some way both facilitate and restrict its use. Such inconsistency is also present in wider kin and peer networks. As such, this thesis also concludes that these networks should not be thought of as homogenous entities but rather systems that contain both aggravating and moderating forces, even in circumstances where they appear radical in their larger whole.

Overall, this thesis offers a number of contributions. In building a dataset of autobiographical accounts of individuals who have engaged in militancy, this study generates new claims about the importance of kin and peer links, crucially, backed by empirical observations. The approach taken offers an unparalleled level of detail and contextualisation when it comes to assessing the impact and influence of these relationships, in particular, a nuanced analysis of the beliefs that are passed on within these settings and how this transmission takes place. At the same time, it also contributes valuable methodological innovations for studying and analysing the self-accounts of those involved in political violence. Included are a number of mechanisms that may have practical benefits for law enforcement practitioners to utilise, understand and extract data from militants' narrative accounts. Significantly, these not only pertain to the authors of these accounts themselves but also help assess whether others around them – or those referred to as 'bystanders' in psychological parlance – share similar beliefs.

Chapter One: Understanding Kinship

Introduction

Scholars have long sought to understand how social networks and personal connections influence individuals' engagement in a host of collective actions. The role and impact of peers, family and kin in individuals' participation in social movements, gang membership, and religious movements has been well documented (see for example, Dauter and Fuller, 2016; Lachman et al. 2012). Elsewhere, a sizeable body of scholarly work now exists that is devoted to mapping the social networks of individuals, and clusters of individuals, involved in terrorism, militancy and political violence (see for example, Krebs, 2002; Pedahzur and Perlinger, 2006; Yang et al. 2006; Crossley et al. 2012; Edwards, 2014). As Timothy Holman summarises, 'there is consensus that networks–family, peer groups, and activist groups–contribute to joining violent groups' (2016:3). Despite this agreement, research has yet to satisfactorily progress our understanding and contextualisation of the importance of these networks beyond this finding. In this thesis, I seek to move this debate forward by bringing together two central, but largely excluded, questions in the study of kin and peer networks and militancy: 'who' exactly is it that individual militants consider their kin, and 'how' do they perceive these kin and peers to have impacted upon their militant engagement?

This initial chapter then aims to provide a nuanced means to conceptualise what it is we are talking about when using the terms 'kinship' and 'family'. To do so, it is structured as follows. In the first section, I look at how existing research emphasises and outlines the importance of kin and family relations when it comes to militant involvement. I argue that, although this work has established a number of reasons why family and kin are crucial for understanding individuals' engagement in militancy, the utility of much of this research is hamstrung by a failure to properly define either kinship or family. In seeking to address this oversight, the next part of the chapter then focuses on how sociological and anthropological work has attempted to identify the universal underlying foundations of kinship. Here, the notion of 'relatedness' – or simply the way that people conceive themselves to be similar or different to others – is proposed as a better means to capture kin relationships. However,

given its potential breadth, the utility of relatedness for drawing the boundaries of certain relationships, in particular those around the family, is problematic. A model is then proposed for combining relatedness and family practices. This chapter concludes by demonstrating how mixing these two approaches provides a means to capture the nuances of a whole host of relationships for thinking about militancy. Importantly, this allows for kin and family relationships, something that are commonly lumped together in studies of militancy, to be teased apart. In doing so, this model then performs a number of functions crucial for addressing the research questions driving this thesis. First, it provides a means to map and compare a variety of relationships, across different cultures. In doing so, it captures the multiple, and sometimes contradictory, levels by which individuals understand and give meaning to their personal relationships. Second, it allows the dynamic nature of how these relationships change over time to be properly captured and accounted for. Finally, this model accounts for the processes of how kinship is 'made' between members of militant groups.

Evidence of the Importance of Kin and Family

The notion that kin and family relations can help explain individuals' participation in militancy has been a longstanding focus within academic and policy research. In particular, the links these networks provide as a recruitment mechanism for militant groups has been well-established in a variety of contexts. Donatella della Porta's study of members of the Italian Red Brigades in the 1970s and 1980s found that just under 25 percent of her sample of 1,214 militants 'had at least one relative, usually husband or wife, brother or sister' also in the movement (1995:139). Similarly, Marc Sageman's much cited study of global jihadists revealed that for 14 percent of his sample kinship ties played a role in their affiliation with the jihad (2004:112). Replicating Sageman's study with European jihadi terrorists, Bakker found that 50 of the 242 individuals examined, or just over 20 percent, were related through kinship (2006:2). Recent studies of individuals who have travelled from Europe to Syria and Iraq also reveal that kinship remains a salient factor in their mobilisation. Bergema and Van San, for example, found that 48 percent of the Dutch citizens included in their sample who had travelled to this conflict zone were either related or connected by marriage (2019:649). Likewise, a report by the New America

think tank found that 'over a third of the Western fighters have a familial connection to jihad, whether through relatives currently fighting in Syria or Iraq, marriage, or some other link to jihadists from prior conflicts or terrorist attacks' (Bergen et al. 2015:8). Such findings, and recent high-profile acts of terrorism carried out by members of the same family, have led some to the rather unsubstantiated conclusion that militants' reliance on kinship links to continue their activities is expediting. Hafez, for example, claims that 'tightening security environments are encouraging jihadis to turn increasingly to the family unit for recruits' (2016:15).

Outside of recruitment, kin, and particularly family members, have been recognised as potentially significant for disrupting the activities of militants and terrorists. Existing research has demonstrated that the kin and families of those who have engaged in militancy often have at least some knowledge of these individuals' activities, preparations or intentions. In their study of lone-actor terrorists, Gill, Horgan and Deckert found that such individuals tended to leak information to their significant others regarding their attack plan before attempting to execute it (2012). Significantly, they found that in 63.9 percent of cases, 'family and friends were aware of the individual's intent to engage in terrorism-related activities because the offender verbally told them' (2014:429 – see also Gill, 2015). In turn families, often provide opportunities for intervention, for example stopping terrorist plots before they reach the operational stage by informing the authorities. In other contexts, families often retain significant contact with those who have engaged in militancy, including those who have travelled to join groups overseas (Miller, 2018:608). The links kept open by family may make possible efforts to monitor or encourage such individuals to desist from militancy.

Something that is widely neglected in much of this scholarly work is the preventative role that kin and family can play in restricting individuals' engagement in militancy in the first place. Anecdotal accounts reveal instances of families or family members performing such roles. In his study of Saudi jihadists, Thomas Hegghammer reports that for 'probably the majority' of those who attempted to travel abroad for jihad, their parents ended up preventing them from successfully doing so (2010:68). He also records 'accounts of fathers and elder brothers travelling to Afghanistan to bring their sons and brothers back' within his data (2010:68). In her detailed study of two members of the British Suffrage Movement, Gemma Edwards demonstrates how individuals' participation in high-risk activism could

be shaped and curtailed even by families sympathetic or actively supportive of the cause (2014). Additionally, limited research has highlighted that certain ideological interpretations, such as the notion that parental permission is required for jihad (Al-Rasheed, 2009; Hegghammer, 2015), may afford family members the influence to restrain individuals' engagement in militancy. In her work on the recruitment on Lashkar-e-Taiba's recruitment, Mariam Abou Zahab found that militants were often unwilling to join the group without the explicit blessings of their family. Furthermore, she recorded that the approval of mothers was deemed most important amongst potential recruits (2008).

(Re)defining Kinship?

Having outlined a body of academic research that emphases the importance of kinship in sustaining militant groups, I am conscious that no effort to define the term in question has yet been offered. Problematically, across the study of political violence few scholars provide any form of clarification of what they mean when using terms such as 'kinship', 'relative' or 'family'. Instead, relying entirely on normative, principally Western, understandings of these concepts, such terminology is frequently used to imply the presence of some form of genetic relationship. This failure to properly define the object of study is analytically unhelpful for a number of reasons. In particular, conflating kinship and family to biological ties alone is inevitably reductive and only allows us to understand a very narrow subset of kin relationships. Returning to the case provided in the introduction to this thesis; such limited conception would entail focusing on the connections between the Deghayes brothers, and likely their uncle, whilst necessarily excluding as kinship the connections that Amer describes sharing with his fellow co-religionists or those formed with other members of Jabhat al-Nusra. In attempting to provide a definition that is able to capture the diverse range of way people relate to others as kin, including the different understandings above, it is first necessary to return to the foundations upon which traditional efforts to define kinship have rested.

Blood and Culture

In all cultures, the networks that connect individuals 'as relatives are apparently universally recognized and universally accorded social importance' (Keesing, 1975:14). This is a relatively uncontroversial position if taken to mean that in all societies people consider themselves to be more related to some individuals than they are to others. A more precise definition of kinship, and how it is constituted has, however, long proven elusive. Traditionally, anthropological approaches advanced that ties derived from sexual procreation, also variously referred to as 'nature', 'biology' or 'blood ties', form the fundamental basis for any conception of kinship (Schneider, 1980; Frishkopf, 2003:3; Franklin and McKinnon, 2001:2). However, contemporary developments within these disciplines now stress that this view, rooted in Western cultural norms and notions of kinship, fails to capture or explain the various means by which individuals denote their relation to others in both non-Western and Western contexts (Schneider, 1980; Holy, 1996; Lambert, 2000).

Instead, kinship is never purely biological, but is also always 'social' or 'cultural'; that is, shaped through human engagement. Organisations, rules and practices determine how all relations are constructed in a given society, meaning that biology cannot be entirely disentangled from social practice despite long-standing anthropological efforts to do just this (Schneider, 1980; Weston, 1991; Carsten, 2004). Even in Western contexts, the border between 'blood' and 'non-blood' kin is continually blurred (Ryang, 2004:755). Marriage provides the most prominent example of this crossover, as a contractual rather than 'blood' based tie. Nevertheless, matrimonial relations are still regarded as central to biological explanations of kinship, primarily because incestuous relationships between family members who share a close genetic link are proscribed by virtually all societies (Holy, 1996:36-38; Carsten, 2004:12-13). Even at this fundamental level of reproduction, culture then regulates biology – here socially-sanctioning who it is that individuals can reproduce with. Furthermore, outside of this limited domain, social practices mean that all consanguinity is still, to some degree at least, conditional. Significantly, individuals determine which biological relations they recognise, afford legitimacy to, and decide to interact with (Edwards and Strathern, 2000:160; Ryang, 2004:759; Nash, 2005:452).

Included in this broader understanding of kinship are many relations that fall under the label of 'fictive kinship' (also variously described as 'artificial', 'pseudo', 'social' or 'quasi' kinship) whereby individuals unrelated by birth or marriage refer to and treat one another as kin (Qirko, 2011:3). Despite emulating blood ties to some degree, fictive kin relations are defined 'in their own terms' (Wagner, 1995). In most circumstances, fictive kin select both whom they share this form of kinship with and the nature of the relationships they enjoy. Given this subjective nature, few typologies of fictive kinship have been assembled (Frishkopf, 2003). Despite this, it is possible to identify some broad features of metaphorical kinship, and how it is constituted.

Metaphorical Kinship

In its widest conception, the idea of fictive kinship is employed 'metaphorically' to construct 'imagined communities' of which individuals perceive themselves to be a member. Principal amongst these is the notion of the modern nation state. Benedict Anderson (1991) argues that national identity has more in common with kinship (and religion) than with secular political ideologies or modern conceptions of their geographical boundaries. Individuals dispersed all over the world identify as members of such nations. Those in diaspora communities often feel a stronger attachment to their 'home' states, even if these are in fact places they may never have visited (Miller and Slater, 2000). As such, these communities are then not 'understood solely by reference to what is taken to be their 'place', but rather by the ways in which they define themselves between and across such places' (Mandaville, 2001:43). Furthermore, Thomas Eriksen (2004:59) argues that for nation states:

> their reality hinges on the efficacy of social constructions relating citizens to one
> another through fictive kinship, and creating a fatherland through geographical
> abstractions. In this dual way, the nation can be imagined as a metaphorical kin
> group residing in a metaphorical place.

The imagined communities that individuals identify with may also take the guise of global social, political and religious movements that cut across cultures, nations and geographies. Unlike nation states these entities need not share, or have ever shared, a geographical location or concentration nor a political authority (Aydin, 2017:16). A prominent example is the Islamic notion of the *umma* or the global faith community of Muslims bound together by ties of religion. Here 'brotherhood is established as a result of *tawhid* [oneness to God] in its spiritual rather than geographical meanings (Al-Rasheed, 2009:312 – see also Haykel, 2009). However, it is also important to recognise that even within these communities there are often different competing understandings of who or what these supra-national communities incorporate – their makeup necessarily dictated by subjective perceptions. Similarly, understandings of these communities, and who and how individuals relate to one another through them, may change over time (Mandaville, 2001:74-75; Aydin, 2017:26). In typologies of identities that run from the local to the global, metaphorical understandings of identity and metaphorical kinship come near the top of this spectrum, dictating a necessarily broad factor in how people see themselves. Madawi Al-Rasheed also highlights how imagined communities can be constituted and operate between the levels outlined. In particular, she describes how for many individuals the Arabian Peninsula has 'a perceived common political and cultural heritage that falls somewhere between the modern nation-state and the larger transnational community such as the *umma*' (2009:315).

Generally speaking, all members of the 'sisterhoods', 'brotherhoods', 'global families' or 'motherlands' that make up imagined communities enjoy equal status in terms of their relation to one another – the egalitarian language used often reflecting this lack of hierarchy. Only in limited circumstances are exceptions made for certain leaders, religious figures, or otherwise specially designated individuals who are afforded greater standing. The absence of any distinction between close and distant kin, and the binary designation of inclusion, often by way of an individual's self-identification, differs from the 'different degrees of relatedness and no fixed or firm way of defining group membership of boundaries' that traditional kin enjoy (Atran, 2010:305). This metaphorical employment also serves to highlight the multiple personal understandings of kinship that individuals can construct and hold concurrently, even if these may appear somewhat contradictory. For example, Ryang observes public and political discourses in the United States, that refer to military service

personnel, who are effectively strangers, as 'sons' and 'daughters', run 'counter to the fundamentals of American kinship' firmly grounded in consanguinity (2004:763). As this example demonstrates, understandings of kinship are shaped by the stories that a society tells about itself, in this case pervasive cultural narratives of modernity that seek to relegate kinship to the domestic sphere of the typical family unit alone. Despite this, invocations of metaphorical kinship are present within all contexts and societies, even if they are more visible in some cases than others.

'Made' Kinship

Whilst individuals within such imagined communities generally do not make distinctions in the strength or nature of the relationship that they enjoy with other members, it is possible to identify some broad divisions in the degree of closeness other forms of fictive kin relationships provide. Anthropologists have argued that, in certain circumstances, kinship is 'made' between biologically unrelated individuals. Here processes such as the continued sharing of substances (notably food), time, locality or residence have all been demonstrated to create bonds of kinship (Carsten, 2000:22, 2004:40; Hutchinson, 2000:60; Lambert, 2000:80; Stafford, 2000:39). Whilst these persons often also enjoy a kinship in the metaphorical sense outlined above, the connections that are 'made' through contact of some form are arguably invested with greater salience (Carsten, 2004:40; Lambert, 2000:79).

Although biological kinship has been traditionally characterised as strong and fictive ties as potentially fragile, Kath Weston has shown that the 'chosen families' of non-blood related individuals are often invested with permanence and certainty in circumstances where biological kinship has been thoroughly disrupted (1991, 1995 – see also Weeks et al. 2001). What makes kinship authentic and equivalent to 'real' or blood relations in such circumstances is the temporal duration of these ties and the sustained effort incurred in maintaining them (Weston 1991, 1995). Similarly, adoption, whereby non-blood individuals take on the role of biologically related family members, has been commonly, and in some cases institutionally, practised within family systems across the globe for thousands of years (Holy, 1996:27). Such relationships, which are often also formalised legally, can scarcely be conceptualised as 'fictive' because of the 'material links' that form between individuals in such

circumstances (Weismantel 1995). Here, individuals are also often stripped of the right to choose who it is that constitutes their kin, a choice that is traditionally associated with fictive kinship (Carsten, 2004:155).

Notions of fictive kinship have influenced some studies of militancy. Whilst not explicitly mentioned, a number of scholarly works that apply Social Network Analysis (SNA) to the study of militant networks, draw upon the ideas that the amount of contact two individuals have enjoyed can be used to determine the strength of the tie between them (Krebs, 2002; Pedahzur and Perlinger, 2006; Osman, 2010). Cultural anthropologist Scott Atran has applied fictive kin to extremist activism, notably suicide attacks (2009, 2010). However, this work is heavily premised on rational choice explanations of how individuals in such settings mimic kin selection effects, and as such, sheds little light on how these ties are understood by the individual actors themselves or how they are constituted (2009:66).

In light of these issues, from an analytic standpoint it may then be tempting to jettison the importance of biology altogether given the difficulty of extracting it from the social processes that surround it, and instead conceptualise kinship in purely social terms. However, Ladislav Holy summarises the persistent question that has prevented anthropologists from doing precisely this: if kinship relations have nothing to do with biology, what separates them from any other form of enduring social relation? (Holy, 1996:168).

'Relatedness'

Given the above problems and 'the susceptibility of kinship to continuous transformations and adaptations' (2000:4), Janet Carsten has proposed using the term 'relatedness' in opposition to or alongside kinship, in an attempt to move away from 'a pre-given analytic opposition between the biological and social' (2004:154). Carsten argues that 'conceived in its broadest sense, relatedness…is simply about the ways in which people create similarity or difference between themselves and others' including both biological and socially constructed ties (2004:82). This similarity may be expressed through the idea of 'links', 'ties', 'connections', 'bonds' or 'solidarity' that an individual enjoys with another. Such connections may be formed through procreation, social means or a combination of the

two (Carsten, 2000, 2004). In this way, 'relatedness' makes possible the comparison between different constructions of the ways in which individuals connect with one another 'without relying on an arbitrary distinction between biology and culture, and without presupposing what constitutes kinship' (Carsten, 2004:5). Relatedness may then be thought of as a continuum, upon which individuals conceive the strength of their social ties. Such a flexible approach allows a broad range of differing forms of relation to be measured together without issues regarding the need for 'catch-all' definitions of different, and necessarily distinguishable, kin types. Similarly, viewing personal connections in this way also makes it possible to capture how relationships – and relations – develop over time as they strengthen, weaken and change in nature. This approach also speaks to work on network analysis that explicitly focuses on 'relations' and how formally and culturally defined relationships are always mediated through informal understandings of them (see for example, Kadushin, 2011:38-39).

This thesis is not the first effort to attempt to use relatedness to provide a more nuanced understanding of how those involved in militancy understand and constitute their relationships with others. Cerwyn Moore draws upon Carsten's work in unpicking the different forms of relatedness that many of the individuals who travelled to take part in the insurgency in the North Caucasus enjoyed (2015). Demonstrating the strength of this approach, Moore teases apart how many foreign fighters not only eschew traditional family bonds but also 'explicitly reject nationality and ethnicity, affiliating instead with ''fictive kin.'' Engaging in activism offers a measure of authenticity as new forms of kinship emerge, which are then reinforced over time' (2015:4). The ability of relatedness to capture the multiple and complex understandings of connectedness that individuals hold at any one time and to account for the dynamic processes which contextualise understandings of kinship are important in explaining individuals' mobilisation. Here, relatedness proves to be a more nuanced, rigorous and theoretically richer way of understanding the role of kinship in militant settings than other work that has applied limited understandings of fictive kinship to the study of political violence (see for example, Atran, 2010).

Nevertheless, in seeking to use relatedness to understand how individual militants from a wide range of cultures, contexts and geographic regions see themselves as connected to others, the breadth of this conceptualisation becomes potentially problematic. Used in a restricted sense to describe

relations that are in some way founded on or appear to imitate understandings of relationships formed through genealogical connection, relatedness falls hostage to the same problems as traditional notions of kinship. Alternatively, if employed in an all-encompassing manner whereby almost any social relation can be thought of as some form of relatedness, it risks becoming an analytically vacuous concept for examining kinship. Stafford, for example, uses relatedness to describe ties between co-villagers and neighbours, relations that would not normally be thought as of kinship (2000).

In attempting to avoid such problems, I propose a model for thinking about relatedness that provides the means to make some broad differentiations in terms of significance. In viewing relatedness as a circular continuum with an individual at the centre (see Figure 1.) it is possible to begin to plot relationships in terms of their significance. The ties to which an individual attaches the greatest significance then occupy the centre with relatedness diminishing as the distance from the centre increases. This provides a basis for a broad spectrum of relationships to be plotted on the same model. Additionally, for comparative purposes, it is also possible to draw some broad distinctions within this scale that reflect how relationships are constituted by way of metaphorical or made kinship. As such, the continuum will see the individual in the centre surrounded by a series of concentric circles or bands that mark these different forms of kinship (see Figure 1.). These bands, however, necessarily overlap, representing how individuals may conceive their kinship to be constituted by multiple means concurrently. For instance, an individual may see themselves and another as kin in both a metaphorical sense, whilst at the same time also enjoying a kinship that has been 'made' in some way. Such a relationship would nevertheless be plotted closer to the centre of any continuum of relatedness – the implication being that kinship that is 'made' is necessarily different, and felt more intensely, at least when it comes to a relationship shared with a single individual.
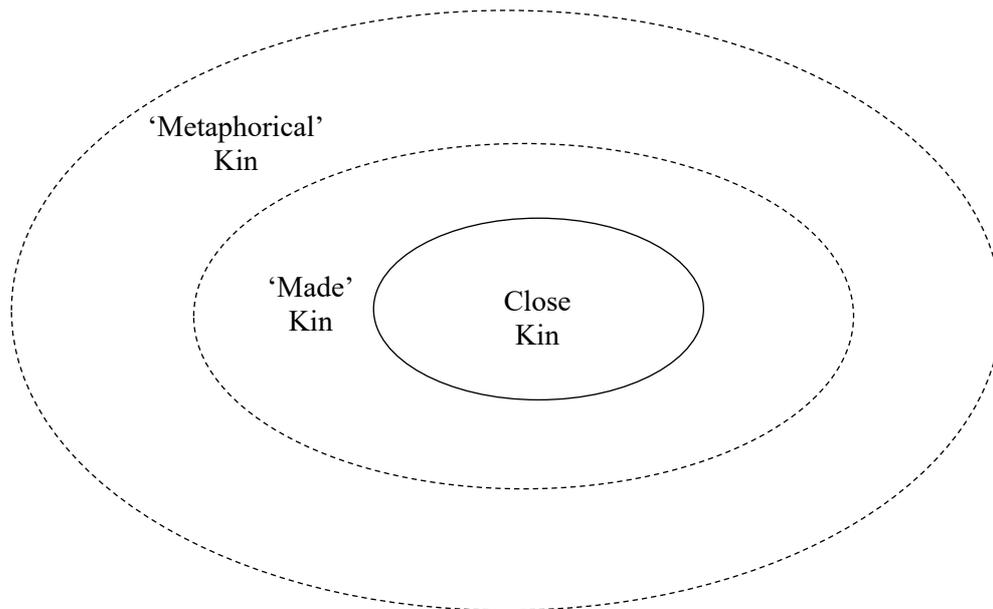
Figure 1. A model of relatedness.

Figure 1. offers an initial means for beginning to organise and plot relatedness. It is, however, important to clarify that relatedness does not necessarily equate to favourable feelings about one's ties. Much work on kinship tends to concentrate on its positive aspects (Carsten, 2013). However, studies have also noted the negative and sometimes ambivalent qualities that accompany kinship ties (Das, 1995; Peletz, 2000; Lambek, 2011). Relatedness therefore encompasses both of these and allows for understandings of how individuals draw their similarity with others through both positive and negative associations. The next section of this chapter then demonstrates how relatedness can be employed to distinguish a set of relationships that are frequently invested with particular significance: familial ties.

Defining 'The Family'

When thinking about personal relationships 'the family' often serves as a *de facto* starting point given how it 'continues to be widely used to refer to an enduring core, or fundamental social unit' (Hantrais, 2004:38 – see also Goulbourne et al. 2010:17). As an idea, the family also has sustained symbolic significance in denoting a unique set of relationships that enjoy characteristics of permanence and closeness usually associated with kinship (Becker and Charles, 2006:119-20). As such, familial ties

are recognised as having a greater intensity attached to them than other relationships that include emotional and moral importance, both positive and negative (Morgan, 1996:155). A number of studies have recorded individuals deeming events regarding their family life to be the most significant in their lifetimes (Ribbens McCarthy et al. 2012:29).

The potential impact of family members has also attracted attention in the study of militant involvement, in part as a result of the assumed significance of these relationships for most individuals. Although a number of studies explore kinship and familial relationships synonymously, others are more discerning and focus specifically on the latter. These studies frequently provide limited explanations or merely hint at which relationships they deem to fall under the guise of family. For instance, Shandon Harrison-Hogan, in an article that focuses on the importance of the family connections of jihadist terrorists in Australia fails to provide any definitive explanation of who is included in this designation (2014). Rather, it is only over the course of discussing various case studies that certain relationships come to light. As a result, it is not clear if other types of family relationship are included or not. Other studies of militant networks likewise neglect defining family for their purposes with similar results (Pedahzur and Perlinger, 2006; Magouirk et al. 2008; Bergen et al. 2015).

One explanation for this absence of a proper definition of 'family' is that in the authors believe no clarification is needed; 'family' being so cross-culturally ubiquitous that we all have some understanding of what is meant. Alternatively, this ambiguity may serve a strategic purpose, allowing the authors to avoid the difficulty that emerges in attempting to provide a catch-all designation of family. Either way, a question then arises as to why the need for further clarification is important? However, leaving the term 'family' open-ended is problematic for a number of reasons. First, from a practical perspective, different forms of familial relationships are commonly seen as carrying different weights when it comes to considerations of contact, power and influence. For example, the capacity of an individual's mother or father to exert concerted influence over a child is likely to be thought of as greater than that of an extended family member. The differentiation of close verses more distant kin is therefore important, for the purposes of this thesis at least, if only for the purposes of testing common assumptions regarding familial influence. Second, without proper definition any findings regarding the influence of family are difficult to disaggregate and contextualise. For example, is it the fact that these

relationships are grounded in biology or afforded a particular status that make them significant, and furthermore, influential? Or is it family roles (whether these be collective or individual) that have an impact here, even if performed by non-kin figures? A proper definition, that contextualises the basis for familial relationships, then also provides for a nuanced understanding of how these ties are important when it comes to militant engagement.

The Nuclear and Non-Nuclear Family

The question of who counts as a family member has been a fundamental problem for any effort to draw a universal model of it (Cheal, 2002). As a starting point, anthropologists have traditionally drawn a division between an individual's 'family of birth' and the family that they may go on to marry into – sometimes referred to as the 'procreative family' – despite the two in many circumstances overlapping significantly (La Fontaine, 2001:5308). Again, in accentuating the importance of consanguinity, this work identified eight 'primary kin types' (father, mother, husband, wife, son, daughter, brother and sister) that form what has been called the 'nuclear', 'elementary', 'individual' or 'conjugal' family (Holy, 1996:31). Extended or 'non-nuclear' family, are then 'relationships of the second order' that result from the 'connection of two elementary families through a common member, such as a father's father, mother's brother, wife's sister and so on' (Radcliffe-Brown, 1941:2).

A number of studies that employ Social Network Analysis have looked to plot the familial connections incorporated in militant networks using the nuclear family as their starting point (Pedahzur and Perlinger, 2006; Yang et al. 2006; Crossley et al. 2012). Magouirk, Atran and Sageman (2008) use the categories of 'nuclear family', 'non-nuclear family' and 'in-laws' (as well as 'friends' and 'acquaintances') to denote the strength of family ties in Jemaah Islamiyah's networks. However, the authors do not discuss how this model of thinking about family translates into the local, non-Western context, nor do they engage with anthropological or sociological work on family and kinship. As a result, whilst their findings are revealing about the presence of blood and marriage links in Jemaah Islamiyah, absent of the contextual understanding of kinship and family systems in Indonesia, they inevitably fail to capture the importance of local kin dynamics for sustaining the group that have been

identified elsewhere (see for example, Osman, 2010; Chernov Hwang and Schulze, 2018). Social Network Analysis holds considerable promise for understanding kin and peer networks and militancy. However, the existing research that has applied this approach to their study rarely does so effectively. As Youngman notes, much of this work is self-referential applying only a cursory knowledge of the rich literature and SNA debates in sociology and instead referencing the same small body of work from within the terrorism studies that is neither as theoretically or methodologically robust (2018:11).[2] The result is that the findings presented are far from as novel as the authors claim them to be.

As the above example highlights, the nuclear family does not serve, nor has it ever, served as the fundamental building block for all kinship systems. Kinship theorists now recognise that this model is neither universal nor inevitable (Holy, 1996:33). Furthermore, individuals now use the term 'family' to include increasingly diverse sets of social connections many of which bear no genetic connotation (James and Curtis, 2010:1164; Cheal, 2002). As such, it is difficult not only for objective observers, but individuals themselves to subjectively identify the contours of who they consider their family (Finch, 2007:70). Family may then be a clearly definable unit for some but a much looser and more permeable entity for others (Ribbens McCarthy et al. 2012:261). Additionally, who a person designates as family is deeply rooted in individual biographies and is subject to change over the course of their lifetime (Williams, 2004; Finch, 2007:66). As a result, when it comes to family 'it is difficult, if not impossible, to find a universally agreed definition that can be applied across or within societies' (Hantrais, 2004:38). Despite this, 'the family', as a descriptive or analytical term, can easily become shorthand for the normative Standard North American Family that takes the nuclear family as its starting point (Smith, 1993). Firmly grounded in consanguinity, it should be recognised that the Standard North American Family is not only insufficient for cross-cultural comparisons, but is in itself a necessarily ideological creation despite the common perception of it as the naturally occurring basis for human organisation (Smith, 1993). Finally, even from a practical standpoint, the division of family into the nuclear/non-nuclear provides only limited analytical utility for assessing the significance of familial relations. If sufficient information is available, it may be possible to trace non-nuclear family to the 'fourth, fifth or

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[2] It is also worth noting here that I support Youngman's conceptualise of terrorism studies as an amalgamation of different fields of research rather than its own formal discipline (2018).

*n*th order', beyond the point where individuals continue to regard these links worthy of any significance (Radcliffe-Brown, 1941:2).

The Limitations of Relatedness

Relatedness appears to provide a useful starting point for conceiving the boundaries of family given that most people share strong ties of connectedness with those who fall under this label. However, relatedness alone may be unable to define the contours of who an individual designates as family for a number of reasons. First, relatedness provides no clear means of differentiating familial ties from any other form of social relationship to which a person attaches significance. For example, an individual may share a strong emotional connection with a friend but, at the same time, still not afford this individual the status of being part of their family. Second, research has found that adopted individuals often refused to refer to the foster families they had formed significant bonds with as 'family', even in circumstances where they had little or no memory of those they designated their 'real' family (Mason and Tipper, 2008:451 – see also Kendrick, 2013:80). As such, an individual's designation of someone as a family member does not automatically equate to them sharing a strong bond of relatedness despite the two being intrinsically linked for many people. Nevertheless, it is important to be aware that this positive association has permeated the way that people describe close relationships as 'like family' (Jamieson et al. 2006). On the other side of the coin, individuals may consider themselves family with others that they have little or no feelings of relatedness towards, or may be 'family in name only.' However, this is not to say that in such circumstances these relationships are absent of emotional importance. Instead, individuals may see their familial ties as emotionally significant but this attachment may invoke feelings such as anger, fear, shame and disgust that prevent them also investing these same relationships with significance in terms of relatedness. Relatedness alone then may not be entirely sufficient to define the boundaries of the family given the complex, and even at times contradictory, points where relatedness, emotions and family meet.

Family Functions and Family Roles

Given the above problems, supplementing relatedness with other approaches may help in identifying family. Sociological studies of the family have been dominated by attempts to define the certain, specific functions that the family performs – a number of which are frequently argued to be essential to any society's continued survival (Gittins, 1993; Goulbourne et al. 2010:24). This task is made significantly harder given that the normative conceptions of the ideal family held by different religious, tribal, caste, national and other kinship groups vary considerably (Holy, 1996; Morgan, 1996; Carsten, 2000, 2004). As argued, the Western nuclear family is neither replicated nor perceived as the standard model of family relations in other cultures. Furthermore, as with most normative conceptions, a significant gap between these ideals and the reality of the family structures that most individuals create or enjoy exists. Whilst 'the families we live with' are to a degree informed by 'the families we live by', in practice, the two are often distinctly different (Gillis, 1996:xvii). This inconsistency makes it a more arduous task to identify the universal functions the family, whatever its composition, supposedly performs.

Despite these problems, significant sociological efforts to highlight the universal functions that all family units serve continue. These have generally encompassed the pooling of residence, economic cooperation and reproduction and the care of children (including adopted children) (Murdock, 1949; Morgan, 1975; Gittins, 1982; Jary and Jary, 1995). Yet the universality of these assumed family functions is challenged by the practical experiences of how many families fail to carry out some, or even all, of these apparently central functions. Many people 'do not define "family" exclusively or even primarily in terms of who they live with' (Ribbens McCarthy et al. 2012:110). In addition, studies of transnational families have shown that 'geographical distance is no barrier to being a "close" family' (Goulbourne et al. 2010:84). Just as households do not equate to families, a family does not need to share a common residence to enjoy strong bonds of relatedness (Williams, 2004; Finch, 2007:68). In a similar vein, many families exist without the presence of children or the need for the familial unit to reproduce itself (Gittins, 1993:111).

Historically, a critical function of the family, in particular the practice of marriage, has been economic (Gittins, 1993:73; Abercrombie and Turner, 1978:165; Turner, 1983:146). Engels argues that the idea of 'the family' developed principally from the need for legitimate heirs to maintain, increase and guard against the fragmentation of property and wealth (1972). In this way the family performs a function that extends across generations. However, with the advent of systems of social welfare the necessity to use family as a means for economic enrichment and security has diminished (Abercrombie and Turner, 1978:165; Gittins, 1993:77). In Western societies, the economic function of family and marriage is now frequently played down or denied (Gittins, 1993:84). Additionally, the idea that the family functions as a vessel for securing the future of property or other forms of legacy for all individuals does not hold true (Abercrombie and Turner, 1978:164). Even in historical contexts, where these functions were of greater importance for individual survival and prosperity, economic betterment cannot be heralded as even secondary motivation for the creation of many families, especially as in many circumstances family brings with it financial costs as well as potential benefits (Gittins, 1993:77).

The notion of obligation has also been argued to be a fundamental principle in any theoretical endeavour to define family functions (Boszormeny-Nagy and Spark, 1973; Stein, 1992). Familial obligations, or certain duties and rights that accompany membership, outline 'the 'oughts' and 'shoulds' that surround individual relationships with family members' (Stein, 1992:525-6). Included in most definitions of family obligations is the duty to maintain contact with and provide assistance to family members as needed (Seelbach and Sauer, 1977; Hanson et al. 1983; Stein et al. 1998). A prominent example is the obligation many children feel to repay the sacrifices and effort expended by their parents in raising them by reciprocating this care back towards their parents as they grow older (Stein et al. 1998:612). In most cases, such as the above example, family obligations are subject to social expectations and negative sanctions for non-performance (Stein et al. 1998:612).

However, despite the existence of these social norms, a number of scholars have emphasised that the enactment of these obligations takes place in the context of an individual's on-going familial relationships (Finch, 1989; Stein, 1992; Stein et al.1998). As such, individuals make a decision about whom they feel an obligation to that is negotiated and subject to change over time, along with their relationship with that person. In addition, this process is highly subjective (Stein, 1992; Stein et al.

1998). For example, selfishness may prevent an individual from feeling obligation towards a family that has cared for them. On the other hand, an individual may feel significant obligation to their family members in circumstances where societal norms would likely release them from these duties, for example in cases of familial abuse or neglect. Given these factors, whilst the function of many families may be to compel members to maintain contact and support other members, this sense of duty does not occur in all familial circumstances. Therefore, the presence or absence of such feelings cannot be used to delineate relationships as familial or not.

In light of this problem, sociological efforts to define the existence and purpose of universal 'family roles' that certain designated members occupy within these units are no more helpful (Gittins 1993). As argued, families take significantly different shapes in different cultures. Certain positions that are deemed central to the family unit in one culture may not even exist let alone be afforded specific roles in other societies (Edwards and Strathern, 2000). This disparity prohibits attempts to define family as a collective of certain positions of varying status and power, despite families long being recognised as sites of the unequal distribution of both (Morgan, 1996, 2011; Gittins, 1993).

Discussions of the inequality of power within the family have primarily focused on two areas; gender and age (Morgan, 1996:127). However, as Gittins makes clear, 'while it can be argued that all societies have beliefs and rules on mating, sexuality, gender and age relations, the content of rules is culturally and historically specific and variable, and in no way universal' (1993:70). Thus whilst divisions of power and status are always likely to be unequal given that different age and sex groups enjoy different access to resources in families, the way that this hierarchy manifests itself is always highly contextual (Gittins, 1993:71). Again, returning to the example of the nuclear family, the patriarchal division of power and status that this familial system rests upon is neither universal nor naturally derived from biology and, in some contexts, is actively rejected (Middleton, 2000:109-111; Gittins, 1993:70). As Morgan argues, 'we cannot, therefore, conclude that family and marital relationships are automatically disempowering for women and empowering for men' (1996:75). Similarly, the mixing of individuals of different age and generations is a 'central and not accidental feature of family'; that certain generations or age groups always exercise power or status over others is also not the case (Morgan, 1996:155). Although families contain positions of status that exercise power

over others, in the absence of a universal model of this division, power cannot be used to define relations as familial or not.

Family Practices

An influential alternative to functionalist or power-centric approaches, advanced by David Morgan, is the notion of conceptualising family not as a fixed framework of assigned roles or positions but rather as something that is continuously created and recreated through routine, or less routine, practices. In other words, family is approached as 'something you do rather than something you are' (Morgan, 1996, 2011 – see also Gillies, 2003:8). Viewing family through such a lens highlights the susceptibility of family ties to lose any sense of meaning without adequate attention and maintenance, and to risk becoming 'abandoned roads on an old map', or mere indications of past connection (Bourdieu, 1977:38). This notion of 'doing family' dovetails with many of the earlier discussions of kinship, in particular, how ties of fictive kinship are made and maintained through certain behaviours. Like relatedness, family practices also allow us to move beyond the idea of the family as a collective of universal and fixed positions and instead to recognise that an individual's family will be composed of a different set of relationships at different given points in time. Such an approach then makes it possible to properly observe and capture family as it changes through dynamic life courses in analysis. This does not, however, imply that many of these relationships are unstable or impermanent, rather that individuals in a vast array of circumstances work hard to 'fine tune' their own needs with those of others in order to maintain a sense of commitment and connectedness, even if the nature of these ties changes over time (Finch, 2007:69 – see also Williams, 2004). Family practices then help explain how families and family networks are sustained in often difficult circumstances, such as dispersion across transnational boundaries (Goulbourne, et al. 2010:101).

Logically the next step is to ask which practices are considered to be 'family practices' and who decides whether a practice contributes to 'doing' family or not? Morgan defines family practices as incorporating a sense of the everyday, a sense of the regular and a sense of fluidity (Morgan, 2011:5-7). This is not to say common day-to-day contact is necessary to qualify as a distinctive family practice.

Many modern families, especially transnational ones, still find ways to 'do family' without such contact (Goulbourne et al. 2010:12). Family practices include both those that surround shared key life events such as parenthood, bereavement and partnering and more everyday general tasks that are taken for granted, obscured or unacknowledged (Morgan, 2011; Phoenix and Brannen, 2014:12). These practices are significant for this study because, through both everyday practices and those that occur at key moments, a family's codes, principles and character are created, demonstrated and passed on to members. Family practices involve the repetition of 'myths, scripts and stories that get repeatedly retold…to maintain a family's ethos and idealised notion of itself and facilitate change towards the ideal' (Phoenix and Brannen, 2014:13 – see also Byng-Hall, 1995; Samuel and Thompson, 1990). Such narratives, and the processes by which they are retold and passed on, then are of great interest for the purposes of this thesis and interrogating influence in the families of militants.

An important question then regards what it is that qualifies practices as necessarily family related? Cheal defines family practices as those 'intended to have some effect on another family member' (2002:12). Morgan, by contrast, argues that such practices need not necessarily be orientated towards another family member but rather carried out with reference to them (2011:9-10). It is important to qualify at this point that family practices are only one lens through which to view these social activities. For example, many family practices would necessarily overlap with 'gendered practices' if the latter was taken as the point of investigation (Morgan, 2011:5). In other words, all that makes family practices distinct from those geared towards other social groupings such as 'friends', 'neighbours', 'colleagues', or so forth, is some form of recognition on behalf of those individuals involved in them that these activities are 'family' related. Thus partaking in family practices involves a degree of circularity, with a sense of family itself reconstituted through engaging in these practices (Morgan, 2011:10). Moreover, who it is that engages in family practices serves to define and establish exactly who counts or doesn't count as family (Phoenix and Brannen, 2014:13)

As social actors themselves are primarily responsible for designating which practices relate to family or not, the nature of 'family practices' will necessarily differ between individuals. Additionally, idealised notions of what a family should look like in any given society also influence individuals' opinions of what family practices are or what they 'ought' to entail. Institutions and agencies

(policymakers, legislators, religious leaders, the media, etc.) and observers, such as researchers, also impact upon the kind of practices that individuals designate as falling under the label of 'family related' (Ribbens McCarthy et al. 2012:144). Again, 'the families we live with' are informed by 'the families we live by' (Gillis, 1996:xvii). Nevertheless, these public discourses make it possible to identify some common themes that help designate practices as family related for a significant proportion of any population.

The home provides an obvious starting point as something invested with significant association with the idea of family for many individuals (Becker and Charles, 2006:119; Ribbens McCarthy *et al.* 2012:29). Many family practices do take place in the home although as transnational families demonstrate, many more occur without the need for common residence (Goulbourne et al. 2010; Morgan, 2011:77). Parenting and patterns of care and caring obligations, most notably across generations, are also conventionally and widely associated with the idea of family and, as such, will be classed as family practices for most individuals (Morgan, 1996:112, 2011:12). There is also 'undoubtedly a close affinity' between food and family practices (Morgan, 2011:101). For instance, the preparation of food is often done in reference to the tastes of other family members and moments of significance, such as birthdays and religious celebrations are regularly marked both by the act of gathering the family for a meal and the consumption of certain foods (James and Curtis, 2010:1175).

As a working definition for the purposes of this thesis, I then follow Morgan's conception of 'family practices' (2011:9-10) as practices that individuals themselves define and reinforce through repeated participation with reference to certain others as necessarily unique to 'family'. As such, this broad orientation rather than necessarily firmly defined notion. However, it makes possible to observe how individuals 'do family' in their autobiographical accounts. An important point to note is that the decision to engage in these practices need not be chosen or enjoyed. Many individuals do so out of obligation, guilt or family pressure rather than out of feelings of familial loyalty or altruism (Goulbourne et al. 2010:143; Morgan, 2011:67). Furthermore, individuals can see their own identity subsumed within the family as a result of engaging in family practices (Morgan, 2011:67). It is therefore possible to envisage situations where individuals engage in family practices with people to whom they do not feel

strongly connected and do not wish to share such practices with. Family practices may draw the boundaries of an individual's family as they see it, rather than how they would like it to be.

This latter point then highlights the problem that family practices cannot fully identify the attachment an individual assigns to their familial relationships. In this sense, it is difficult to use these practices to distinguish between those relations an individual considers close, and extended family. The frequency of engagement in family practices provides no indication of the strength of people's connection. As Morgan argues, family practices need only be regular, not the everyday (2011). That an individual only receives a phone call once a week from an absent parent does not mean that this relationship is less significant than those they enjoy with other family members with whom they engage in family practices with on a daily basis.

Towards a Workable Model

This chapter has so far highlighted some of the difficulties in disaggregating kinship and family from one another and in attempting to provide a conclusive definition of both. It has also sought to emphasise that kin and familial networks should be thought of as fluid entities that change over time with an individual's view of their connection with others. Such an appreciation makes it possible to move beyond attempting to draw universal models of kin and familiar structures as sets of fixed relationships, whether these connections are drawn by way of consanguinity, 'culture', functions, or roles. The two alternative approaches outlined, Carsten's relatedness and Morgan's family practices, provide an opportunity to conceive approaches to kinship and familial relations in a more flexible, nuanced and analytic manner. Relatedness provides an initial continuum that allows kinship and familial ties to be plotted and provides the opportunity for comparison of the myriad of ways that individuals denote their relation to others. Similarly, family practices avoid the need to draw a universal model of the family (something that inherently does not exist) by way of its apparent functions or collection of roles. The notion of family practices also provides an effective means to interrogate familial influence because of the roles played by such practices in transmitting and reinforcing family ideals, values and goals. Despite these benefits, both approaches have their limitations; relatedness in

failing to clearly provide a means to mark the boundaries of an individual's family and the insufficiency of family practices to highlight the divisions that individuals make within the family, such as between close and extended family, and to delineate those relations invested with a certain significance.

Combining these two approaches, however, provides a model for plotting how individuals conceive their kinship with others, including drawing the boundary of the family, and allows for complex kin and familial relations to be teased apart. Conceived as a continuum, relatedness remains a useful but nevertheless linear model for thinking about familial relationships. Family practices add another dimension to this means of thinking about personal relationships, providing a way to cut vertically across this spectrum and draw the boundaries of family to account for circumstances where relatedness is conceived unevenly. The concentric bands of different forms of relatedness retain relevance for distinguishing how an individual's familial relations sit within their broader conceptions of their kin network. Family practices are then a way of marking on top of this continuum the bounds of those relations an individual considers familial to one degree or another.

From examining how these two approaches intersect it is possible to draw conclusions about the relation one individual sees themselves as enjoying with another (see Figure 2. below). Where an individual conceives themselves to enjoy strong ties of relatedness with another, who they also engage in family practices with, this would be indicative of them considering this person a close family member. Similarly, where feelings of relatedness are less pronounced but family practices are still undertaken the relation may be seen as one of extended family. Continuing with this approach it may be able to plot other relationships in the same way; close friends or close non-familial kin (strong relatedness but no engagement in family practices), friends or non-familial kin (some degree of relatedness but no engagement in family practices) and family where relatedness is absent (little or no relatedness but engagement in family practices). Where neither relatedness nor family practices are present there is likely to be no relationship of significant attachment in terms of kinship.

	Engage in Family Practices	Do not Engage in Family Practices
Strong Relatedness	Close Family	Close Friend or other close non-familial Kin
Some form of Relatedness	Extended Family	Friend or other non-familial Kin
No feelings of Relatedness	'Absent' Family	No Relation

Figure 2. The intersection of relatedness and family practices.

This conceptualisation provides a way to conceive of family which is flexible, applicable in different cultures and settings and informed by practices. This latter point is important in that it means that these markers are observable in the accounts examined by this thesis. Additionally, combining relatedness and family practices also helps determine the form of significance they assign to their relationship with each of the members within their familial unit. As such, this allows a move away from the position that familial relations are necessarily those invested with the most attachment for every individual. In practice, the boundaries of family may transcend these bands significantly rather than simply forming a nucleus in the centre of how they conceive their relatedness.

Conclusion: Unanswered Questions in the Study of Kinship and Militancy

This chapter has demonstrated why the conceptualisations of kinship frequently used in the study of militancy, based on genetic relations and Western models of the family, are insufficient for capturing the broad ways that people relate to each other and perceive themselves as related in both non-Western, and Western contexts. Instead, kinship is constituted and operates on a number of levels. Similarly, the real-world family structures that individuals enjoy do not, and have not, ever uniformly resembled certain idealised models. I must make clear, however, that the arguments presented here do not seek to exclude either biologically-based kinship or units that resemble the nuclear-family from this study. In many cases, the most significant relationships experienced by those examined in this thesis

are constituted through these means. However, the point is to be aware that however 'natural' these arrangements and understandings appear they are nevertheless socially constructed. Similarly, whilst far from universal, family roles as commonly conceived retain significance, even if only because a large proportion of any given society view them as being so, and consciously or unconsciously reinforce them by performing these roles. However, the approach for looking at familial systems advanced in this chapter helps make it possible to investigate these roles in a more nuanced way. In particular, it foregrounds the idea that these roles are also performed by 'surrogate' or non-genetically related figures, including those within militant groups, and in doing so focuses on the functions and expectations associated with these positions.

An underlying premise of this chapter has also been to propose a model for the task of capturing how individuals conceive their own kinship with others. Whilst this need not be exhaustive in every regard, it is designed to provide the tools to answer the key questions driving this thesis; who do militants understand as their kin and how are these relationships constituted? Challengingly, this model needs to encompass both the big and the small of kinship, accounting for both the dynamics of how individuals in close contact make kinship through sustained contact, whilst at the same time conceptualising how people understand themselves to share unique bonds with others they may never have met on the other side of the globe. In combining relatedness and family practices this model allows also us to look at how militant groups come to resemble or take on the guise of families. As such, it captures not just where kinship develops or why it is important for understanding individuals' engagement in violence, but also the processes of *how* kinship comes to be made in certain settings. In doing so, this provides the means to address a considerable gap in existing research on militant involvement. The next chapter then considers another type of personal relations that also can be considered and analysed through relatedness – peers –and explores how these relationships can be understood to exert influence and facilitate the transmission of ideology.

Chapter Two: Peers, Influence and Ideological Transmission

Introduction

The first chapter of this thesis focused on 'who' it is we mean when talking about kin. This second chapter then turns to address questions regarding 'how' these relationships exert some form of impact or influence. Here, influence and impact are approached in a broad sense. On the one hand, this thesis is interested in the physical openings and restrictions that kin and peers provide that both facilitate and constrain individuals' engagement in militancy. On the other hand, this research is also concerned with how these individuals and networks help shape the worldviews of those who have gone on to engage in political violence. That said, one of the first tasks remains to define who exactly is meant by 'peers', given that the term's broad usage and susceptibility to lose all analytic utility. Included is an overview of how existing scholarship has analysed the impact of peers on individuals' engagement in militancy.

The second part of the chapter focuses on the nature of the impact and influences examined. In particular, I break these factors down in to three categories: conscious material impacts, indirect impacts and ideological transmission. The first two relate to how these relationships physically restrict or provide openings for individuals to engage, desist from or remain involved in militancy. Ideological transmission, by contrast, pertains to how kin and peers shape militants' ideas and beliefs. This latter category is focused upon in depth, due to the complexity and the nuance associated with capturing and analysing such transference. In outlining the problems with much of the literature on ideological transmission, I propose a means of thinking about transmission that premises the position of the individual recipients themselves in the development of their own ideas and beliefs. In particular, I suggest that looking at how narrative materials drawn from kin and peers come to be integrated in the storyworlds of militants provides an opportunity to better capture the nuances of how beliefs and ideas are transmitted and taken on in these contexts. Finally, I argue that the study of peer, and to a lesser extent kin and family, networks can also be approached as narrative networks – or systems that shape

participants' subjectively held meanings through the collective renegotiation of the stories told within them. Here, in drawing on qualitative sociological studies of networks, I propose a means for using narrative accounts to unearth how the inherent meaning systems of all networks and communicative interaction between participants can be unearthed and analysed.

Defining Peers

Despite being the object of study in a variety of literatures, a precise definition as to who exactly the term 'peers' refers to is difficult to find (Reitz et al. 2014:280). In common usage, the term is taken to refer to persons of 'the same age, status, or ability as another specified person' (Oxford, 2006:1298). Other definitions highlight that peers are generally taken to be members of the same generation (Niño et al. 2015). Conceived as such, the broad range of relationships that could be classed as peers is huge. Over the course of their lifetime, most individuals will come to enjoy various peer relationships with friends, classmates, flatmates, co-workers, neighbours, as well as fellow members of social, political or religious organisations. Such list could go on and on. In a similar manner to the term 'kinship', without some form of contextualisation, the label of 'peers' risks becoming analytically useless – the threat always looming that any interaction between individuals of a similar status may prove potentially subject to such categorisation. In taking one term commonly associated with peers, 'friendship', it is clear that this label is usually employed to refer to a broad range of different associations. Research has found that even in a single cultural context, the use of the term 'friend' has multiple meanings for most people and is not used to distinguish a specific form of intimate relationship (Fischer, 1982:306).

In attempting to disaggregate different forms of peers, a return to the model of relatedness proposed in the previous chapter provides a useful starting point. Friendships, for instance, are often invested with significant relatedness that other peer relationships – such as those shared between co-workers or classmates – are not. In some circumstances friends may be considered 'like family', the separation only marked by the absence of engagement in particular family practices (see the previous chapter). Peer relationships are also shaped by members' self-descriptions of them. Included are the

stories that the parties in peer groups tell internally – or to each other about their connection with one another – and those they tell to others externally about these same relationships (Sommers, 1994). These designations outline the expectations that are attached to them, again, both at the participants' level and in a wider societal sense (Fuhse, 2009:60). Developing this further, Reitz et al. (2014) propose that the principle of 'equality matching' is a defining characteristic of peer relationships. Equality matching 'implies that resource exchanges in peer relationships are equivalent as peers are entitled to the same amount of giving and receiving, for instance in terms of affection and support' (2014:281). For example, in an American context a friend might be expected to provide significant assistance in times of crisis whereas such expectations would generally not be expected of other peer relationships, such as neighbours or co-workers. This friend would expect the same in return if the situation was reversed. Differentiations also occur within different peer types. Whilst the term 'friendship' is commonly interpreted broadly at both a personal and societal level, particular qualifiers such as the designations of 'best friend' or 'close friend' have further personal and cultural expectations that individuals draw upon when conceiving and describing these relationships. Again, the parties to such relationships also expect that any exchanges within them will be reciprocated.

These means can also be used to determine the borders of peer groups. The stories that friendship groups tell about themselves – again, both internally and externally – and their expectations of one another dictate membership, even if this boundary is frequently hazy and these groups contain overlapping designations and interior splits (Fuhse, 2009:60). As members, all of those involved hold relatively similar expectations of one another (although these may be subject to further internal dyadic relationship dynamics) (2014:281). Relatedness, self-descriptions and equality matching also help capture the dynamic nature of peer relationships, or their capacity to shift from one type to another over time. For example, over the course of working together individuals may become friends as much as co-workers, or in the context of militancy as one member of the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) puts it, become 'friends as much as comrades' (Conway, 2014:125).

Perhaps more so than family and kin relationships, existing research stresses the importance of peer and friendship ties for individuals' participation in militancy. The role of pre-existing friendships in helping facilitate recruitment into militant groups, in particular, is held as significant across contexts. In her study of 1,214 members of the Italian Red Brigades, Donatella della Porta found that 70 percent of her sample had at least one friend involved in a terrorist organisation prior to their own recruitment (1988). Highlighting the density by which peers can tie uninvolved individuals to these groups, 42 percent had eight or more friends who were formal members. Similarly, in his study of jihadists, Marc Sageman found that 'preexisting friendship bonds played an important role in the formal affiliation' of 68 percent of his sample (2004:111-112), leading him to conclude that involvement is necessarily a group phenomenon (2004:110). In contemporary settings the impact of peers remains significant. Botha and Abdile's study based on interviews with members of al-Shabaab found that friends introduced 30 percent of interviewees to the group; 64 percent had formally joined with a friend; whilst 22 percent of interviewees had also recruited other friends (2014:9). Similarly, a study of German foreign fighters found that 82 of the 99 profiled individuals, or just over 82 percent, had 'preexisting peer-to-peer relationships with at least one fighter, recruiter, supporter, or Salafist scene leader before their departure to Syria and Iraq' (Reynolds and Hafez, 2017:17). The consensus within this literature then is that peers, in particular friendship ties, provide direct or indirect organisational connections for individuals to join militant groups.

In a similar vein to kin and family relationships, peers also provide opportunities for interventions to stop or attempt to divert individuals away from joining militant groups. Whilst studies have stressed how militants leak information about their plans to their significant others, in certain contexts, this capacity has been shown to be significantly higher for peers. For example, a study of Kenyan recruits to al-Shabaab found that 34 percent informed a friend of their decision to join (Botha, 2014:899). By contrast, only 11 percent informed a parent and four percent a sibling (2014:899).

The Nature of Influence and Impact

Both this and the preceding chapter have highlighted how the existing literature stresses the importance of the organisational connections that kin, family and peers provide for individuals in the recruitment processes of militant groups. The purview of this thesis, however is much broader, and instead focuses on the effects of these relationships through various other means and mechanisms. It is then important to unpack what 'impact and influence' are taken to mean for the purposes of this study. A starting point is to outline the temporal scope of 'when' this influence and impact took place. In a departure from the approaches taken by other studies, this thesis does not focus solely on specific stages of militant involvement – such as recruitment – in isolation. Instead, it examines the place of kin and peer relationships over the course of individuals' lives as relevant to their 'militant careers', or the entirety of their engagement in political violence. This not only spans their potential desistance from violence but also any subsequent instances of recidivism that they engaged in – something not often considered in existing research.

Within the academic literature on militancy the notion of approaching individuals' engagement in these activities as a process has become well established (LaFree and Dugan, 2004:70 – see also Horgan, 2005; Taylor and Horgan, 2006; Gill, 2015). Such analysis should attempt to 'understand the decisions made by the individual at particular times within a particular social and organizational context' (Horgan, 2008:90). To do so, John Horgan proposes a model that asks 'how' rather than 'why' individuals move through 'discrete phases to 'becoming' a terrorist, 'being' a terrorist (or what might be construed as both (a) remaining involved and (b) engaging in terrorist offences) and disengaging from terrorism' (2005:69). These phases of militant involvement, however, do not necessarily advance in a linear fashion nor are these stages often entirely distinct from one other (Simi et al. 2016). Whilst recognising that militant involvement is a complex and individualised experience, it is possible to nevertheless identify similarities across varying accounts (Horgan, 2005, 2008; Viterna, 2006; Bosi and della Porta, 2012). As Jocelyn Viterna argues in regard to militant recruitment, because 'mobilization

processes are patterned, scholars can identify the different paths that individuals follow to participation while still prioritizing parsimonious explanations' (2006:2-3).

Max Taylor and John Horgan argue that in viewing militancy 'as a process also reflects an acknowledgement that the extreme violence associated with terrorism may have its origins in relatively mundane and apparently unrelated activities' (2006:586). This point then brings us back to the task of outlining what impact or influence are understood to be, for the purposes of this thesis at least. In its common usage 'influence' is defined as 'the capacity to have an effect on the character, development, or behaviour of someone or something' (Oxford, 2006: 888). Taken in such manner it is arguable that every kin, peer and family member of those who engage in militancy exercises some degree of influence over them simply through any form of interaction or absence. The utility of such broad conceptualisation for understanding militant engagement is then void. On the other side of the coin, as Taylor and Horgan highlight, the decision to focus only on those influences and impacts that appear to have some form of major and easily observable bearing on the direction of individuals' lives or the course of their militant careers risks excluding many of the smaller or seemingly unconnected events that are nevertheless just as significant in accounting for their engagement. In taking a life-course approach, this thesis seeks to explore how multiple different influences and events combine as oppose to searching and accounting for only the impact of particular 'turning points' or 'key events' as other studies have done in analysing militants' lives (see for example, Nash and Bouchard, 2015; Pemberton and Aarten, 2018). In this sense, impact and influence are taken to include single incidents, gradual processes and a combination of the two.

Conscious Material Impacts

This chapter now turns to discuss and break down the various forms of impact and influence that will be examined over the course of this thesis. The first of these relate to the material impacts that family members, kin and peers consciously provide to individuals. As this and the proceeding chapter have argued, existing research arrives at a clear consensus when it comes to kin and peer networks;

across temporal and geographical contexts these ties prove crucial in the processes by which many people join militant groups. However, in explaining *how* exactly these mechanisms operate, this work is less clear cut. A limited number of studies contextualise and describe in detail how these processes manifest in their localised settings (Osman, 2010; Moore, 2015; Kendall, 2018). Julie Chernov Hwang and Kirsten Schulze, for example, explain how in Indonesian jihadist organisations 'kinship ties create more flexible pathways to entry; in some instances, they expedite the route into the group, bypassing *pengajian* [Islamic study sessions widespread across Indonesia that militant groups often encourage potential recruits to attend for extended periods] altogether' (2018:921).

However, much analysis, especially large-N studies, fails to contextualise or explain how the significant presence of kin and peer ties within their samples translate to militant involvement. Sageman's argument, for instance, that marriage ties may expose individuals to new radical kin and friendship networks, explains how these connections reproduce themselves rather than how they actually impact on individuals' physical entrance into militant groups (2004:113). For the most part, existing research rests on reasonable, but nevertheless untested, assumptions as to how ties of pre-existing loyalty, solidarity and trust make recruitment easier, more efficient and less risky for both recruits and groups. In summing up a number of these, Harris-Hogan argues that a reliance on these connections 'would appear a logical practice as such close relationships would ensure loyalty and a degree of trust, and would assist a network in remaining both covert and connected' (2014:36).

The conscious material impacts of kin and peers on individuals' militant engagement has been largely neglected in another regard by existing scholarship: the physical efforts of kin and peers to either prevent individuals joining groups in the first place or to get those already involved to desist. Anecdotal evidence reveals instances of family members attempting to stop individuals from travelling to join militant groups or to provide them with alternative pathways such as employment opportunities (see for example, Hammami, 2012; Adair, 2003). Despite the potential benefits for countering militant involvement, the capacity of these relationships to insulate or dissuade individuals from joining violent groups has not yet been properly explored in either the academic or policy-focused literature. This thesis then seeks to help address this gap.

Indirect Impacts

The influence and impacts discussed so far have all included conscious decisions on the behalf of kin and peers to push individuals towards or away from militancy. However, the influence of these figures come in many other indirect guises and may pertain to more general characteristics and circumstances linked to individuals' upbringings or family lives. These factors then have an indirect link to militancy and might also impact upon participation in a whole host of behaviours or actions. Analysis of the socioeconomic backgrounds of participants has traditionally been one of the principle means for attempting to understand their involvement in political violence (Freytag et al. 2011). However, the capacity of such measures to explain individual participation in such behaviour has been widely rejected (Horgan, 2005; 2008:83; Moghaddam, 2005; Viterna, 2006; Bosi 2012:348). Significant attention in life-course criminology has also been devoted to understanding engagement in criminality from a developmental context. This analysis has been more successful in demonstrating how the 'baggage' that people carry from developmental periods of childhood and youth – stages marked by high familial and peer interaction – affects their pattern of offending in later life (Sampson and Laub, 1993:7; Warr, 1998:183). Much recent work has applied these approaches to the study of militant engagement. Simi, Sporer and Bulbolz for example conclude in their sample that childhood risk factors and problems in adolescence are significant precursors to participation in violent right-wing extremist groups (2016). Such findings demonstrate that influences stemming from familial and peer settings may be relevant for helping understanding individuals' engagement in militancy. For the purposes of this thesis, however, the focus remains on how militants themselves understand these contexts or factors rather than approaching them as preconditions or risk factors for involvement in political violence.

Ideological Transmission

Another form of influence and impact analysed in this thesis regards the ideological dimension of militant involvement. Militancy by its very definition as 'violent methods in support of a political or

social cause' (Oxford, 2006:1113 – see also Karcher, 2017:10) implies that those involved possess at least some understanding of the cause, ideas or beliefs their actions support, even if these do not line up with the formal doctrines of militant groups. Here, I seek to examine the impacts and influences of kin and peers that relate to the ideas, beliefs, values, grievances, and traditions that militants hold. In one sense at least, these elements can be said to encompass these individuals' ideological beliefs. The term ideology, however, is inherently contentious even amongst leading scholars of the subject (Leader Maynard, 2014:821; Youngman 2019:13-16). It is then worth clarifying how ideology is understood and conceptualised for the purposes of this study. I take Fine and Sandstrom's (1993:23-24) definition of ideology as a useful starting point in this regard:

> a set of interconnected beliefs and attitudes, shared and used by members of a group
> or population, that relate to problematic aspects of social and political topics. These
> beliefs have an explicit evaluative and implicit behavioral component.

In building upon this conceptualisation, I then take a deliberately broad approach to ideology in this study (for example religious and political affiliations may be included). At one end of the scale, are formal ideological doctrines that provide entire thought systems for viewing the world, whilst at the other end are isolated beliefs that only pertain to some aspects of it. For example, anti-Semitic beliefs may be taken in abstract in some settings but may also form part of the wider ideological doctrines of far-right groups in others. As Mark Youngman argues, ideology is used to refer to phenomena that operate at very different levels (2019). This occurs even within the contexts of particular militant movements, for example, between the grand-isms of communism as a global doctrine and at the local, group-level interpretations of the thought systems of the Red Brigades (2019:15). This broad definition of ideology proposed then allows for analysis that is cognisant to the nuances of what it is that is being transmitted.

The idea that families influence the beliefs of their members is commonly accepted in everyday life. Academic research, particularly within sociology, psychology, political science and religious

studies has sought to test this assumption. For the purposes of answering the research questions driving this thesis, this work is then potentially useful – especially in light of the fact that familial and peer contexts have served as the principal settings where this research has been conducted (Schönpflug, 2008). In a series of reviews of this literature, Lee and Knott compiled and summarised relevant findings from various disciplines that employ different theoretical approaches to understand how beliefs and values are passed on in familial (2017a) and peer contexts (2017b). I do not intend, nor have adequate scope within this thesis, to discuss each of these in depth. However, it is nevertheless useful for highlighting how some of the key research can provide an initial starting point for thinking about ideological transmission in kin and peer contexts.

The first body of relevant literature has focused upon 'socialisation' or 'the comprehensive and consistent induction of an individual into the objective world of a society or a sector of it' (Berger and Luckmann,1966:130). Socialisation can be further divided into primary socialisation – or that which takes place in the family and the home – and secondary socialisation – for which peers, school and educational settings, religious organisations are responsible (Browne, 2011:11). Beginning with primary socialisation, families have been shown to socialise children through a variety of means. At a very basic level this includes teaching children the fundamental norms and values of everyday life, such as how to control their emotions and temper their behaviours in different settings (Flanagan, 2002). Families also provide the first introduction to a society's culture through their language, the traditions passed on and their reinforcement of socially acceptable behaviour – all of which are encouraged through positive and negative sanctions, such as rewards and punishments (Flanagan, 2002; Grusec, 2011). Crucially, families also provide children with their first role models (Greendorfer and Lewko, 2013). Socialisation is generally conceived as a lifelong process whereby individuals are constantly learning. Secondary socialisation then commonly takes place as children grow older, and come into frequent contact with peers and organisations outside of the familial home. Through similar means to families, these individuals and groups then socialise individuals into their own relevant cultures (Berger and Luckmann, 1966:138).

In addition to socialisation, 'transmission' has been used by scholars – particularly within political science – to refer to the ways in which ideas, attitudes, practices, religious affiliations, political positions and values are passed on (Schönpflug, 2008). The means by which this transmission takes place have been recognised to include observational learning processes (Jennings et al. 2009), intra-family discussions (McDevitt and Chafee, 2002), the sustained repetition of rituals and embodied practices (Whitehouse, 2004) and formal teaching (Nesbitt, 2000). A number of findings from this work are potentially relevant for examining the transmission of ideology and beliefs associated with militant involvement. First, as Lee and Knott identify in their reviews of this literature, the notion that older generations can pass on ideology to younger generations within families has received mixed empirical support (2017a:6). Similarly, evidence that peer groups exert influence on the beliefs and political affiliation of individuals is 'modest at best' (2017b:5). These findings can, however, be further broken down. In a familial setting at least, the content of what was being transmitted appears to impact upon the strength of transmission. In their review of research regarding the transmission of political values from parent to child, Jennings et al. found that 'the more concrete, affect-laden, and central the object in question, the more successful was the transmission. More abstract, ephemeral, and historically conditioned attributes were much less successfully passed on' (2009:782). The presence of politically homogeneous parents, as well as other supporting family members, has been shown to boost the likelihood and depth of transmission of such values (Jennings and Niemi, 1974; Tedin, 1980).

Whilst an interesting starting point, the utility of these findings for understanding militant involvement may be limited for a number of reasons. First, generally this research focuses only on a small set of relationships, in particular the inter-generational, or vertical, transmission of ideology from parent to child. Furthermore, there is 'a persistent concern that research on ideological transmission has focused disproportionately on white, middle-class and politically and religiously stable contexts' (Lee and Knott, 2017a:54 – see also Jennings and Niemi, 1968; Kelly and de Graaf, 1997). The direct relevance of these findings for the transmission of ideology in the settings examined by this thesis is therefore questionable. Nevertheless, they provide a useful starting point for beginning to think about the transmission of ideology and other values that relate to militancy in kin and peer contexts.

Within studies of political violence, and particularly terrorism, the idea of parents influencing the ideological development of those who go on to engage in violence has captured attention in certain quarters (Post et al. 2003; Post, 2005; Asal et al. 2008; Duriez and Soenens, 2009). A number of different approaches have been used to attempt to analyse how parents affect the transmission of extremist beliefs, ideologies and support for violence. From their interviews with 35 individuals from a range of secular and religious militant groups imprisoned in Israel, Post et al. conclude that 'clearly, families that were politically active socialised their sons at a young age and were supportive of their involvement' (2003:172). Expanding on this, Post's later work has focused on how hatred is apparently 'bred to the bone' in the family settings of Palestinian militants through the exposure of individuals to a 'narrative of victimization since early childhood' (2005:17). Another study of the inter-generational transmission of racism and prejudice found that 'there does exist a significant concordance in racism between adolescents and both of their parents' in regard to these views (Duriez and Soenens, 2009:909).

Elsewhere, however, this correlation appears less concrete. Few other studies arrive at such definitive conclusions. Asal, Fair and Shellman's quantitative analysis of whether families in Pakistan consented or refused to consent to a child's decision to join a militant group concluded that this decision was highly depended on socioeconomic factors (2008). King, Noor and Taylor found some evidence of normative support for the use of violence amongst the immediate relatives of members of Jema'ah Islamiyah (2011). However, the authors admit that it is not possible to determine whether this familial support predated this kin member's involvement in militancy. They postulate that families' support 'might also be an attempt to justify their relative's highly costly anti-normative acts' (2011:412). In their review of the literature, Sikkens, Van San, Sieckelinck and de Winter found that this research is 'ambivalent about whether young people learn extreme ideals, prejudice, and racism through their parents or elsewhere' (2017:212). Their own, admittedly small, study of eleven Dutch former militants from various ideological groups similarly did not support the notion of a correlation between the two; 'both formers and their family members gave little weight to the influence of parents' (2017:212). Only

one of their interviewees answered that they believed that they had been directly influenced by a parent (2017:205).

Problematically, in a similar vein to the literatures on socialisation and ideological transmission in religious and political contexts, this work is dominated by a focus on the influence of parents. Anecdotal evidence suggests that intra-generational family relations – primarily siblings – can also prove significant in the ideological development of militants (Andre and Harris-Hogan, 2013; Hwang and Schulze, 2018). However, no studies that explore the capacity of siblings to transmit ideology in any depth (nor in fact, any that examine their influence in engagement in militancy more generally) could be identified. In other circumstances the role of other family members, such as grandparents, in influencing the beliefs of militants has also been highlighted (see for example, Orsini, 2012). Again, no studies could be found that focused specifically on the role and impact of these family members.

Within studies of political violence, there has also been less work on the transmission of ideology or beliefs between peers than there has been on familial settings. The work that does exist, again, provides mixed support for the idea that these individuals ultimately prove influential in shaping others' beliefs. Botha, for instance, describes how al-Shabaab were successful in moulding the collective understandings of recruits, in particular 'transferring "my" grievances to "our" grievances' (2014b:915). By contrast, Schuurman, Eijkman and Bakker's (2015) study of the Hofstad group – a network of Dutch Islamist militants – is notable in highlighting the divergence of ideological beliefs held by members in even this relatively small setting. Whilst the majority displayed a strong affinity with Salafi-Jihadism, a significant proportion had misgivings about certain aspects of the dominant interpretation of this ideology within the group (2015:912). Furthermore, three members seem to have had little or no interest in radical or fundamentalist interpretations of Islam altogether (2015:912). The authors conclude that 'fluctuations in the justifications for violence indicate just how difficult it is to speak of a clearly defined or commonly shared "Hofstadgroup ideology"' (2015:914). In this sense, it is difficult to suggest that members significantly influenced each other's beliefs, even over time, given the longitudinal dimension of the study (three years).

A number of lingering questions then remain when it comes to peers and the transmission of extremist ideologies and beliefs. It is unclear as to the degree to which individuals with similar beliefs associate with one another (homophily) or how much the beliefs within these groups change to become more similar through their interactions (socialisation) even in radical contexts. Relatedly, studies have tended to focus on the commitment that individuals within militant networks commonly enjoy towards one another as explanations for their behaviour rather than suggestions that this association influences the ideological observances of members (see for example, Atran, 2010).

How Transmission Takes Place

In both familial and peer contexts the existing research presents a mixed picture on the extent to which ideologies or beliefs that pertain to support for militancy can be passed on. That said, even taking the two together, there is only a small body of literature in this area. Studies that attempt to interrogate the complexities of the transmission of extremist ideologies within small groups of either family or peers are even rarer. Additionally, this work suffers from a significant gap in attempting to identify, measure and explain how transmission takes place in these contexts. These problems understandably stem, at least in part, from a lack of detailed and accessible data. A notable exception is a body of work by Donatella della Porta and Lorenzo Bosi. Here, empirical findings are coupled with militants' own testimonies to develop detailed, contextualised explanations of exactly how familial traditions and 'counter-hegemonic consciousness' (as well as material ties to militant movements), translated into cumulative micro-processes that explain how PIRA and Red Brigades volunteers decided to join these groups (Bosi and della Porta, 2012 – see also Bosi, 2012; della Porta, 2013). For example, they describe the different layers of beliefs that were transmitted simultaneously to a member of the Red Brigades during his early life and how this process took place; 'socialization to left-wing values therefore happened during his childhood, especially listening to his grandfather's tales of the anti-fascist struggle, but also of rebellion as an expression of human dignity' (Bosi and della Porta, 2012:370).

Outside of this work, a limited number of detailed case studies that focus on particular groups or militants also provide some insight into transmission dynamics and processes familial and peer settings. Lorenzo Vidino's (2011) analysis of a cell of four Tunisian friends who formed an al Qaeda-affiliated cell in Italy provides some explanation of the processes by which their ideological beliefs converged. Drawing on the testimonies of two members, it outlines the 'domino effect' (2011:406) that took place in their shared apartment, whereby one member would supposedly indoctrinate another, who then in turn would go on to influence another. Both of the two interviewees give weight to the influence of peer pressure in this process (2011:406). Furthermore, some explanation of the processes by which the transmission of ideology was attempted is provided. The interviewees describe how the shared consumption of ideological media, specifically jihadi videos (2011:406); verbal efforts on the behalf of some members to coerce others to change their behaviour and values (2011:406); and appeals for individuals to visit settings where they would be further exposed to ideological material – in this case a mosque with a long-standing association with radicalism – were all employed to try and change some members' beliefs (2011:402). However, any ideological transmission described here nevertheless remains inseparable from social factors and dynamics within the group. Whilst the ideological commitment of three of the members may have been deeper, one of the interviewees is adamant 'he was never fully convinced of the jihadist arguments supported by his roommates but that he went with them to the ICI [Islamic Culture Institute – a mosque infamous for its links to militancy] and watched jihadist tapes not to lose their friendship' (2011:406). Similarly, decisions to partake in actions with ideological connotations appear to have been initially taken out of feelings of obligation or to avoid upsetting other members. It is undeniable that social factors and group dynamics are fundamentally intertwined with ideological transmission in such settings. However, what is difficult to judge is whether the weight afforded to the social dimensions of these processes in much of the literature is actually warranted or instead, at least in part, results from the difficulty in assessing how beliefs are shaped in such contexts with only limited data.

Elsewhere, a limited number of studies have sought to examine how ideological transmission manifests in the familial setting of a particular militant. Drawing heavily from the testimony of one of

his brothers, Andre and Harris-Hogan's (2013) detailed examination of the interaction of ideas and influence within the family of jihadist Mohamed Merah highlights some of the difficulties in identifying how different beliefs, grievances, values and ideologies are passed on in such contexts. In describing how the Merah children were brought up in an 'atmosphere of racism and hatred' (2013:310), the authors detail the conscious efforts of their father and uncle to transmit anti-Semitic beliefs. Specific incidents – sometimes involving serious violence – and statements are recalled as part of a sustained campaign to ensure that 'the children were systematically taught that "Arabs are born to hate the Jews"' (2013:310). However, other elements of their father's ideological beliefs are neither expanded upon in depth nor are the processes by which they were supposedly passed on explored. Instead, the rather vague notion that the Merah children were exposed to their father's 'Islamist discourse' (2013:309) or 'extremist discourse' (2013:310) alone is taken to account for their decision to adopt radical understandings of Islam themselves. Here, greater detail and explanation is provided when it comes to a specific prejudice (in this case anti-Semitism) that can be easily identified and isolated in accounts, rather than the more complex set of interconnected beliefs and attitudes that presumably underpin the rest of their father's ideological views. Specific and isolatable beliefs are also more easily communicated by those involved. Problematically for such studies, individuals frequently don't talk about, nor do they generally have the vocabulary to succinctly explain the ideological beliefs they have come into contact with in the time afforded by interviews or short accounts.

This example then highlights a key problem with the existing literature. Such studies often do not, nor have adequate data, to delve too deeply into the 'what' of that being transmitted – or the specific ideas and beliefs passed on by kin and peers – let alone question how this transmission takes place. In this context, ideological beliefs – especially those deemed 'extremist', 'radical' or 'violent' – are generally treated as black boxes, or complete belief systems for viewing the world and its ills that are transmitted and taken on in their entirety. The literature attempts to bypass this problem by either focusing only on single, restrictive and easily definable beliefs that often form a component of such ideologies (racism, anti-Semitism, specific grievances) or instead looks at very broad notions of familial or peer support for the actions of those who have engaged in militancy. However, that either approach,

absent of detailed contextual explanations, can capture the nuance of these dynamics is contentious. For example, family members may share racist beliefs but disagree on the use of violence in support of these views. The idea that familial support for the violent actions of members can simply be divided into binary categories negates the place of context or that the views of the parties involved may not align in their entirety one way or another. Family members may not either condone or condemn these actions in their totality. Their views may depend heavily on context or in a research setting, how the question about this action is posed. Additionally, familial support or disapproval is not necessarily static. Families may change their attitudes towards the actions of members over time. It is the unclear then if studies that rely on such correlations as evidence of transmission really do much to enhance our understanding of these complex dynamics. Finally, this work, again, accounts little for the agency of the recipient of this transmission something that studies of transmission in other contexts have challenged (McDevitt and Chafee, 2002).

An Alternative Approach to Influence and Impact

In seeking to avoid the problems discussed, this thesis approaches the influence of kin and peers from the perspective of how individual militants personally understand them – whether these be conscious or indirect material influences, or those that impact upon their beliefs in some way. To do so, a narrative analysis of the autobiographical accounts of individuals who have engaged in militancy was undertaken. A significant benefit of this approach is that it is highly cognisant of context. Even when it comes to the physical opportunities or restrictions that kin and peers present, the meanings and significance of such actions are always mediated and understood through the author's perception of them. For example, a parent's effort to secure employment for their child can be interpreted in a number of ways. The child may see this as their parent attempting to provide them with a better future. Or it could be viewed as an attempt to exercise control over one's actions and life. Alternatively, in a context relevant to political violence such actions could be understood by the benefactor as means to steer them away from delinquency and/or involvement in militant groups.

This approach is also useful for interrogating the nuances of ideological transmission. By conceiving individuals as active, albeit constrained, agents responsible for creating and managing their own ideas, and beliefs, it is possible to break down what it is that is adopted or taken on from family members, kin and peers. This has a number of benefits over approaches that seek to analyse the transmission of such elements from an objective standpoint. In particular, it moves away from seeing the beliefs that kin and peers pass on in simplistic or binary terms and makes it possible to break down the complex, caveated, and sometimes contradictory, views that the individuals that surround militants hold themselves. Additionally, this approach makes it possible to analyse how the views of kin and peers, including those that support or oppose violence, change over time. Doing so avoids a problem encountered in much existing literature that has sought to measure familial support for the actions of militants, specifically whether this support preceded their involvement or instead manifested retroactively (see for example, King et al. 2011:412).

Autobiographical recollections also contain information about the authors' own assessments of how, where and when transmission took place. The transmission of a whole range of abstract ideas, values and beliefs can also be interrogated. Some may appear from an objective standpoint to have little or no link to militancy. However, a narrative reading of these individuals' account reveals how these beliefs are reinterpreted by the authors to necessitate the use of violence. Viewing militants as active agents in their own socialisation also opens up questions about how they deploy their kin and family backgrounds in constructing their identities. In regards to metaphorical understandings of kinship, individuals always choose which elements of these links that they draw upon (Al-Rasheed, 2009). Individuals do the same with their family histories, selecting which elements to privilege and which to downplay or ignore (Strathern, 1999:78). In familial contexts where transmission has primarily been studied, the agency of the recipients of this transmission has largely been excluded from this theorisation. These actors are frequently characterised as passive agents in the adoption of beliefs or ideology (McDevitt and Chafee, 2002). However, McDevitt and Chafee argue that even in familial relationships characterised by unequal power distribution, such as between parent and child, these interactions inevitably encompass some degree of bidirectional exchange as the recipients question and

bring their own meanings to that they are being exposed to (2002:288). In this sense, individuals always have a say in negotiating transmission by determining the meaning that they give to the beliefs that they take from others. Militants then decide which elements from these individuals to reject or accept in how they imagine the world and their own future. Taking account of such agency, this approach adopts a holistic perspective towards transmission that accounts for the varied means by which this process takes place.

Whilst the approach outlined here then appears beneficial for analysing ideological transmission, the process of actually capturing the nuance of such transference is inevitably difficult. To do so requires a means to conceptualise transmission, and how it can be identified, in a different manner to those employed within the existing literature. One such approach is to interrogate how ideas taken from others are employed in the imaginations of militants. Imagination is an under theorised but nevertheless central element of political violence. The pursuit of all political goals is inherently linked to imagination, specifically the ability to imagine alternative realities both in terms of our own lives and the world we live in. Those causes advanced by violence are no different in this regard. 'Narrative imagination' – or our capacity through stories to envision the worlds of others, the future, the past, the not-real and the not-yet-real – has been theorised as playing a significant role each of our daily lives and existences (Nussbaum, 1998; Andrews 2014, 2016). Here the theorising of Molly Andrews is instructive. She describes her work to focus on an understanding of imagination (2016:20):

which does not leave the real world far behind, but rather is grounded in it, which extends from the 'real', the world as we know it, to the world of the possible. It is imagination in its everyday guise, imagination as it is manifested as we think about our lives as they have been lived, and as they might be led.

Andrews argues that in viewing our lives and the world around us through the lens of narrative imagination we constantly create and recreate possible futures for ourselves, something that inevitably impacts upon our actions (2016). This understanding then disrupts everyday assumptions regarding the division of the real and the imaginary. In this sense, 'the real and the not-real are not then polar opposites

but, rather, are positioned in relation to one another, linked by a thread of ongoing change and perpetual becoming' (Andrews 2014:6).

Imagination also raises questions about individuals' capacity and willingness to not only embrace narratives, but also to go further and immerse themselves within the alternative realities they constitute. In his study of the media consumption of convicted terrorists in the UK, Donald Holbrook found that stories, fables and biographical accounts conveyed as heroic narratives were especially prevalent (2017:28 – see also Holbrook, 2019). Theoretical work in literary studies offers valuable insight into the affective capacity of such narratives. Green and Brock focus on the power of narrative to stimulate within individuals a 'transportation into narrative worlds', or 'a state in which a reader becomes absorbed in the narrative world, leaving the real world, at least momentarily behind' (2002:317 – see also Green and Brock, 2000, 2002; Green, 2004). Significantly, the traveller (the reader, listener, viewer or receiver of the narrative) always returns from the journey of transportation somewhat changed by the experience (Gerrig, 1993:10-11). Transportation also commonly induces an emotional change in the real world state of the traveller creating an affective bridge that connects this narrative world to their everyday one (Green et al. 2004:317). This sense of direct and personal immersion, in part, helps explain why narratives often resonate so strongly with individuals (Green and Brock 2002:315).

In this sense, I am interested in how narrative elements are gathered by militants from those around them and fashioned into the narrative storyworlds that these actors constantly weave around themselves and their actions. Autobiographical texts provide a means to assess these storyworlds and the processes by which they are created. In working with testimonies, researchers are always to some degree reliant on what the authors decide to include and exclude. In certain circumstances, the authors may not wish to reveal that family members or peers held potentially violent or extremist views, nor that they attempted to pass these on in some way. They may temper, obfuscate or excuse the beliefs of these individuals in their accounts. However, the narrative approach taken here, that makes it possible to scratch beneath the surface of these descriptions, connect smaller incidents and analyse that which is missing, allows analysts to unearth otherwise hidden connections. In such instances, even when excluding incidents or details or being deliberately vague in their accounts, militants inevitably reveal

more than they intended. Through narrative analysis it is then possible to begin to assess whether those individuals in the author's immediate social surroundings – referred to as 'bystanders' in the psychological literature – share the same beliefs.

Narrative Networks

Kin, and particularly peers, not only offer individuals opportunities to meet and interact with others but also the means to encounter a broad range of ideas, stories, beliefs and meanings. Given that individuals are frequently members of, and move between, different peer groups concurrently, they unavoidably act as communicative bridges that connect large and otherwise disparate populations together (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, 2001:333). As such, even the smallest of peer groups are inevitably exposed to the meanings, ideas, beliefs and stories held by peers outside of their self-defined boundaries. In this way peer networks might be approached as conductive systems for the spread of these ideas, beliefs, meanings and stories. However, such networks are not neutral conductors. As work within qualitative sociology that counters the notion of thinking about networks from a purely structural standpoint attests, these communicative systems are not only responsible for transmitting but also actively shaping meanings. Jan Fuhse argues that all networks contain 'meaning structures', or a 'culture of symbols, schemes, and scripts diffused in a particular network' (2009:64). These meaning structures, in turn, produce group identities and allow for 'collective action, that is, acting coordinately in the name of the collective' (2009:65). Existing research has shown how meaning structures impact on the actions of gangs and social movements (Gould, 1995; Tilly, 2002). Ann Mische (2003:258) further argues that personal social networks should not be seen:

> merely as locations for, or conduits of, cultural formations, but rather as *composed of* culturally constituted processes of communicative interaction. This means that we should shift our attention away from cultural forms such as "identities" or "frames," toward the study of how these forms are shaped, deployed, and reformulated in conversation.

Drawing together the work of both Mische and Fuhse, as well as that of Jürgen Habermas (1987), Gemma Edwards, approaches 'personal social networks as socio-cultural 'lifeworlds' with a particular 'meaning structure' which arises in communicative interaction' (2014:65). Unlike these authors I am not principally concerned with how meaning structures or communicative interaction can be used to map personal networks. Rather, I am interested in how these dimensions of networks influence subjective meanings held at the individual level of the participants – in other words, the interface and overlap between the 'lifeworlds' of peer networks and individuals' narrative storyworlds.

Edwards' (2014) analysis of two members of the British Suffrage Movement proves a useful model of how such analysis may be approached. On the one hand, whilst her study maps the personal relationships of these two women, on the other, it also focuses heavily on how their subjective interpretations – in this case, those that relate to the need to adopt certain tactical innovations – were shaped by the networks around them. Here, Edwards demonstrates how detailed empirical and specifically narrative data – letters, speeches and diaries – can be used to plot the impact of meaning structures, communicative interaction and network structures in this process (2014:53). Looking at the militant careers of the two subjects through these texts, it is then possible to determine the 'world of meaning that was woven through the broader patterning of their social networks and from which – in making their decisions – they had to draw' (2014:65). Such network cultures are not just relevant during individuals' move towards militancy. Rather, for those already involved, groups also contain 'a structure of meanings about their commitment that helps them to remain committed over time' (Passy and Giugni, 2000:121).

As Edward's study suggests, narratives provide one means to interrogate how network cultures shape personal meanings. Through storytelling we bring our own meanings to the public domain (Barthes, 1977:119; Presser, 2010:431). These meanings are then received and renegotiated by others, including kin and peers. Autobiographical texts then provide one means to interrogate not only the flow of stories in social spaces, but also how these narratives are filtered through meaning structures and shaped through communicative interaction. These texts frequently include descriptions of the settings where stories were first encountered and how they were received, not just by the author, but also by

other members of their peer networks. Included is information on how certain narratives were adopted, challenged, rejected, reinterpreted, given meanings and otherwise shaped by these networks. Autobiographies then often provide insight into the multiple stages that such narratives pass through after entering group settings. Included are descriptions of where, when and how stories were first brought to the group; the interactive processes by which they were received, debated and renegotiated; the collective assessment that the group arrived at and attached to them; and finally, the author's interpretation of the initial narrative and how it changed during all of the above phases. In examining multiple autobiographies from the same context it is often possible to identify how similar versions of the same stories are told in different settings. Here, it is also feasible to interrogate how these narratives change and are repurposed over time and why they continue to be retold and resonate in certain contexts.

In this sense, I examine kin and peer networks as narrative networks as well as physical ones. I focus on the capacity of these networks to not only make stories encounterable, but also to debate and renegotiate them; something that ultimately shapes the personally-held meanings of members – here, the authors of autobiographical texts, and to a lesser degree, those around them. Again, whilst it is not my intention to map the structure or composition of these networks and how and where narratives flow within them, this approach does help understand the positions that certain individuals occupy within these systems. In particular, certain individuals occupy the role of narrative gatekeepers or those who possess some capacity to impact upon the flow of narratives and make certain narratives more or less encounterable within networks. These gatekeepers may play a role in shaping stories to resonate in local contexts. The literature taken from qualitative sociological studies of networks when applied in this way then provides a means to add another dimension to the analysis of these systems.

Conclusion

Having made a case for using relatedness as a means to conceptualise personal connections in chapter one, this chapter focused a subcategory of these relationships – peers – as well as the wider issue of how kin and peer influence can be understood. In the first part of the chapter, I highlighted how

'peers' have been ill-defined in a variety of disciplines despite widespread recognition of their importance in shaping the actions of individuals. I argue that peer relationships can be identified and broken down through relatedness, and the self-descriptions and expectations that their participants afford to them. The second part of the chapter focused on how the impact and influence of kin and peers are conceived and approached for the purposes of analysis in this thesis. As a starting point I reviewed the literature on how these individuals' effects have been studied in regard to militancy. This work, however, is found wanting in many regards and leaves important questions about participation in political violence unanswered. In particular, despite universal recognition that kin and peer links assist or expedite individuals' entrance into militant groups the actual processes by which this takes place are commonly missing from analysis. This absence reemphasises the need for further contextualisation of the roles that these ties play.

In attempting to address this gap, this study breaks down kin and peer influence and impacts into three broad, and sometimes overlapping and non-exhaustive, categories: conscious material impacts, indirect impacts and ideological transmission. In proposing this as a means for looking at influence, I reviewed the relevant literature and drew particular attention to the transmission of ideology. Even taken broadly, this remains the most theoretically and methodologically complex and contentious aspect of kin and peer influence to account for. Scholars have struggled not only with identifying instances of the transmission of extremist ideologies, but more broadly with conceptualising how to approach the task of accounting for such transference. A central aspect of this chapter has been to propose an alternative way for examining ideological transmission that captures the nuances of what it is that is actually passed on. By looking at how militants draw their storyworlds through narrative imagination, it becomes possible to understand which elements they take from others.

Such an orientation also opens up new avenues to explore how kin and peer systems function as networks for the transmission of beliefs via narratives. Here, in drawing on work from qualitative sociological studies of networks, I propose an approach that adds further nuance to studying these systems from a purely narrative standpoint. In particular, it adds a means of interrogating how the cultural and structural features embedded within all networks come to shape the subjective meanings

held by their members. To test whether this approach holds value for studying militant networks requires access to reliable data. The next chapter explains how the data analysed in this thesis, a corpus of militant authored autobiographies, was identified, collected and complied.

Chapter Three: Introduction to the dataset

Introduction

The first two chapters have outlined the limitations of existing research on kin and peer networks and extremist involvement. In doing so, alternative theoretical approaches have been proposed for understanding both how these relationships are constituted and how they are influential. To demonstrate how these insights can prove beneficial for studying the role of these networks in individuals' engagement in militancy, it is then necessary to apply them to relevant data. This chapter focuses on the data itself – militant-authored autobiographies. The chapter that follows this one will deal with the methodological approach taken to interrogate these texts through applied narrative analysis. This chapter is composed of two parts. The first discusses the collection of data. Initially, a brief overview of militant autobiographies and how they have been used in academic research is offered. Here, I make a case for using these texts to access the accounts of militants as opposed to other potential sources of data, and consider some of their limitations for this purpose. The next part of the chapter then outlines the parameters of the study. Decisions taken regarding case selection are explained and justified. A discussion of the ethical considerations of conducting such research concludes the first part of the chapter.

The second part of the chapter presents an overview and breakdown of the final dataset of militant authored autobiographies complied. Although this study is qualitative by nature, it is useful to offer some quantitative breakdowns and an overview of certain relevant themes readily identifiable across the dataset. In doing so, some of the difficulties in trying to objectively identify relevant factors, and the limited conclusions that can be drawn from analysing the data in such way, are highlighted. Finally, this chapter concludes by offering an introduction and contextualisation to some of the accounts that are discussed in-depth in the following analytical chapters, including an explanation of why they were selected as illustrative examples.

Autobiography in Research on Militancy

Before introducing the dataset and outlining the criteria used to select texts for inclusion, it is first necessary to provide some overview of the data that forms the basis of this study – autobiographies authored by individuals who have engaged in militancy – and how previous research has approached and analysed these texts. The publication of autobiographical accounts written by militants for public consumption dates back to the turn of the 20th century (see for example, Berkman, 1912; Savinkov, 1917). In the period since, the accounts of participants in various conflicts and different forms of militancy have become accessible. In recent years, autobiographies written by militants have become best-sellers in their place of publication (O'Callaghan, 1998: Stone, 2003) and have even been met with critical acclaim (McDonald, 2014). Despite this prominence, autobiographies have been largely neglected by scholarly work on militancy. Although autobiographical texts have been fruitfully explored by a limited number of academics and researchers who seek to understand the ideological or psychological milieu in which individuals engage in militancy (della Porta, 2006, 2013; Ramsay, 2013; Youngman, 2016; Holbrook, 2017), for the most part concerns regarding reliability have meant that they have received less than systematic analysis despite a long standing recognition of their potential as a source of detailed information (Cordes, 1987; Rapport, 1987; Altier et al. 2012; Youngman, 2018). The literature seeking to analyse larger datasets of autobiographies that does exist within terrorism studies has focused on identifying and coding the occurrence of incidents and episodes for the purpose of both quantitative (see for example, Shapiro and Siegel, 2012; Shapiro, 2013; Altier et al. 2017) or qualitative analysis (Acharya and Muldoon, 2017; Gill et al. 2018).

It is important to briefly address some of the practical benefits of using autobiographies for the purpose of this research. First, autobiographies provide an available and accessible source of data; something particularly important given that the clandestine nature of militant groups can make systematic data difficult to collect and analyse. These texts are an important primary source material, especially when read alongside manifestos and other interviews and statements, and form one part of a wider corpus of information for understanding militant movements. Second, the researcher can access much of this material from their own location. The geographical and financial constraints associated

with conducting interviews are therefore mitigated. Furthermore, given that many militants are based in dangerous or difficult to access locales, it is unrealistic to assume that primary data collection could take place across the same breadth of contexts. Significant ethical issues, as well as considerable preparation and intimate local knowledge and language skills would be required to conduct research in such environments (Dolnik 2013). As a textual source, autobiographies also allow the accounts of deceased individuals as well as those who are incarcerated, unwilling or otherwise unavailable to be interviewed to be analysed. For these reasons the use of autobiographical accounts permits the experiences of a larger number of militants to be included in this study. Using existing texts also removes the potential risk of interviewer bias whereby the nature and phrasing of interview questions in some way influence or guide the responses given, or as Christoffer Carlsson argues, that as an interviewer you often 'get what you ask for' (2012:7 – see also Silke, 2001:7-8; Horgan, 2012:201). By comparison, analysis of already collected material is unobtrusive (Krippendorff, 2003:40; Charmaz 2006:37).

Autobiographies also provide a distinct combination of *breadth* – typically discussing a significant portion of an individual's life – and *depth* – containing comprehensive recollections of one's experiences in a level of intimate detail not available in other sources of data (Smith and Watson, 2010). Of particular interest, when telling the story of their lives, individuals revert to what Habermas and Bluck call a 'cultural concept of biography'; a template that dictates these accounts begin by outlining an individual's family history, the circumstances of their birth and early familial and friendship experiences, before progressing through a linear account of the author's life after leaving the family home (2000). By contrast, many hours of interviews would be required to extract the same amount of information. In this way, autobiographical accounts provide a rich, and often unparalleled, source of detail about family, kin and peer interactions, crucially, including how individuals personally constitute and understand these relationships.

Case Selection

Gerring argues that a case can denote any spatially delimited phenomenon that is 'observed at a single point in time or over some period of time' (2007:19). The cases studied in this thesis are individuals who have employed or have been part of groups that have used or advocated the use of 'violent methods in support of a political or social cause' (Oxford, 2006:1113). To narrow this potentially broad definition, this is taken to mean non-state actors and groups engaging in co-ordinated acts of serious violence or warfare. Included are those who have engaged in terrorism. These individuals need not have engaged in violence directly themselves, however. This thesis focuses on those who have been members, and supported the activities, of militant groups or have engaged in acts of political violence on their own. It also includes those who have been directly involved in the preparation, financing or execution of acts, or attempted acts, of violence. Determining exactly where and when an individual becomes 'a militant' is, however, extremely difficult. For example, the point where ideological, or non-material support breaches the threshold if constituting an offence from a legal standpoint is often vague and standards inevitably vary by country (Dearden, 2016). This thesis does not aim nor have the scope to add to such debates. To circumvent such problems, I share the approach taken by other studies in focusing on individuals' self-designated process of 'becoming' – or their own conception of themselves as having engaged in militancy (Bearman and Stovel, 2000; Blee, 2002). The accounts of those who consider themselves to have merely been supporters of such groups or causes are therefore then excluded. Individuals need not be formal members of militant groups to be included. Both those who carry out acts of violence alone and those who have not been officially sworn into militant groups are therefore eligible for inclusion.

Temporal and Geographical Boundaries

The core question at the heart of this thesis is, what do narrative accounts reveal about the influence of kin and peer networks in how individuals understand and give meaning to their involvement in militancy? In attempting to answer this question, it is first necessary to establish the

parameters of the study and provide justifications for the decisions made in approaching it. Any dataset of cases must be temporally and spatially bounded (Ragin, 1992). On a temporal level, this thesis examines the accounts of individuals who engaged in militancy between 1945-2015. 1945 was chosen as a start date in light of arguments that it was only after this point that terrorism 'became a more pervasive global force' (Hoffman, 2006:43). By contrast, 2015 was chosen as a cut-off point to stop data collection becoming an open-ended undertaking and to allow sufficient time for the accounts to be properly analysed. Whilst dictated by both theoretical and practical concerns, the temporal duration of this study nevertheless encapsulates many of the so-called 'waves of terrorism', including phases of anti-colonial, new left-wing and religiously motivated terrorism (Rapoport, 2002). In addition to this expansive temporal range, no geographical limits were imposed in where these individuals engaged in militancy.

The decision to focus on a broad range of cases and contexts was undertaken for a number of reasons. First, autobiographical accounts written by militants are not uncommon. In focusing on multiple contexts across a broad time period the range of potential material for inclusion was greatly increased. The validity of the conclusions drawn from this larger dataset are also strengthened. Second, this thesis looks to compare how kin and peer influences operate across contexts and time periods to explore any commonalities that can add to our understanding of participation in militancy both generally, as well as to examine how these influences are understood differently in diverse geographical or contextual settings (for example, in religious and non-religious militant groups). Of particular note, in drawing from a variety of contexts, I seek to disrupt and challenge the pervasive narratives in modern (principally Western) societies that seek to relegate kinship to the domain of the nuclear family and promote the notion that non-biological forms of kinship are something that are felt 'out there' in 'other' cultures (see for example, Carsten, 2016). As chapter one highlights, other forms of kinship are just as central in how individuals conceive their connections with others in various contexts despite efforts to suppress or downplay their importance.

Limitations of This Approach

Building a dataset of autobiographical accounts from the period outlined provides adequate scope to address the question driving this thesis. However, it is important to acknowledge and be honest about the limitations of this approach. It is critical to recognise that this dataset is neither comprehensive nor representative. For reasons that will be outlined, and because of the limited capacity of a PhD project, obtaining and analysing every militant-authored autobiography from this time period was infeasible. Nevertheless, the sample size was designed to be of sufficient size to draw valid conclusions that hold across different contexts. Despite the broad focus, a number of factors – notably issues of geography, time and language - have influenced the material that is available, and is included in the dataset. First, even when militant authored texts were identifiable it was not always possible to obtain copies, despite my best efforts to do so. For example, a copy of *My Love, My Revolution*, the autobiography of the former leader and founder of the Japanese Red Army (JRA) Fusako Shigenobu, published in 1974, could not be procured. Second, in looking at material from various geographical settings, issues regarding translation come to the fore. A number of accounts identified were ultimately excluded simply because an English-language translation could not be obtained. Of those texts where a translation could be found, the original language of publication included Arabic, German, Russian, Spanish, French and Italian. There were, however, a number of further issues that should be considered in using such translations, something that I now turn to address as part of discussions regarding case inclusion.

Case Inclusion

For valid conclusions to be drawn, a dataset must necessarily be 'bounded' (Ragin, 1992; Gerring, 2007). This then requires an explanation of how potential cases were selected and why others were rejected from this corpus. Discussion of this process is broken down into two parts, although the two overlap to a degree: the first refers to the nature of the texts themselves, whilst the second relates to questions of who is included in the dataset.

Autobiography

The data at the heart of this thesis is a corpus of autobiographies authored by those who have engaged in militancy. Whilst generally taken to mean a 'retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality' (Lejune, 1989:4), the borders of autobiography has proven notoriously difficult to define (Lynch, 2009:1). To provide a conclusive definition is an undertaking well beyond the scope of this thesis. However, it is necessary to discuss a number of related issues that impact upon case selection. Excluded from the dataset are texts that may present as autobiographies but provide little to no details of the author's life or involvement in militancy. One example of such text, that provides an overview of a group's history and beliefs, but little about the author and their experiences is Naim Qassem, *Hizbullah The Story from Within* (2005). Another example excluded from the dataset is Jerry Rassamni, *From Jihad to Jesus: An Ex-Militant's Journey of Faith* (2006). This work offers the author's own readings of a particular ideological doctrine rather than an account of his life. Both of these examples illustrate the difficulty in using autobiographies and the need to select appropriate texts as part of my dataset.

Another of the central concerns that continues to hinder research in the social sciences using autobiographies regards their authorship. Altier et al. (2017:314), in their study of 87 terrorist autobiographies, 'excluded texts that are not traditional autobiographies in that the majority of the text is written by a co-author or ghost writer' (2017:314). Here, the example given is Gerry Bradley and Brian Feeney, *Insider: Gerry Bradley's Life in the IRA* (2009), an account where the voices of the professional writer (Feeney) and the protagonist (Bradley) are clearly discernible within the text, the latter's input being marked by quotation marks. Other autobiographical texts 'authored' by militants follow a similar format with extended passages reproduced *ad verbatim* in blocks of quotation marks or italics that sometimes last tens of pages, whilst a co-author fills in the gaps and contextualises these descriptions (see for example, Moloney, 2010; Leslie, 2014). The argument for excluding these texts appears logical – the presence of another voice in addition to the protagonist appearing to challenge the idea that the account is theirs alone.

Following such criteria for exclusion, however, runs into difficulty when applied in practice. A close scrutiny of many autobiographies reveals the input of other writers. Problematically, the nature and degree of this input can be difficult to readily discern. The autobiography of former neo-Nazi, Ingo Hasselbach, for example, is entirely absent of any mention of the journalist who helped write it outside of their name appearing on the front cover alongside Hasselbach's own (1996). By contrast, former loyalist paramilitary Michael Stone's, *None Shall Divide Us*, is initially presented as if he alone had written it, with only his name appearing on the front cover. However, the introduction reveals that journalist, Karen McManus also lays claim, at least in part, to authorship of the text stating; 'to my critics, of whom I expect there will be plenty, I would say just one thing: I do not intend this book to be a glorification of the life of Michael Stone' (Stone, 2004:xi). To confuse things further, although externally presented as a biography authored by American pastor and writer G. Brent Riggs, *Terrorist to Evangelist: The True Story of Cornelius Kenneth McClinton*, is written from McClinton's perspective. Within the acknowledgements Riggs states:

> Most of all, thank you to Ken McClinton, who tirelessly penned his sometimes difficult memories so that I could communicate them in my own style to the Westerners on this side of the pond. I gave a few years to write this. Ken gave his whole life to create this story (quoted in Riggs, 2011: acknowledgements).

This admission fundamentally changes the light in which the text may be read with the authorial process appearing little different to those of many works presented as autobiography. Such difficulties help explain why many literary scholars reject the idea that a firm differentiation between autobiography and biography can be made given that there is an almost infinite array of collaborative life-writing in-between the two (Lindeman, 2017:1 – see also Lejeune, 1989; Couser, 2004).

As noted above, texts that have been translated also pose a challenge to the idea that an autobiography is necessarily the voice of the author alone. The input of such individuals can be significant. Those involved in producing Yassin Aref's account discuss the process in detail, describing how they took Yassin's 'broken English and [made] it into proper sentences' (2008; loc. 230). Even

where the input of translators is less intensive, their participation nevertheless inherently alters a text. As Martin Müller explains, cultural meanings are embedded in linguistic expressions, meaning that 'translations as the transference of meaning can always only be partial and never total' (2007:210). Parts of stories may be lost in translation with new meanings and interpretations added. In other words, translators do not play an invisible role in shaping a text. As such, there is no neutral method of translation that does not involve invoking some form of political decision-making (Müller, 2007:211).

In one sense at least, the example of the texts excluded in Altier et al.'s study might in fact be considered more honest in terms of authorship than many of the 'traditional autobiographies' they include in their sample in clearly distinguishing the text that is the protagonist's from that which is provided by a professional writer (2017:314). Even though issues of co-authorship are inescapable, this thesis takes a different, broader approach to what constitutes an autobiographical text, including those texts where the voices of the protagonist and author are presented separately. The reasons for doing so are twofold. First, even in the absence of ghost-writers or translators, during the production of virtually every autobiography, editors, proof-readers and an array of individuals are asked to provide feedback on the text: in this way, they exercise a degree of input over the final text. Yet it is impossible to determine the extent and nature of these individuals' contributions. Second, and more importantly, the premise that any narrative account, even those that relate entirely to ourselves, are the possession of any single individual has been rejected by many scholars of narrative (Barthes, 1967). Mikhail Bakhtin, for example, argues that language in itself is fundamentally pervaded by the words of others – those who have come before the speaker and have shaped it usage (1981, 1986). In this sense, 'every word, expression, utterance, or narrative bear the traces of all subjects, possible and real, who ever used or will use this word, expression, utterance, or narrative' (Brockmeier and Harré, 2001:46). Similarly, culture fundamentally impacts not only the stories we tell about ourselves but how we tell them. As Jerome Bruner argues, in writing our autobiographies we necessarily 'become variants of the culture's canonical forms' (1987:15). Without seeking to delve too far into discussions of narrative's fundamentally co-constructed nature (something that will be explored in the next chapter), it should be recognised that all stories are never entirely our own. Autobiographies, even those that list only a single author, and are read in their original language, should be recognised as collaborative social activities.

Crucially, all such texts, even those that include significant collaboration in their production, nevertheless reveal more about the self-narratives of the protagonist and the behaviours they engage in than initially apparent.

More than merely representing abstract, and potentially superfluous, theoretical navel-gazing it is important to acknowledge that this understanding shapes the selection of autobiographies included in my dataset. In particular, I include accounts that have previously been discounted by other studies because of concerns regarding their authorship. Nevertheless, in approaching accounts that include the significant input of a professional writer, where the division between their voice and that of protagonist are clearly discernible within the text - the latter's input being marked by quotation marks or italics – it is this portion only that I have coded and included in my analysis.

Additional Considerations

In some cases, serious concerns and doubts have been raised about autobiographies purportedly written by 'ex-militants' or 'ex-terrorists' to the extent that the authors' engagement in these activities has been argued to be entirely fabricated. A well-known example is that of Walid Shoebat, who has been accused of using his memoir *Why I Left Jihad: The Root of Terrorism and the Rise of Islam* (2005) to invent a backstory of himself as a member of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to further his career as an 'expert on terrorism' (Griffin and Johnston, 2011). In particular, the acts of terrorism that Shoebat claims to have been involved in were contradicted by documented evidence, and his membership of a militant organisation was disputed even by members of his own family (Luyken, 2008; Griffin and Johnston, 2011).

Given the focus of this study – the influence of kin and peers in the decision-making of individuals who would engage in militancy – accounts of individuals who were forcibly recruited and made to serve in militant groups are also excluded from the dataset (see for example, McDonnell and Akallo, 2007). Similarly, whilst a number of individuals included went on to act as informants for law enforcement agencies or governments, the accounts of members of the security services who deliberately infiltrated militant movements are similarly discounted (see for example, Lewis, 2017).

Additionally, lone-actors (also variously referred to as 'lone wolf', 'lone offender' or 'lone operator terrorists') who at least appear to commit acts of terrorism by themselves or with limited connection to militant organisations, present a potential definitional challenge given that their motivations, and differentiation from those who perpetrate acts of mass harm for personal reasons, are often difficult to fully discern (Gill, 2015:11). As such, for the accounts of lone-actors to be considered and included in the dataset, these individuals must harbour an altruistic belief that they are securing a wider goal, rather than settling their own personal vendettas (Hoffman, 2006: 37), and must clearly demonstrate or state this strategic aim (Ravndal, 2015:27).

Given the broad focus of this study, the potential number of individuals who are available for inclusion is considerably larger than other studies that focus on specific militant groups or militancy only in particular regions or contexts. The result is that a high threshold can be set for inclusion. As such, where there is doubt as to whether an individual meets the criteria for inclusion, as outlined above, a cautious approach has been taken in excluding them from the dataset. That said, autobiographies are only written by a very small section of those individuals who engage in political violence. Even with the increased publication of these texts, they are not comparable to large-N studies on open source data such as census figures. The nature of field of study of this thesis – militancy and extremism – however, inevitably points to smaller dataset and case study analysis precisely because of this lack of data. Even positive researchers making 'causal' claims recognise the limitations of such data (Ragin, 1992).

Data Collection

Ensuring rigour in the collection of data when it comes to research on militancy is critical to make valid claims, especially when using a corpus of data (Moore, Youngman and Copeland, forthcoming). To begin to identify potential texts to be included in the dataset, internet searches for relevant terms 'militant', 'guerrilla', 'terrorist', 'freedom fighter' and 'autobiography' or 'memoir' were undertaken. This search was then expanded to combine 'autobiography' with the names of groups included in the UK Government's list of Proscribed Terrorist Organisations (Home Office, 2019) and the United States State Department's list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations (2019). The same searches

were also carried out on the library catalogues available at Lancaster University and the University of Birmingham and the websites of major publishers. To find further potentially relevant texts, my initial list was then cross-referenced with other academic works that have analysed militant autobiographies. Here, Jacob N. Shapiro's book, *The Terrorist's Dilemma* (2013), was of particular use. Significantly, the appendix contains not only a list of the 108 terrorist autobiographies the author subjects to quantitative analysis in its entirety, but also summarises each briefly. A number of other articles using militant autobiographies also provided further means to cross-check my own, and being published after Shapiro's study contained accounts that had been published in the interim (Altier, et al. 2017; Gill et al. 2018). These methods helped ensure data collection was undertaken in a systematic manner (Braun, Clarke and Gray, 2017).

The vast majority of the autobiographical accounts identified were texts that have been commercially published. As such, copies were then purchased or obtained from libraries. Where possible electronic rather than physical copies of these texts were preferred for ease of coding during analysis. In addition to conventional autobiographies, a number of texts were taken from larger collections of the accounts of those who had engaged in militancy in certain contexts or who had been in the same organisation. These accounts were selected on the basis that they were both autobiographical, in the sense that the space afforded to the author allowed them to talk about their own experiences including their move towards, and potential disengagement from militancy, and that they discussed kin, peers and family members. Colin Crawford's *Inside the UDA* (2003), for example, compiles the accounts of former members of the group. In including such accounts, there are nevertheless some considerations that must be taken into account. For instance, whilst greater inference could be drawn from the absence of certain figures in more detailed autobiographies, it must be recognised that such exclusion might not carry the same weight where the author is afforded less scope to explain their experiences. Such a limitation is accounted for in the flexible methodology employed in this study (see the following chapter for further discussion).

As well as conventionally published autobiographies, this dataset also includes those self-published by militants or militant organisations themselves, usually by way of having been uploaded and distributed via the internet. In many cases these texts imitate the form of conventionally published

autobiographies including aesthetic considerations, format and content (Copeland, 2019), but take the form of electronic .pdf files rather than physical texts. A number of such texts were acquired from websites that serve as online repositories for primary documents that relate to militant groups (see for example Jihadology.net). These sites also often provide copies of these texts that are safe for researchers and academics to download. In other cases, these texts were downloaded from websites sympathetic to the author's political cause. For instance, Eric Rudolph's memoir, *Between the Lines of Drift*, is available to freely download from the website of *Army of God* (www.armyofgod.com) an organisation that celebrates those who have taken violent action against abortion clinics or staff. It is to the ethical considerations of using such material, as well as more general reflections, that I now turn.

Ethical Considerations

In the process of completing this research, a full consideration of any potential ethical issues or ramifications was undertaken. From the outset it is important to acknowledge that this research has been generously funded by the Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats (CREST), an independent research centre, which in turn receives funding from the UK security and intelligence agencies. There has, however, been no effort to influence this research. The approach and focus of this thesis has been entirely mine to shape within the broad topic it was funded under. As a member of CREST, this also means that my research was subject to an additional ethical review process on top of Lancaster University's own, via the centre's Security Research Ethics Committee (SREC).

Whilst all of the data examined within this thesis is from open sources and freely available, given the sensitive nature of some of the material collected, a number of further ethical challenges needed to be considered and strict procedures adhered to. First, due to the potentially distressing content of some of the material, measures were put in place to protect myself as a researcher including making sure that avenues for confidential discussion and support were available if necessary. Second, although most of the autobiographical accounts examined were commercially published, some were procured from online websites that seek to distribute these texts freely, including those that are sympathetic to militant or terrorist groups. In order to avoid complications arising from accessing such material a

number of steps were included in my submission to the University ethics committee and to SREC. First, relevant figures within the University and CREST were informed of the nature of the research. Additionally, the dataset and all accompanying source material were managed and stored in compliance with University and UK Research and Innovation data storage policies. As such, all electronic data was stored on a secure university drive rather than personal computer or other storage. Finally, potentially sensitive material was not accessed in public computing spaces. These steps were deemed acceptable to the ethics committees, who approved this research.

Composition of the Dataset

In total, the dataset is comprised of 48 autobiographies written by militants. This sample is significantly smaller than Shapiro's (2013) collection of 108 terrorist authored autobiographies, Altier et al.'s (2017) 87 autobiographies and Gill et al.'s (2018) collation of 97 terrorist autobiographies. The reasons for this are two-fold. First, different inclusion criteria, notably the smaller time period examined by this study – 1945-2015 versus the open-ended period used in the studies cited – meant that fewer accounts were available for inclusion. Second, the methodological approach used in this thesis (applied narrative analysis) required a more intensive reading of texts that those used by these studies.

In terms of composition, individuals from 26 different militant groups are included in the dataset. These accounts were written by individuals from groups or causes that were religious (such as al-Qaeda, the Taliban), ethno-nationalist (such as the Algerian National Liberation Army [ALN], the Provisional Irish Republican Army [PIRA]), left-wing (such as the Red Army Faction [RAF], the Weather Underground Organization [WUO]), right-wing (such as German Alternative [DA]), or single-issue (such as Direct Action [DA]). In terms of composition, the division between these groups and causes was ethno-nationalist (33 autobiographies), left-wing (six autobiographies), religious (six autobiographies), single-issue (two autobiographies) and right-wing (one autobiography). The heavy prevalence of ethno-nationalist groups in the dataset (69 percent) is concurrent with the make-up of

Altier et al's (2017) (68 percent) and Gill et al.'s (2018) (62.6 percent) samples of terrorist authored autobiographies.
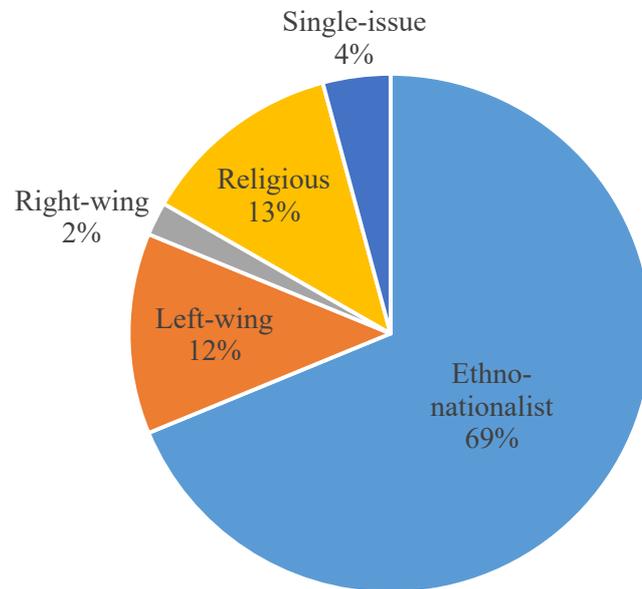
Figure 3. Distribution of authors included in the dataset by group type.
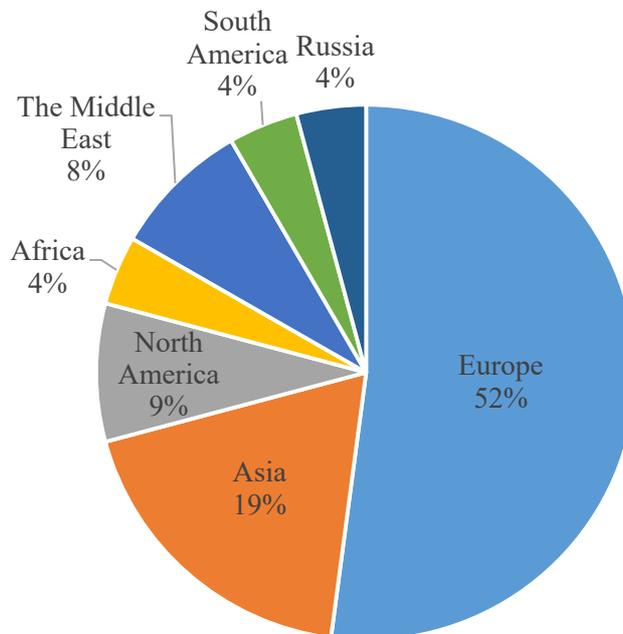
Figure 4. Distribution of authors included in the dataset by region of primary operation.

Geographically, over half (or 25 of the 48 autobiographies) of the accounts were authored by those who had engaged in militancy in Europe. The rest of the accounts were divided across Asia (9 autobiographies), North America (4 autobiographies), the Middle East (4 autobiographies), Africa (2 autobiographies), South America (2 autobiographies) and Russia (2 autobiographies). Seven of the accounts, or just under 15 percent, were written by women. This is comparable to the figure of 17.6 percent in Altier et al.'s (2017) study (a breakdown by gender was not included in either Shapiro (2013) or Gill et al.'s (2018) studies).

Some Quantitative Observations

In approaching the texts contained within the dataset it quickly becomes clear that attempting to use quantitative analysis to capture many of the themes of interest is problematic. These texts are unavoidably uneven, messy, and at points contradictory. Similarly, the subjective and often dynamic nature of relevant factors, for example the notion that there was some sort of family support for an individual's decision to join a militant cause, cannot be easily and readily captured through such means. It is, however, possible to code for the presence of some simple binary variables that may relate to kin and peer influence. The table below (Figure 5.), shows a complete breakdown of the presence of these variables by each account, as ordered by group type. In total, 24 authors, or half of those in the dataset, state within their accounts that someone they consider a family member or relative had been a member of a militant group. Breaking these relationships down, 11 of the 25 said that this included a parent, 11 a sibling and 14 another relative (such as an uncle, cousin, grandmother). Exactly half of these individuals claimed to have relatives from more than one of these categories involved in militant groups. Interestingly only one author (Flair Campbell, a member of the PIRA) revealed that a parent, sibling and other family members had all been members of militant organisations at some point.

However, it is immediately apparent that the familial involvement reported varies hugely by context – in particular, by group type. Significantly, 20 out of the 33 authors from ethno-nationalist groups report having a relative who had also engaged in militancy. By comparison half of those from religious groups (three out of six) reported the same, whilst this was only recorded by just over a fifth

of authors from left-wing, right-wing and single issue groups when taken together (two out of nine).[3] In further separating ethno-nationalist groups by context, one conflict in particular stood out. A full two-thirds (14 out of 21) of the militants examined from the conflict in Northern Ireland stated in their accounts that another relative had also engaged in militancy. Interestingly, of those who did not report having a familial link to others involved in the conflict, the vast majority came from Loyalist groups – only one such account was written by a member of a Republican organisation as opposed to six by Loyalists. Such findings therefore appear to suggest that Republican militants were more commonly tied in to the conflict via kin and family than their Loyalist counterparts.

This quantitative analysis also points towards a generational dimension when it comes to familial involvement in militancy. Of those authors with a parent who had engaged in militancy, all bar one came from ethno-nationalist groups. Even in the sole outlying case, that of al-Qaeda member Nasser al-Bahri, the author nevertheless reveals that his father had engaged in militancy for a nationalist rather than religious cause, like his own ('my father had taken part in the armed uprising against the British Colonialists' (2013:12)). When comparing authors from ethno-nationalist groups with the rest of the dataset, the numbers who had one or more sibling involved were broadly comparable (nearly a quarter of individuals from such groups as compared to a fifth of authors across the rest of the entire sample). By contrast, ethno-nationalists were significantly more likely to have a parent involved in militancy (10 out of 33 as opposed to only one out of the 15 in the rest of the sample). Similarly, for other family relatives (taken to include older relatives such as uncles, grandparents, etc.), these links were reported in 13 out of the 33 accounts. Again, this is significantly higher than in other contexts. In particular, only one author from outside an ethno-nationalist group reported having a non-parent or non-sibling relation who had also engaged in militancy. Here, there appears to be a correlation between the long-running nature of many ethno-nationalist struggles and familial involvement. Those involved in these conflicts much more frequently reported having older relatives also involved in militant groups than actors from other contexts. In this sense, this finding appears to suggest that inter-generational involvement may to some degree be shaped by family. However, without further contextualisation it is not possible to

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[3] Given the relatively small number of accounts written by individuals from some of these different types of group it is more useful to take them together rather than separately.

account for how much this was down to these relationships or if the heavy prevalence of individuals from the same families was merely the result of the fact that these conflicts temporally span the period when multiple generations would have been of the age to volunteer for militant groups.

Other family factors are difficult to capture quantitatively. Nevertheless, some initial findings regarding the preventative influence of families can be drawn. 14 out of the 48 authors examined in total reveal that a family member, usually a parent, attempted to physically prevent them from joining a militant group or travelling to engage in a conflict. However, without contextualisation the utility of such a finding for thinking about familial settings remains dubious. For example, Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) member Manny McDonnell recalls how his father was physically violent towards him in an effort to keep him out of local militant groups. At the same time his mother appears to have quietly encouraged him to continue his association with this group (2014). As Edwards (2016) demonstrates, familial support for members' involvement in militancy is always context dependent and changeable over time even when it initially appears clear cut. The idea that such variable can be quantitatively captured is then debatable. Even if possible, such limited analysis adds little to our understanding of female roles in sustaining militancy – something that has been the subject of much theorising in scholarly work that often rests on somewhat shaky empirical evidence (see for example, Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007:98). This study, and the qualitative corpus-based approach taken, then seeks to help address this evidential gap whilst at the same time remain sensitive to context; for example, exploring how female roles in conflicts are often understood differently to men's 'morally' (see for example, Steans, unpublished; forthcoming).

Peer relationships prove even more difficult than kin and peer relationships to analyse. Included in most accounts are mentions of numerous peers, including those who are already somehow involved in or connected to militant groups. However, the nature and importance of these ties varies to such an extent that attempting to capture them through binary categorisation quickly becomes unsustainable. That said, one quantifiable factor that relates to peers are those instances when individuals physically joined, or attempted to join, militant groups with another peer or group of peers.

	Name	Group	Parent involved in militancy	Sibling involved in militancy	Other family involved in militancy	Family attempted to stop them joining	Joined a militant group with a friend
Ethno-nationalist	Zohra Drif	*ALN*		X			X
	Aukai Collins	*Chechen Groups/ Harakat-ul Jihad*					
	Mikail Eldin	*Chechen Groups*			X		
	Mosab Hassan Yousef	*Hamas*	X		X		
	Manny McDonnell	*INLA/ IPLO*		X		X	
	Yassin Aref	*JeM*		X	X		
	Charanjit Singh	*KCF*					
	Gurcharan Singh	*KCF*	X				X
	Sher Singh	*KCF*					
	Niromi de Soyza	*LTTE*				X	X
	María Eugenia Vásquez Perdomo	*M-19*					X
	Masood Farivar	*Mujahedeen*			X	X	X
	Leila Khaled	*PFLP*	X	X		X	
	Brendan Hughes	*PIRA*	X		X		
	Eamon Collins	*PIRA*			X		

Category	Name	Org					
Ethno-nationalist	Flair Campbell	*PIRA*	X	X	X	X	
	Kieran Conway	*PIRA*					
	Martin Meehan	*PIRA*	X		X		
	Sean O'Callaghan	*PIRA*	X		X		X
	Shane Paul O'Doherty	*PIRA*			X	X	X
	Alec Calderwood	*UDA*		X	X		
	Billy McQuiston	*UDA*	X		X	X	X
	Cornelius Kenneth McClinton	*UDA*					
	David Stitt	*UDA*	X		X		
	John White	*UDA*					
	Johnny Adair	*UDA*		X		X	X
	Michael Stone	*UDA*					
	Sam Duddy	*UDA*					
	Alastair Little	*UVF*		X		X	X
	David Ervine	*UVF*					
	David Hamilton	*UVF*					
	John Black	*UVF*					X
	Robert	*UVF*	X				

	Name	Group					
Left-wing	Bommi Baumann	*2 June Movement*					
	Omar Cabezas	*FSLN*		X			X
	Giorgio	*Prima Linea*					
	Margrit Schiller	*RAF*				X	
	Jane Alpert	*WUO*				X	
	Mark Rudd	*WUO*					
Right-wing	Ingo Hasselbach	*DA*		X			X
Single-issue	Ann Hansen	*Direct Action*					
	Eric Rudolph	*Lone Actor*					
Religious	Omar Hammami	*al-Shabaab*				X	
	Omar Nasiri	*Al-Qaeda*		X			
	Nasser al-Bahri	*Al-Qaeda*	X			X	X
	Morten Storm	*Al-Qaeda*					

Khaled al-Berry	*Jama'a Islamiya*					X
Abdul Salam Zaeef	*Taliban*			X	X	

Figure 5. Quantitative analysis of kin, family and peer factors present in the dataset.

Across the dataset 15 authors, or just under a third, reported that their entrance to groups was such a joint undertaking. Interestingly, this figure appears consistent across the different groups involved. This finding then highlights that, when it comes to crossing this particular threshold at least, communal dynamics appear significant. However, again, without further contextualisation it is difficult to understand the nuances of a such shared undertaking, in particular if decision-making was truly a joint process or rather if there were leading or led parties.

Selected Cases

In the course of the analysis of the dataset of autobiographies that follows, a number of accounts are repeatedly returned to and focused upon in-depth. These cases were selected because of their capacity to highlight and serve as very good examples of themes found more widely across the corpus of accounts examined (explained further below). To analyse such cases without providing some background details regarding the author and the nature of their militant involvement is, however, difficult. With that said, here I turn to briefly provide such information for those accounts explored in detail during later chapters.

The first is that of Leila Khaled, a celebrated member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP).[4] During her militant career, Khaled would take part in the hijacking of two airliners. Born in Haifa, Palestine, Khaled was forced to flee to Lebanon as a child with most of her family during the 1948 Palestinian exodus (her father stayed behind and eventually joined the armed resistance against the Israelis). Her autobiography, *My People Shall Live: The Autobiography of a Revolutionary*, details her life growing up in a refugee camp within a politically active family. It also provides insight into how a family's beliefs, in this case those about gender, can impact upon support and opportunities for individuals to engage in militancy. Significantly, Khaled's account also demonstrates the importance of place, land and time in the construction of one's kinship and how such understandings can attach collective value to one's personal involvement and acts of militancy.

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[4] Leila Khaled's autobiography is also explored in-depth in Copeland, 2018.

The next account that receives substantial attention is that of Eamon Collins, who operated as an intelligence officer in the Provisional IRA in the late 1970s and 1980s. Although he never directly carried out an act of violence himself, Collins was responsible for identifying and gathering information on potential targets and planning and facilitating terrorist attacks, including bombings and assassinations. He also fulfilled an internal security role within the PIRA, vetting recruits and handing out punishments to members thought to be compromised or guilty of infractions. After eventually being arrested by law enforcement officials, he cracked under interrogation and provided detailed information about his and other PIRA members' activities. However, under pressure from his family and the Republican movement, he decided to retract his statement. From a family with Republican sympathies, but also certain moral objections to violence in pursuit of these goals, his account provides insight into the complexities of the transmission of beliefs and ideology within such settings. In a similar vein to Khaled, Collins also draws heavily upon metaphorical understandings of his own kinship, that are inherently linked to place and land. In doing so, his account also proves an illuminating example of the importance of this form of kinship in a Western context.

The final accounts focused upon at length are those of Ingo Hasselbach and Mikail Eldin. Hasselbach is a well-known German neo-Nazi who founded and occupied a leading position in a number of right-wing extremist organisations. Born in East Berlin, his family upbringing was complex. Whilst both his parents were loyal Communist-party journalists, Hasselbach spent much of his early life living with his grandparents. Aged seven he found out that another man was in fact his biological father. Significantly, this individual, who he would enjoy a fractious relationship with, was something of a hero of the Communist regime. His account highlights the importance of certain familial figures – in this case paternal ones – throughout individuals' militant engagement and even their desistence. Hasselbach describes in detail how he understands his own search for a father figure to have led him into militancy. Significantly, he also describes how he would later end up becoming such a figure to others within these groups. Mikail Eldin by contrast, was a journalist at the start of the first Chechen War who, by his own admission, became a partisan reporter for those resisting the Russian forces. By the Second Chechen War, having taken up arms himself, he was attached to a resistance unit specialising in tactical intelligence. His memoir, *The Sky Wept Fire: My Life as a Chechen Freedom Fighter,* is

particularly illustrative of how metaphorical understandings of kinship and the transmission of characteristics and emotions are rooted in physical substances, in this instance blood. Crucially, Eldin explains how these beliefs shaped his actions. Furthermore, his account also provides significant insight into how kinship forms between members of militant groups.

Conclusion

This chapter has explained and justified the decisions taken in the selection, collection and organisation of data for analysis within this thesis. The study of political violence always necessarily involves working with incomplete data so it is essential that the choices made are openly divulged and properly accounted for. I argue that autobiographies are often a neglected source of insight, especially when it comes to the study of militancy. They form part of the wider corpus of info from manifestos, interviews and statements – or, the output of clandestine groups – that can be fruitfully employed to study these organisations. In a broader sense, this thesis also adds to the growing body of work on autobiography, narrative and conflict (Clark, 2013; Coates 2015; Copeland 2019; Steans, forthcoming). Within this chapter I have sought to address some of the wider issues that are often side-stepped in studies of these texts, notably regarding co-authorship. Here, I argue that the co-constructed nature of all autobiographical texts (and narrative itself more generally) should be borne in mind when determining whether texts meet the standard set for inclusion. Relatedly, the practical and unavoidable limitations of both procuring and working with these texts have been outlined and their potential impact on the final dataset itself considered.

This chapter has also introduced and broken down the composition of this dataset. Drawn from a broad demographic of individuals who have engaged in militancy in different temporal and geographic contexts, this represents a unique corpus of texts. In terms of data selection and collection, the decisions made to ensure that this process was undertaken in a robust manner have been explained and justified. Significantly, I believe this to be the largest sample of militant authored autobiographies to have been subjected to such intensive qualitative analysis. The brief quantitative analysis of the dataset demonstrates the notable, albeit variable, presence of kin and peer links to militant groups. However,

the limited conclusions that can be drawn from analysing the dataset through such means beyond this further strengthen justifications for the qualitative methodological approach taken. With that said, the next chapter then explores how narrative analysis was used to interrogate these texts.

Chapter Four: Methodology: Narrative Theory and Applied Narrative Analysis

Introduction

The previous chapter introduced the data that forms the basis of this study. This chapter then explains how such texts were approached and analysed. As such, it is ordered in two parts. The first provides the theoretical underpinning of the methodological approach taken and discusses what this form of analysis can reveal. An initial task is to define what narrative is taken to be and how the elements of a narrative can be approached and broken down. Next, the theoretical conceptualisation taken regarding the inextricable and dynamic relationship between narrative and experience is outlined. Here, I stress my departure from much of the existing literature that has utilised militant autobiographies as data in treating these narrative accounts not as objective or subjective records of individuals' lives as lived but rather as constitutive antecedents of experience. In this sense, the focus is not what these events 'were', but how they are understood and reinterpreted, articulated and retold. I am interested in capturing what the stories that militants tell 'do' in as much as what they say. I then make a case for why narrative analysis is well suited for interrogating kin and peer influences. In particular, I argue that narrative and relatedness are intrinsically intertwined, with stories shaping relatedness in a number of ways. In particular, the figures in individuals' immediate social environments significantly influence the stories that people tell about themselves and their relation to others, whilst the act of shared storytelling itself is inherently a practice that strengthens relatedness between individuals. Finally, the link between storytelling, meaning and action is also explored. In doing so, I seek to demonstrate how this approach and study makes an original contribution, both theoretically and empirically, to the study of militant engagement.

With the theoretical grounding of my methodological approach outlined, the second part of the chapter focuses on the model developed to apply narrative analysis systematically to militant authored autobiographies. Whilst far from exhaustive, this provides a three-layered framework for identifying,

breaking down and organising the narrative elements and devices within such texts. To demonstrate how this works in practice, and crucially what doing so reveals about kin and peer influences, each of these elements are then explored with reference to a single militant autobiography, that of al-Shabaab member Omar Hammami. Here, analysis also takes the form of descriptive arguments that aim to answer questions regarding whom, when, and in what manner kin and peers are influential or impactful. This chapter concludes by outlining some of the limitations and considerations required in using this analytical framework.

What is Narrative?

Before proposing a methodology for analysing kin and peer influences in the accounts of militants using applied narrative analysis, it is important to decide what we mean when we use the term 'narrative'. Despite being ubiquitous to human existence, both transhistorically and transculturally (Barthes, 1975:251-252), narrative remains a contested concept. No single, commonly accepted definition exists, even within literary theory. Some central features and accepted definitional themes of narrative are commonly agreed upon, however. It is widely recognised that for something to constitute a narrative, an event, however abstract, must take place. Unlike a chronology (or a simple list of dates), narratives necessarily depict *a change* from one condition to another (Ricoeur, 1984; Bruner, 1990; Brockmeier, 1993). In this sense, narrative is a uniquely human phenomenon, occurring in all activities that serve to represent events in time (Porter Abbott, 2002:p.xi). Significantly, narrative allows events or incidents themselves to create the order of time, the assumption being that two events necessarily belong together and logically follow one another. In this way narrative is more than merely description; it not only illustrates but explains (Polletta, 2006; Squire et al. 2014). In doing so, narrative unavoidably generates meaning, making a moral point, no matter how subtle (White, 1980; Polkinghorne, 1988; Bruner, 1990; Polletta et al. 2011).

Some narrative researchers make a distinction between 'stories' – as recounted sequences of events – and 'narratives' as accounts of events that require some level of organisation, plotting and interpretation on behalf of the narrator (Chatman, 1975:295). Such a distinction can be traced, in part,

to the Russian structuralist linguists of the 1920s who, in establishing contemporary narratology, insisted on the distinction between story or 'fabula', and narrative or 'syuzhet' (see for example, Propp, 1968). According to this understanding, a story is never seen directly, but instead is picked up through the 'narrative discourse', or events as represented by the narrator (Porter Abbott, 2002:14). This implies a necessary level of symbolic work undertaken by the author in presenting an event or sequence of events as they took place (Chatman, 1975:296). Approaching the analysis of narratives in such a manner, it is possible to contrast the 'what' of 'stories' (or their content) with the 'how and why' of 'narratives' (their form, structure and the context in which they are told).

The structuralist separation of story and narrative serves a valuable organisational function in the analytical breakdown of narrative texts. However, an important caveat must be stated; namely whether such a neat division between the two can, in fact, be made. Whenever an account of a sequence of events is presented, it is inevitably narrativised because any attempt to do so is necessarily inflected by the storyteller's narrative culture (Squire et al. 2014). This is especially apparent when individuals come to provide accounts of their own experiences. Faced with the limitless array of events, characters and experience that comprise individuals' lives, culture inevitably influences the prioritisation and selection of certain incidents over others (Somers, 1994:617). Even subtle influences of culture, such as notions of what 'makes a good story', blur the line between 'story' and 'narrative' to the point where this separation becomes elusive and open to subjective interpretation. In this light, many researchers reject the division between story and narrative, especially given the tendency of structurally-based approaches to decontextualise stories from the circumstances of their telling (Culler, 2002). Furthermore, given that this thesis seeks to explore what kin and peer storytelling does as much as the content of these stories themselves, the analytical utility of the story/narrative division becomes questionable. Setting aside these concerns for the moment, this division has methodological utility in helping demonstrate how autobiographical texts can be broken down systematically and for illustrating some of the theoretical points discussed.[5] That said, unless specified 'story' and 'narrative' are

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[5] For example, the story/narrative discourse distinction is useful for beginning to think about how time is presented within militants' accounts. Here, 'story' and 'narrative discourse' are inherently bound by different constraints. A story is necessarily linear and can only present events in their chronological order in the direction time moves.

employed in their common usage in the discussion that follow, especially in light of the fact that much of the work discussed also does the same.

Narrative and Experience

The story/narrative divide is useful for exploring one of the central concerns that continues to hamper research using militants' self-accounts. In conceiving narrative discourse as something separate to story, and subsequently responsible for explaining events as they transpired, the structuralist division then makes a claim about the relationship between narrative and experience; namely that story necessarily precedes narrative. The underlying assumption is that human lives, as lived, exist 'out there' somewhere, independent of narrative description (Polkinghorne, 1988:67–68; Presser, 2010: 434). In this sense, narrative provides either an objective – that is, an accurate description of events and the world as it really is – or a subjective, personal interpretation of these incidents as they happened and of the world in which they occurred (Presser, 2010:434). In other words, narrative serves as either a record or interpretation of experience. In viewing narrative through either lens, the utility of autobiographical accounts becomes questionable; perpetually held hostage to perennial questions of truthfulness and authenticity, such as 'did these events really happen as described?' or 'are the motivations presented really what the author felt at the time or merely *post hoc* justifications?' respectively. Such concerns have coloured the social scientific reception of this type of source material (Hopkins, 2013:8) – including studies of political violence – the latter to the extent that autobiographical accounts written by militants have received little systematic analysis despite long standing recognition of their potential as a source of detailed information (Cordes, 1987; Rapport, 1987; Altier et al. 2012).

It is here that this thesis departs from much of the small body of literature that has analysed militants' self-accounts. Despite the apparently inherent logic that narrative follows experience, it is important to highlight that this is only one way of conceiving the interplay between the two. Here the work of French philosopher Paul Ricoeur is crucial (1984). Significantly, Ricoeur proposes 'a third

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By contrast, narrative discourse can jump between these events in any order and still maintain coherence (Porter Abbott, 2002:30).

way' to conceptualise the relationship between experience and narrative. He views this relationship as inherently dynamic, arguing that 'aspects of experience itself are presented originally as they appear in the narration and that narrative form is not simply imposed on preexistent real experiences but helps to give them form' (Polkinghorne, 1988:67–68). In this sense, narratives are much more than *post hoc* justifications but rather are constitutive of, or shape, experience (Presser, 2010:434). Given that we experience the world narratively, as the protagonist of our own ever-changing story, it becomes clear that 'a life is not "how it was" but how it is interpreted and reinterpreted, told and retold' (Bruner, 1987:31 – see also Presser, 2009:184; Fleetwood, 2015).

This position also circumvents an inherent tension in viewing narrative as a record or interpretation of experience as sociological work on narrative has illustrated: the expectation that an individual's story will necessarily be the same in each retelling despite the dynamic nature of human life (Polletta, 2006:3). It is logical that, as our experiences are constantly changing and expanding, so too must our narratives of how we understand these events and the world (Presser, 2010:434). The idea that narrative and experience are necessarily inseparable also finds explicit support *within* the autobiographies of a number of militants. In the preface to her autobiography, former 19th of April Movement (M-19) guerrilla, María Eugenia Vásquez Perdomo, describes how she discovered meaning in the process of recalling her life. She states, 'the written words and I influenced each other, we affected each other always. Thanks to this exercise, I found meanings and explanations that had been invisible to me' (2005:xxxiii-xxxiiv). Again, thinking about self-narratives in this way supports the notion that stories *do something* – that is they are always told for different purposes or audiences – and this inevitably influences how they are narrated (Presser and Sandberg, 2015:3). In this sense, it is possible to analyse autobiographical texts as 'strategic performances of self', both in terms of what they do for the author and how these efforts are received by certain audiences (Steans, forthcoming).

This understanding of narrative and experience underpins narrative criminology, which analyses the role of stories in individuals' engagement in, and understandings of, acts of harm (Maruna, 2001; Presser, 2009). Presser and Sandberg summarise how narrative criminologists 'scrutinize the structure and meaning of offenders' narratives including plots, metaphors, symbolic boundary drawing, and identities. They also consider how offenders' narratives are linked to and emerge from the narratives

and culture of mainstream society or particular subcultures or subsocieties' (Presser and Sandberg, 2015:15). In this way, it is not only the content but the form or the 'linguistic and poetic characteristics of the narratives' that reveal how these individuals understand their participation in crime (Presser, 2012:10 – see also Presser, 2010:439). Importantly, a small number of scholars have applied such approach to understand the accounts of those who have engaged in politically motivated violence (Sandberg, 2013, 2015; Berntzen and Sandberg, 2014; Colvin and Pisoiu, 2018).

Outside of this limited work, existing studies of the accounts of participants in militancy that have employed narrative approaches have, for the most part, been dominated by psychological accounts of narrative (Glazzard, 2017; Copeland, 2018). However, like terrorism studies itself, narrative sits across many different disciplines. The methodology I outline here then makes a theoretical contribution in bringing together distinctive theoretical accounts of narrative into dialogue for the purposes of interrogating militants' accounts. In addition to psychological and narrative criminological readings of narrative, insights from literary studies, sociology, philosophy and international relations are all drawn upon. The result is a richer theoretical grounding and analytic toolkit for interrogating individuals' accounts. Such approach makes it possible to properly account for the place of narrative in the fashioning of meanings and, importantly for the purposes of this thesis, in creating and demonstrating relatedness – something to which I now turn.

Kin and Peers, Meaning and Action

As Vásquez Perdomo's statement above highlights, in conceptualising narrative and experience as inseparable, the importance of meaning comes to the fore. It is a widely accepted that humans innately seek meaning and purpose in life (King et al. 2016). Although establishing the link between meaning and action sits well beyond the scope of this thesis, examining the theoretical underpinnings of this relationship is nevertheless necessary to understand the position of narrative in the move between the two. Psychology has long focused on discovering and describing meaning-making at the level of the individual, or the symbolic activities that humans employ in constructing and making sense of both the world and themselves (Bruner, 1990:2). However, given that meaning is neither biologically

determined nor something created solely in the mind of the individual, its study has always also necessitated insight from interpretive disciplines in the humanities and social sciences (Bruner, 1990:2; Mattingly et al. 2008:2). Meanings, instead, are collective and communal; the product of cooperative creation and negotiation between individuals (Bruner, 1990:12-13).

Meaning-making, a central impulse of human life, then necessarily constitutes a narrative process. Stories draw on the events that matter in our lives, incessantly replacing meanings – values, judgements, motivations, commitments and emotions – in place of a straightforward chronological recollection of the events recounted (Barthes, 1977:119; Presser, 2010:431). Again, even the accounts we give of our life stories inevitably *do* things for us and our present situation (Steans, forthcoming). Through narrative we are able to bring our own meanings to the public domain, further renegotiating and reconstituting them. The act of storytelling, then, is meaning-making; in other words, individuals do not merely express meaning through stories but rather fundamentally create meaning in the process of constituting their experiences in narrative form (Bruner, 1990; Gottschall, 2012). However, despite their public nature, meanings are not always easily identified. As scholars of narrative have illustrated, the dialogic nature of how meanings are created and recreated, contested and resisted, means that meaning is inherently unstable, forever in flux, even where it appears constant (Bohman, 1997:176; Andrews, 2014:3). The fluid nature of language itself is reflected in the multiplicity of meanings that words carry. Similarly, meanings are not always fully appreciated by those who hold them, with individuals only ever having a partial understanding of the meanings of the stories they tell (Ricoeur, 1976; Presser, 2010:444).

Meanings do not in themselves, however, constitute restraints or triggers for action. Instead, meanings constitute a 'possibility relationship' between individuals and the worlds they inhabit, signalling or indicating a range of options or possibilities for action (Brockmeier, 2009:222 – see also Holzkamp, 1983:236). Each individual is born into a world where culture and language provide pre-existing 'symbolic systems' that provide the tools necessary to carry out the unescapable task of having to interpret, weigh and ultimately choose between established cultural meanings (Bruner, 1990; Brockmeier, 2009:222). As Bruner argues, 'culture and the quest for meaning within culture are the proper causes of human action' (1990:20).

Social relationships – family, kin and peer ties included – then play a crucial role in determining and shaping the meanings that individuals come to hold. People do not generate stories, even those that pertain to their own personal understandings of their identity and connections with others, out of the blue. Instead, 'when telling stories people draw on pre-existing ones that they have heard in their social environments' (Sandberg et al. 2015:1173 – see also Bruner, 1987), and, in doing so, are limited in drawing these narratives from available cultural materials (Polletta et al. 2011:112). The importance of narrative in shaping relatedness, and thus kin and peer relations, must also be stressed. At various levels, the narratives and narrative elements taken from others help shape how individuals understand themselves, their identities and their connection with others. First, families, as a small culture of their own (cf. Langellier and Peterson, 2004), inevitably contain and promote implicit cultural scripts that circumscribe preferable or acceptable ways to be. As Baddeley and Singer argue, 'the creation and (re)telling of family stories is a way of establishing a family identity that distinguishes the family from all other families and defines its most prized values, its outlook on the world, and its shared identity' (2010:200). Significantly, it is not merely the content of stories that families tell about themselves but also the practice of engaging in such action (the telling of family stories) that helps define relatedness between members (Carsten, 2004:4). Additionally, the process by which families narrate their shared history together 'provides a framework for each individual family member to understand and integrate shared events into their own individual life stories' (Bohanek et al. 2006:39 – see also Stone, 1988:244). Thus, family narratives and storytelling serve distinct purposes, including to manage painful events, maintain family values and beliefs, and sustain bonds between the generations (Yerby et al. 1990 – see also Steans, forthcoming). However, it is also crucial to stress that family narratives and the process of family storytelling may not always be interpreted or viewed as necessarily positive undertakings. For example, individuals can feel constrained by the stories that their families tell about themselves including those that pertain to reputations for violence or other potentially unfavourable behaviours (Brookman, 2015:218; Pillari, 1986).

Similarly, as chapter two argued, for peer groups the stories told between those involved help define membership. Likewise, for larger collectives, including those that relate to individuals' understandings of their kinship, storytelling is also crucial. Ricoeur argued that 'the identity of a group,

culture, people or nation is not that of immutable substance, nor a fixed structure, but that, rather, of a recounted story' (1995:5). Furthermore, national narratives and family stories, particularly those that relate to injustice are often deeply intertwined (Tölölyan, 1989:105). Narratives at each of these levels tell people how to be and act. As Somers notes, 'people are guided to act in certain ways, and not others, on the basis of the projections, expectations, and memories derived from a multiplicity but ultimately limited repertoire of available social, public, and cultural narratives' (1994:614). Crucially, these narratives endow certain readings of events with local understandings of coherence and emotional meaning (Polletta, 2006:53; Tölölyan, 1989:101; Moore, 2010:25). As social movement scholars have argued, these narratives then provide rationales for participation in collective action and can induce within individuals the feeling of a moral obligation to act (Polletta, 2006:6). Crucially, such narratives can not only 'imbue the time of individual lives with transcendent collective values', but also 'tell individuals how they would ideally have to live and die in order to contribute properly to their collectivity and its future' (Tölölyan, 1989:101).

A Model for the Systematic Application of Narrative Analysis

The first part of this chapter has outlined the theoretical paradigm that underpins the methodology chosen and underscores how such analysis can be used to reveal kin and peer influences. This second part then demonstrates how these narratives can be identified and interrogated systematically across a large body of texts. Problematically, comprehensive explanations of the actual process of narrative research are often lacking from much work that utilises such approaches. As Lois Presser explains, within narrative criminological literature 'we rarely see detailed discussions of how the researchers went from raw discursive data to the colorful findings they share' (2010:438). Similarly, in a special issue of *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* that focuses on using narrative as a 'tool' for analysing the accounts of those who have engaged in political violence, the editors stress the need to answer a question that has hampered much research in this area, namely 'what concrete steps do they [researchers] take to analyze stories?' (Graef, da Silva and Lemay-Hebert 2018:7).

In attempting to avoid such pitfalls, and in proposing a tool with wider application for the analysis of militant self-accounts, this thesis builds an analytical framework for interrogating autobiographical texts that can be applied directly onto these accounts.[6] The aim here is to analyse how certain narrative elements are utilised in how individuals comprehend the world around them, their actions and experiences and where kin and peers fit into these understandings. That said, it is important to recognise that this framework is only intended as a guide to assist with breaking down, organising and identifying relevant narrative devices and elements that relate to these figures. As I will argue, autobiographical narratives are more than the sum of their parts. The relevant narrative devices and elements captured by this framework can therefore never provide a complete analysis and nor are they intended to. The distribution of these elements varies greatly between accounts. Nevertheless, this framework helps illuminate those elements that might otherwise be missed or that are less apparent in their connection to kin and peer influences. It also introduces a level of systematisation for repeating this analysis to a large dataset of autobiographical accounts.

This framework contains three primary levels for breaking down and examining autobiographical texts: paratexts; the story; and narrative discourse. Although in practice these elements may overlap (most notably story and narrative, as discussed), the division is nevertheless useful as an organising principle. These three levels were then further subdivided into the various narrative devices and elements that fall under each. Unsurprisingly, literary theory provides an extensive list of devices and components found within narrative texts that relate to paratexts, the story and narrative discourse, respectively (Porter Abbott, 2001). Many of these elements have the potential to prove useful for the purposes of the thesis. However, the development of a framework that encompasses all of them was infeasible simply due to their number and the vast amount of labour needed to analyse even a single text against such a list of narrative devices. As such, a process for selecting those most relevant to analysing the role of kin and peers was undertaken. Initially a small selection of autobiographies was read, in light of the theoretical insights drawn from literary studies, to identify the prevalence and

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[6] This methodology and framework has also been used to analyse militants' self-accounts in Copeland, 2018, 2019.

importance of various narrative devices for revealing the influence of kin and peers. For instance, although I had considered paratexts, it was only when initially flicking through a collection of militant authored autobiographies that I had collated that it became clear that the vast majority contained introductions, dedications, endorsements and photographs that hinted at the importance the author dedicated to particular persons, relationships or themes linked to friendship or kinship. The selection of narrative elements that made up the framework was then gradually revised through sensitively reading and rereading the test cases.

This thesis then develops and applies a new framework to the study of these texts. The final composition - nine different narrative elements across three levels - is reflective of two things. First, the framework is intended to help address the gap in the theoretical understanding of narrative within terrorism studies. Second, the development of this analytic framework was inductive rather deductive, having been initially derived and refined in conversation with the particular texts examined. To organise the analysis, a table was then populated for each autobiography that cross-referenced categories of 'family', 'peers', 'metaphorical kinship' and 'kinship practices within militant groups' against each of these devices or components (see Figure 6. below).

To demonstrate how this framework can be leveraged in practice, and applied directly onto a text, the autobiography of a single militant is explored here as an example. The account of Omar Hammami (also known as Abu Mansuur al-Amriiki), was selected for this purpose as it contains a large number of the narrative devices that illustrate how he understands and presents his kin and peers (those not present in his account are illustrated with examples from other militant accounts). To provide a contextual backdrop, in 2006 Hammami, an American citizen, travelled to Somalia to join Islamist militant group al-Shabaab. His 127-page autobiography, *The Story of an American Jihadi: Part One*, uploaded to the internet in 2012, provides a detailed recollection of his life growing up in the United States, his drawn-out journey through various countries culminating in jihad and experiences as a member of al-Shabaab. Released shortly after he had publicly broken away from the group, Hammami was killed by his former comrades before the publication of any of the subsequent volumes that his title implies he had planned to author (BBC, 2013). Nevertheless, his autobiography remains one of the most extensive accounts written by a Western jihadi (Anzalone, 2012).

Paratexts

The first level of the framework for breaking down autobiographical texts pertains to their paratextual elements. When approaching an autobiography, a reader is not met directly by an unadorned textual account of the author's life. French literary theorist Gérard Genette coined the term 'paratexts' to refer to those elements of a literary work – titles, subtitles, cover artwork, photographs, prologues, forewords, and introductions – that render it comprehensible and consumable to the reader in the form of a book (1997:1). Despite its apparently tangential status, all of this material can impact upon or even transform the light in which a narrative is read (Porter Abbott, 2001:26). In this sense, paratexts are therefore always part of a text's narrative. Even those accounts that are self-published by militants themselves usually follow a similar format, again highlighting common assumptions about the significance of paratexts in producing a proper account (see for example, Rudolph, 2013).

The importance of paratextual elements for understanding political violence are often stripped from text-oriented approaches. However, recent work has demonstrated how these elements should be integrated into analysis. Analysing a corpus of militant communiqués, Moore, Youngman and Copeland (forthcoming) demonstrate the importance of paratextual features in ideology, highlight how some leaders of these groups put a great deal of thought into the visual dimensions of their public appearances. Here, flags and other forms of visual symbology, such as demonstrations of a particularly military aesthetic, played an import role in establishing these actors' credibility. Copeland (2018, 2019) has also explored how paratexts are deployed in the autobiographical accounts of those who have engaged in political violence. Significantly for this study, autobiography as a genre has a number of paratextual conventions that frequently relate closely to, and are illuminating of, kin and peer relationships. These texts often include prologues, which provide a space for authors to consider, discuss and reflect on the process of producing an account of their life. Included are often descriptions of relationships of significance to the author and of how certain individuals have been important in their lives and the writing process. Dedications similarly serve as acts of memorialisation for individuals with whom the author shares a certain emotional connection.

In addition to those elements that form a written introduction to the text, autobiographies frequently feature certain visual paratexts. The inclusion of photographs of the protagonist at different ages is a convention associated with the form. Significantly, the process of visually documenting one's life in such way inevitably then involves the decision to include or exclude images of family. In this sense, these paratexts become a very specific means of 'displaying family' (Finch, 2007:77), the omission of such images also telling its own story about these relationships. One militant account where such photographs play an important role is that of the Olympic Park Bomber, Eric Rudolph (2013). In his self-published memoir, Rudolph includes a selection of pictures from his upbringing that conform and seek to paint a certain idealised image of what American family life should look like. Included are photographs of his parents on their wedding day, Rudolph and his teenage girlfriend with the caption 'the perfect couple', and children and family members on holiday and enjoying what might be considered 'traditional' family activities such as partaking in sporting events. Finally, a focus on the outdoors adds to the projection of nostalgia and the idea of harking back to a better time (Rudolph, 2013:113-120). These photographs form an extension of the narrative that underpins his ideological beliefs, namely the fear that 'traditional' notions of the family are being eroded, thus partially justifying his anti-abortion and anti-gay attacks. As these examples demonstrate, paratexts are often revelatory for analysing individuals' self-accounts and, as such, are factored into the methodology taken in this study.

		Family	Peers	Metaphorical Kinship	Kinship Practices Within Militant Groups
PARATEXTS				*The cover image (of a distant sunset) hints at a journey elsewhere to find a new world and sense of purpose, something that requires embracing new understandings of one's relation to others.*	
THE STORY	*Supplementary events*	*A tangent that includes a detailed construction of a family history of delinquency.* *Includes is his creation of his 'terrorist heritage'. This is not mentioned again or elsewhere but helps understand how he sees his involvement in militancy as predetermined.*	*Hammami is keen to include details of events and stories that demonstrate how popular he was at school.*		*Details that may otherwise be considered mundane are focused upon in-depth. These include markers of the creation of kinship such as the jovial atmosphere and jokes shared between fighters, the importance of food and his differing relationships with local and Western members.*
	What is excluded?			*There is relatively little description in his account of any feelings of relatedness he has towards other Muslims in a metaphorical sense.*	

NARRATIVE DISCOURSE	***Genre***	*Draws from a number of genres including the bildungsroman and the picaresque novel. In particular, a narrative template of the Hero's Journey is employed with family taking a central role as challenges that he would have to overcome on his own 'road of trials'.*	*The actions of friends (in letting him down or needing to be jettisoned) also form parts central to his 'Hero's Journey' template.*		*His position as the roguish protagonist of a picaresque novel is further increased by his narration of how he initially survives on his wits within the group and later uses these talents to provide for them.*
	Collected Stories	*The stories of his uncle's time in prison as a suspected member of the Muslim Brotherhood are given special prominence. These collected stories are included before any other descriptions of his family.* *These collected stories perform a number of functions: complete details in his understanding of the world; provide a cultural script of group dynamics in a struggle for a cause.*			*The collected stories of several other Western militants are included, in particular, those that pertain to their own backstories. The inclusion of these stories then demonstrates his stronger relationship with these individuals than the local fighters who he says little of.*
	Trope	*He states that his actions are motivated by a desire to build a better future for his family despite them*			

NARRATIVE DISCOURSE		*objecting to them. He draws a parallel between himself and the Prophet Ibrahim in both being willing to sacrifice their families for God.*	
	Agency	*Despite claiming to be in charge of his own destiny, for a long time his narration reveals that he is under the shadow of trying to please his father.*	*He narrates himself as taking a leading position within his peer group. Making the decision to leave peers behind at various points.*
	Time	*He creates a temporal link to militant involvement dating back generations through the idea that he has 'terrorist heritage'.*	
	Coherence	*Whilst he claimed that he was willing to sacrifice his family, he ultimately did what was in their best interest even if it jeopardised his chance of making jihad.*	*Of the different characters are deployed in his account, one of the most prominent is that which relates to him as a social and well-liked individual. However, this clashes at points with the more serious 'professional militant' character he also employs.*

Figure 6. Analysis of Omar Hammami's autobiography using the framework.

The Story

The next level for organising and breaking down narrative elements within the framework pertains to the 'the story', or 'the raw events' from which a narrative is comprised. This level of the framework fundamentally relates to the events that individuals decide to include or exclude from their autobiographical accounts. Even though existing studies of militant autobiographies have focused heavily on content, here literary theory provides a more nuanced means to think about how to analyse these elements.

Supplementary Events

Literary theorists have developed a number of means to break down and analyse the events contained within a story. Roland Barthes and Seymour Chatman argue that a distinction could be made between constituent and supplementary events. To develop this line of thought Barthes uses the terms 'nuclei' and 'catalyzers' (1975:295-296), while Chatman refers to them as 'kernels' and 'satellites' (1978). Constituent events are those that cannot be removed without fundamentally changing the story; they are the key turning points and events driving the story forward (Barthes, 1975:267). Supplementary events, by contrast, can be taken away whilst leaving the story, on the face of it at least, intact. Such understanding typically induces a hierarchy of events with constituent ones considered the more salient. Existing research, commonly places great emphasis on identifying certain key incidents and 'turning points' – in other words, constituent events – that appear to account for individuals' moves to extremist positions (see for example, Nash and Bouchard, 2015; Pemberton and Aarten, 2018). However, as Barthes and Chatman agree, the inclusion of additional and supposedly supplementary incidents raises a crucial question: since they are not necessary for the progress of the story why did the author feel obliged to include them in their account? Asking this question is often useful in the interpretation of autobiographical texts, especially given that these works are contrived and carefully assembled rather than spontaneously pulled together (Colmer, 1989).

This thesis then makes a contribution in how accounts of political violence are analysed, adding another layer to the dominant approach of interrogating only that which is contained within them. For instance, existing analysis of Omar Hammami's account has focused on certain critical incidents that appear to account for his deepening ideological commitment and sense of marginalisation in the United States (see for example, Mastors and Siers, 2014). However, inclusions in his account of supplementary events also prove revealing in understanding kin and peer influences. At the beginning of his autobiography Hammami includes a long, rambling and often contradictory family history. He goes off on something of a tangent in an effort to paint a picture of his mother's side of the family as being characterised by delinquency – variously describing relatives as 'bootleggers' and 'known to be rowdy' (2012:4) – despite admitting that he has little knowledge of and has met few of these relatives. In describing these supplementary events, Hammami also makes the rather outlandish claim that 'I think having the IRA on one side of my family tree and al-Qaacidah on the other might have given me a bit of a bad temperament' (2012:8). The 'IRA' side of his family is a reference to his mother's family, whom he states are of 'Irish decent' (2012:4) whereas the Syrian heritage of his father is presumably his 'al-Qaacidah' side – though there is nothing to suggest that those on either side had any link with these militant groups (he is also either unaware or unconcerned that the Protestant background of his mother's family would likely prohibit their membership of or support for the predominantly Catholic IRA).

The refashioning of his family history by Omar Hammami is important for how he understands his own move towards and engagement in militancy. In particular, he draws on a narrative that involvement in political struggle, much like criminality or other forms of deviancy, runs in certain families and somehow accounts for his own confrontational nature. In this sense, he understands and gives meaning to the idea that his own involvement was preordained. This demonstrates that supplementary events can carry a significant burden of meaning, something which may be overlooked in the search for key moments or incidents.

What is excluded?

Another strategy for analysing a narrative is to consider the events that were excluded from an individual's account. Here, the narrative approach advocated is distinct from other analyses of content. Absences in themselves are considered significant rather than simply a missing variable; they pose questions about why the author chose to exclude certain elements from their accounts. The absence of descriptions of certain family members, in particular, may in itself be instructive about the relationship the author enjoys with them. Certain aspects of family history may be excluded because they don't fit with the author's narrative identity. Silences, or the choice to leave elements unsaid, have been shown to provide an important means by which the death of family members is incorporated into the stories that individuals tell about themselves (Baddeley and Singer, 2010). Additionally, absence and presence should also not be thought of as binary positions; rather, a space between the two exists that is open for individuals' own construction of meaning (Derrida, 1997). Families, in particular, give rise to the possibility of absent presences whereby certain figures are understood and narrated as being both missing but still, in some sense, close, and potentially influential. Included are the absent presences of both those physically absent from militants' lives and those missing in how these individuals narrate their autobiographies. In both situations, the lingering trace of such individuals or the importance afforded to their absence may be detectable through a narrative reading of these accounts.

Whilst the approach advocated here moves away from the necessity of authenticating the authors' recollections with other records of these events to try and establish their truthfulness, there is nothing to say that militants' accounts be read in isolation from additional reports of their actions or lives. For example, Leila Khaled chose not to mention in her autobiography (1973) that a prolonged absence on the part of her father was the result of him joining the Palestinian resistance and being sent to Gaza and then Egypt before finally making his way back to his family a year later (Irving, 2012:14). However, when read with this information in mind, Khaled's recollection of how an image of her father appeared to her as she was carrying out a hijacking sheds new light on her understanding of how she was attempting to realise the goals of not only her wider kin group but also of a close family member

(1973:140). This then hints at another dimension of the added emotional resonance she associates with her engagement in militancy.

Narrative Discourse

The final level of analysis included in the framework is that of 'narrative discourse', or the raw events of the story as represented by the narrator's symbolic work. This element refers to the 'texture or technique' of the author's narrative, something that has largely been absent from studies of militants' communicative efforts (Glazzard, 2017:9).

Genre

Whilst usually associated with works of fiction, self-accounts nevertheless consciously or unconsciously conform to and take on the shape and characteristics of genres – or recurrent literary forms, such as epic, drama or tragedy (Polletta, 2009:1490; Moore 2010; Sandberg and Presser, 2015:93). Autobiographies are no different (Steans, forthcoming). The genre to which such texts conform is usually identifiable not only through content but also tone. The autobiographies of Palestinian militants, for instance, frequently draw from the collective narratives of their social group and kin in being rooted in the genre of tragedy (see for example, Khaled, 1973). Genres can be further broken down into subgenres, templates and recognisable plots or scripts. Significantly, for this thesis, family background – or individuals' interpretations of their starting point in life – often forms a fundamental component of the templates that individuals deploy when it comes to giving accounts of their lives. Hankiss argues that most life stories can be conceptualised as dynastic (a good past producing a good present), antithetical (a bad past producing a good present), compensatory (a good past producing a bad present), or self-absolutory (a bad past producing a bad present) (1981). *Bildungsroman*, or 'coming of age' stories focused on the psychological and moral growth of the protagonist from youth to adulthood, is a template that militants commonly draw on in the process of

narrating their ideological and physical moves to extremist positions (Deary, 2010:81). Again, a central part of such a template is often the idea of breaking free from one's family (Courtois, 2015).

Whilst drawing on both of these templates in part, Omar Hammami's light-hearted but egotistical narration also resembles the picaresque novel – a genre of fiction that depicts a series of loosely connected episodes or adventures of a roguish but likable protagonist who survives a corrupt and hostile society by living on their wits (Kent and Gaunt, 1979). However, in their episodic telling such tales are usually lack a larger plot. Hammami's account by contrast employs a more rigid, and recognisable, narrative structure. In his classic work, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), Joseph Campbell argues that all myths conform to the same underlying template that he terms the 'Hero's Journey' (for more on how individuals draw on heroic characters in narrating their experiences see Steans, forthcoming). Although Hammami's narration does not include all 17 of the stages that every hero passes through in Campbell's original conceptualisation, it does draw on many, and exhibits the same overarching structure.

Peers and family occupy a central role in how Hammami deploys this template. His description of outgrowing his hometown Salafi friends who, unlike him, were not prepared to embrace and travel abroad for jihad, speaks directly to the 'call to adventure' – a phase suggesting that the protagonist's initial ideals and settings are challenged as they become aware of a new and forbidden world (Campbell, 1949:49). Similarly, he reframes his struggle to overcome the efforts of his family and friends to prevent him from travelling for jihad as merely the first test on the 'road of trials' that he, the protagonist, must surmount to achieve his goal, explicitly referring to the 'trials' he would face (2012:100). Hammami's declaration that he would 'walk from the south of Somalia to the north by foot if it would help matters' (2012:42) with his wife who wanted him to abandon the battlefield, again also speaks directly to the notion that those around him were subjecting him to tests of his endurance. His narration of how his wife offered him an easy way out from the hardships of combat, but that would ultimately derail his quest, also closely mirrors another stage of the hero's journey of 'the woman as temptress' (Campbell, 1949:120).

Crafting his account as a hero's journey performs a number of important tasks for Hammami, not least helping to repair the rupture in his narrative identity brought about by his disillusionment and

break from al-Shabaab. Having ultimately found being a member of a militant group disappointing and not what he had envisioned, he reframes the act of actually making it to Somalia and jihad as more important than any ends he achieved there. He states 'my biggest personal achievement is to have performed *Hijrah* [emigration] and to have engaged in Jihaad' (2012:121). Talking up the challenges he had to overcome and the significance of what he has already achieved then smooths the crisis or lack of direction he faces at failing to achieve the ultimate goal he had pursued and dedicated his life to; the notion of freeing all oppressed Muslims through force.

Collected Stories

When approaching autobiographical texts, it is immediately apparent that these accounts contain within them a mass of smaller stories. These contribute to the larger 'point' of the autobiography. Schiff, Noy and Cohler focus on the idea of 'collected stories' or the 'individualized articulation of stories that were not discovered through direct experience but were, rather, vicariously encountered. They are the stories of others' (2001:160). Here, though the narrator was neither participant nor witness to these events, they nevertheless choose to include them in their accounts. Unlike collective memories that 'are the property of social groups who talk about, and reconfigure, defining moments of group history through the frame of present day concerns' (Schiff et al. 2001:161 – see also Halbwach, 1952; Moore, 2010:46), collected stories are not necessarily shared by all members of such social groups. Instead, these stories may be dyadic – or shared between as few as two persons. Through collected stories individuals extend their knowledge of the world beyond merely the circumstances they personally encounter. However, they are more than the repetition of encountered stories; by including them in their own accounts the line between the author's story and the stories of others they collect becomes permeable (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986). Stories collected from the authors' family, friends, kin and contextual settings become a fundamental part of their own self-narratives and, furthermore, serve distinct purposes within individuals' accounts.

Like all autobiographies, Omar Hammami's account is replete with collected stories – the most prominent being those that related to his uncle Rafiiq and his experience of time spent in a Syrian prison

as a suspected member of the Muslim Brotherhood. Linguistic demarcations, particularly the emotive tone, of Hammami's detailed retelling of stories of this '20 years in a tormenting hell of a prison' (2012:4), demonstrate an 'intimacy with the narrative in ways that are more than just someone recounting someone else's story' (Azarian-Ceccato, 2010:116). Collected stories are more than the repetition of encountered stories; they are 'used to complete details in a life history, to demonstrate authorial intentions, and to show dearly held meanings' (Schiff et al. 2001:187). For Hammami, stories of how the guards from the (largely) secular Syrian regime punished his uncle and fellow prisoners for outwardly displaying their religiosity are taken as indicative of the subjugation Muslims endure across the world and only strengthen his 'hatred for the disbelieving rulers of the Muslim countries' (2012:23).

The stories of his uncle also provide Hammami with a cultural script of the idealised behaviours and bonds between members of a group engaged in a shared ideological struggle and their willingness to endure extreme hardship for one another. He recalls his uncle telling him 'how the brothers would take turns sacrificing for the weak, by standing in front when the guards came in to beat them. Those brothers would cry if they were refused their turn' (2012:23). Hammami then faces an 'unexpected reality' (2012:109) when he meets with petty theft, dishonesty, selfishness and bullying (of which he is sometimes the victim) upon joining al-Shabaab. Here his expectations of what it entails to be a member of group engaged in shared political struggle has been intrinsically shaped by the collected stories of his uncle, something that conflicted and nagged away in his thinking throughout his own experiences and eventual decision to leave al-Shabaab (2012:91).

In addition to examining how the stories of others are deployed within autobiographical texts, a profitable strategy for analysis may be to focus on whose stories are collected and retold. All stories are not equally encounterable by all persons, and, as a result, tell us something about individuals' social contexts. Whilst the majority of the collected stories in Hammami's account were told to him by the protagonist directly, he nevertheless reveals that his uncle was someone he had 'heard about for my entire life' (2012:22). Other family members, at least in part, contributed stories of his uncle's actions – something that he fails to mention elsewhere. Given that collected stories must resonate with the narrator in some way to be sufficiently salient to be told as part of their autobiography, this resonance may, at least in part, be derived from the significance afforded to the teller and the relationship they

share. Militants frequently repeat instances of harm perpetrated against close family members that they were not witness to, but which nevertheless elicit an emotional reaction in them (see for example, Collins, 1997:32). In Hammami's case the collected stories of his uncle are afforded greater significance in his account than the actual relationship the two of them shared. Nevertheless, the fact that these stories pertain to his uncle make them available to gather into the story he tells about himself. It is through collected stories that individuals acquire knowledge about their ancestry, something that influences identity at the personal level (Strathern, 1999:78).

Of course, some collected stories appear in autobiographical accounts without reference to where or through whom they were encountered. Stories that circulate within peer networks, for example, are often included without reference to their origin. However, this absence is significant in illuminating social contexts. As research in narrative criminology has demonstrated, some stories are so ubiquitous in certain settings that explaining them becomes unnecessary, illogical and potentially a marker of someone being in some sense an interloper (for further discussion see below) (Sandberg, 2016).

Trope

Whilst the concept of trope has been used in a variety of ways, narrative criminologists such as Sveinung Sandberg (2016) have used the term to refer to commonly recurring literary and rhetorical devices that hint at familiar stories that carry wider, often dominant, cultural influences (see also Cuddon and Preston, 1998:948). Peer and familial relations are frequently referred in nods to taken-for-granted stories that are shared across entire societies (Tilbury, 2007). Such tropes are commonly employed in autobiographical accounts. For instance, a number of militants draw on family tropes about overcoming difficult upbringings (see for example, Riggs, 2011) or peer related tropes, such as the idea of 'falling in with the wrong crowd' within their accounts (Hamilton, 1997). Omar Hammami similarly employs such devices throughout his account. For instance, he and a number of other militants repeat a trope that their actions, even in abandoning or condemning their families to hardship, are in some way done for their benefit. Drawing a parallel between himself and the Prophet Ibrahim, who was prepared

to sacrifice his family to demonstrate his devotion to God, Hammami narrates his own decision to forgo a relationship with his daughter in order to continue towards jihad as one made entirely for her and her future. He states 'I'm sure my daughter will grow up being told how selfish her father is, but it was exactly my selflessness that caused me to make my decision' (2012:38). In a similar manner to pervasive collective stories, Sandberg argues that 'the most important stories in a society are often only hinted at, not fully told. Paradoxically then, when a narrative has become a trope or even completely silenced, it can be at the height of its societal importance' (2016:166). Tropes, or the 'things that go without saying' are often revealing about social contexts and environments. For example, authors who are from certain settings may omit explaining commonplace terms or stories as to do so would be unnecessary. Again, not knowing such meanings would immediately mark individuals as unfamiliar with certain social settings or an outsider.

Time

Though autobiographies may initially appear to present a straightforward record of time, as an account of an individual's experiences during their life course, there are a number of further temporal dimensions contained within these texts. The first relates specifically to the *presentation* of time. Here, the structuralist distinction between story (the raw events of a story) and narrative discourse (these events as plotted and represented in a narrative) again proves informative, this time in demonstrating the temporal division at the heart of all narratives. Story, with its progression of events through their chronological occurrence in time is necessarily linear. Narrative discourse, on the other hand, is concerned with the form of time that reshapes that story in the telling. In other words, a textual account may jump between events in any order whilst still maintaining coherence (Porter Abbott, 2002:30).

Gérard Genette (1980) presents three concepts for understanding the presentation of time in narrative discourse: *order, duration, and frequency*. Here *order* is understood as the association between the order of events in the story and the alternative ordering of these same events as given in the narrative. Aukai Collins' autobiography begins by recounting his conversion to Islam aged 19 and subsequent journey through militancy, before turning to give an account of his youth midway through

his account (2003). Given the traumatic circumstances of his upbringing, the ordering of his narration may then be seen as significant, specifically as a means to insulate himself from accusations that his early life influenced his decision to engage in militancy – something that might accompany a linear recounting of his life course. *Duration* refers to the amount of time dedicated in a narrative to narrate the events of the story as opposed to the time they 'actually' took. Narrative tempo or rhythm speeds up and slows down key events in a story. For example, former al-Qaeda member Nasser al-Bahri's autobiography devotes just four pages to describing his life before the age of 16 – by which time he states that his commitment to jihad was absolute (2013:12-15). Here duration helps craft a narrative that, given his background, suggests his participation was always beyond doubt. Finally, Genette uses *frequency* to describe the 'narrative temporality of repetition, which allows a narrative both to return multiple times to a single event and to condense multiple happenings of an event into a single instance of narration' (Martin, 2016:3).

Genette's conception of these three elements forms a useful starting point for thinking about the temporal dimension contained within self-accounts. However, there also exists a more fundamental, if not complex and somewhat elusive, link between time and narrative. Paul Ricoeur (1984:52) has sought to reveal the existential or 'deeper experience of time' that narrative makes possible:

> Between the activity of narrating a story and the temporal character of human experience there exists a correlation that is not merely accidental but that presents a transcultural form of necessity. To put it another way, time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence.

In other words, the true nature of time – in terms more fundamental than of chorological units (such as days, minutes and hours) – can only be rendered understandable when we narrativise it (Martin, 2016:3). The accounts of militants therefore provide a means to explore the authors' subjective understandings of time and its place in their engagement in violence. It is important to recognise then that time is

repeatedly shaped, stretched and compressed within militants' accounts, even if we initially think of these texts as straightforward representations of time.

Such understandings of time are often intertwined with and inseparable from kinship. In one sense, militants reconfigure the defining moments of history through the frame of their contemporary goals and concerns. Ongoing persecution and threats are commonly framed as part of a wider historical subjugation of one's nation, community, kin or family, with significant incidents narrated to appear recent. In another sense, a temporal dimension is intrinsic to individuals' comprehensions of their kinship. Humans innately seek to fashion an understanding of where they came from and to locate themselves in time (Carseten, 2000:689). Not having sufficient information to do can often prove distressing (Carsten, 2000:690). In this sense, personal conceptions of time then become a central component, not only of how individuals constitute their kinship, but also of how they understand the necessity for their own participation in violence. As Khachig Tölölyan argues in regard to Armenian terrorist groups, 'the time relevant to a particular terrorist act or group might be the day, the month, the decade previous to the event' (1989:100). Understandings of events are subjectively rendered not only in terms of their significance but also their proximity in time.

Coherence

The search for a unified and coherent self-narrative remains the most common approach to examining life stories (Maruna, 2001:7 – see for example, McAdams, 1988; 1993). However, the frequent practice, of mining narrative accounts for those events deemed most salient and significant, presents the risk of smoothing out the author's experiences. Such a cohesive narrative may end up being the product of a reductive reading by the researcher. As research within narrative criminology has demonstrated, it may be more profitable for interpreting narratives to focus on ruptures or inconsistencies (Sandberg, 2013). In his analysis of Anders Breivik's manifesto, Sandberg has shown that the author 'utilizes several, sometimes competing, self-narratives or characters' (2013:75 – see also Bakhtin, 1981; Frank, 2012). These include the 'professional revolutionary'; 'the evangelist'; and 'the pragmatic conservative', but also the seemingly contradictory character of the 'social and likeable

person' which Breivik develops by employing a relaxed tone, jokes and concerted efforts at humour (Sandberg, 2013:78). Drawing on Jarvinen's argument that accounts are best understood if positioned against real or imagined accusations, 'Breivik's descriptions of himself as normal, likeable and social can be seen as a prepared response to accusations he knows he will meet, i.e. of being some kind of inhuman monster' (Sandberg, 2013:79 – see also Jarvinen, 2001, 2003).

Omar Hammami is remarkably similar in deploying contradictory characters in his account. Whilst his personality as a light-hearted joker may be less affected than Breivik's efforts to portray himself as affable, Hammami is nevertheless keen to portray himself as a 'social butterfly' (2012:10). This character nevertheless conflicts with an alternative one, of himself as a hardened jihadi fighter, which he deploys at other points in his account (within the opening pages he reveals that he has authored a number of strategic documents for jihad under a pseudonym). Again, in a similar vein to Breivik, Hammami also appears to be using this lighter character to defend himself from accusations, namely that his decision to travel to Somalia was the result of being marginalised and shunned by his peers in America. As such, his account frequently stresses his popularity at school, whilst he also states 'I left America while the American dream was firmly tucked under my pillow' (2012:113).

Agency

A final element that is included in the framework under narrative discourse regards the agency of the author. Whilst not necessarily an element of narrative in the same way as others in the framework, it nevertheless became apparent when applying the model that individuals' narration of their capacity to act independently and to make uninhibited choices (Rubinstein, 2001:14) was a significant marker of influence. As Jill Steans argues, 'agency cannot simply be read from the narratives offered by individuals' (Steans, forthcoming – see also Steans, unpublished). With this said, analysis here focuses then on how the authors examined attempt to narrate their own agency and any changes or inconsistencies observable here. Transitions in narrated agency often occur within familial settings as individuals grow up and begin to move out of the sphere of control of their parents. In Omar Hammami's case, despite his claims to the contrary, questions regarding his own agency linger as he

explores career options that will please his father (2012:29). Interrogating how these dynamics play out in his narration then adds another dimension for understanding how both the influence of his father delayed his decision to finally travel overseas for jihad and how the act of doing so became for him a means to move out of his father's shadow.

Pulling Together Analysis

In this chapter I have outlined a framework for systematically breaking down the various narrative elements employed in militants' self-accounts against the organisational categories of 'family', 'peers', 'metaphorical kinship' and 'kinship practices within militant groups'. Given that kin and peer influence have generally been understudied, part of the analysis in this thesis is also constituted descriptive argument that 'aims to answer what questions (e.g., when, whom, out of what, in what manner) about a phenomenon or a set of phenomena' (Gerring 2012:722). In using the term description, I follow Gerring's argument that description is neither prefatory to causal analysis nor of little scientific value (2012:721). Instead, rich description should be considered analysis in its own right and is necessary to discover new meanings and ideas.

Following the collection of autobiographical data, the framework was applied and populated with material from each of the accounts contained in the dataset. Themes of interest that cut across accounts were then identified and coded. Even where difficult to full discern or disentangle from one other, these themes were then used to provide guides for further refinement and contextualised discussion of what is complex data. Here my prior knowledge, experience, expectations and intuition were all of value, subject to proper considerations of reflexivity (something considered below). The use of this methodological framework did not discount or restrict my sensitivity in this regard. Rather, it was employed to help guide the research, interpret findings and provide a means to marry research intuitions with a systematic means to compare themes, and their prevalence, across accounts and contexts (for discussions of the value of using such frameworks see Simi et al. 2016:542; De Bie et al. 2015). Validity was also introduced through the iterative nature of this process. The accounts were read multiple times not only to identify themes but to check that each theme was properly captured. Re-

reading also provided the opportunity to consider how different narrative devices combine or were indicative of themes found elsewhere within the same accounts or if themes had been missed.

Whilst not possible for all the texts, where an electronic copy could be procured computerised text analysis software, Nvivo, was used to assist with the identification of themes and elements for plotting into the framework. This proved useful in a number of ways. First, such software helped ensure that coding was undertaken in a logical and consistent manner and facilitated the systematic organisation of a large amount of data. Second, functions within Nvivo which allow texts to be searched and specific information retrieved assisted with the comparison of different themes and the relationship between them. Memo functions were also used to record running ideas and developing themes. Whilst such programmes help ensure that analysis is methodical and attentive (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013:3), they do not challenge the position that it is the researcher, and their hard work, which are ultimately responsible for ensuring rigor when interpreting themes, generating ideas and discerning meanings. In this sense, it remained up to me, and not the software, to identify the remarkable in the data. Whilst the use of Nvivo did help speed up the process of analysis, similar conclusions would have been arrived at without its use.

Limitations and Reflexivity

It is important to also consider some of the limitations of this narrative approach. Ultimately, as stated, this framework is only devised as a starting point. Many narrative elements that relate to kin and peers are not easily captured by a general framework or are specific to a single or limited number of accounts. For example, in certain cases, lexical choices that carry particular meanings in specific contexts or usages might be revealing. Such terms might resonate within certain kin groups and hint at particular elements of their collective memory. Similarly, the use of tone in narrative accounts is often indicative of individuals' assessments and feelings towards various individuals, events and ideas. These elements, however, are necessarily difficult to capture in an analytical framework. Flexibility is essential for working with ultimately messy data that autobiographies comprise. No framework will ever capture all of the elements contained within these works nor would such a rigid system of

investigation harness the full interpretive benefits of narrative analysis. A valid criticism may be made that using such a framework may ultimately be reductive, diminishing analysis to a process of identifying recurring narrative elements and devices whilst failing to appreciate that narratives are more than the sum of their parts. In this sense the 'whole' of a narrative account must also be kept in mind even when attempting to break down and organise elements of complex and multi-layered texts.

Significantly, in completing all of these tasks the role of the analyst for successfully using the framework remains key. No matter the sophistication of frameworks or tools for assisting in investigation, narrative analysis is ultimately and unavoidably directed and dictated by those using them. It is then crucial to recognise that when examining any narrative, 'the analyst, who is also a narrator of a kind, has no objective position' (Moore, 2010:3). Researchers then pick and choose which stories to tell when interpreting, analysing and ultimately presenting their data, something that is influenced by their own exposure to particular narratives or modes of analysis (Aspden and Haywood, 2015:229). To this end, ongoing reflexivity on the behalf of the analyst is crucial. Throughout analysis I have attempted to be mindful as to how my own interests and biases have impacted upon the themes focused upon and the conclusions arrived at. Here, memos have been used to help produce a record of how themes were developed, further enhancing opportunities for reflexivity. In revisiting these notes I was able to consider how certain avenues of analysis developed over time and whether alternative explanations held any weight.

The centrality of the researcher, and crucially their creativity and intuition, then also raises questions about how this analysis may be replicated. Significantly, it is doubtful that computerised analysis could provide the same results in terms of analysis, the themes identified and the conclusions drawn. In particular, contextualisation, not just in terms of the setting where and when individuals' militant engagement take place, but how language is used and twisted mean that the subtleties and nuance that cannot be easily captured and accounted for in programming. This, however, should not be seen as a weakness of this approach. Rather, it merely highlights that the complexity of the data demands a methodological approach that is both rigorous and creative.

Conclusion

In the previous chapter I outlined how my dataset of militant authored autobiographies had been compiled. In this chapter I set out the methodological approach that was used to analyse these texts for kin and peer influences. In doing so, I have sketched and established the theoretical and epistemological underpinnings of the approach taken and discussed what this means for the conclusions drawn in this analysis. Existing studies of the accounts of participants in political violence have been dominated by psychological accounts of narrative (Glazzard, 2017; Copeland, 2018). However, like terrorism studies itself, narrative sits across many different disciplines. This chapter, makes an important contribution in bringing physiological readings of narrative into conversation with those from other disciplines such as literary studies, sociology, philosophy, international relations and narrative criminology. Viewing narrative and experiences as inseparable, and as enjoying a dynamic relationship, provides a new means to approach militants' self-narratives. This returns the analytical emphasis to how these individuals understand the world, their actions and, crucially for this thesis, how their kin and peers and their influence are folded into this process. Significantly, this approach moves away from the issues of accuracy and truthfulness that continue to stymy the use of self-authored texts in much research on militancy, and instead towards a greater focus on what these stories 'do' for these individuals and their understandings of their actions. Additionally, as argued in the introduction to this thesis, autobiographical narratives may be used to do more than just to investigate the understandings of their authors. Instead, in thinking of storyworlds and real-life as inseparable, the possibility to draw wider conclusions about the influence of kin and peers in a more general sense remains open.

Abstract theorising, however, is of little value without practical application. In this chapter I have also provided a detailed overview of the framework that was used to analyse the corpus of militant autobiographies compiled, and demonstrated how it works when applied to a single account. In doing so I have outlined a means for addressing and capturing the richness of militant self-narratives – something that previous research has failed to do. For the wider purposes of this study, I have also shown how this approach dovetails with the earlier discussion of relatedness, in particular, the importance of narrative in shaping how individuals understand their connections with others. Through

narrative analysis of autobiographical accounts it is possible to observe and analyse instances of ideological transmission and how individuals fashion their own storyworlds from available narrative material. In the study of political violence narrative approaches have often been criticised for being vague, subjective and unsystematic. This chapter has demonstrated how it is possible to analyse influence through such means in a methodologically clear, consistent and robust manner, using a corpus of autobiographical texts that draws on an understanding of context. Whilst analysts will unavoidably diverge in their choice or interpretation of narratives, this framework helps standardise the analytical process and ensure that each account is interrogated in the same manner initially.

The next task is to move from the theoretical and the abstract to a detailed descriptive analysis. With this in mind, the following three chapters undertake a comprehensive exploration of the influence family, peers and metaphorical understandings of kinship and kinship practices within militant groups respectively.

Chapter Five: Family

Introduction

This, the first of the analytical chapters to apply the narrative methodology discussed in the previous to the dataset of autobiographical accounts, focuses on the place of families in individuals' engagement with militancy. As argued in chapter one, the family retains significance both in terms of how most individuals conceive their immediate significant social relations and how the influence of kin has been approached in studies of militancy. In the following chapter, analysis of the influence and impact of families is split into two parts. The first section focuses on the themes found within the dataset of accounts that relate to families in a wider, collective sense. The role of the persecution of family members in militants' accounts is initially explored. Next, those factors that relate to family traditions and community standing in relation to the involvement in violence are discussed. The place of families in attempting to restrict individuals' engagement in militancy is then considered. In doing so, the complexities of familial support or approval for both militant causes and the personal involvement of family members in these struggles is teased apart. Finally, this first section of the chapter examines how the authors understand their family background to have impacted on their engagement, continued involvement and desistance from militancy.

The second half of this chapter discusses individual family members in depth, starting with mothers. Here, the various roles that mothers are narrated to take on are explored, in particular, in regard to their role in maintaining traditions and certain understandings of morality. Next, the roles of fathers in militants' narratives are examined, and at points, contrasted with those of mothers. Finally, the place of sibling relationships is analysed. Throughout, this chapter also demonstrates what applied narrative analysis can add to our understanding of these texts and how it can be used to assess the views of the author's family members. Specifically, this (and the following two analysis chapters) show how my analytic framework helps unearth and analyse themes that are unlikely to have been identified through a 'natural' reading of these accounts.

Families

Persecution of Family Members

It is unsurprising that the accounts of militants from protracted conflicts, frequently contain descriptions of persecution or suffering endured by the author's family at the hands of others identified as 'the enemy' (whether this 'enemy' are in reality the genuine perpetrator of this harm or not).[7] Whilst some authors describe witnessing such incidents personally, many more report encountering the details of this harm through collected stories, passed on to them within their family. In both cases, the resonance of this maltreatment and purpose of its inclusion in their accounts remains the same; to predicate and justify the use of violence in response. Militants from various contexts similarly narrate how, at various points, conflicts 'became personal' or 'close to home' when a family member was targeted. In framing this persecution in such a way, a number of authors understand these events to mark the point where their participation in violence ceases to be optional. Very few, however, cite the death of a close family member as a motivating factor for their decision to engage in militancy. Here, Ulster Defence Association (UDA) volunteer Alec Calderwood is something of an exception. He reveals that his understanding of how wider communal victimisation shifted and 'became personal' after the INLA murdered his uncle (who himself had been a member of a Loyalist paramilitary group) (quoted in Crawford, 2003:70).

Exactly how 'close to home' or personal this oppression has to be for it to be included in the author's self-narrative is variable. Another Loyalist, Alastair Little, places great weight in his autobiography on the death of his best friend's father at the hands of the IRA. Pointedly, Little plays with time in the narrative discourse of his account, uncoupling the order in which events transpired from how he narrates them. Doing so emphasizes the significance of how this event 'changed everything' for him (2009:41). Not only does his autobiography begin with a description of himself at the funeral of his friend's father, the event is also something that he returns to multiple times. Here, the

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[7] A differentiation is made here between the suffering of immediate or extended family members and harm historically perpetrated again kin more broadly. The latter its explored in chapter seven.

killing of a loved one is then co-opted to some degree in his view of the need for action. Importantly, by his understanding, whilst it was not his father who died this time, it could well have been or might be in future (2009:14). Whilst revenge remains a motivating factor in some accounts, many more militants talk about such events triggering a need to prevent the possibility of the same happening again to those they care about. In this sense, violence may be seen as both retributive and a necessary pre-emptive act to protect loved ones.

Families are also responsible for passing on and keeping alive understandings of persecution and subjugation. Here, ideas of the historical or long-standing nature of this suffering are commonly reinforced through collected stories taken from family members. Eamon Collins' account details how instances of persecution against his family were reframed by his mother to chime with wider narratives of the historical oppression of Catholics in Ireland (1998). One of his mother's stories in particular is recounted in great detail. It pertains to a harrowing and traumatic incident where his school-aged mother and her uncle were set upon by a crowd of Protestant men after attempting to sell ice cream at an Orangemen's parade. The two narrowly escaped serious injury but the frightening experience nevertheless is narrated to have had lasting effect on his mother and her views (1998:32). Of particular relevance, in telling the story Collins' mother describes how the instigator and chief perpetrator of their harassment was a 'big, violent, loud-mouthed bastard [who] had looked just like Ian Paisley' (1998:32). Whether or not this individual genuinely did bear any resemblance to Ian Paisley is inconsequential. The story nevertheless serves as part of the 'enemification' of the 'other' (Moore, 2010:100). That his mother described this aggressor to take on the image of one of the most recognisable figures of Loyalism served to portray her experience as indicative of this group's violent nature and persecution of Catholics.

Both Collins' account and those of a number of the other militants also contain recollections of instances of humiliation suffered by the author's family members. Whilst the study of humiliation in international politics has attracted noteworthy attention, principally in relation to the debasement of nations and peoples, (Moore 2010:128), here the focus is firmly personal. Recalling how their family home was raided by British soldiers, who had mistakenly suspected his father of transporting explosives, Collins' description focuses on his personal distress at seeing close family members ill-treated (1998:49-53). Whilst suffering significant harm himself (including being badly beaten by the

soldiers and having the barrel of a rifle forced into his mouth), Collins emphases how he would 'never forget the sight of my father standing there so humiliated' (1998:52). It is to this image that he returns a number of times in his account.

Humiliation is also a central theme in Leila Khaled's narration of her family's forced exile from their home in Palestine (1973). In particular, she devotes much attention to painting a picture of how her hardworking father was suddenly left penniless and 'had to watch Zionists' move into their home whilst their life's possessions were carted off (1973:26). Whilst these two examples may suggest that these understandings of humiliation are often linked to seeing male relatives (mainly fathers) being emasculated, the accounts examined reveal that these feelings are also often felt in regard to other family members. Khaled, for instance, frames her family's miserable existence post-expulsion through the prism of seeing her sisters humiliated (1973:28). Michael Stone also includes a collected story in his account of how his cousin and frail aunt and uncle were publicly humiliated during their forced expulsion from their home by Republicans (2003:32). Significantly, in narrating these events he includes the objections of a Catholic witness – the implication being that this debasement was such that even someone who should have supported this act thought that a line had been crossed. Stone claims that 'this sectarian attack on my family sowed the seeds of hatred and resentment that would stay with me for most of my adult life' (2003:32), demonstrating the significance he attaches to it. The notion of the humiliation of one's family then appears to be particularly important in how militants understand their actions. Whilst understandings of humiliation are embedded differently in different contexts (Moore, 2010:128), the accounts examined stress that there is something uniquely evocative, even more so than acts of violence or even murder, that necessitates an immediate and forceful reaction to right the wrong done to their relatives.

Impeccable Family Credentials

Many of the authors examined hail from backgrounds steeped in militancy or its supporting traditions. A select number present the notion that their family and militancy are so closely interwoven that to try and disentangle the two is to present an inauthentic representation of their lives. One author

from Northern Ireland recalls, 'when I think back to it I was involved [with the loyalist paramilitaries] without even realising that I was involved' (quoted in Crawford, 2003:68). Similarly, David Stitt describes how being an ever-present companion to his father in his UDA activities since infancy, his socialisation into the group predates his capacity to form memories of not being involved (quoted in Rolston, 2011:187). Such examples clearly challenge 'the commonly held belief that intimacy and ideology are lived out in separate spheres' (Hopkins, 2013:21). Here, the narrative methodology used is, again, revealing. In such circumstances, instances of, or nods towards, direct ideological transmission appear to be absent precisely because they cannot be disentangled from what these individuals consider 'normal'. This unconscious indoctrination is narrated to have occurred simply by way of immersion, with individuals being taken to militant events and surrounded by members, symbols and ideological material since before they can remember.

Instances of individuals being so totally engulfed by militancy at a young age are however rare, even in the accounts of those authors from families with immaculate pedigrees of militant involvement. More frequently, a division between the ideological and the intimate can still be made within their familial setting. Here, the move to militancy is often articulated as a 'natural progression' when viewed through the prism of their early lives. Absent are the conversion narratives found in the accounts of other militants. Instead, belief systems conducive to engagement in militancy are narrated as having been absorbed slowly over time from the surrounding atmosphere with few references to specific incidents that mark particular junctures on how the came to adopt this outlook. However, the accounts of those who grew up in impeccable families universally contain a tension; the need to address, if not celebrate, their family's involvement whilst at the same time stress that the decision to become involved in the same cause was of their own volition. As a result, even the accounts of those authors from the most politically active backgrounds state that militancy was something that was not directly encouraged or even discussed within their family (Moloney, 2010:35; Rolston, 2011:175). Instead, their accounts can commonly be characterised as a response to accusations that their involvement in militancy resulted from familial indoctrination or pressure.

Frequently, these accounts include conscious efforts on the author's behalf to seek out and validate their own understanding of conflicts, ideologies and the need for violence from external

sources. A number tell similar stories about how they constructed their own arguments in support of their families' positions by reading and studying texts within their homes growing up (O'Callaghan, 1998; Moloney, 2010; O'Doherty, 2011). These individuals, however, fail to appreciate that the libraries of texts they drew from were not neutrally complied repositories of information but rather have been selectively cultivated by their family members. In this sense, these collections of texts then comprise sites of institutional – that is familial – memory. Narrative analysis provides a means to interrogate the impact of this indirect influence. Shane Paul O'Doherty, for instances, describes how 'it was the discovery of the tragedies of Irish history which first caused my desire to give myself to the IRA, and the best part of that history I imbibed alone at home reading books I found in the family library' (2011:14). Significantly, he recalls that a number of these texts were the first-hand accounts of those who had taken part in this armed struggle. Here, an appreciation of narrative provides a means to understand O'Doherty's emotive reaction to this text, and furthermore, how it induced within him transportation to a narrative world. He states that 'at the age of nine and ten I was definitely engaged in lonely and emotional communion with the spirit of these writings, meaning that I cried my eyes out while reading them' (2011:23). It is clear that this transportation then blurs the boundaries between his own world and that of the heroes of these texts. Whilst he can not necessarily join them in engaging in such action immediately he links the two through his understanding of this 'spirit' he sees them sharing and uses this as narrative material to weave into his storyworld. This example then highlights that familial influence need not always include direct member to member contact to be significant. Rather, families can also impact upon individuals' beliefs through indirect means – in this case cultivating and making certain texts available to members.

Many authors from such backgrounds also suggest that any expectations that they would personally become involved in militancy were enforced by the wider communities they lived in rather than internally within their family. A number of volunteers from both sides of the conflict in Northern Ireland tell similar stories of the pressure they felt of having to live up to the family name, not wanting to let family members down or otherwise undermine this reputation. Billy McQuiston, whose father and uncles were well known locally for their involvement in the UDA, articulates how this external pressure would manifest: 'at times, people felt that they didn't have to ask me where I stood on things

or would I be interested in getting involved in something. They took it for granted because of my name that I would' (quoted in Rolston, 2011:155). Nevertheless, McQuiston quickly succumbs to the need to take ownership of his move into militancy, immediately following this up with a clarification that 'it was a duty and an honour' for him to involve himself in these activities (quoted in Rolston, 2011:155).

The accounts examined support the idea that being raised in a family with impeccable credentials or standing within the local communities that supported militant groups or causes did help expedite the transition from support to involvement in violence. The facilitative roles of families in this regard are largely described as twofold. First, such impeccable families often provide individuals with the knowledge and means for making contact with militant organisations. As Sean O'Callaghan puts it, 'many of the boys my age boasted that they were going to join the IRA…but the difference between me and them was that I knew exactly how to join up' (1998:48). Second, these credentials are said to have mitigated the need for the author to be vetted by militant groups in the same manner as unknown individuals would be – something that has also been identified in the sociological literature on trust in the recruitment of social movements (Tilly, 2015). As Shane Paul O'Doherty describes in regard to his father's local standing, 'in later years, being his son was a passport to being known and trusted' (2011:28 – see also Little 2009). Interestingly, Eamon Collins also reveals how when later acting as a recruiter himself, knowing that men 'came from "good" family backgrounds' weighed in individuals' favour when making the decision of whether to risk offering them an invitation to join his unit (1998:87).

Romanticising Militarism and Participation in Political Causes

The narratives of militants often paint pictures of household environments in which significant emotional weight was attached to the previous involvement and sacrifices of members in service of political and armed struggles or family histories of military service. A prominent example are the stories of family service in the British Armed Forces that are frequently included within the accounts of Loyalist paramilitary members. The influence of the value and romanticism attached to such service in these settings is evidenced by the fact that many of these authors recall attempting to follow these family

members into the armed forces before eventually accepting paramilitary involvement as something of a substitute. Many also reveal the prominent and visible place that the celebration and commemoration of this service took in their familial home. Michael Stone, for instance, describes the role of a particularly emotive form of iconography that his family displayed prominently during his upbringing:

> On the wall of our home was a framed parchment dated 28 September 1912 which was signed by James 'Soldier' Moore, my other great-grandfather. He served with the Royal Irish Fusiliers. 'Soldier' Moore had put his signature, in his own blood, to a solemn covenant to resist British Home Rule for Ireland (2003:20).

Here, in many authors' understandings, the link between their family's military service and their own action is easy to make: the defence of one's nation, people, and way of life. In doing so, they see their own involvement in militancy as a continuation of this celebrated behaviour and draw upon the transcendent collective value attached to it by their families. Storytelling is also a crucial means by which families maintain this ethos. Militant accounts from various contexts are full of collected stories that relate to such family involvement in armed political struggles or conflicts. As explored in chapter four, Omar Hammami gives much precedence to the stories he heard throughout his upbringing regarding his uncle's '20 years in a tormenting hell of a prison' (2012, p.4) as a suspected member of the Muslim Brotherhood. Stories of his uncle and his fellow prisoners' almost mythical religious commitment and sacrifices for one another at the hand of the ruthless and secular Syrian regime perform a number of tasks in his understanding. First, they serve to complement and articulate his understanding of the world and the larger subjugation Muslims he sees views as pervasive across the world. These tales also provide a cultural script that dictates what participation in a political struggle should look like, replete with a romanticised sense of camaraderie, selflessness and dedication to a larger cause. which Again, this latter point is important given the Hammami's own experience did not live up to the image that the stories of his uncle helped him imagine – something that appears to have ultimately impacted on his decision to leave al-Shabaab.

Familial involvement in such struggles often provides a significant explanatory purpose in the narratives of many militants. As noted in chapter four, in certain contexts, obtaining knowledge about one's ancestry implies acquiring identity about oneself (Strathern, 1999). In many of the accounts examined, establishing or fashioning a link to others similarly willing to suffer for their beliefs is crucial for how the authors understand and give meaning as to why they came to be involved in militancy. One account that demonstrates the significance afforded to this process is that of neo-Nazi Ingo Hasselbach. Crucially, Hasselbach describes how, as a child, he discovered that the man he had grown up believing was his father was not in fact his biological parent. Even though this surrogate father was himself a committed communist, his genetic father was something of a state hero, having served time in jail in West Germany for his communist beliefs before going 'over the wall' to East Germany. As a neo-Nazi and someone who suffered extensively at the hands of the Communist regime, is interesting reflecting back that Hasselbach describes himself as 'bursting with happiness' (1996:13) when it was revealed that this figure was his father. His narration of these events raises questions of coherence in his account. It is questionable that he would be so elated to find out that a man who had abandoned him as a child would elicit such a universally positive reaction. Again, it also seems odd that he would want to want to celebrate his link to a darling of the Communist regime that he despises and bristles against throughout his account. Nevertheless, this point proves crucial in giving meaning to his own actions. Crucially, in his narration his stepfather is the 'man in the gray [*sic*] polyester suit…. someone who would have never have fought for communism in the West but rather would have become a banker, the same brain in a different suit' (1996:35). By contrast, and in spite of their diametrically opposed ideological beliefs, Hasselbach finds significant meaning in the fact that his father had been 'willing to go to jail for his political beliefs' (1996:34). It is the idea that his father was different from others and willing to act, no matter the personal cost, that he chooses to appropriate. In this sense his father's actions help explain his own, if only to himself.

Whilst the experience of Ingo Hasselbach may seem like something of a unique example, even within the relatively small sample of accounts examined, a number of militants chose to establish and disclose familial involvement in political or military causes that appear seemingly irreconcilable with their own. This understanding sees Sikh militants draw meaning from family involvement in communist

movements (Keppley Mahmood, 2010:171); IRA members from family service in the British Army (O'Doherty, 2011); and Islamists from family actions in support of nationalist causes and even participation in combat as members of the US military (al-Bahri, 2013; Collins, 2003).

Difficult Upbringings

In fashioning accounts of their lives, a number of militants, either consciously or unconsciously, feel the need to conform to what sociologists John Lofland and Norman Skonovd label 'the fallacy of the uniformly profound' or the assumption that dramatic life outcomes must have dramatic causes (1981:378). Here many draw on a trope that a dysfunctional family upbringing could provide such a trigger for their later involvement in violence. The narrative underpinning of Kenneth McClinton's narrative centres around how the ghosts of his upbringing led him to a life of pain and subsequently, at his lowest ebb and with nothing left to lose, to choose to join a Loyalist paramilitary organisation. Emphasising his troubled upbringing not only serves to help explain why he was willing to take such risks but also makes his later redemption in finding god and desisting from militancy all the more remarkable. A problematic issue, however, for those who seek to understand and employ ideas that their involvement in violence was part of a legacy of their troubled upbringing, regards their own agency. The following quotation highlights the rupture at the heart of McClinton's self-narrative:

> I don't lay any blame on the deprivation I experienced as a child or any of the horrors
> of my alcohol-ridden, dysfunctional family….I place the blame squarely on one reason
> summed up in the immortal words of the late Frank Sinatra, "I did it my way" (quoted
> in Riggs, 2011:109).

McClinton then, somewhat unsuccessfully, attempts to reconcile this rift in the central narrative of his account through other means. He places great weight on how his brother, who equally endured the same troubled upbringing, was able to fashion a successful life for himself. Doing so demonstrates that there was nothing inevitable about his involvement in militancy or that it was something that he had little say

in. A number of authors from troubled backgrounds also seem reticent to open themselves up to potential questions regarding their own agency here. Aukai Collins plays around with how the story – or the raw events – of his life are ordered in his narrative discourse (2003). Unlike most autobiographies, his account begins at the point where, as a young man, he entered a Mosque for the first time. It is only half way through the text that he returns to give an account of his early life prior to this point. As such, recollections of his extremely troubled upbringing are only brought in after his agency – having cast himself as a travelling rogue who chose to join and leave militant groups as on a whim – had already been demonstrated. Relatedly, beginning his account with his conversion to Islam reinforces his understanding that it was at this point that his life really commenced. These techniques then help these individuals navigate the difficult task of balancing their own agency with the dramatic nature of their upbringings in their understandings of their transition to militancy.

Steers Away from Militancy

In pervasive conflicts, a number of authors' accounts reveal that their families made efforts to provide them with alternative paths to becoming involved in political violence. Employment appears a key way by which families attempted to steer younger members away from extremist organisations. This appears particularly prevalent in working-class, patriarchal societies, where sons were expected to follow their fathers into certain occupations. A number of Loyalist volunteers tell stories of their fathers securing jobs for them, often after they had first been arrested for offences related to terrorism. From these militants' narrations, these efforts were designed to provide a clear alternative to returning to paramilitary groups (Hamilton, 1997:50; Little, 2013:52). Although less frequent, militants in other contexts tell similar stories of how the prospect of employment or further education was offered to them by families desperate to keep them from engaging in violence. Abdul Salam Zaeef recalls how his relatives, in particular his cousin, sought to persuade him to continue with his studies as something that would 'give him a future' (2010:20). By contrast, his cousin argued, participating in jihad was always something he could come back to later.

Outside of providing employment opportunities, many authors recall how their parents would hold a tight rein on their movements in an attempt to keep them out of the engulfing conflicts that surrounded them (see for example, Collins, 1998). Alastair Little describes how his mother sent him away from their hometown in Northern Ireland as a teenager to stay with relatives in Scotland; she 'wanted me to be away from the violence that she feared was sucking me into a downward spiral' (2013:46-47). Such efforts, however, are largely narrated as counterproductive – the separation from conflicts or peers serving only to increase the authors' feelings that they were missing out and strengthening their desires to participate in activism. A limited number of accounts contain stories of families attempting more dramatic measures. Some parents subjected their children to physical violence in an attempt to discourage any inclinations towards joining militant groups (Hamilton, 1997:26; al-Bahri, 2013:17). Omar Hammami recalls the bizarre tactics his family employed to try and stop him travelling overseas for jihad that included drugging him with sleeping pills and tricking him into believing that the security forces were looking for him (2012).

In certain contexts, a number of individuals talk about seeking their parents' approval in the process of joining a militant cause. Many of those who wished to partake in jihad claim that the need for such consent was prescribed by their faith (see Cook, 2005:100; Al-Rasheed, 2009; Hegghammer, 2015). However, a narrative reading their accounts often reveals the presence of more complex reasons behind their decisions to seek this parental endorsement. In particular, focusing on the ruptures in the coherence of the narratives of these individuals is often illuminating. For instance, paradoxically, Masood Farivar, explains that after turning 18 and, in his eyes, reaching an age where he could make the decision to make jihad himself, 'the only question' was whether his parents would give him their blessing (2009:123). Similarly, Nasser al-Bahri is clear in his narration that, despite his father being 'dead against' him travelling to Afghanistan as a sixteen year-old, he nevertheless could have gone if he'd wanted (2013:17). Whilst these individuals are then adamant that they don't technically need the approval of their parents, their narratives nevertheless unconsciously reveal a personal desire to receive this validation. In such situations, parental influence is a difficult factor to detect. Applied narrative analysis, however, allows multiple smaller threads – or indicators of this lingering influence – to be tugged at and examined. Significantly, such analysis, especially interrogating the tone and coherence

within these accounts, uncovers that parental influence often extends over a long period of time, well beyond the point when these individuals leave the familial home and frequently after the point of joining militant groups.

None of those militants who asked their parents for such a blessing recall receiving it. Nevertheless, the differing reactions and reasons that parents are said to have given in denying this request is interesting. Whilst his mother reacted with an appeal to his emotions, stressing the pain his death would cause her personally, Masood Farivar states that his father chose to try and appeal to logic, arguing that, without his consent, his participation in jihad would contravene the teachings of Islam (2009:125). Nasser al-Bahri's father also attempted to counter his desire to leave for Afghanistan by providing a rationale as to why the groups currently fighting the jihad were illegitimate, rather than objecting to the wider cause or his son's involvement (2013:17). Narrative analysis here reveals that al-Bahri's desire to please his father had an indirect but nevertheless significant impact on his ideological development. Whilst not stated explicitly, his account reveals that he took to listening only to those ideologues of whom his father approved – the latter then impacting upon his ideological development in an indirect way (2013:18). These examples are then indicative of the complexities of familial support for certain causes or militant groups. In particular, families or family members can be supportive of militant causes or the use of violence but hold a different attitude when it comes to the participation of their own relatives in these activities (see Edwards, 2014). In attempting to influence these individuals to refrain from engaging in militancy, it appears that different family members often employed, or are narrated to have employed, different approaches. In particular, mothers are often described to have attempted to appeal to the author's emotions or morals whilst fathers tend to seek to challenge the logic of their actions or the legitimacy of the groups they wished to join.

Family Backgrounds and Desistance

From the accounts examined, family background appears to play a key role in one aspect of militant involvement: desistance. Kieran Conway, a relative outsider to the conflict in Northern Ireland,

having hailed from the suburbs of Dublin, explains how this position made it easier for him to desist than many of the other volunteers he served alongside:

> Because of my background, it was relatively easy to switch out. Most republicans are thoroughly tied in; their families and social milieu, their very geography, keeps them there, and they stay on, forever, in some diminished capacity. By contrast, all I had to really do was not go to places that I had been going to (2014:198).

For others, the decision to turn one's back on a group or causes was to do the same to one's family and community (see for example, Collins, 1998:286-7). Additionally, Kieran Conway, like a number of other militants in the accounts examined, enjoyed the advantage of having been born into a middle-class family – something that also appears to be influential in these individuals' thinking when considering desisting. Although Niromi de Soyza initially bristles against the privileged upbringing and advantages she enjoyed in her youth, having joined the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) her narration nevertheless contains an underlying sense that for her a return to a comfortable life is always available and only a stone's throw away (2011). By contrast, the accounts of militants from working-class backgrounds commonly give the impression that they and many of their fellow members are tied-in by a lack of alternatives as much as by family (or community) pressure. For de Soyza, she states that whilst her political views changed little during her desistance, she nevertheless comes to embrace the class and family beliefs and privileges she had earlier rejected. Her account concludes by explaining how soon after leaving the LTTE and violence behind she had the opportunity to study and build a new, bourgeois life abroad. She is then seemingly oblivious to how such a path would appear inconceivable to the majority of those she fought alongside. Masood Farivar similarly tells of how his desistance was brought about in part by the string-pulling of his comparatively well-off parents who had secured him a job as a journalist – an opportunity that he 'reluctantly' took (2009:158).

The first half of this chapter has explored the impact of families in a collective, general sense. The second half seeks to open up the familial unit and break down and compare the influence of different family members. The particular figures examined – mothers, fathers and siblings – are focused

upon in-depth because of attention, and frequently, the influence afforded to them in the accounts examined. Here, analysis centres on commonalities as to the positions these members are narrated to have occupied within the family and the expectations, roles and responsibilities attached to them. It is to the first of these familial figures, mothers, that I now turn.

Mothers

Unlike fathers, who are often absent for periods or in their entirety in militants' narrations, mothers commonly remain constant figures in these texts. Although rare within the dataset of accounts examined, mothers also present as the only familial relations which these authors reveal having openly discussed their involvement, or prospect of involvement, in militancy. After becoming involved in the armed Republican movement, Manny McDonnell reveals, 'I'd already discussed moving to the INLA with Ma, as loyal a Republican as you could find. She was an IRA woman through and through, brought up to believe in achieving the aims of the IRA by peaceful means' (quoted in Leslie, 2014:34). All of this was despite his father's vociferous, and sometimes physically violent, objection to his involvement. Whilst McDonnell is keen to stress that his mother's support did not extend to the use of violence, at points elements of his narration appear to contradict this position and allude to the idea that she would support any means necessary to achieve a united Ireland.

A narrative reading of McDonnell's account does reveal that whilst there might be questions over the degree to which his mother supported violence, at a minimum she did not condemn it, nor his personal involvement in it. He reveals that she offered her unconditional support, even if this took the form of visiting him in prison or whilst on the run (quoted in Leslie, 2014:34). Such an understanding of mothers is not uncommon. Many authors conform to tropes about mothers sharing an unbreakable bond with their children – something that transcends their involvement in violence. In their understanding this support will remain unequivocal despite the heinous nature of their actions. This is not to say that mothers are always initially present as prominent figures in militants' narrativisaton, often being relegated to something of a background role within their narrative discourses. Here, applied narrative analysis can again help bring what might otherwise be neglected considerations of their

influence to the fore. In contrast to fathers, their position on issues is often left unsaid. However, interrogating and linking together supplementary events and the absences of objections or interjections on the part of mothers is often revealing. The images of them that appear are often very different to, and directly challenge, the coherence of how these authors directly talk about their mothers.

For instance, such an approach demonstrates that Morten Storm's mother is the key figure throughout his account even if he states that she 'washed her hands' of him aged 16 (2014:18). On the surface this claim is used to highlight his own delinquency and ultimately his redemptive narrative. The inclusion of his mother's statement that 'there's never a dull moment with you' (2014:125) and how he 'imagined her raising her eyebrows and gentle shaking her head, resigned to yet another twist in her wayward son's life' (2014:114) are also used by Storm to cast himself as something akin to the tearaway protagonist of the picaresque novel. However, a diametrically opposed picture of his mother appears through a narrative reading of his account. Even if only sporadically and fleetingly mentioned throughout, applying my analytical framework to his account and tying together his use of trope, tone and supplementary events a different understanding of his mother as a committed figure who stood by him without judgement comes through.

María Eugenia Vásquez Perdomo's mother similarly plays the role of a silent but nevertheless inimitable emotional crux, whose support she 'always felt' (2005:63). A narrative reading of her account reveals how important this backing was during both the strains of continued involvement in militancy and her eventual decision to desist. Whilst, Vásquez Perdomo again chooses to carefully exclude any explicit discussions of whether her mother actively supported her use of violence, narrative analysis nevertheless reveals that she was at the very least aware of her daughter's involvement in militancy. Significantly, this backing manifested as more than merely remaining silent as to her activities and also included a practical element with her mother looking after her son for extended periods so she could continue her activism as part of the M-19.

Mothers do, however, also take on more active roles in the narratives of many militants. Principal amongst these is in acting as 'bearers of tradition'. Although the accounts examined reveal some examples of both mothers and fathers playing a key role in religious socialisation, across various contexts, mothers are commonly described as the principal agent of the transmission of faith within the family. Militants raised in Muslim, Sikh, Protestant and Catholic households all tell similar stories of their mother undertaking this role. Commonly, a mother's religious adherence is contrasted with the relative ambivalence or even hostility towards religion on the part of the authors' fathers. Mosab Hassan Yousef, for example, whose father was one of the founding members of Hamas, nevertheless emphasises how it was the responsibility of his mother to socialise him and his siblings in their faith (2009:14).

Infrequently, militants' accounts reveal the transmission of religious beliefs that link closely with violence. One notable example here is the Olympic Park Bomber Eric Rudolph. He recalls that, as the dominant figure in his family household, his mother was responsible for dictating the family's religious path – a role that was further consolidated after the death of his father who, whilst also religious himself, nevertheless appears to have been something of a moderating influence in this regard (2013:18). Although never explicitly stated, a narrative undercurrent running throughout the account of his early life and adolescence reveals how his mother adopted ever more extreme interpretations of her Christian faith. Significantly, Rudolph's mother also took him and his and siblings to a meeting of a notable Christian Identity group that she had discovered through listening to audio-cassettes of sermons by the group's leader (2013:104). Despite the white supremacist ideology espoused by this ideologue and group, Rudolph remains reticent to disclose that his mother had adopted such views herself. He claims that 'she had no commitment to Identity at the time', instead arguing that this was just one more brief stop on her "spiritual journey' (2013:104). Here, his motivation may be to protect his mother from accusations of extremism. However, his qualifying inclusion of 'at the time' leaves it open that she may have espoused such views at some point (something that appears to have been confirmed by subsequent media interviews she has partaken in – see CNN, 2005). Additionally, Rudolph's insistence that it was

ultimately his own decision to accept his mother's invitation to attend, and subsequently stay with the group, may at least in part be motivated by questions of his own agency. The idea that a woman had exerted considerable influence over him, may be particularly difficult for him to admit given the personal resentment towards women that forms a constant and underlying theme throughout his account.

This maintenance of tradition often also takes a non-religious form (Steans, 2008:160). In particular, in long-running conflicts, mothers are presented as being responsible for the transmission of ideas of resistance. Frequently, militants recall how their mothers attempted to affect this transmission through particular readings of history and collected stories that link instances of personal subjugation with wider notions of collective persecution. Many accounts reveal that, given their role as primary care givers, mothers were able to strengthen the resonance of these stories in telling them to their children both from a young age and with, sometimes daily, frequency. Zohra Driff talks of how her mother actively sought to supplement the lessons she learned at school with her own 'full cultural debriefing' that explained how these readings were wrong and that the French were both 'others' and unwelcome foreign occupiers in their homeland (2017:7). Whilst both her mother and father shared these views, it was ultimately her mother who was charged with implementing this process. These lessons were reinforced with stories of the resistance of their ancestors 'worthy of the finest tales of sultans and princes' (2017:7). This latter point, again, highlights the unique resonance and emotive capacity of narrative to help transmit values and beliefs.

Leila Khaled recalls how her mother went further, explicitly telling her that it was her duty to keep a tradition of resistance alive: 'you Leila, and your brothers and sisters, must never forget Palestine and you must do your utmost to recover her' (1973:34). However, Khaled's experience highlights that the traditions mothers commonly maintain and transmit are often not without contradiction. Despite her commitment to the notion of resistance, Khaled's mother was also insistent that it should only be her sons and not her daughters who were to physically take part in political and militant actions to achieve this goal. Her mother's zeal for resistance did not extend so far as to challenge traditional gender expectations, something which Khaled attributes to her mother's own upbringing and fears of the societal ostracism and repercussions that would befall her daughters if they participated in such manner.

As a result, it was only the intervention of Khaled's father and brother that made it possible to secure their mother's begrudging acceptance of the female family members' participation in political activities.

The upkeep of some ideological traditions are also understood as inherently linked to gender (see Steans, 2010:404). Many of those involved in violence in Northern Ireland repeat and reinforce cultural narratives that women, in particular mothers, play a special role in the maintenance and transmission of Republicanism. Manny McDonnell, for example, makes a point of noting how his female siblings universally adopted staunch Republican beliefs in a similar vein to how his mother and her own sisters had done before them (the implication being in his account that for his sisters, support crossed over into their own engagement in militancy). By contrast, his brothers and father are presented as being entirely uninterested in the cause (quoted in Leslie, 2014:10). This understanding also appears to transcend the political divide, with Alastair Little similarly drawing upon a gendered notion of how these beliefs were passed on in stating how those from the Protestant community 'imbibed Loyalist history with our mother's milk' (2009:23).

A Lens through which to See the World

The influence of mothers in passing on their beliefs is discernible in the self-narratives examined. Across various contexts, militants appear to take considerably less issue with directly addressing and discussing the impact of their mothers on their views as opposed to other family members, such as fathers. Significantly, a number of authors engage in extensive discussions of how their mothers' influence manifested itself as a lens through which they interpreted the world and events around them. Eamon Collins, for example, explains that 'as a young person growing up I began to witness the historical conflicts described by my mother being lived out, and saw them through her eyes' (1997:40). Similarly, Sean O'Callaghan suggests that his mother's influence was so fundamental to his own outlook as to become undetectable to even him; in particular, describing how his mother 'cemented in me some deep-seated beliefs that remained submerged for many years of my life' (1998:356). His use of the term 'cemented' speaks not only to the permanence of these beliefs, but also the concerted processes undertaken by his mother to transfer and instil these values in him. Such experiences are not

limited to the narratives of militants from Northern Ireland. María Eugenia Vásquez Perdomo is even more explicit in regard to the active nature of this transmission in her description of the 'social sensitivity' that her 'mother cultivated' (2005:20) within her. Again, the terminology used here hints at the long-running and deliberative process undertaken by her mother in attempting to pass on this perspective for viewing the world.

Moral Arbiters

Mothers are also narrated to occupy another role in militants' accounts that is often closely linked to their position as bearers of tradition; that of acting as moral arbiters. Whilst fathers are often described as having questioned the ideological reasoning that underpins militant causes or the logic of employing violence in service of these political goals, mothers are frequently painted as having objected to the use of force on the grounds that violence is always morally wrong no matter the political purpose it serves (see for example, O'Callaghan 1998:128). Many militants tell similar stories about the need to overcome their own deep-rooted prohibitions against violence inherited from their mothers, some of which the authors were not fully aware of until reflecting back on their experiences. Interestingly, in a number of accounts this responsibility appears to conflict with other roles also assigned to mothers such as being the bearer of tradition. Eamon Collins states:

> Of course, in one sense the Catholic version of Irish history which I had picked up
> from my mother had predisposed me to sympathy for republicanism. Yet contradicting
> the unspoken message of that history, the Catholic Church throughout my childhood
> had taught me that violence was wrong. So now I wanted to kill for the cause, but I
> discovered that my upbringing had left me with an inner revulsion against killing
> (1997:62).

In his case, an ideological justification for violence had to be sought elsewhere (via a notable ideologue) to provide something of a work-around to this prohibition. Nevertheless, the morality inherited from

his mother shaped Collins' personal engagement in militancy to the point that he was never able to physically carry out an act of violence himself (despite planning and organising many). Similarly, IRA volunteer Martin Meehan depicts the difficult cognitive process required to overcome these barriers: 'I was a strong Catholic; my mother embedded that in me. To come to an arrangement in your mind that you may have to go out and kill people or you may have to hurt people, that was a hard thing to do' (quoted in Rolston, 2011:164). That Meehan's mother had died when he was only nine years old also speaks to the lasting effect of such influence as experienced at formative periods such as young childhood. Here, in giving voice to these prohibitions, the authors demonstrate that they too have non-negotiable boundaries beyond which they will not exceed. Doing so performs a number of functions for these individuals. They serve as a response to anticipated accusations that they are senseless murderers who kill without restrain or remorse. Acknowledging these considerations is also often used to demonstrate that they are inherently more moral than those they are in conflict with - even if their actions in fact often breach their own principles in this regard.

Fathers

Following in Their Footsteps

Whilst many militants discuss their fathers at length, they are considerably less forthcoming in discussing how they came to internalise their influence. In contrast to mothers, none of the accounts talk in terms of seeing the world through the lens of their fathers' beliefs. Despite this, fathers present a different challenge for many militants in understanding their involvement in violence. Across the body of accounts examined, only one author details the experience of having a mother who had been involved in militancy herself. By contrast, a significant proportion have fathers connected to or involved in political violence to varying degrees. Here, the prospect of being coerced to follow in their footsteps looms large in the narratives of militants from various contexts, especially for those whose fathers were well-known or had significant reputations both within these organisations and their local communities. All are adamant that their fathers' involvement was not talked about at home (O'Callaghan, 1998;

Moloney, 2010:35). Mosab Hassan Yousef, for example, states that his father – a founding member of Hamas – 'never said, "I want you to become a good mujahid"' (2009:63). The son of an Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) member similarly attempts to play down the impact of his father who had been involved in the same organisation: 'he never influenced me, I will say that, in terms of pushing me towards anything. I just felt comfortable with it. I didn't think I had to do it because of my da' (quoted in Rolston, 2011:179).

Despite every militant with such a father telling a similar story, narrative analysis reveals that many of these figures did take an active role in preparing them for their own involvement in political violence. Here, the experience of PIRA member Brendan Hughes provides an illuminating example. Of his involvement in militancy he states: 'It was just something that I believe I was destined to be, and I don't think my father actually directed me towards this, consciously directed me towards this, [but] he probably unconsciously directed me towards the movement' (quoted in Moloney, 2010:36). However, in his narration an undercurrent directly contradictory to this position is also present that hints at a concerted effort on the part of his father to implant virtues and lessons that would serve him well for a career in militancy. He recalls how his father quickly instilled in him the idea of never talking to the police or informing on others (quoted in Moloney, 2010:38). His father also encouraged him to take practical steps that would benefit his later career in militancy. Hughes recalls how, long before he had become involved in violence, his father had told him never to get a tattoo as this was something that could be used by security forces to identify him (quoted in Moloney, 2010:40). This example is indicative of how the narratives of a number of militants from various contexts are inconsistent when it comes to the idea that there was no desire within their family for them to become involved in militancy. Whilst none of the accounts examined in the dataset describe fathers directly asking or pressuring them to join militant groups, they also reveal instances of these figures teaching them skills or lessons that appear to have had little application outside of militancy. For instance, many include recollections of fathers making sure that their children were able to use firearms or that they were comfortable being around these weapons (see for example, Rolston, 2011:188). The extent to which this influence was as unconscious as the authors make out is therefore highly debatable.

Father Figures

A recurring theme throughout the accounts examined is the significance afforded to older male figures who take on paternal qualities or roles as an emotional substitute for otherwise absent fathers. The need for such father figures, however, appears to vary by gender. Even though a number of female militants describe growing up without a father figure in their lives, none demonstrate the same need to find such a figure as their male counterparts. For instance, Eric Rudolph neglects to talk about his emotional reaction to the death of his father in his autobiography despite being only 15 at the time. It is nevertheless clear that this death left a gap for both a male role model in Rudolph's life and a cognitive opening where he might be more susceptible to new explanations that would help him make sense of this event. Significantly, in the aftermath of his father's death, Rudolph and his brother would come to spend much time with Tom, a family friend of longstanding and eventual neighbour. Described as 'little more than an adolescent himself' (2013:77), Tom falls somewhere between a surrogate older brother and father for Rudolph and his siblings. He recalls that it was Tom who 'told them about the Conspiracy' – or the idea that conservatism in the United States was under attack by forces seeking to set up a world government – and who was responsible for first taking them to meetings of various groups which fell under the umbrella of the Patriot movement that shared such beliefs (2013:82). The timing and context of Rudolph's exposure to this ideology, and its supporting religious dimension – which he refers to as 'a muscular kind of Christianity' (2013:101) – is then significant in his adoption of them. Significantly, these doctrines expounded resistance and the need to fight back against the unjust 'system' – something that he narrates as being responsible for the death of his hardworking father. Furthermore, despite being an active member of the milieu of the extreme-right, Tom is nevertheless described as being 'too cool for anyone's school of thought' (2013:83). Here, Tom may provide Rudolph with an example of the benefits of engaging in political violence outside of a formal group whilst at the same time drawing upon the established ideological currents of a larger movement. It is during this period of close association with Tom that Rudolph recalls that he 'wasn't really up on my politics. I'd never seen any evidence of an impending United Nations takeover, but what did I know?' (2013:102). Whilst this revelation might initially appear supplementary, it does appear to demonstrate Tom's lasting and

pervasive influence on Rudolph given his later decision to target the Olympic Games – a visible symbol of global cooperation – something that may be seen as incongruous with the rest of his other targets, all of which were closer in line with the Christian Identity ideology he would later espouse.

Although his lack of a father figure remains unspoken for the most part, Morten Storm's account contains a number of supplementary, but nevertheless revealing, events that make this absence felt (2014). He chooses to include a brief but unsuccessful attempt to reconcile with his biological father and also describes the positive influence of being taken under the wing of a boxing coach during his adolescence. Similarly, during his conversion to Islam, Storm describes an instance of transportation into a narrative world that would have a fundamental impact on his real world beliefs. In reading a book about the Prophet Mohammed, he recalls 'within minutes I was so absorbed in the story that the world outside evaporated' (2014:24) and that he continued to read the book for six hours without taking a break (2014:26). Transportation to narrative worlds is often brought about by a 'illusion of intimacy' between those transported (the reader) and the inhabitants of these fictional worlds whereby the reader's distinction between themselves and these characters becomes disrupted (Horton and Wohl, 1956). This process often takes place when the reader comes to see a character sharing similar backgrounds and traits to their own (Green, 2004). Crucially, Storm recalls seeing within the Prophet Mohammed someone like him who had grown up without a father in his life but had gone on to do great things (2014:24). This identification then plays a central role in how he understands his instant affinity with Islam and decision to dedicate his life to its service.

A narrative reading of his autobiography reveals that this search for a father figure characterises Storm's understanding of his life. Significantly, it was in militancy that he would finally find such a surrogate figure in the form of charismatic ideologue, Anwar al-Awlaki. He describes how Awlaki was personable and showed genuine interest in him, something that had been missing from male figures in his life until that point. Tellingly, he also recalls how Awlaki showed great affection as a father to his own son (2014:73). In this sense, Awlaki then also provides a role model for how Storm could similarly be both a good father and committed to the idea of jihad, something he had previously struggled with reconciling. Ingo Hasselbach is even more explicit in declaring how Michael Kühnen, a celebrated figure within the German neo-Nazi scene, was 'happy to fill the role' of the father figure he also

understands himself to have been looking for all his life (1996:351). This not only helps him to understand his initial involvement, but also explains some of the turns of his militant career. Crucially, Hasselbach describes how his personal loyalty to Kühnen led him to stick with him during a serious split within the neo-Nazi movement after it was made public that Kühnen was both homosexual and HIV positive (1996:136). Here, he is able and willing to bend his ideological beliefs for the sake of maintaining a deeply personal connection. Hasselbach also reveals how Kühnen's impending death 'reawakened my resolve to work single-mindedly as a neo-Nazi…I would carry on the work of the Führer' (1996:232). As such, during a period of waning commitment to neo-Nazism, the personal bond and debt that Hasselbach felt that he owed to this father figure within the movement then served to renew his zeal for militancy. In this instance, a militant cause and its association with a single individual – who here takes the guise of surrogate family figure – become inherently intertwined. The idea that the two can be separated in Hasselbach's thinking then appears contentious.

Siblings

Across the accounts examined, intra-generational influences that relate to militancy within families are difficult to uncover. In contrast to parents, siblings generally receive relatively little attention in militants' autobiographies, often only given passing reference when the author initially outlines the make-up of their family. Where they are mentioned, the successes of siblings in building careers and living normal lives free from involvement in militancy are usually used as a juxtaposition against the author's own actions. Here, the inclusion of these diverging paths serve a number of purposes. For some, the inclusion that a sibling 'doesn't understand how and why I got involved' (Stone, 2003:21) only serves to make their own choices and decision to involve themselves in violence all the more remarkable (Moloney, 2010:312; Riggs, 2011). A limited number of accounts reveal that siblings tried to persuade the author to leave violence behind (see for example, O'Callaghan, 1998:68), but none provide more than a fleeting reference to these efforts. The success stories of siblings can also serve to absolve their families of responsibility, serving as 'proof' that they are not the products of bigoted parents or dysfunctional families. IRA member Shane Paul O'Doherty, for example, feels compelled to

list how a number of his siblings had served in the British military (2011:35). This lends weight to the idea that the author's support for their cause and ideological beliefs are arrived at as the result of a conscious, logical and reasoned understanding of the situation – or their own agency– rather than merely being the result of immersion in environments of deep-seated and irrational hatred. When it comes to their place within the family or their relationship to siblings, many authors employ a recognisable trope in assuming the character of the black sheep, a position that is often drawn on when the need to stress their agency arises.

Absent from fulfilling these tropes, the inclusion of siblings in the narratives examined is relatively limited. A number only to drop in the fact that they have siblings deep into their accounts, with brothers and sisters appearing somewhat out of the blue. Others pick and choose certain siblings to include or leave out from both detailed discussion or from making any reference to entirely. Here, the absence of siblings in these accounts is then significant in itself. For the most part, the intentions of the authors appear to be protective. Siblings, who are more likely to be alive than parents, are obviously more susceptible to suffering any repercussions from their revelations. In a number of accounts, the details included are limited or narrated in such a way the reader cannot be sure to whom they can be attributed. Some accounts make passing mention of siblings being 'heavily involved' (Cabezas, 1985; Crawford, 2003:70; Aref, 2008; Driff, 2015) in militant groups or serving prison time for offences related to political violence (Rolston, 2011:173). However, for the most part, no further details of how this impacted on their own involvement are explored. Only two accounts include substantial discussions of the influence of siblings. In the first, Omar Nasri describes how he was drawn into a network of Algerian Islamists through his older brother (2006). However, Nasri throughout attempts to downplay and discredit the influence of his more pious brother, stating that he only 'let himself be persuaded' to rediscover his faith as part of a 'charade' to get back to Belgium (2006:21). Relatedly, he is keen to stress how the two disagreed vehemently on many things. Nevertheless, a narrative reading reveals that underlying his account is a sense of deference towards his older brother despite his assertations. Much of his narration then appears to be a conscious effort to exert his own agency despite the unequal power dynamic that exists between the two of them.

By contrast, Leila Khaled is happier in acknowledging the impact of her oldest brother, Mohammad, whom she credits for first drawing her into politics (1973:32), and describes as a significant influence in her 'period of political apprenticeship as an activist' (1973:45). As a classmate of the leaders of the Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM) at the American University of Beirut and in accordance with local customs as the eldest son, Mohammad was afforded special status, authority and credibility within the family. Despite her young age, Khaled's account describes an incident when he bettered their father in a political debate, winning both his father's approval and position as the political authority of the household, as a turning point in her life (1973:32). Crucially, here her brother assumed the role of a narrative gatekeeper responsible not only for passing on readings of the political situation and conflict, but also filtering and shaping them. Khaled recalls how her brother would tell their siblings and parents tales of protest and resistance and became a 'political commentator and all of us, especially the girls, learned enormously from him' (1973:32). Her brother's credibility and the culture of their family network – whereby their father encouraged open debated and reasoned argument, even if it challenged his own authority – solidified his position in this gatekeeping role.

Whilst not revealed in her autobiography, Khaled later confirmed the dynamics of how this influence manifested amongst her siblings, and was part of a deliberate effort on the behalf of her brother to recruit them to his political cause. She states, 'within the ANM it was believed that every member of the Movement should influence his family first, so my brother influenced my two older sisters and my other brother who was two years older than me. Then my sisters influenced me' (quoted in Irving, 2012:16). Despite this, Khaled's autobiography discloses how the flow of narratives in this space was sometimes restricted, in particular, how her sisters refused to discuss ANM matters with her at certain points because she had not yet become a fully-fledged member. Such examples then demonstrate how familial networks and external networks intersect, and at times conflict. Relatedly, it should not automatically be assumed that the ties between siblings take precedence over those to militant groups. Khaled, likely cautious of repercussions against her brother, provides little further detail of the extent of his political activities or support for violence beyond him 'going off on unknown

political missions for weeks at a time' (1973:49).[8] However, what is clear is that Mohammad also provided frequent physical opportunities for Khaled and her sisters to partake in small acts of political support for the movement such as distributing literature and posters.

Despite Khaled and Nasri's accounts being the only ones to directly discuss the influence of their siblings in their move towards violence, this is not to say that this is not present in the other accounts. Here the application of narrative methods allows for less immediately obvious impact to be detected. One such example is that of Alastair Little. At a certain point, his otherwise conventional autobiography switches to the third person (likely to provide some notion of deniability) and describes the experience of a young boy – himself – discovering a gun in the familial home. Soon after, the owner of the weapon and their friends become aware of this and subsequently 'draw[s] him into their group, to strengthen his sense of belonging, and therefore his commitment to keeping quiet' (2009:35-36). These individuals would then involve him in other activities that supported terrorism, such as the preparation of explosives. Here, again, narrative analysis can help shed light on who the figure who drew Little in was despite their identity and that of their friends being left unstated. Little's use of the phrase being 'one of the big boys', is an admission that this group was led by someone he already trusted, and an earlier revelation that his older brother had been involved in rioting and Tartan gangs clearly hints that this was his sibling and his sibling's friends. Reflecting back, he contrasts the feeling of importance this incident gave him at the time with how he now understands that he was 'just a 12-year-old child' (2009:36). The incident forms a key component, not only of his entry into militancy, but also how he comes to understand his involvement in violence, as both perpetrator and victim of the conflict.

Ingo Hasselbach's disclosure that his favoured tactic in recruiting youngsters into neo-Nazi groups by presenting himself as and seeking to fulfil the role of an 'older brother' draws from and is reflective of his own experience. He, more than most, understands the impact and vulnerabilities associated with the absence of an older male role model. He also reveals here his own understanding that the transmission of violent ideology follows, and is reliant on, establishing such relationships.

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[8] Khaled reveals that one of her brothers was beaten up in retaliation for her role in a hijacking. Later, one of her sisters would also be killed by assassins, who had mistaken her for Khaled (Ettachfini, 2016).

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Ironically, one of those he would use this strategy upon was his own younger brother, someone until that point he had never before wished to have any sort of brotherly relationship with. His brother would also prove instrumental in his desistance from extremism. During his own crisis of confidence during his neo-Nazi involvement, he states that he found his brother 'grappling with uncertainty at the same time' (1996:332). According to Hasselbach, the ability to talk through the burgeoning gaps in his neo-Nazi ideology with someone he could trust unequivocally but who also understood life inside militancy was invaluable for eventually relinquishing these beliefs.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is unsurprising that the accounts reveal that families and family members exert influence over those who engage in militancy in a whole host of ways. What is immediately obvious in the accounts examined is the universal absence of the narration of instances of family members directly asking or pressurising an individual to become involved or support a militant group. This is not to say that this did not happen, but rather that it is missing from the autobiographies examined. What emerges is a much more complex but nevertheless revealing picture. Here the impacts of family are both conscious and unconscious. In interpreting the world around them and their actions within it, militants display something of a piecemeal approach towards assuming and understanding the influence of their families and family members, taking some parts whilst rejecting others. Interestingly, this often includes adopting somewhat contradictory beliefs, something that may be explained by the fact that their accounts commonly reveal familial attitudes that are no less conflicted. Similarly, the accounts also reveal that families are frequently sites of contestation in regard to beliefs and values that relate to militancy. Any instances of familial support for militant causes and/or the involvement of their family members are both highly variable and context specific and often far from synonymous. In both cases, this approval or backing is fluid, subject to change over time and often the source of significant conflict within families.

There are also significant differences in how many militants talk about different family members in regard to their influence. Many are happy to admit that there are fundamental elements in

their thinking that are directly taken from their mothers, and furthermore, that these beliefs continue to impact upon how they understand the world and the violence they participated in. Mothers are also associated with concepts of morality and emotion, whereas the need for paternal role models or figures appears heavily in the accounts examined when it comes to fathers. The influence and impact of siblings also present a unique challenge to analyse. Possibly out of a desire to protect them, or through a sense that it is not their place to talk about them, siblings are little mentioned in the dataset of accounts examined. Nevertheless, through applied narrative analysis it is possible to interrogate the impact of these figures. It is to another form of intra-generational relationship that I now turn: the role and impact of peers.

Chapter Six: Peers

Introduction

Whilst the preceding chapter focused on the influence of family on individual's engagement in militancy, this chapter uses the same analytic framework to interrogate the role and impact of peers. Whilst peers appear in a vast and complex array of roles, the majority of accounts support well-established positions in the study of social movements, high-risk activism and militant organisations as to the importance of these relationships for providing individuals with some form of trusted link or means to contact those already engaged in such activities (McAdam, 1986; della Porta, 2005, 2013; Hegghammer, 2010; Edwards, 2014). Furthermore, many authors suggest the existence of well-worn pathways for individuals to transition from certain peer groups, milieus or behaviours to militant organisations. A question then reappears throughout this chapter; why do some individuals chose to take these pathways and graduate from what might be termed subsidiary activities or contexts to involvement in full-blooded militancy whilst others choose to stop there? A number of militants recognise this issue themselves. Alastair Little, for example, employs an interesting narrative device early on in his account, juxtaposing how his own path and that of a school friend who had similarly been involved in rioting would diverge. This friend he recalls, despite his father being killed by the IRA, became a prison officer whilst Little would go on to become a member of the UVF (2009:18).

This chapter attempts to address the question of why the authors of the accounts examined decided to surpass many of their peers and engage in militancy. Given the diverse range of influence that peers exercise, the analysis is ordered into a number of sections. The first examines the contextual backdrop that militants perceive peers to provide to their involvement in violence. In particular, there is a focus on how these authors conceive certain generational and temporal understandings of the events around them. The second section covers the structures of peer networks and how individuals narrate their places within them. Included is analysis of the characteristics of the friendship networks that militants describe enjoying both before and during their engagement in violence. Next, this chapter

explores peer groups as narrative networks, that is their capacity to share and shape stories that relate to militancy. Here, collective storytelling performs both a configurative role, in helping individuals understand events around them, whilst also elevating membership or association with militant organisations as prized social identities. Analysis focuses on the impact of network cultures and the role of certain individuals within them. Finally, this chapter concludes with a discussion of the 'fan cultures' that many militants recall existing around certain groups and milieus. Included is analysis of how certain texts and forms of militant media are consumed within these networks. Again, the analytic framework and understanding of narrative set out in chapter four, is used throughout to help demonstrate how narrative analysis allows for a richer and more nuanced understanding of the impact of peers than an ordinary reading or thematic analysis of these texts could provide.

Peer Contexts

'Everyone's doing it'

Many militants narrate their move towards violence as occurring in contexts where they perceived 'everyone' – or virtually all of their friends and peers of the same age – to be either directly involved in militant groups, their subsidiary organisations or high-risk activism (Crawford, 2003:69; Hamilton, 1997:50; Vásquez Perdomo, 2005:25). Here, the normative expectation to be involved in these behaviours is such that the decision to remain detached marked individuals as abnormal. Militants' accounts commonly reference 'the pull' of taking part and how the fear of missing out on something that all of one's peers were partaking in exacerbated this attraction. Many describe the gnawing feeling and inner torment they experienced knowing that their friends and peers were risking their lives whilst they occupied themselves with 'less important' undertakings such as attending school (Little, 2009:33; Farivar, 2009:122; O'Doherty 2011:69). The stories shared within these peer networks, that stressed both the excitement of being part of these events and their importance, often only exacerbated these authors' anxieties about the possibility of missing out (Black, 2008:38; Little 2009:41).

These accounts often include instances of other individuals, notably those of the same generation, perpetuating this normative expectation. Masood Farivar recalls his sister suggesting flippantly, 'why don't you join the jihad like everyone else?' (2009:82). Many accounts reveal how the author understood this expectation to manifest as a pressure for them to become involved. Unlike descriptions of the influence of family members, many are explicit in revealing that they felt peers to have pressured them to become involved in, or to reengage in, militancy. David Hamilton states bluntly that he 'felt peer pressure from my mates to get back involved in the Troubles' (1997:50) whilst Farivar recalls how his friend 'did his bit to drill the idea of jihad into my head' (2009:121). Although references to how this pressure manifested itself are often fleeting, Abdul Salam Zaeef describes the significant effort on the behalf of his peers to coerce him back into the fighting in Afghanistan. He recalls attempting to isolate himself from this friendship network for fears they would pull him back towards militancy; 'I wanted to focus on my studies so I told none of my *mujahedeen* friends where I was, and stayed out of sight' (2010:32). However, his 'friends were unrelenting and soon we were having heated debates: on the reasons for returning, on the duty of jihad, and on the latest battles between the *mujahedeen* and the Russian troops' (2010:32). Such were the coercive efforts of his friends that they managed to convince not only Zaeef to re-join them but also a teacher, who initially opposed his involvement, to give them his blessing to return to Afghanistan (2010:32).

In many contexts this pressure also appears to weigh differently by gender. A number of accounts unconsciously reproduce gendered expectations that only men should be involved in militancy in omitting female peers from their descriptions of how 'half of the young men from my quarter' (al-Bahri, 2013:16) or 'nearly all the young men of my age' (Crawford, 2003:90) were involved in militant groups. Peers, in particular, play a crucial and direct role in reinforcing these norms. Masood Farivar, for example, describes how his friend sought to exploit the cultural expectations imposed upon him and 'had in effect said that if I didn't join the jihad, I was a *bay-ghayrat*, a dishonourable man who lacks the courage to fight for his land, property, and womenfolk, the most despicable insult imaginable' (2009:122). The rupture posed by this accusation in the story that Farivar tells about himself and his own masculinity is such that he attributes it, at least in part, to have been a key factor in his resolve to become a fighter rather than a scholar (2009:122).

'Caught up'

Across contexts, militants express a feeling of being 'caught up' with peers, that rests on more than simply pressure or fears of missing out (Khaled, 1973:45; Giorgio, 2003:62; Vásquez Perdomo, 2005:38). Rather, their accounts reveal that a shared understanding of the temporal background that contextualises one's actions is critical for making sense of the decision to become involved in political violence. Here time is not something measured in chronological units but instead is something that is experienced with and through peers. In numerous accounts, the point that marks the authors' personal move into militancy is understood to coincide with a wave of collective discontent or energy within one's peers accelerating and ultimately reaching a critical mass. Here, as these militants understand it, separate persons become a collective actor; individuals are bound to one another as carriers of a larger force beyond themselves. Many express sentiments as to how 'normal life had been suspended' at such points (Black, 2008:41). A reaction is therefore seen as an inevitability, driven by something bigger than individuals or organisations but rather is the result of a collective consciousness reaching a breaking point whereby events can no longer continue without response.

For those accounts that paint this reaction as a response to longstanding repression, herein lies an interesting paradox; whilst previous generations have endured this suffering valiantly, suddenly this subjugation is no longer bearable for the author and their peers. However, by their narrations there is nothing inherently different about their generation. They are presented as no braver, more willing to fight back or less apathetic than those who came before them. Rather, this position is understood to have been thrust upon them; something that is not the result of the conscious efforts of certain individuals or groups but a force or energy that emerges spontaneously for their generation entirely of its own accord. Many accounts talk about how the locations where peers would congregate as having a perceptible presence and emotions of their own or variously described them as being 'alive' during such periods. One militant describes a 'revolutionary consciousness sweeping the campus' at their university whereby this collective energy was channelled in various directions and expressed through never-ending gatherings and protests, street art and graffiti (Vásquez Perdomo, 2005:28; Schiller, 2009:11).

Such understanding of time, however, does not appear out of the blue, as these accounts portray, but rather is constructed through selective emplotment – or the assembly of events into a narrative with a plot. Militants frequently place themselves as having been present at certain defining moments, or more accurately they reconfigure the events they were witness to or involved in in order to mark shared points of significance (see Gerges, 2005:80). For Loyalist, John Black, an IRA bombing in which he was nearly killed was in his own words a 'defining moment' for all of his Protestant peers, noting that it was specifically from this point onwards he could 'feel the resentment growing like a cancer, in even the most liberal men' (Black, 2008:205). Black is far from alone in narrating this undercurrent as something that can be sensed or felt, both within and through peers.

In the face of such palpable collective energy, many militants narrate how they and their peers were, often unconsciously, swept along with these currents (Little, 2009:31). Interestingly, none describe being reluctant participants in this process and instead frequently recall their pride or otherwise considered themselves 'blessed to be living in revolutionary times' (Conway, 2014:13 – see also Little, 2009:31). This sense of being caught up in wider peer currents can also have a tangible impact on how individuals understand their militant trajectories to have played out. Such descriptions frequently coincide with admissions on behalf of the author as to their lack of sophisticated understanding of the political rhetoric or ideological dimensions of conflicts (Black, 2008:39-49; Little, 2009:34; Riggs, 2011:100; Rolston, 2011:164). Rather, this collective energy brushes over such details and premises simply the need to be involved. María Eugenia Vásquez Perdomo, caught up in a wave of student consciousness, states that she had little appreciation for the militant group she was joining initially – mistakenly believing it was the National Liberation Army (ELN) rather than a faction of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). She recalls; 'I simply let myself be led. For quite a while I didn't know what group I belonged to' (2005:40). In such circumstances, the understanding of being part of something much larger than oneself helps explain the willingness of these authors to admit to an absence of their own agency at critical junctures of their militant trajectories.

Comprehending events in such a way also stresses the spontaneity of any actions taken, imbuing them with a particular sense of authenticity. Violence perpetrated at such moments is then not only a natural response but is also the manifestation of collective energy much larger than the author and their

peers; these individuals merely act as a channel for its release. In some accounts such understandings are used to provide a justification for violence. In others, they merely serve as an observation of the conditions of its emergence. Relatedly, militants' self-narratives reveal how this understanding produced a shared and intense atmosphere of solidarity that dictated, at least in their own thinking, that the changes they strived for through violence could not fail or become corrupted simply because of the sheer power and weight of those behind them (Vásquez Perdomo, 2005; Little, 2009; Conway, 2014 – see also Gerges 2005:81). Such feelings therefore provide an important and influential backdrop to how individuals understand engagement in militancy as pressing or necessary.

'If you were not involved you were a "nobody"'

In interrogating militants' self-narratives, the desire for status amongst peers is afforded significance in virtually every account. Militants both explicitly state this aspiration in some accounts whilst it is revealed through narrative analysis in others. Here, the association with militant groups is commonly viewed as a means to acquire status with one's peers. Many accounts detail how the authors saw the need to prove themselves, often through violence, or otherwise impress older peers who were members of militant groups or those associated with them (Adair, 2003:16; Little, 2009:31). Loyalist, David Hamilton, recalls that 'if you were not involved you were a "nobody"' (1997:50). A number are frank in admitting that the status they enjoyed through their positions as members of militant groups felt good and gave them a sense of power that was intoxicating (Schiller, 2009:30; Crawford, 2003:71).

Although universally denied by the authors, the narrations of a select group of militants are characterised throughout by a need to win the approval of peers (Adair, 2003; Stone, 2004; Storm, 2014; Riggs, 2011). Frequently, this pursuit of standing transcends these individuals' personal trajectories before and during their involvement in militancy. Morten Storm, for instance, emphasises the notoriety he enjoyed among his hometown peers – not least through references to himself, and by extension his local reputation, in the third person (2014:18) – as well as stressing how he later became something of a 'celebrity' in radical circles (2014:111). The accounts reveal how both the street codes that dictate status within criminal milieus and those that surround militant movements are dependent on an

individual's willingness to accept and use violence. Here, militancy appears to often be viewed by those already acquainted with violent milieus as an available pathway to continue enjoying a certain reputation amongst peers (Hasselbach,1996; Hamilton, 1997; Adair, 2003; Storm, 2014; Riggs, 2011). In the study of contemporary Islamist militancy, a common claim has been that 'a prior experience with violence was seemingly a precondition for engaging with extremist ideology' (Crone, 2016:592 – see also Bouhana, 2019). However, the accounts examined contain instances of individuals from various different contexts exhibiting the same behaviour. Conversely, a pre-existing reputation can also be interpreted as a coercive factor that pressures individuals towards militancy. One Loyalist, for example, recalls 'I had a reputation as a bit of a hard man when I was younger, so I was expected to join the paramilitaries' (quoted in Crawford, 2003:60 – see also Moloney, 2010:20). Here, the tone of this author's narration of these events helps highlight the burden they felt this standing carried with it.

Peer narratives also often dictate which militant groups hold status, shaping perceptions of their effectiveness and prestige through stories – something a number of authors recall impacting on their aspirations to join certain organisations (Khaled, 1973:110; de Soyza, 2011:51). David Ervine's perception that the UVF was 'more concise and more effective than the UDA for instance, 'was shaped by 'tittle-tattle, bar talk, that type of stuff' (quoted in Moloney, 2010:307).

Subsidiary Organisations and Associated Activities

In describing the move towards violence, many accounts stress the importance of activates undertaken with peers that, in their contextual settings, were regarded as ancillary to militancy. Such actions include participation in activism or protest, civil disobedience and community resistance, as well as membership of both formal and informal peer organisations. Political organisations, student movements, gangs and official youth wings, in particular, are all frequently recalled as having supported the activities of militant groups and provided pools of potential recruits for them to draw upon. Whilst the accounts highlight the often complex relationships between these actions and involvement in militancy, many demonstrate established pathways that bridge the two. At the same time, they also

reveal the internal constraints imposed by peers involved in these activities that often impede individuals from furthering their involvement in violence.

It is immediately apparent that actions undertaken with peers are commonly mediated to hold particular meanings shared by participants. Rioting and protest, in particular, are often understood as an act of collective bonding; something that provides a mutual identity and purpose rather than serving a distinct political or strategic aim (Little, 2009:34). In their research on emotions and social movements, Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta draw a distinction between the 'shared' and 'reciprocal' emotions that occur between members (2001). Shared emotions, whilst collectively held, are directed outwardly, such as anger or outrage. Reciprocal emotions, by contrast, relate to individual members' feelings towards one another, such as friendship, solidarity and loyalty (2001:20). Whilst rioting and protest may be thought of as collective displays of anger or discontent, the accounts examined focus almost entirely on the reciprocal emotions associated with participating in these behaviours. In certain circumstances peers were responsible for regulating instances of uninhibited emotional release during protests or riots, usually by expelling those peers who were deemed to have become consumed by rage (Little, 2009:17 – cf. Busher, Macklin and Holbrook, 2019). Nevertheless, violence, or at least the prospect of violence, is a critical facilitator in how the reciprocal emotions of these shared activities are understood and narrated. Repeatedly, militants describe how they and their peers viewed rioting and violent protest through the lens of putting their lives on the line for one another; in other words, the participation in a violent ritual that confirmed one's loyalty to the group. Unsurprisingly, identities forged through the participation in violence are necessarily claimed at the expense of others. Interestingly, a number of accounts reveal such 'others' could be those peers fighting for similar political causes. María Eugenia Vásquez Perdomo recalls that the division among the hard left student groups in Bogotá was such that 'on more than one occasion, in the middle of a stone fight against the police, two groups with different agendas wound up fighting with each other' (2005:36). As this example demonstrates, these activities commonly take on a specific meaning in the cultivation of highly localised identities, even where situated as part of a broader political context.

Despite confirming the existence of established pathways between these associated activities and militant involvement, for the most part the autobiographies examined are absent of any real

description of the processes by which this transition occurred (Hamilton, 1997:16; Little, 2009:34). However, in using my analytical framework to interrogate these accounts, that left unsaid is nevertheless revealing. In deeming it unnecessary to include any description of how this move takes place, these authors present this graduation as a natural or otherwise entirely ordinary progression. The underlying narrative that participation in one necessarily leads to the other is already hegemonic and excluded precisely because of its ubiquity. The few accounts that shed more light on this transition are also marked by significant absences. Vásquez Perdomo, for example, recalls only that leftist groups had their 'eyes on' her rather than revealing more as to how she was contacted by these groups (2005:39). Such narration nevertheless suggests that her move to more violent action was entirely out of her hands. The silences in these narrations also reveal how it was accepted with peer groups that to be invited to join a group was an honour and that those chosen would necessarily accept these advances (Little, 2003:34). The potentially violent repercussions of turning down such offers is often only hinted at – one militant recalling only that he 'would be taking a bullet' if he refused the invitation of a Loyalist paramilitary group (Adair, 2003:37). Whilst militant groups themselves may then be responsible for physically recruiting from these networks, it is peers who perpetuate these dominant, but unspoken, narratives that shape how militancy is understood and, often positively, viewed by individuals.

Leaders Versus Followers

As well as being involved in organisations and activities linked to militancy, the accounts reveal that many authors were involved in non-violent political, religious or other activist associations prior to joining militant groups. In both cases, the position that individuals narrate themselves to have occupied within these peer organisations is revealing. Virtually all recall themselves as having held positions of responsibility or standing. Some explicitly refer to themselves as leaders of these groups (Hasselbach, 1996:97; O'Callaghan, 1998:42). Loyalist Michael Stone, for example, recalls being recruited into the UDA from a tartan gang where he had served as the 'general' of some 140 local teenagers (2004:31). Prior to this, he had formed, led and later disbanded a non-sectarian street gang (2004:26). By Stone's narration his graduation to the UDA was entirely natural for someone with his qualities. However,

rather than explicitly describing themselves as leaders, many authors recall their roles in establishing, coordinating or hosting the activities of peer organisations (Adair, 2003; Vásquez Perdomo, 2005; Hammami, 2012; Yousef, 2011). Relatedly, a number describe recruiting friends into these groups (O'Callaghan, 1998:50; Stone, 2004:36; Hammami, 2012:16; Storm, 2014:29). Whilst often subtle, narrative analysis reveals that consciously, or not, most militants narrate their experiences in a manner that marks them as somehow different to their peers. Commonly, the narrative voice and lexical terms shift to the singular when describing these roles even in accounts where the narration of these activities has been collective up until this point (see for example, O'Callaghan, 1998:42). These authors then view and present themselves as assertive and active agents both within their peer groups and in terms of dictating their progression towards militancy.

This self-perception may provide a useful starting point in beginning to unpick the question of why the authors of the accounts examined went further than many of the peers around them who stopped short of engaging in militancy. Michael Stone's account, in particular, contains a visceral demonstration of his willingness to surpass his peers. He recalls an incident during his initiation into the UDA where he and a group of friends were asked to shoot a dog in order to prove their commitment (2004:36-37). Crucially, he includes not only how his friends were unable to undertake the act themselves but also attempted, ultimately unsuccessfully, to persuade him not to do so. This notion of having to move beyond peers, even those who have played some role in the move towards militancy, is commonly discussed within the accounts examined. Omar Hammami, for example, states 'there came a point when the support my close friends used to provide in my early stages coming from *Jaahiliyyah* [the 'age of ignorance' before the advent of Islam] actually turned in to a form of dead weight preventing me from going forward' (2012:113). His language is revealing; 'going forward' refers to a quest for the greater understanding that would eventually result in jihad, whilst the metaphor he invokes of friends as a heavy burden highlights the moderating effect of these peers. As such, his only choice then is to 'eventually cut the rope' (2012:113) and discard these individuals entirely.

Interestingly, a number of militants attach significant symbolic value to this process that exceeds merely jettisoning those peers who they perceived to exercise a preventative influence. Many adhere to a cultural script which dictates that relationships with friends who are not involved in

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militancy must be severed in a single decisive swoop (Giorgio, 2003; Nasiri, 2006; Little, 2009; Schiller, 2009; al-Bahri, 2013). It may be argued that for those who want to join clandestine movements removing oneself from those who are not committed to the same cause and might try to talk one out of engaging in violence, or worse still, inform the authorities serves a practical purpose. However, many of the authors examined comprehend this process to hold its own important meaning and to mark a significant juncture in their understanding of what becoming a militant comprises. Prima Linea member, Giorgio, for example, describes his disappointment that there was no 'graduation dinner' to mark this important moment or chance to 'grieve' for these lost friends (2003:98), whilst others engage in figurative gestures that signify the permanence of their self-imposed excommunication, such as burning photographs or the contact information of former friends (Nasiri, 2006:24; Schiller, 2009:47). Significantly, many militants present these actions as necessary to purify themselves in preparation for the taxing commitments that accompany life in clandestine organisations.

Structural Characteristics of Peer Networks

Existing research has stressed the importance of pre-existing friendship groups in the move to militancy, in particular, the capacity of these networks to allow individuals to contact those already involved in political violence (della Porta, 1995, 2013:246; Crossley et al. 2014; Edwards, 2014; Holman, 2016). The accounts examined describe how numerous members of certain social circles would go on to join one militant group or another (Hasselbach, 1996:39; O'Callaghan, 1998; Vásquez Perdomo, 2005:21; Rolston, 2011:173; Leslie, 2014:26). An interesting line of enquiry then is to explore the nature of the peer groups these authors enjoyed before and during their involvement. In looking specifically at how these individuals describe and narrate their own position within these groups, applied narrative analysis provides an alternative to Social Network Analysis for interrogating and understanding the importance of these networks. Studies of militancy using formal social network methods have tended to focus on mapping the composition of such networks from an objective standpoint without considering how individuals consider their own role and capacity to be both

influenced and influence others around them. Looking at networks in such way, however, adds another dimension to our understanding of how individuals enter, exit and remain part of them.

Weak Ties

The notion of presenting oneself as having enjoyed a good social circle and positive relations with before engaging in militancy peers appears important in nearly all of the accounts examined. Many authors appear reticent to expose themselves to accusations that being socially isolated somehow contributed to their involvement in militancy. Sandberg argues that Anders Breivik makes a significant effort to craft a self-narrative of himself as a 'social and likeable person' in the autobiographical elements of his compendium (2013:78). Similarly, such characters are employed by a limited number of militants examined, notably in the tone by which they narrate their accounts (Hammami, 2012; Rudolph, 2013). However, using the analytical framework to analyse texts reveals that many more authors enjoyed social networks characterised by the absence of strong interpersonal connections with individual or groups of peers. These accounts commonly describe the author regularly moving through different groups of friends and acquaintances; they are absent of peers who appear throughout or for extended periods of time. For such individuals, this absence of strong relationships then transcends the move into militant milieus. Instead, these accounts frequently reveal experiences of often intense rivalry between individuals within these radical networks. Bravado and boasts about being the first to join militant groups, to fight and even to be martyred are common (al-Bahri, 2013:29). The processes of joining a militant group are frequently narrated then as competitive endeavours. Few authors recall any sense that joining was a cooperative undertaking in service of a shared cause. A number describe feeling only hostility and jealousy for peers who went on to become members of groups before them, frequently painting themselves as more committed or deserving. Through such networks, many authors describe meeting individuals who would recount tales of their own involvement in militancy. However, here such stories are framed as boastful or fanciful rather than deserving of acclaim (Farivar, 2009:122; Storm, 2014:75). In light of the unfavourable perceptions of others within these networks, this may be expected given that 'people read along the lines of genre if the main characters fit dominant expectations

about people of that status' (Polletta et al. 2013:294). A number of militants speak of their irritation that friends or acquaintances had been able to make contact with these groups before themselves, interestingly even when this assisted the author's own move towards militancy (O'Doherty, 2011:45; al-Bahri, 2013:27).

In terms of the impact of such networks in the move to militant engagement, the accounts examined reveal that networks of weak ties act as something of a double-edged sword, both facilitating and constraining individuals in such endeavours. The perception of peers as rivals appears to have motivated some of those militants examined. The act of telling others of their intention to join a group in such circumstances could manifest as a pressure to live up to one's word (al-Bahri, 2013:16). However, the distrust within these networks is often cited as a factor that made the move into militancy more difficult. A number of authors recall turning down opportunities that may have facilitated their engagement because of such suspicions. A search for belonging has been commonly cited as one of the most significant drivers in the decision of individuals to join militant groups (see for example, Maher, 2015). An interesting, and perhaps counter-intuitive, finding then is that few of the accounts examined appear to confirm this notion. Only a handful directly mention or hint at their attraction to the idea of the intense fellowship between fighters in militant groups (Schiller, 2009:31; Storm, 2014:59).

Strong Ties

The accounts examined also highlight how pre-existing friendship groups impact on militant involvement, in particular the trajectories of those individuals who come from peer networks marked by strong ties and personal relationships to which they attached positive significance. Again, applied narrative analysis is useful for pulling apart how these relationships are constituted and understood by individuals. Here, these peers are often afforded the status of 'family' (al-Berry, 2009:38; Crawford, 2003:70). However, surprisingly few authors write about following a longstanding friend or group of friends into militancy. Khaled al-Berry is unique in attributing the fear of losing the close friends who had become members of al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya as crucial in his own decision to join (2009:40). Significantly, he is explicit in stating that he was initially no more than a sympathiser of the group with

no desire to become a member (2009:26). By contrast, a number of accounts describe the mobilisation of entire groups of friends, who would go on to form the core of local militant groups or factions. Here the path towards, and in limited cases the actual move into, militancy is presented as an entirely shared – and collectively directed – experience (Hasselbach, 1996; Giorgio, 2003; Black, 2008; Rolston, 2011:150-151). Loyalist John Black, along with his close knit group of friends, formed a vigilante group to protect their neighbourhood and were eventually co-opted *en masse* into the UVF (2008). His account highlights the egalitarian nature of this process whereby they all had to agree to this latter step. The narrative voice and lexical terms used to describe this period are almost entirely collective. Here the perception of events is narrated as how 'we' rather than 'I' saw it, as is the sharing and shaping of the emotional reaction to certain events, both positive and negative (Black, 2008 – see also Vásquez Perdomo, 2005:47).

Despite this egalitarian nature, Black's account reveals how pressures from a close friendship group to become involved in militancy can manifest, in a different but albeit influential manner. In particular, the different narrative voices in his accounts, which expose the points of rupture where his personal feelings diverge from that of the group, highlight the impact of informal social pressures in groups characterised by positive ties. Black is open in recalling how, at various points, the fear of appearing a coward in front of his friends outweighed his nagging doubts about his own ability to engage in violence and even thoughts of fleeing the conflict (2008:94). He would only later learn that others shared similar doubts and fears (2008:122). He describes how, on the eve of the group formally joining the UVF, an opportunity was presented for anyone who wanted to leave to do so without judgement (2008:100). However, 'everyone looked at each other and no one moved towards the door' (2008:101). By this narration the decision undertaken by him and his friends to stay was motivated by their commitment to one another and the importance invested in maintaining the respect of those they shared a close bond with. Interestingly, another Loyalist tells a similar story regarding a gathering of loosely amalgamated individuals who were to be sworn into the UDA (quoted in Crawford, 2003:58). By his telling, gone is any consideration for the opinion of others. Rather, 'about 20 men just bottled [lost their nerve] and ran out. They were out of there so fast they left a cloud of cement dust on the floor' (quoted in Crawford, 2003:58).

The competing narrative voices present in many accounts also demonstrate that group dynamics often shield individuals from thinking too deeply about their involvement in behaviours that they are uncomfortable with. Alastair Little describes the only incident of violence he was involved in that he found 'disturbing' was when he was ordered to carry out the punishment beating of another member of his Tartan gang and someone he would have considered a friend (2009:69). Despite his doubts, he nevertheless went along with it because of the group pressure. Crucially, a number of authors reveal that they lacked alternative social networks resulting in further pressures to conform rather than risk becoming socially isolated (Hasselbach, 1996; Black, 2008; al-Berry, 2009; Little, 2009). The importance afforded to these relationships also makes it difficult for individuals to raise concerns or doubts about certain behaviours or the need for violence without fear of losing face or the respect of group members. As these examples demonstrate, even within closely knit friendship groups, social pressures dictate that some things are simply not said and instead frequently masked with displays of bravado (Black, 2008:85). For these individuals, the strength of these interpersonal ties plays a crucial role in not only deepening their militant actions but also in cutting off what they perceive to be alternative courses of action.

Dyadic Peer Relationships

Something that transcends the accounts of individuals from peer groups characterised by both strong and weak ties is the importance of dyadic peer relationships. The vast majority include instances whereby critical junctures in their militant trajectories were taken with a single other person. This role might be occupied by the same individuals throughout an individuals' entire engagement in engagement in militancy or different people at different points. Many accounts say little more than such actions were undertaken with a friend or peer. Nevertheless, even in instances where involvement in militancy is narrated as a collective experience or shared by a group of closely bound individuals, the accounts reveal splits within these networks whereby key decisions are taken with a single other. For John Black, the act of contacting a militant organisation, and significantly, the process of desisting from the same group, was undertaken with the same close friend (2008:67).

Interestingly, there also appears to be little pattern in accounts examined as to the nature of these relationships. Included are instances where the author and this other figure are narrated to share a relationship equivalence or where one exercised an influence over the other. At different junctures the author may occupy different positions in this relationship. Omar Hammami, for example, narrates himself as being the driving force behind his and his friend's decision to make *hijra* (2012:29). However, at another significant point in his move to militancy, he assumes something of a subordinate position in his narration, being led by a friend who gave him the confidence to consume jihadi texts he had previously been 'too scared' to read (2012:34). Using narrative analysis to examine less obvious relationships then reveals that dyadic relationships play a critical, if often understated, role in individuals' accounts. Significantly, in sharing key junctures with others, many authors implicitly suggest the importance of external validation, approval or support in their own thinking at crucial moments in their militant trajectories.

Peers as Narrative Networks

Across the accounts examined, peers prove a crucial contextual backdrop to the manner by which individuals perceive their engagement in militancy through the telling of stories. Individuals naturally encounter stories through their immediate social surroundings, in particular via friends. However, peer networks also provide conducive systems responsible for transmitting stories on a much broader scale. Here stories, including those that relate to militancy, take on a life of their own. Nevertheless, these narratives reflect the networks that circulate them. Applied narrative analysis of autobiographical accounts makes it possible to study how some stories are adopted, exaggerated, shaped and retold in such networks whilst other tales are rejected.

Configurative Stories

The accounts reveal that a primary function of peer storytelling in these settings is configurative, by which I mean that they help make sense of a situation and often contain both

diagnostic and prognostic frames – or those that serve the function of identifying and providing a solution to a problem respectively (Snow and Benford, 1988:199; Benford, 2005:38). Whilst many authors present their families as reticent to talk openly about various aspects of the conflict that surrounded them, by contrast, they describe peer interactions as being dominated by the telling of stories regarding these events. In sharing, disputing and amending each other's stories, peers play an important role in mediating how individuals organise and make sense of the complex and often frightening events around them. Collaboratively peers produce shared narratives of conflicts that provide immediate, and often attractive, answers to critical questions such as why conflicts were occurring and who was to blame for this violence. This includes providing individuals with stories that shape understandings of both who 'we' and the 'enemy' are (see for example, Little, 2009:28). Crucially, these stories not only shape how events and threats are perceived but also the responses that they should be met with. One militant from Northern Ireland recalls with amusement how 'school became a weird place' given the bravado, posturing and one-upmanship of his very young classmates, who in line with what local cultural scripts dictated, would tell stories of how they personally planned to take the fight to the British Army (Leslie, 2014:19).

Within the accounts examined a number of storytelling practices are used to help construct these shared interpretations. Militants from various contexts recall that peer narratives painted reality in terms of a simplified series of binary opposites (see Bearman and Stovel, 2000:86), for example, that the only options were violent resistance or death. These individuals state how this practice produced intractable certainties in their own thinking which reflected local ideological and cultural positions that withstood events, or alternative readings of events that challenged these narratives. For example, a number of militants from Northern Ireland reveal the framing of militant involvement as something that men were simply expected to be involved in – a position that reflects local narratives of tough masculinity. These include the selective emplotment of events into a broader narrative of victimhood, and the collective amassing and linking of multiple smaller stories and events to give weight to larger narratives (see Bearman and Stovel, 2000:85; Polletta, 2006 for the use of this practice in other contexts). Peer groups often devoted significant efforts to building repertoires of stories of harm

persecuted against the collective 'us'. One militant describes how 'unconsciously, we latched on to any story that confirmed our perspective' (Little, 2009:28). Crucially, the collective weight of these accumulated tales of persecution could be brought to bear on any story that challenged these victim-narratives (Khaled,1973:93). The sheer volume of stories told about these conflicts is also often narrated as having contributed to the perception that violence was inescapable (Leslie, 2014:19). A number of militants recall that their perceptions of reality were painted to such a degree by these stories that they believed that their own deaths were inevitable. Such a view provoked an immediacy in the need to fight back, whether they believed this would ultimately make a difference or not. One militant from Northern Ireland, for example, explains that for him and his peers the view was firmly, 'if we were going to go down, then let it be with a fight' (Black, 2008:76).

Such stories are then constitutive antecedents for involvement in militancy. The accounts examined reveal that, for the authors, these tales harness narrative's inherent capacity to endow certain readings of events with emotional meaning (Polletta, 2006:53). A number recall how certain stories sent ripples of shock through their peers and were perceived as defining moments within these groups (Black, 2008:60). One Loyalist recalls that often his reactions to events 'weren't reasoned responses to the wider context' but rather 'were provoked by stories... that touched me deeply' (Little, 2009:29). As social movement scholars have argued, such narratives often provide rationales for participation in collective action and can induce within individuals the feeling of a moral obligation to act (Polletta, 2006:6). These collective storytelling processes can also imbue seemingly incongruent events with coherence. A number of members of Loyalist paramilitaries, who saw themselves as faithful to the British State, military and rule of law, recall feeling conflicted in terms of their identity and questioned the use of violence during their move towards militancy (Black, 2008:74-75; Little, 2009:76). However, these individuals describe how stories told, shaped and refashioned between peers were instrumental in framing their actions as an extension of the work of the British military – in particular, that paramilitary groups were merely doing what conventional forces would be if their hands were not tied by strict rules of engagement. This collective narrative was critical, at least initially, in smoothing the rupture that breaking the law and finding themselves a target of security forces caused in the stories that these

individuals told about themselves and their actions (Black, 2008:74-75; Little, 2009:53; quoted in Crawford, 2003:92).

Dissenting Voices?

A notable absence from virtually all of the accounts examined in the dataset are instances of either the author, or others within their peer group, questioning or critiquing the configurative stories they encountered within these networks. This omission points to the importance afforded to the context of peer storytelling, both in terms of the peer pressures mentioned and the perception that these circles were trustworthy sources of information regarding ongoing events. LTTE member Niromi de Soyza proves the only exception here. Not only does she reveal that there was significant disagreement within her peer group when it came to how the LTTE's choice to eliminate rival Tamil militant groups was initially understood, but also how dissenting and questioning voices were silenced within this network. By applying my analytical framework to her account, it is possible to piece together how the network culture of her peer group and certain individuals within it shaped a dominant narrative reading of these events that was eventually accepted by the group. Using the analytical framework to accumulate details alluded to through her account, it is possible to establish that her peer network at school was highly sympathetic, if not entirely pro-LTTE and was populated by those who had family members who supported or who were in the Tigers. The result is a network culture naturally resistant to any criticism of the group. de Soyza describes how her and peers didn't want to believe the stories of cruelty by LTTE members they encountered: 'we were so in awe of the Tigers we managed to justify everything they did' (2011:51).

At the point where these rumours could no longer be ignored, de Soyza's account is also revealing as to how certain figures within her network were influential in silencing views that challenged the dominant narrative of support for the LTTE. In particular, narrative analysis demonstrates that it was those peers with family members who were senior Tigers who enjoyed a sort of transferred credibility and subsequently occupied influential positions within her friendship group. By her narration, it was these individuals that the rest of the group looked to, and who were subsequently

given the first chance to offer rebuttals or excuses for the Tiger's actions. The standing of these individuals made others hesitant to challenge them. Dissenting voices were then brought into line as the majority sided with those seen as more credible, and by extension knowledgeable. The result was that they arrived at a shared narrative that provided a coherent justification – here, that the actions of the Tigers were a necessary evil to achieve the wider goal of Tamil freedom – which at least gave the appearance of having been collectively negotiated. Once this dominant narrative was established, de Soyza's narration makes it clear that this position was no longer up for discussion. Despite presenting herself as an influential character within this network and having experienced sometimes visceral negative emotional reactions to the LTTE's actions, it is clear that she was also extremely fearful of daring to even voice an opinion that differs to her peers'. Here, further discussion of this subject was actively silenced by members (2011:59).

'Warriors among us'

In their capacity as conductive systems, peer networks are responsible for transmitting and reshaping a whole host of different narratives as members tell stories for entertainment, to negotiate meanings and to make sense of the world. Amongst others, one particular subset of these stories are those that elevate certain individuals to prized social identities as heroes. Militant accounts give much credence to the importance of such stories, with many recalling being enchanted or enthralled by such tales (O'Doherty, 2011:40). They also reveal that peers impacted on this process in a number of ways. First, the consumption of militant media (something discussed in detail later) that mythologises individuals is narrated as something primarily done with peers (Collins, 2003:7; Nasiri, 2006:22; al-Bahri, 2013:27; Storm, 2014:49). Additionally, peers are not only responsible for crafting heroic narratives, but are commonly also the subject, or protagonists, of such tales. Across contexts, stories mythologise the 'here-and-now-revolutionaries' (Conway, 2014:15), or those peers who were seen to be taking the fight to the enemy at that moment. In protracted conflicts, the celebration of contemporary figures is often narrated as an important marker in differentiating younger generations from the 'dead and distant' heroes of previous ones and serves as a means to take ownership of these conflicts (Conway,

2014:15). Commonly, these stories stress the ordinariness and relatability of the protagonists (even if they are later transformed through their deeds). Tales are told about individuals from the same street, neighbourhood or city (Adair, 2009:23; O'Doherty, 2011:40; Rolston, 2011:188), whilst videos and media consumed with peers often document the actions of protagonists known by the viewers personally (al-Bahri, 2013:27). The similarity of the protagonists of these stories to the authors of the accounts examined may explain why these tales resonate so strongly, given the proclivity of individuals to identify with characters in narratives that resemble themselves (Polletta, 2015:38 – see for example, Nasiri, 2006:24; Yousef, 2010:48).

In terms of their content, these stories frequently draw on predictable themes: the celebration of acts of bravery; 'David and Goliath' struggles of individuals overcoming great odds to inflict damage on the enemy; and the memorialisation that the protagonists would enjoy. Interestingly, the most recurrent theme, however, regards the capacity of individuals to stoically endure great hardship in support of their cause. The collected stories that Masood Farivar repeats stress how *mujahedeen* fighters withstood day after day of artillery shelling and suffered great losses rather than describing any offensive actions they had taken (2009:107). Similarly, Johnny Adair recalls the story of a local youth who lost a leg in a Republican attack but nevertheless immediately returned to the front-line of the conflict unfazed. He states, 'if he had been shot dead I doubt I would have remembered him' (Adair, 2009:23). Here Adair and his peers reshape the narrative of these events to highlight how unwavering commitment to the cause is prized more than death in service of it; the capacity to bear prolonged suffering without complaint, something that would be discharged by death, is then what marks individuals as heroes.

Within the accounts it is often difficult to identify where the stories that circulate in peer networks originate. Many are presented absent of their teller or where they were encountered. The exclusion of these elements is significant nonetheless, the implication being that these stories are so ubiquitous in certain contexts that it unnecessary to mention such details (Sandberg, 2016). Nevertheless, the accounts make clear that locations where peers would congregate – neighbourhoods, university campuses, sport clubs, schools, refugee camps and religious institutions – reverberated with the telling of stories. Similarly, where identifiable, the teller of stories appears significant. A number of

militants describe how rehearing the same stories from credible peers, such as returning fighters, invested these tales with new importance or meaning (Collins, 1998:44; Farivar, 2009:107; al-Bahri, 2013:16). Such figures often found receptive audiences, including those who looked to consume dramatic and exciting stories of militancy for entertainment as much as for inspiration (part of audiences in whether stories are believed see Polletta, 2009; Steans, forthcoming). Nasser al-Bahri recalls that 'when mujahid came back, they were feted. 'Afghan Arabs' were heroes and everyone wanted to hear about their exploits (2013:16). Such individuals also commonly appear keen to propagate their own legend through these tales. In his account, al-Bahri repeats the collected story of a fighter pulling a Russian helicopter down from the sky with his hands. The miraculous nature of this deed may appear to be an embellishment of exaggeration that has been added in this tale's retelling over time. However, this account of how these events transpired is revealed to have come from the original teller, a comrade of the protagonist who claims to have witnessed exactly this scene (al-Bahri, 2013:18). The credibility that these individuals held and the amenable audience they found themselves addressing meant that such stories could not only be told but also believed.

Whilst individuals may sympathise with the protagonist of stories without feeling a need to change their own opinions or behaviours (Jacobs, 2002; Polletta, 2006), the accounts examined reveal how such stories impacted on an individual's participation in militancy. First, such stories inspire. Many accounts demonstrate how individuals internalise and live out the stories that are encountered, shaped and ultimately told about peers. Some recall how, during the move towards militancy, they would engage in certain smaller acts of violence or high-risk activism precisely because it would make them the subject of stories that would distinguish them within their peer groups (Little, 2009:41; Yousef, 2010:25). Relatedly, grander, more heroic stories of the actions of peers provide templates for actions that are ultimately transformative; capable of investing otherwise ordinary or mundane existences with transcendent significance. Many militants express their desire to have such enduring stories told about themselves by their peers and demonstrate strong narrative imaginations in envisioning themselves in such heroic positions. Nasser al-Bahri describes his disappointment at failing to emulate the stories he had heard from peers about their own heroic deeds after he had travelled to fight in Bosnia; 'I had planned on being the last of the Mujaheddin to leave there, brandishing the legion's black flag'

(2013:39). How such stories are locally shaped can also make one's own participation in violence necessary or appealing. IRA volunteer Shane Paul O'Doherty states, 'in Derry, the bravest of the brave and the local heroes were those who put themselves at considerable risk in the front line of violence. They were already being mythologized in tales and songs. I wanted to be one of the heroes and proficiency in violence was clearly a necessary qualification' (2011:40).

For many authors, having stories told about oneself is also understood as a marker of status. New entrants to militant milieus are often socialised to learn about notable peers through the stories that surround them (see for example, Vásquez Perdomo, 2005:26). In both of these senses, the stories encountered via peers shape what the author understands 'proper' involvement in militancy to entail. A failure to achieve either memorialisation or the imagined futures that heroic tales provoke can impact on individuals' militant trajectories. al-Bahri, for example, travelled on to another conflict after Bosnia in the hope he would realise his gallant visions for himself (2013:39). Finally, such stories also often appear to have a coercive edge and are interpreted to induce a feeling of moral obligation to act (Polletta, 2006:6). This dimension is also present in al-Bahri's narration of how the stories of those who had travelled to fight in Afghanistan served as 'proof that there were still warriors among us, prepared to fight our enemies' (2013:18), implicitly shaming those who refused to undertake such action.

Stories Not Told

This discussion of peer storytelling has focused on those narratives that in some way facilitate militant involvement. Interestingly, the accounts examined are absent of the stories told by peers that provide resilience, alternatives or otherwise direct individuals away from militancy that have been identified elsewhere (see for example, Joosse et al. 2015). The exclusion of such stories may, however, result from the data examined. The autobiographical accounts of militants necessarily seek to explain why they became involved in militancy rather considering how and when they might have taken alternative paths. The accounts of individuals in similar circumstances who chose not to engage in militancy might be more enlightening here (see for example, Husain, 2007; Kaddouri, 2011; Nawaz, 2012). The point must also be stressed that militant groups do not control the stories told within peer

networks. Johnny Adair, for example, recalls how the story of Michael Stone's notorious attack on an IRA funeral at Milltown was interpreted and received differently by the UDA's leadership and the milieu that surrounded the group. After the UDA officially sought to distance themselves from Stone's actions, Adair recalls how the story was told differently amongst his peers and only 'confirmed what we all knew: that they [the UDA leadership] had no stomach for the fight' (2003:51). Whilst the vast majority of peer stories found in the accounts examined proved useful for militant groups – namely in assisting recruitment and their support within local populations – this example serves to demonstrate that these stories and the networks that transmit them sit outside of their control and in certain circumstances may even run counter to them.

Fan Cultures, Barriers to Activism?

A number of the autobiographies examined contain descriptions of what others have argued amount to something that resemble fan cultures within militant milieus (Ramsay, 2013:43). Gilbert Ramsay demonstrates that the literature on fandom provides a useful lens to view the 'subcultural practices of collective consumption and production, mutual aesthetics and raw sociality' (2013:43) that appear under the umbrella of the broad and diverse culture of online jihadism. Whilst none of the autobiographies examined contain examples of individuals engaging in such behaviours in an online-setting, multiple accounts contain instances of offline fandom behaviours in various contexts. In particular, a number of militants recall peers who did not aspire to be active participants in militant groups but nevertheless viewed associating with these organisations and consuming and producing texts linked to militancy as a source of entertainment. Some authors reveal that they were part of such networks and that they themselves engaged in fandom behaviours before joining militant groups. Niromi de Soyza, for instance, reveals that she placed posters of 'fallen Tiger heroes' on her bedroom wall as a teenager (2011:156) and also authored poetry that celebrated Tamil militancy (2011:51).

Many accounts paint participation in these subcultures as something almost entirely removed from the violence of militancy. Included are members who not only have no interest in personally participating in activism or these conflicts but also those who did not even appear to understand the

political causes that the militant groups they associated with sought to achieve through the use of violence. For many, their positive association with militant groups primarily focused on individuals and their heroic deeds rather than wider groups or causes. As one militant recalls, 'among my friends, the game of choice was naming the top mujahideen commanders…We debated their virtues and styles of fighting the way suburban American kids talk about their idols' (Farivar, 2009:119). Narrative analysis then reveals that aligning oneself with these figures was seen as a means of projecting status within peer networks.

Looking the Part

The accounts examined also support existing research on the importance of aesthetic markers and practices for militant groups and social movements more widely (Ramsay, 2011; Hegghammer, 2017; Sawyer, 2007; Pilkington, 2016). One such practice that appears frequently is the adoption of specific styles or items of clothing. A number of authors stress that dressing in a particular, often aesthetically military, manner was central for creating a shared identity within these groups (Nasiri, 2006:31; al-Berry, 2009:53). Thomas Hegghammer also argues that such visual clues form part of the costly signals employed by recruits who seek to prove their credentials in joining clandestine organisations (2013:6). However, the accounts examined highlight the significance attached to these hard to acquire markers for signalling commitment and status within much wider groups of individuals, notably one's peers, both within and outside militant milieus. Here, dressing in such a way is then principally understood as a means to display prized social identities. Militants' narrations focus on the desire to attain these markers for the purpose of transmitting to other peers the sense that they are worthy of respect and possess certain street credibility (Crawford, 2003:69; Adair, 2003:16; Vásquez Perdomo, 2005:26; al-Berry, 2009:57).

Analysing the importance of dress practices for understanding individuals' engagement in violence is difficult. In many cases a narrative reading reveals that the decision to adopt the clothing style of a militant organisation is presented by these authors as having occurred for various reasons. For some the act of dressing in such way is narrated as being part of a wider process of subversion against

society and its expectations (Baumann, 1975; Schiller, 2009). Here, the link to militant groups or causes can often somewhat obtuse. Ingo Hasselbach, for instance, recalls members of the scene that surrounded neo-Nazi groups having anarchist tattoos mixed in with those of swastikas (1996:106). A number of authors are critical of others for merely dressing the part without what they see as proper commitment to these groups (Farivar, 2009:127). Female members of these milieus also recall instances of peers pressuring them to abandon what were considered overly feminine senses of dress and to instead replace them with clothing apparently more befitting of aspiring militants to demonstrate their political commitment (Vásquez Perdomo, 2005:30). Here, dress then signals all sorts of ideological cross-overs. In the cases presented, this includes extremist ideologies which intersect, or militant and 'feminine' styles that compete. What the authors reveal, however, is that *they* wish to show up what they consider to be ideological contradictions and that *they* wish to be the arbiters of what is the correct dress and proper commitment. Ideology then is understood by as a form of authorisation for the display of certain aesthetic styles.

Whilst such considerations may appear somewhat flippant, the role of peers in shaping the meanings attached to such aesthetics appear important in the accounts examined, particularly in the process of attracting individuals to the idea of militancy in the first place. The accounts contain deep-seated, often unconscious positive associations with these visual markers and subsequently, a longstanding desire to attain them for oneself even if their significance is not always fully appreciated. These connotations were also firmly established in authors' thinking from a young age, something that is often exploited by militant groups to draw these individuals in. A narrative reading of Johnny Adair's account reveals that, by the age of 10, he and his peers would do everything to look like members of the uniformed paramilitaries (2009:16). Niromi de Soyza describes how she and her school friends coveted the dress of LTTE members, in particular 'the black thread around their necks that carried the cyanide capsule or *kuppie* gave them added prestige' (2011:36). Here, the embodiment of ideology in dress is part of an emotional process of coming to associate with or belong to a group and its cause. These aesthetic considerations then help establish part of the attraction to certain militant groups, something that often has a lasting impact on which of these organisations individuals come to join (something discussed in further depth below).

Consumption Practices

Academic research that has focused on the media that militants collect, whilst valuable, in large part 'does not engage with the difficult question of when, how and to what extent the material was consumed' (Holbrook, 2017:5, 2019 – see also Ramsay, 2013). Examining autobiographical accounts makes it possible to analyse not just what is it that militants consume but also *how* they consume this material. A number of militants from Islamist groups recall instances of the consumption of jihadi videos (Collins, 2003:7; Nasiri, 2006:240; al-Bahri, 2013:27; Storm, 2014:49). In each of these cases, it was a friend who introduced the author to this media. Significantly, such materials are narrated as being consumed collectively, that is in the company of friends, peers or siblings. None of the authors recall that they watched such films on their own. Omar Nasiri's account here is particularly revealing. He describes how he devoured documentaries on his own to learn about the conflict in Afghanistan (2006:22). By contrast, he recalls only consuming militant-produced videos with other peers (2006:240). In this sense, watching this specific type of media then appears to be primarily a social practice, with significance attached to the communal nature of this consumption. The mixture of ideology and entertainment in the consumption of militant media is also apparent in the account of Ingo Hasselbach. In a similar vein to a number of Islamist militants, he recalls how he and peers would gather together to watch Nazi propaganda films from the 1940s (1996:315). Again, a narrative reading of his account makes clear that this was a necessarily a social endeavour and not something he did alone. Each of these films had also been carefully edited, with a specific segment of pornography that heavily featured Nazi symbolism grafted onto them. Whilst the imagery and association remains overtly ideological, it is clear that the purpose of this addition was to add to their capacity as entertainment. Hasselbach's revelation that all of the films that he and his peers consumed bore this pornographic motif is also revealing as to how their media consumption was shaped by a particular narrative gatekeeper – a peer who edited these films and added his own calling-card to each.

Ingo Hasselbach recalls in detail how he and friends would consume ideological material through another communal means, specifically by playing a computerised version of a popular board game that had been modified to take on an explicitly anti-Semitic guise. The aim was for players to

move pieces that represented Jews to an end point that represented a gas chamber. A narrative reading of Hasselbach's description reveals a number of different layers in how the game resonated. Not only does he recall that he found the game 'amusing' but that it also invoked as certain sense of nostalgia: 'I'd also liked it simply because it was modelled on a game I remembered playing with my mother when I was a little boy' (1996:318). Aside from normalising anti-Semitic views, Hasselbach's narration reveals that the shared narrative immersion offered by this game was significant in constructing communal understandings that then fed into each of their individual storyworlds. In particular, he describes how playing together was important in helping mend the narrative rupture of both celebrating and denying that the Holocaust had taken place and induced them a narrative transportation to 'live in a realm that was beyond rational thought' (1996:318).

Instances of individuals consuming films or videogames produced by militant groups, ideologues or their supporters are less prominent in the other autobiographies examined. This may, at least in part, result from the fact that many of the accounts pertain to involvement in militancy that predates widespread availability of such films via the internet or other forms of transferable media. Nevertheless, these accounts also contain instances of the collective consumption of other material within these networks. Alastair Little, for instance, places great emphasis on the lyrics of a pop song sent to him by his best friend when, as a teenager, he had been sent away from the conflict in Northern Ireland by his mother (2013:51). Included within his account is a copy of the full song lyrics that pertain to the death of a British soldier in the conflict. In reading the lyrics he recalls an instance of transportation to a narrative world, and how he choked up and cried at the heroism of the protagonist and his valiant death. Significantly, the text gave him a new desire to return home to the conflict. Reflecting back on the song's lyrics, however, Little now describes how he now understands that it was written as a protest against the senseless loss of life in the conflict rather than the heroic treatise he initially thought. This then emphasises that such media is collectively interpreted – in this case by Little and the friend who sent him the text – with specific meaning negotiated and assigned to it by these consumers.

The idea that these fan cultures provide a gateway for individuals to then transition to militant involvement is contentious. Gemma Edwards argues that, rather than providing objectively identifiable opportunities for action, social networks contain 'intersubjective expectations' or locally shared meanings, discourses and expectations that both constrain and provide openings for action (2014:64). The decision to adopt or engage in different forms of action is mediated by 'expectations attached to "what is proper action" for someone in their social position in the community' (Edwards 2014:66). In a similar vein, the fan cultures that surround militant groups are frequently narrated as being responsible for constraining individuals in their move towards violence. A number of accounts describe how even the supporters of socio-revolutionary movements were happy to perpetuate norms that restricted the participation of certain individuals in militancy. Kieran Conway recalls that, even within IRA-aligned elements of hard-left, student politics (including 'the Republican Club'), class expectations were keenly enforced, much to the disadvantage of those, like himself, from middle-class backgrounds who wished to participate directly in militancy (2014:16-17). He describes one individual making it 'perfectly clear that the IRA was not for the likes of us but for the working-class lads' (2014:16) whilst another suggested that to even consider joining was indicative of his 'immature adventurism' (2014:17). The entrenched culture of this network then firmly dictated how members could partake in activism. Conway's account reveals that these expectations were strictly enforced through negative sanctions – primarily public reprimands and the threat of expulsion – for those who exceeded these limits.

Further normative expectations are imposed by the peers of aspiring female militants. The experiences of a number of female authors support the findings of research regarding women's participation in activism and militancy in recalling how they too faced persistent stereotypes from peers that their desire to engage in militancy stemmed from personal reasons, namely claims that their involvement arose from a desire to find a romantic or sexual partner (Hamilton, 2007:106; Pilkington, 2016:64-66; Eggert, 2018:5). By contrast, aspiring male militants recall facing no such questions as to their motivations or the authenticity of their commitment. Significantly, a number of female authors describe how such accusations prompted them to question their continued move towards militancy or

altered how they pursued this goal (Vásquez Perdomo, 2005:30). A more restrictive gendered expectation is described by Niromi de Soyza. She recalls the prevailing attitude amongst her LTTE supporting friends that, as middle-class girls, their personal involvement in even the organisation's student wing was 'not proper' (2011:63). Here their potential involvement transgresses not one but two social norms – as regard gender and class – that were deeply entrenched and reinforced in a network culture that reflected the conservative attitudes of the members' families and their wider society. By de Soyza's narration, these norms were so internalised and shaped the story that she and her friends told about themselves to such a degree that the possibility of their own participation was something they entirely discounted (2011:63). All of this despite, as argued, this same network culture being highly supportive of the LTTE, it's cause and use of violence.

Fans to Actors?

The accounts examined support arguments made in existing scholarship that the vast majority of individuals who participate in the fan cultures that surround militant groups have no intention to engage in violent activism (Ramsay, 2013). Some accounts suggest that in certain contexts, involvement in these milieus may provide an outlet for individuals of a certain class to experiment with political dissent, something that may play a role in redirecting them away from militancy proper. Eamon Collins, for instance, recognises that joining radical student organisations allowed many of his university peers to get any revolutionary aspirations out of their systems in an environment that cocooned them from violence (1998:48). Such an avenue only appears available to a privileged few, however. For those authors that did go on to transition from these fan cultures to militancy, there is then an obvious need to differentiate themselves from those they deem to be charlatans or those they see as 'all talk' (de Soyza, 2011; Storm, 2014). This process can, however, prove difficult. Whilst highly critical of the middle-class revolutionaries around him, Kieran Conway's account makes clear that he was from an equally privileged background (he states, 'I had always taken for granted that I would go to university (2014:5)). As such, considerable effort is devoted within his account to paint his commitment to militancy as more than superficial, in particular, through repeated assertions about everything he was

prepared to forego to join the IRA (Conway, 2014:30). Such individuals then must engage in significant narrative work to distinguish themselves from others around them in these fan cultures.

For those authors who do progress to activism, involvement in fan cultures does appear to shape the course of their militant engagement. The vast majority do go on to join those groups that they have long associated with and share a certain sense of allegiance, loyalty or admiration. In certain contexts, this loyalty can also manifest as something of a preventative factor given the need to join 'the right' group, privileging some to the extent that available options are discounted. Niromi de Soyza, for example, makes clear that pressure from her friends constrained her already limited options as a female wishing to join a militant organisation in Sri Lanka. Significantly, she recalls how she was prepared to remain outside of militancy altogether rather than even entertain the idea of joining an unfashionable group who did accept female recruits, in part, for fear of becoming the laughing stock of her LTTE supporting friends (2011:51-52). The importance of these associations can then have a significant impact on the course of individuals' engagement in militancy.

Conclusion

Across the accounts examined, peers appear to exercise a significant and sustained influence on militants throughout their engagement in militancy. These authors are more willing to discuss, and attribute significant weight, to the influence of peers in their decision to engage in militancy than they are to family members. Included are instances they deem to have been coercive. Relatedly, many narrate the move to and their involvement in militancy as an entirely shared experience, or something undertaken with peers throughout.

A narrative analysis of militants' accounts reveals that peers are critical in shaping the contextual backdrop against which individuals set their involvement in militancy. In particular, it is through interaction with peers and a sense of the collective emotions and energies of their generation that many militants' worldviews are often invested with the temporal understandings that can imbue involvement in violence with a particular sense of urgency. Whilst the authors examined come from different peer and friendship networks with significantly different characteristics, they often share

similar views of their own position within these groups, namely presenting themselves as influential or driving forces (although not necessarily their recognised leaders). Here applied narrative analysis provides a different means to shed light on the processes at work in peer groups, in particular, how networks of both strong and weak ties can exert a coercive impact in directing and accelerating individuals' engagement in militancy.

Approaching peer groups as narrative networks is also revealing. The accounts examined reveal how peer storytelling not only elevates certain figures or actions as something to aspire to but also plays a crucial role in shaping how individuals understand the events around them and their possible responses. Network cultures and the presence of certain individuals within them are then crucial in this process. Even in 'fan cultures', the stories that members tell about themselves can act to restrict engagement. Additionally, peers appear crucial in how individuals consume militant authored material, in particular for the purposes of entertainment. Finally, applied narrative analysis makes it possible to draw together and assess the role of context, structure, storytelling and the consumption of media in how peer networks are influential in individuals' engagements with militancy.

Chapter Seven: Metaphorical Kinship and Kinship Practices Within Militant Groups

Introduction

Whilst the preceding chapters have explored the influence and impact of families and peers on individuals' engagements in violence, this final analytical chapter focuses on two different forms of kinship that militants express within their autobiographies. The first regards what has been termed 'metaphorical' kinship, which relates to how individuals consider themselves members of peoples, nations or other imagined communities. The second focuses on the kinship that develops or is 'made' between genetically unrelated individuals within militant groups. In both sections, the questions driving the analysis are: How are these understandings of kinship constituted, and how do they impact on individuals' engagement in violence? Addressing each of these different forms of kinship in turn through this lens, the chapter is structured as follows. Initially, a brief overview is offered of how the metaphorical understandings of kinship present in autobiographical accounts are identifiable through applied narrative analysis. The next section seeks to break down and explore a number of themes and foundational elements that militants use to constitute their metaphorical kinship with others and how these understandings impact on their engagement in violence.

The second half of this chapter addresses kinship within militant groups. First, an overview of how significant bonds formed in groups are narrated is given, as well as how these relationships impact on individual members' continued involvement. The idea of how groups take on the guise and shape of families is considered. The next section then explores exactly how this kinship is made in militant groups between biologically unrelated individuals. This chapter explores some of the instances the accounts reveal about where kinship between members of groups has been lacking or has broken down. Finally, this chapter concludes with a discussion of the themes explored and how they overlap with one another.

Metaphorical Kinship

Before considering how 'metaphorical' kinship fits into the accounts examined, it is necessary to recap exactly what is meant by this term. Here, kinship is used figuratively to describe 'imagined communities', such as the modern nation state and global or transnational social, political and religious movements with which individuals self-identify. Such individuals may, but need not, enjoy any form of genetic link with other members (although such groups often draw on myths of sharing a traceable and unbroken bloodline). Descriptions of metaphorical understandings of kinship are immediately visible in some accounts, whilst more difficult to discern in others. Mikail Eldin's memoir, for example, is dominated by discussions of his conceptions of the distinctive kinship shared by all Chechens. Throughout he makes clear that his biggest fear is not the physical decimation of the Chechen people through the two gruelling conflicts they experienced *per se*, but rather the loss of the unique spirit and connection he believes they share in the event that they turned upon one another in their individual desperation to survive (2013:8-9). This understanding is also demonstrated through a repeating motif in Eldin's narration that focuses on his desperate efforts to keep a white scarf given to him before the conflict unsoiled throughout years involved in militancy (2013:47). In doing so, he touches upon an underlying narrative that, whilst not as immediately visible, is nevertheless found across many of the accounts examined: ideas of the exceptionality of one's imagined kin group and bonds (whether this be peoplehood, nation, religion, or other community) and the need to defend these connections at all costs. The idea that metaphorical understandings of kinship are only applicable in certain (primarily non-Western) contexts is strongly rejected, with this assertion backed up by the findings taken from analysis of the dataset of militant-authored autobiographies.

In various contexts, militants' narratives are marked by a certain enthusiasm when it comes to the selection of tropes and an associated sense of romanticism in envisioning themselves as the defenders of their kin in the storyworlds they weave around themselves. Michael Stone, for instance, captures the sentiment of many militants in this regard, stating 'I was in love with the idea of being the great defender, the knight in shining armour looking after my people' (2003:25). Here, this protection of kin draws on a number of common themes and images. Most militants envision themselves as tough,

resolute and necessarily masculine figures. Many are unsurprisingly keen to conjure up images of themselves as contemporary incarnations of these warriors of the past: 'we strode through the streets like knights in dirty camouflage fatigues' (Collins, 2003:119). Such comparisons are not only employed by militants to convey themselves occupying positions of strength, but also to add a sense of authenticity in how they understand their actions. These activities are then seen as merely the latest in a long chain of heroic endeavours that date back through their kin and that 'glorifies reinvented ancestors' (al-Rasheed, 2009:305 – for the important of images of warriors in militant narratives see Ostovar, 2017; Anderson and Sandberg, 2018). Notions of honour and self-sacrifice are also common in how militants understand themselves as having 'a duty' to their kin. A number of militants narrate the need to live up to promises and sacred vows they had made at an earlier age to their people (Stone, 2003:37; O'Doherty, 2011:1). One militant from Northern Ireland, for instance, begins his account with his own written declaration, which mimicked those authored by members of the 1916 Easter Rising, that he had written aged ten to fight for Ireland and his kin's freedom (O'Doherty 2011:1).

Significantly, in the accounts of those who travel overseas or to different cultural settings to participate in militancy there often appears to be an eagerness on the part of these authors to buy into and immerse themselves in the local myths, legends and fables of their destinations, even if they often only superficially understand these cultures. Comprehending oneself as kin with certain others, and subsequently party to associated myths, traditions and cultures, makes accessible a whole new set of materials for militants to weave in their narrative storyworlds. After travelling from America to fight in Chechnya, the enthusiasm of Aukai Collins to embrace local myths shines through in his narration. In preparing for a battle he states, 'after all, we were Nokche Bores, Chechen Wolves, and just as a real pack of wolves may hunt with caution, when their den is threatened they will attack whatever is posing the threat with no hesitation' (2003:137). Collins narrative discourse, notably his tone, reveals his excitement at the exotic and heroic nature of the narrative materials he gains through this kin link, something that he would otherwise not have access to in fashioning his storyworld.

Despite the examples provided, in some contexts attempting to unearth the presence and importance of forms of metaphorical kinship can be difficult. Here the benefits of applied narrative analysis again come to the fore. As Paul Ricoeur argues, 'the identity of a group, culture, people or

nation is not that of immutable substance, nor a fixed structure, but that, rather, of a recounted story' (1995:5). Through the analytic framework advocated it is possible to interrogate how these stories, or parts of them, are integrated into militants' autobiographies, and by extension, their storyworlds. In particular, in tying together disparate notions or those markers of kinship that are only hinted at during various points. Here, it is possible to identify a number of common, and often overlapping, constituent elements by which such relatedness is constituted. It is to these that I now turn.

Blood

Given that this chapter explores kinship constituted in a metaphorical sense, a focus on blood – something commonly employed as a shorthand for genetic link – may initially appear somewhat paradoxical. However, a close reading of the autobiographies reveals that militants articulate and understand blood in a variety of complex ways – most of which appear to have little grounding and often run counter to strictly biological readings of kinship. Although commonly understood as something that kin have in common, blood is presented as mutable and subject to constant transformations. At the same time, blood is invested with a particular form of permanence: chapter five, for example, considered how individuals understood the notion of writing one's commitment in blood as the strongest pledge possible.

In beginning to unpick militants' diverse understandings of blood and how it impacts on their engagement in violence, it quickly becomes clear that nearly all share the idea that not all blood is the same. Most buy into and repeat a myth that they and their kin share an unbroken genetic link to the same historical forbearers and believe that a clear division between kin and non-kin blood can be made. The act of donating blood to help support kin involved in conflicts appears in a number of accounts (Khaled, 1973:92; Farivar, 2009:110). Whilst not without practical function, such act nevertheless carries a deeper symbolic meaning, demonstrating that the blood of one's kin is precious or somehow special, and that their identity should not be contaminated by accepting the blood of other non-kin outsiders. Unsurprisingly, neo-Nazi, Ingo Hasselbach, also draws on the notion that 'German' blood requires protection from outside 'degradation' (1996:110). As such, he frames and understands the

violence he and his comrades engage in against ethnic minorities as a necessary part of this process to purify or cleanse his kin's blood.

Many militants' understandings of the uniqueness of certain types of blood also extends to the matter they contain. Even in Western contexts, where cultural narratives of individualism and scientific readings of biology appear to run counter to notions of genetically inheritable character traits, the accounts examined nevertheless commonly stress the role of blood as a vehicle for the transmission of certain beliefs. Authors from various contexts describe characteristics, support or proclivities for involvement in certain causes as being 'in the blood' (Alpert, 1991:16; Rudolph, 2010:16; Leslie, 2014:37). The transmission of Republicanism, in particular, is often articulated through such means, something which may in part reflect the significance afforded to blood in the Catholic faith. However, these same authors also stress that other members of their family, who shared this same blood, did not similarly engage in militancy (Leslie 2014:37). Instead, a narrative reading of their accounts reveals that such characteristics or proclivities are seen as lying dormant within their blood only to be activated by external stimuli – a common example being direct personal experience of repression or persecution. These traits then present as constitutive rather than causal factors in these individuals' engagement in violence, and help the author explain their own actions to themselves. Many militants appear to find significant meaning in the idea that their involvement was in some sense pre-ordained. The idea that this proclivity requires an external trigger to be activated also helps these individuals navigate the rupture brought about by the failure of their family members, who share the same blood, to have also engaged in violence. Interestingly, the transmissibility of blood can also be marked by the absence of a trait or belief. Loyalist Alastair Little, for example, states that viewing the police as adversaries was not in Protestants' blood (2013:76). Significantly, he reveals how this understanding initially acted as a constraint on the violence that he and his comrades engaged in even though it was recognised that this hampered their effectiveness.

The accounts examined also contain other understandings of blood inherently linked to action, emotions and time. First, a number of authors express sentiments that disrupt the dichotomy between kinship that is necessarily 'given' through biological link and that 'made' through certain behaviours, specifically through the idea that 'blood' relations can be forged through sacrifice and heroic deed.

Aukai Collins presents his actions, of being wounded fighting in Chechnya and his 'blood mixing with their soil', as conferring upon him the right to consider himself a Chechen (2003:148). Whilst this notion may appear somewhat self-aggrandising, it mirrors understandings of the creation of kinship and nationality through blood sacrifice that persist in some contemporary, including Western, military forces.[9] Other militants similarly reproduce wider cultural narratives that sacred land is nourished or sustained through the blood of martyrs (see for example, Khaled, 1973:88). Here the heroic deeds of such individuals live on forever, their blood not only becoming inseparable from the soil it was shed for, but also providing fertile ground to give new life to future kin.

In a number of accounts, blood presents as something that is not only made through particular acts, but also as a vehicle that can preserve and transmit emotions that relate to certain behaviours or actions. In particular, notions of shame associated with acts of cowardice or betrayal are commonly narrated as capable of living on through one's blood and, importantly, can be passed on to one's children, descendants and relatives. Here, the permanence of blood is again emphasised in a number of ways. Eamon Collins, for example, states that his cousin felt that their blood had become tainted by Collins' decision to turn his back on the PIRA (1997:353). This understanding of their kindred link is interesting for two reasons. First, the power of blood to transmit emotions extends beyond merely passing them on to one's direct descendants. Instead, this blood connection to all other genetic kin remains open for the entirety of an individual's life meaning that emotions can be transmitted horizontally – or within generations - as well as vertically across them. Second, for all of the perceived dishonour of Collins' actions, this blood link nevertheless remained intact. Again, such ties are understood as permanent and unbreakable.

Mikail Eldin describes a similar understanding of blood's transmissivity from the opposite perspective, as the recipient or inheritor of a heroic kin legacy. Whilst detailing his experience of being tortured and a particular moment of weakness where he considered giving up information about his comrades, he states: 'someone in your blood far stronger and wiser, some ancient, mighty voice in your

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[9] See for example, the longstanding tradition in the French Foreign Legion of 'Français par le sang versé' (French through spilt blood) whereby any member wounded in action is automatically awarded French citizenship (Twigger 2017).

blood begins to speak: You are a warrior…. This ancient voice stirs some feeling in you … Is it pride, perhaps?' (2013:84-85). Crucially, in Eldin's narration, it is the encounter with this collective evocation of his kin – something that blood alone inherently makes possible – that shames him from the prospect of relenting. Here, the obligations to kin transcend this life and live on forever. The prospect of suffering and even death therefore assumes less importance than of being responsible for dishonouring this legacy. Blood then appears as the primary, and most evocative, vehicle through which militants narrate their feelings of being burdened by both the echoes of both past and the future. The notion that one forms a link in a kin legacy that stretches backwards and forwards across time eternally through blood ties carries significant weight in how militants understand and give meaning to their actions.

Kinship, Land and Time

Anthropologist Frances Pine argues that kinship and memory are often tied to and understood in reference to certain locations, envisaging 'a particular aesthetic of kinship memory, linked to stories and genealogies of people which are often articulated in relation to place, space, and land' (2007:107). The inclusion of long and often detailed descriptions of physical landscapes in the accounts of militants might initially appear as supplementary events in their narrations. However, by subjecting these elements to narrative analysis it is possible to unearth another dimension in how these individuals constitute their kinship and understand their militant involvement (Vásquez Perdomo, 2005:44; Zaeef, 2010:x|I; Aref, 2014:5). In limited cases, the link between land and kinship is integrated directly into the author's ideological beliefs. Ingo Hasselbach, for example, understands protecting the natural landscape of Germany as a necessity for preserving the purity of his kin and their bloodline, thus reinforcing the idea that land and place form an important and interdependent dimension of how these bonds are constituted (1996:110). However, more frequently, the link between kinship, land and action presents in a more esoteric, if no less important, fashion. Local understandings of the connection between kinship and place are often imbued with temporal significance, something that influences how contemporary actions are understood. For Mikail Eldin, an affinity and feeling of safety within the mountains is not only a fundamental aspect of Chechen kinship, but something that unconsciously

influences his actions and those of his comrades when it comes to militancy. The decision to seek sanctuary in the mountains, as 'their ancestors had done since time immemorial when outnumbered by the enemy' (2013:67), is narrated as simply what they as Chechens 'do' rather than something with tactical or strategic advantage. In this sense, kin narratives influence and help shape both individual and collective ideas about how militancy takes place.

One case that vividly demonstrates the importance of the intersection of these elements of kinship is that of PFLP member, Leila Khaled. Having been forced to leave Palestine with her family aged four, her recollections of their homeland are understandably hazy and confusing but nevertheless emerge throughout her narration. Analysis of different generations of displaced persons often makes a division between those who hold their own memories of 'home' and those who possess only 'memory of the eviction story' (Thiranagama, 2007:141). Khaled, however, falls between the two – her own memories framed and supplemented by the collected stories of her family and the collective memory of her wider Palestinian kin. Whilst dislocated individuals often experience competing ties to both their ancestral home and that in which they now find themselves (Thiranagama, 2007:141), Khaled is unequivocal that Palestine alone is her home. Crucially, the basis of her connectedness to other Palestinians is constituted through a shared memory of place that is grounded in a different temporal setting – a frozen image of Palestine before the expulsion – rather than reference to any place as currently exists. For Khaled, displacement is 'an orientation, a way of inhabiting the world' (Thiranagama, 2007:129) and is fundamental in how she understands her kinship with other Palestinians.

A close reading of Khaled's account highlights the temporal and spatial dimensions of this dislocation and its place in how she understands her move towards, engagement and continuing involvement in militancy. One supplementary event to which she devotes attention is the violent upending of a tent that served as a school for her and her fellow Palestinian children in a refugee camp in Lebanon (1973:9). The tent serves as an obvious symbol of the humiliating and precarious existence her people had been consigned to as a result of their forced displacement. Additionally, with its lack of solid foundation or connection to the land it sits upon, the tent demonstrates that for her kin this stay will only ever be accepted as temporary. No matter how much time passes during their displacement,

they will not allow this position to be made permanent and no roots will be laid in this foreign soil.

Standing in contrast to this dislocation is Khaled's city of birth, Haifa, which she narrates as a reference point for all Palestinians; 'Haifa is a safe anchor for the wayfarer, a beach in the sun' (1973:22). Here personal and familial significance and memories attached to the city become intertwined with the larger collective memory that all Palestinians have access to: 'I love Haifa, as does my family and all Palestinians' (1973:22). Khaled's use of 'the Road to Haifa' as the title of the chapter that marks her entrance into militancy is also revealing. It stresses the importance of returning and reclaiming the city in a physical sense, and emphasises a temporal dimension of such action. Her future is not only intrinsically linked to achieving this goal, but the present is also put on hold until she does. She makes this suspension of time clear in stating:

> I left Haifa four days after my fourth birthday, on April 13, 1948. My birthday was not celebrated because April 9 was a day of national mourning in Palestine. I am now twenty-nine years old and I have not celebrated a single birthday since, and will not do so until I return to Haifa (1973:24).

Critically, to achieve the return to Haifa is not only to repair the damage of the past and redeem the honour and dignity of her kin, but also to 'restart time' and any prospect of a future for them.

The importance of Haifa also extends beyond how Khaled understands her decision to take up arms in support of the Palestinian cause, but also impacts on her actions as a militant. Describing the hijacking of TWA Flight 840, Khaled recalls how she instructed the pilot to turn the plane and fly over Haifa. She states, 'as we approached the land of my birth, it seemed that my love and I were racing towards each other for an eternal embrace' (1973:138-139). Here the city itself is humanised and talked of as if it were a long lost lover. Similarly, she describes how she wished to land the plane and 'to melt into the eternity of the land and form part of the soil of Palestine' (1973:148). The division between land and person is then disrupted. Significantly, one's bodily substance is not only made of the same material as the land but ultimately will return to it one day, to ensure the prosperity of future generations.

Reclaiming Haifa is once again to achieve permanence in terms of place and land, but also time; to make land and people once again inseparable.

Khaled is far from alone in understanding her kinship through such means. Eamon Collins similarly articulates a form of kinship that relates to his involvement in violence, constructed and invested with meaning through reference to time, land and place. This kinship, firmly rooted in the aesthetics of the landscape of County Down, serves to collapse time and is understood by him to exercise a significant 'pull to the past' (1997:101).

> Tall pine trees stood guard beside abandoned stone houses where labourers and small farmers had reared large families for generations, until they had been driven out to fill the factories, armies and servants' quarters of the industrial nations. These abandoned ruins dotted a landscape that had once been densely populated (1997:101).

The landscape, that serves testament to the persecution experienced by his ancestors, is presented as a marker of the concerted effort to disrupt and erode the traditional fabric of local kinship. The motif of the stone houses standing in the bleak landscape is also invested with meaning. Despite their disrepair, the skeletons of these structures persist. Again, land and buildings are anthropomorphised, this time taking on the characteristics and indomitable spirit of Irish resistance – of which Collins and his Republican comrades understand themselves to be contemporary incarnations. The capacity of these structures to endure, even as empty shells, demonstrates that, much like the Republican cause, a foundation remains that might one day be refurnished or returned to its former glory.

The examples of Khaled and Collins demonstrate an understanding of kinship and political cause, synonymous, and only fully understandable, with reference to land, time and place. Importantly, these temporal understandings of kinship not only reach back into the past but also extend into the future; necessarily providing projective narratives (such as to reclaim land or resist oppression) that can necessitate and imbue participation in militancy with both immediacy and transcendent collective value. Similar understandings and articulations are found throughout the dataset of accounts examined. Mikail Eldin, for example, equally humanises the city of Grozny trying to hide and protect its defenders

(2013:33), whilst for Omar Cabezas a particular mountain during his life as a guerrilla 'had been our protectress, that had helped us, had hidden us, kept us in her womb' (1985:125). Crucially, in such references the distinction between person, kin and place is eroded, something that permeates certain understandings of kinship with a notion of being innately natural. Militants' narratives often demonstrate how they believe the bond between kinship and land to flow both ways; this earth exercising its own connection towards specific peoples who have resided upon it and become somehow interlinked with it. In this sense, these authors believe their cause and action to be supported and sustained by the land as an extension of the 'natural' order. Such an understanding imbues participation in violence with another form of necessity, importance and sense of inevitability.

Kinship Practices within Militant groups

The second part of this chapter focuses on the kinship that is 'made' between individuals during their time in militant groups. Included are both those persons who may already enjoy some form of metaphorical kinship and those who share no other form of pre-existing relatedness. Whilst the importance afforded to these relationships varies by account, almost all contain examples of the author forming some degree of relatedness with other group members. A number of accounts present shared service in a militant group as a site for the creation of relatedness that rivals any 'given' through blood or familial link. In many cases, such relationships seem to drive individuals' continued participation in militancy. Nevertheless, such connections can be problematic to identify in autobiographical accounts. However, seeing relatedness as a continuum negates the need to make firm delineations when relationships are conceived, for example, as friendship, comradeship or kinship. Not only does such an approach better reflect the nuance of personal relationships – particularly in light of their fluid and ever changing nature – it is also highly unlikely that the messy and uneven information that autobiographical recollections necessarily provide could support a more categorical approach. That said, by employing a narrative approach to map and unpick the signs of relatedness that build and diminish within individual accounts, it is possible to examine relationships of kinship and their change over time.

In examining militant accounts, shared hardship, whether it be in combat or in the general stresses of life underground as part of a clandestine organisation, commonly presents as a means of building significant bonds of relatedness. Mikail Eldin, for instance, describes how it was 'all too easy' to become close to others in circumstances where life and death hung so finely in the balance (2013:273). Having felt the intensity of these bonds, and the pain of losing them, his narration reflects his reticence to allow such connections to again develop. At points, a conscious effort on his behalf to remain detached from the others within his group is clear, not only from his descriptions, but also from the tone and decision to switch to the third person in his narration. He states, 'you were always trying to keep some distance, not to get too close to anyone… And that's why you tried to stay aloof. You were tired of losing friends and comrades in this war' (Eldin, 2013:273). Despite these attempts to insulate himself, the relatedness that forms in such circumstances nevertheless appears difficult to avoid. Here, the narrative methodology used is again revealing as to this gradual process, in particular in interrogating the coherence and tone of Eldin's account of this period. At his most isolated, his descriptions of the world around him are bleak, monotonous and washed out. However, as fresh bonds with new comrades slowly begin to form, so too does the colour creep back into his narration – this despite his claims that he would no longer develop such relationships.

Unlike Eldin, many militants appear reticent to talk openly or find it difficult to fully capture the nature of the relationships that they shared – and often continue to share – with others from their groups. Most express similar sentiments that these bonds will stick with them life. Relatedly, given the unique circumstances of these relationships formation, these authors are unequivocal that they will never find such intense connections elsewhere (Collins, 2003:ii; Farivar, 2009:175). However, beyond this, many authors engage in a degree of romantic nostalgia about these bonds rather than actually discussing these relationships directly. Frequently, absent from their narrations are descriptions of the individuals with whom they shared significant bonds and the nature of these particular relationships. Instead, a number of authors resort to generalities, frequently drawing on tropes about having been 'bands of brothers' and how they enjoyed 'bonds born of combat'. Abdul Salam Zaeef, for example, states 'what a brotherhood we had amongst the *mujahedeen*! ... When I look back on the love and respect we had for each other, it sometimes seems like a dream' (2010:43). Morten Storm also draws

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on clichés in describing members of one group as 'a brotherhood of simple beliefs and unquestioned loyalties' (2014:6).

Militants are more forthcoming in talking about their relationships with other members of their groups in one regard: after they have been killed. Mikail Eldin, again reverting to his unique use of the third-person, describes how the death of another member affected him 'so deeply that it took you a long and painful time to emerge from a profound depression' (2013:273-274 – see also Farivar, 2009:253). This gradual process is also marked by tone and the depiction of time slowly crawling forward employed in his narration. Others reveal that their commitment to ideology or cause was rocked by the death of certain members of their group, often to the extent that they questioned their own involvement (Cabezas, 1985:121; de Soyza, 2011:252). In such circumstances, feelings of relatedness also present themselves through actions rather than words. In particular, the accounts contain descriptions of practices that indicate the existence of significant emotional connections, in particular, those that pertain to certain personal rituals, ceremonies and acts of memorialisation for fallen comrades. A number of authors talk about investing specific physical objects given to them by deceased individuals with meaning, even if they are not always fully aware of the full significance themselves. Mikail Eldin, states after being wounded; 'for some reason those smashed binoculars, a gift from a comrade who dies a week earlier … bother you more than blood issuing from your head' (2013:62). After a fellow militant, considered a close friend, died in battle, Omar Hammami recalls how he would 'take on his Kunyaa as a means of preserving his heritage' (2012:93). Both of these gestures perform traditional family functions in securing heirlooms and providing an heir to continue the comrade's lineage and name. Autobiographical texts themselves can also provide sites for memorialisation, particularly via their paratextual components. Significantly, dedications are often written to former comrades. Aukai Collins' admission, for example, that 'not a day goes by' (2003:ii) without him thinking of a number of those who had died in combat, sheds new light on the importance afforded to these relationships.

The need to memorialise others, however, is not always something individuals find easy to do. Niromi de Soyza, for example, in the aftermath of the deaths of many of her close comrades, explains how she felt weighed down under 'the burden of keeping their memories alive and making their dream come true' (2011:252), something that eventually became unbearable and impacted upon her decision

to leave militancy behind. Given the lingering and very real prospect of one's own death that often accompanies militant involvement, the need to ensure that fallen comrades live on is understandably, not an entirely selfless act. Instead, the decision to engage in such practices, in part at least, appears motivated by ideas that one's own legacy would live on in the event of the author's own death, with a number of militants expressing such sentiment explicitly (see for example, O'Doherty, 2011:40).

Memorialisation aside, the impact of these personal relationships on individuals' continued engagement in militancy appears significant. First, these bonds induce individuals to make costly sacrifices that ultimately benefit the group as a whole. Many authors are adamant in stating that they would lay down their own lives for their comrades. The idea of letting one's comrades down is commonly narrated as the author's biggest fear, even more so than any severe personal repercussions or even their own deaths (Crawford, 2003:75). A number claim they themselves owe their lives to these bonds (Zaeef, 2010:37; Eldin, 2013:205). Second, these kinship bonds often become crucial in sustaining individuals' continued involvement in groups. María Eugenia Vásquez Perdomo, states of her devotion to the M-19, 'ideology alone could not achieve this feeling. It was the passionate love for my compañeros [comrades] that was the motor of my life' (2005:102). The strength of these connections proves influential not only in difficult times but rather throughout her engagement in militancy. A number of militants, however, do talk of how their personal connections with those within their groups kept them from desisting when they were considering their options, something that I will return to later.

Groups to Families

In their accounts, militants from across various contexts frequently come to describe those around them as 'family' (Collins, 1998:158; Crawford, 2003:70; Vásquez Perdomo, 2005:97; Farivar, 2009:123). Here, the absence of a genetic link can be interpreted as something that strengthens this understanding of relatedness. Khaled al-Berry argues that his comrades 'were an extended family, one chosen by God, and not just kinfolk imposed upon one' (2009:38 – see also Zaeef, 2010:22). The idea of groups being a 'chosen family', albeit one chosen by god rather than the individual members themselves, then speaks directly to anthropological and sociological conceptualisations of kinship in

gay and lesbian families (Weston 1991, 1995; Weeks et al. 2001). Here, the notion that all of those involved have chosen to share a certain commitment and goal is interpreted as something that binds them. Whilst still highlighting this closeness, others reject the idea of familial language being able to fully capture the relatedness they enjoyed with their comrades; 'we weren't a family…, that was certain. We were something much better' (Nasiri, 2006:178). The bonds constituted within militant groups are then often understood to be imbued with a permanence and certainty in circumstances where biological kinship has been thoroughly disrupted. In particular, many militants contrast the close ties they find in groups with those they have lost or that have become strained with their biological families because of their decision to engage in political violence (Hasselbach, 1996; Collins, 2003). Here, the love of their comrades, by contrast, is often presented as unconditional, something that can cause significant ruptures in individuals' self-narratives when they attempt to leave these groups (something, again, that is explored later in this chapter).

These close ties, however, usually only relate to a small group of individuals, namely those that the author operated or lived closely with. Detailed descriptions of significant relationships are usually limited to a few individuals. Masood Farivar, for example, paints a detailed picture of each of those within his *mujahedeen* unit who made up his group of close friends (2009:37-141 – see also Zaeef, 2010:28; Eldin, 2013:273). A number of authors describe these groups exercising a level of care and help towards one another that could only feasibly be shared between a select or small number of individuals (Nasiri, 2006:152). Included were a number of tasks commonly found within families, such as checking that others had eaten enough or looking after individuals who were unwell. In this sense, militant groups frequently resemble conventional military units in being a collection of smaller family-like squads that together make up a larger unit (Woodward and Jenkins, 2011:261).

In certain contexts, however, the accounts examined reveal the development of larger, often more formal, overarching family structures that include all members of the militant group. Nasser al-Bahri recalls that Tarnak Farms, an al-Qaeda training camp made up of 'fifty families, around two hundred people' (2013:79), despite its size, took on such a guise. Whilst all of those present would have enjoyed a sense of metaphorical kinship derived from their shared membership of the *umma*, al-Bahri's account hints at a family-like structure within the camp that further delineated how individuals

perceived their relatedness with one another. Unsurprisingly, he recalls how Osama bin Laden occupied a paternal position as head of the group, something that the unit's leader was more than happy to encourage (elsewhere scholars have noted bin Laden's propensity to nourish this paternal image – see for example, Gerges, 2005:36)

The means by which this familial structure was reinforced elsewhere is also interesting. For example, after a disagreement, a senior member of the group explained to al-Bahri that 'the Sheikh [bin Laden] was reproaching you in a fatherly way' (2013:70). Here specific familial terminology (outside of that commonly used to refer to all other members such as 'brother') is used to reinforce this image. Moreover, in taking it upon themselves to attempt to smooth over and explain such a disagreement, this senior member assumes a position akin to that of an older family member. al-Bahri describes how bin Laden's 'favourite wife', Um Hamza, also assumed the role of 'mother of all the jihadis' as well as providing advice and guidance to the wives of fighters (2013:154). al-Bahri claims that this familial structure contributed to an absence of conflict within the camp (2013:211). However, other aspects of his narration appear to contradict this idea. In particular, an atmosphere permeated his description, of competition for the attention and ear of this father figure permeates his descriptions of the camp which exacerbated underlying tensions that centred around the nationality of fighters. Furthermore, it appears that bin Laden's preference for concealing any frictions and promoting the idea of the group as a cohesive pseudo-family meant that tensions between different factions were never addressed and allowed to fester and become pervasive (2013:211).

Whilst instances of militant groups taking on the guise of families in their entirety are rare, a number of authors describe their experiences of occupying certain familial roles within their groups and of the impact of these roles upon their own militant careers. In particular, many of those who found paternal influences in militant groups (see chapter five), talked of transitioning to become father figures to other younger members themselves (Hasselbach, 1996; Crawford, 2003:72). Ingo Hasselbach, for example, recalls his guilt at knowing the emotional toll his desistence from the Neo-Nazi scene would cause for younger members who looked to him to perform such a role. Even after his decision to break from the group and renounce its ideology, his commitment to this role persisted, his account describing how struggled with the idea that he was abandoning these vulnerable younger individuals to a life of

violence and extremism (1996:339). For others, continuing the paternalist role they had occupied within militant groups was important for their own desistence. Michael Stone presents his post-prison work, offering guidance to young people at risk of paramilitary involvement, as an extension of the role he had occupied during his incarceration looking after and advising younger comrades. Stone frames this paternal role as something that steered him away from the prospect of recidivism and provided an alternative way to find meaning and purpose beyond militancy (2003:238).

Leaving These Bonds Behind

The accounts reveal that the personal bonds formed over the course of militant involvement are not easy to sever. In the process of desistence, many authors recall that feelings of loyalty and relatedness to former comrades persisted long after they had personally disavowed these groups, their supporting ideologies or otherwise made the decision to leave (de Soyza, 2011:293). Eamon Collins' account, in particular, highlights that desisting from militancy is a complex, multifaceted and drawn out process – something made infinitely harder by the lingering bond of kinship with his former comrades. Despite his deep disillusionment with the IRA and wider Republican movement, at both an ideological and personal level, he nevertheless explains that 'no one ceases to be a revolutionary nationalist overnight' (1998:361). Despite being publicly denounced, disowned and exiled by the IRA, Collins still states: 'sometimes I would surprise myself with the strength of sympathy I felt for my former comrades' (1998:361). In particular, he recalls 'feeling an incredible visceral rage' when three members of the PIRA were shot dead by the British security forces. He states:

> Rationally, I could not properly explain where my feelings came from. After all, I
> believed that the armed struggle was pointless and I accepted that in war combatants
> ran the risk of being killed. But emotionally I wanted to attend those funerals and – if
> I am honest – I wanted to see the IRA hit back (1998:361).

Collins' frank and critical self-reflection reveals that whilst he managed physically and rationally to divorce himself from the IRA's ideology and disengage from his social ties to its members, he did not at the same time fully sever his emotional connection to the group. A number of authors similarly present themselves as unaware of how difficult the process of relinquishing these ties would be. Ingo Hasselbach, for example, recalls his need to say goodbye to each member of his group individually before making his decision to disengage from militancy known (1996:338). He claims that the actions of these former comrades to target his family with violence afterwards came as something of a shock given the feelings and respect he still felt for them; 'I'd still had some naïve idea that they would value our friendship as something separate from our ideological connection' (1996:363). Tellingly, he also describes how this action was 'the final step in making me realize that any feelings of camaraderie or friendship that had survived my renunciation of the Cause were false' (1996:xii). The lexical choice of the term 'false' here to refer to his own feelings is revealing. In particular, Hasselbach recognises that he could no longer fully trust his own judgement given that the emotional legacy of these bonds was clouding his ability to think logically about his desistance. In this sense then, these feelings needed to be consciously resisted and repressed as part of the process of leaving the group.

A critical element of desistence from militancy for a number of authors is the process of accepting that they can survive without the emotional and relational crutch that close-knit clandestine groups provide. Many have devoted and lived significant proportions of their lives within these structures with some having little or no experience of living outside a militant group as an adult. As argued, Vásquez Perdomo's account is characterised by an underlying need for the strong emotional bonds of love, trust and acceptance she found only in militancy. She simply states that her comrades were 'my universe' (2005:97). Even whilst an active member of the M-19, she recalls the reality of enforced time spent away from her comrades, such as during the birth of her son, as 'suffocating' (2005:59). In the process of desisting then the act of attempting to build an individual rather shared identity and understanding of oneself proves difficult. David Hamilton states that he 'had no confidence in doing something outside the group, I had what is known as a "gang-set mentality"' (Hamilton, 1997:110). The need to develop an alternative identity and lingering sense of belonging to a collective may account, in part, for why a number of militants examined in the dataset went on to join religious

groups or organisations that provided both social structures and connotations of being part of something bigger (Hamilton, 1997; McClinton, 2011; Little, 2013).

How is this Kinship Constituted?

Whilst many authors are eager to stress that they developed significant bonds with others in militant groups, beyond the idea of kinship being forged through shared involvement in combat, the process of unearthing how this relatedness was constituted proves something of a difficult undertaking. Few authors talk explicitly and in-depth about how their relationships with others developed. Again, applied narrative analysis and the ability to piece and tie together how small actions and statements hint at larger thematic undercurrents is crucial in disclosing these mechanisms. The accounts reveal that those who occupy leadership positions within militant groups are frequently keen to foster a sense of kinship between members. Notions of brotherly, nonsexual love and feelings of mutual trust, honour and loyalty are all seen as essential, not only to the ability of militant groups to carry out violent operations but also for their continued existence. Conventional military forces have long sought to encourage the creation of such emotions between recruits, in part at least, by stripping away their previous personal allegiances and providing them with a new 'family' (Woodward and Jenkins, 2011; Græger, 2019). Many authors recall how militant groups look to imitate one of the key methods used by militaries worldwide to create this kinship; enacting conditions of significant shared hardship on recruits in the course of their training. Omar Hammami describes in depth the training practices of al-Shabaab (some which are lifted directly from those of US special forces), that in punishing the entire group for the failings of the weakest, build a sense of collective unity (2012:55). His account highlights how the buds of kinship emerge in such situation; 'one British Somaali brother was trying to help us all out by changing the environment from one of forced torture to volunteering for hell. He would give the brothers morale and everyone was making *Takbiir* [the pronouncement that 'God is [the] greatest']' (2012:55). Omar Cabezas, similarly describes in detail how the intense and brutal training regime of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) in the jungles of Nicaragua gradually forged him and his comrades into a collective whole:

By dint of violent shocks day after day, the new man was born … a man –it might seem

incredible – but an open, egotistical man, no longer petty – a tender man who sacrifices

himself for others, a man who gives everything for others, who suffers when others

suffer and who also laughs when others laugh (1985:87).

Whilst often applied in a haphazard manner, such methods are credited elsewhere with instilling deep personal bonds that included trust between members of militant groups (Nasiri, 2006:164; Eldin, 2013:262).

Whether in training, combat, operations or at other points, the accounts also reveal the importance of the everyday contact between militants for building relatedness, something that appears to conform to modern anthropological understandings of how shared time, locality or residence 'make' kinship (Carsten, 2004:40; Lambert, 2000:80). In particular, many accounts recall the jovial atmospheres within militant organisations, with humour often presented as one of the building blocks of in-group relations (Conway, 2014:90; Collins, 2003:171; al-Bahri, 2013:133). Practical jokes are reported as being common, something necessary to pass the time, to alleviate boredom and help relive the sustained fear and tension that often comes with militant involvement (Cabezas, 1985:157; Drif, 2017:186-187). Gilbert Ramsay has stressed the importance of humour within jihadi groups and that jihad is ultimately meant to be an experience that is looked back on fondly (quoted in Copeland, Morrow and Moore, 2017:12). In the accounts examined, kinship appears to blossom from such actions, something that was often recognised by militant commanders who encouraged a relaxed atmosphere within their ranks (see for example, Farivar, 2009:141). The ordering by which Omar Hammami lists his grievances in not being able to communicate with his fellow members is telling as to the importance of humour for him: 'I don't remember having one joke, one suggestion, or one idea understood properly for the greater portion of a year' (2012:70). Joking around, however, is also said to have caused frictions within groups at certain points. In particular, these conflicts are frequently described as exacerbating generational splits and often follow a similar pattern of older veterans disapproving and becoming infuriated with the behaviour of younger recruits, sometimes to the point where individuals from both

sides were pushed to leave groups (see for example, Adair, 2009). Aukai Collins, for instance, gleefully tells of how his self-image as something of a joker earned him the wrath of older fighters and dismissal from not one but two militant groups (2003:45, 93-94).

Across contexts, daily life as a member of a militant group is also infused with shared rules, codes, rituals, and practices. Existing research has recognised the place of those practices with ideological connotations as a crucial means of building shared identities within social movements and militant groups (Ramsay, 2013; Hegghammer, 2017). However, the accounts examined reveal the importance of more mundane everyday practices, those that share on limited or no link to ideology, in fostering and cementing kinship within such groups. Here, the capacity of autobiography to offer a window into the minutia of daily life is revealing. Whilst the eating practices of militant groups may appear a supplementary consideration in examining their internal cohesion, the sharing of food is something that many authors devoted great attention to. For many militant groups, communal eating is a necessity, dictated by conditions and logistics rather than conscious choice. Similarly, in these times of hardship and few luxuries that often accompany militant involvement, food and the act of eating take on great significance. Contemporary anthropological understandings of relatedness stress that such practices – particularly those associated with the preparation and consumption of food – are crucial in creating and sustaining bonds between individuals. Significantly, such actions bridge different conceptions of the building blocks of relatedness and family; notably family practices (Morgan, 1996) and the notion that bonds of relatedness are created and reinforced over time through the consumption of the same substance (Carsten, 2000:22; Hutchinson, 2000:60; Stafford, 2000:39).

First, many militants present the act of eating together as a great leveller within groups. Multiple accounts describe how group hierarchies were stripped away as leaders and senior figures sat down together with rank-and-file members to eat the same food, something that in itself fostered a sense of solidarity and uniformity (al-Bahri, 2013:74; Storm, 2014:147). This time set aside for eating together also mirrors a fundamental family practice that takes place in domestic households, even if only dictated out of necessity. A number of accounts describe how this custom commonly provided an opportunity for members to talk, share stories and, as one militant describes it, 'tightened our comradery' (Vásquez Perdomo, 2005:45 – see also Cabezas, 1985:69). Masood Farivar recalls another militant stating at one

point that 'eating the food next to my best friends makes me feel like I'm in heaven' (2009:164). The act of eating certain foods together in celebration of special occasions (Hamilton, 1997:41; Little, 2009:87) again imitates those practices that take place within families. A number of accounts also recall how significant importance was placed on marking individuals' birthdays with meals (Cabezas, 1985:66; Drif, 2017:187), something that is not only a family practice but one which emphasises the idea that individual members were valued as more than mere comrades by the rest of their group.

A number of authors also recall instances of how they provided food for their group. Such an action is commonly associated with family life, although often understood as an obligation rather than a mark of close ties of relatedness (Goulbourne et al. 2010:143; Morgan 2011:67). In the accounts examined, however, these undertakings were accompanied with positive feelings. Omar Nasiri describes how providing food for his group became a means to express his close feelings towards them; 'I had never felt so loved in my life, so taken care of. And I wanted to take care of them as well. Once, I gave Ibn Sheikh some money to buy a sheep so we could eat it at the camp…when we ate the meat, it was wonderful to see the brothers so happy' (2006:178). Similarly, the actions of many militants in paying for food for the group, personally going without so that others could eat or sharing certain luxury items, indicate that a deeper sense of relatedness often accompanied these behaviours (Collins, 2003:325; de Soyza, 2011:293; Hammami, 2012:68; al-Bahri, 2013:132). In this sense, the act of providing others with sustenance becomes an important means of giving oneself to the group, strengthening the idea that one's future and that of the group are intrinsically intertwined. Other militants describe being the recipient of such altruism and how this only strengthened the bond between themselves and other members (Collins, 2003:42; Farivar, 2009:139; Eldin, 2013:261).

Studies of relatedness demonstrate that in various contexts the blood of individuals unconnected by genetic link is conceived to become progressively more similar as they consume the same substance (Weismantel, 1995; Carsten, 2004). As Janet Carsten argues, 'if food is gradually transformed into blood in the body, and those who live together come to resemble each other as well as develop emotional closeness, then in the long term this is surely a quite literal process of creating kinship' (2004:139). In this sense, the actual food that militants consume within groups becomes important. In consuming the same – often meagre – food, militants often describe themselves and their

comrades becoming similar. A number talk of how their physical appearances changed, their narrations hinting at how both this and the ability to endure such hardship became markers of group membership and identity (Cabezas, 1985; Collins, 2003; Nasiri, 2006; Farivar, 2009). By contrast, individuals who left during training or operations were often those who couldn't handle the food itself, or the lack of it. The result is that the group became a leaner, sharper and absolutely committed whole; the 'fat' – or those not willing to endure such hardship for the cause and collective – shed along the way. In this sense, food becomes part of the myth or script that members in militant groups frequently tell about themselves that hardship is necessary to forge them into a collective group. It is also a central part of what they believe partaking in such action necessarily entails. Through these narratives a certain form of kinship develops between members of militant groups. A caveat has to be made here, however. Discussions of food were generally only found in the accounts of those whose militant involvement included significant time spent in camps, training in the field or engaged in prolonged periods of combat. For those militants who operated in an urban setting or did not live communally, there was frequently not as much mention of food or its importance in their relations with others.

Lingering Divisions and the Breaking Down of Kinship

Despite virtually all the authors recalling having formed some sort of kinship with fellow members, the accounts also confirm the presence of internal splits, rivalries and competition that often develop within these organisations. A number of militants recall finding themselves on the receiving end of internal feuds (Moloney, 2010:287; Adair, 2009:118). These conflicts take on a different dimension, however, in those groups which claim to eschew nationality, ethnicity or some other pre-existing differences in favour of the higher kin loyalties that members share via their inclusion in broader imagined, supra-national communities or causes. Without explicitly expressing such preferences, a number of authors demonstrate their inclination to associate with individuals that resemble themselves. Narrative analysis suggests that militants from Western backgrounds who travelled abroad to take part in jihad overseas frequently end up associating closely with those from similar backgrounds (see for example, Collins, 2003:42). Omar Hammami, who travelled from America

to Somalia to fight with al-Shabaab, paints a depressing and fractious picture of the first year of his membership of al-Shabaab fighting and living alongside local Somali fighters. Not only does his account detail a significant 'cultural barrier' (2012:70) between himself and these fighters, it also gives examples of any kinship they enjoyed as co-religionists being actively 'unmade' through the very same practices that appear to create relatedness in groups. In particular, Hammami recalls how acts such as the stealing and hording of food were commonplace, and that even the act of eating invited conflict and competition between members (2012:69). A significant change in the tone of his narration occurs when his group is joined by a number of mainly Western fighters (2012:82). Gone is the petty infighting and conflict, instead replaced in his narration with descriptions of 'classic memories' and 'Kodak moment[s]' (2012:84-85) shared between the Muhaajiriin. Emphasising the upturn in atmosphere, the text is frequently interjected with references to 'haha' and exclamation marks indicating that it is meant to be performed aloud to stress the joviality of the events described. In stark contrast to the lack of description of the local fighters, the backstories of many of the Muhaajiriin are provided. These individuals are referred to in endearing terms such as being 'amusing', 'very sincere' or a 'real character' (Hammami, 2012:84-86).

Such divisions are not only apparent in the accounts of Islamist militants from Western backgrounds. Despite his assertions that all members were united as both Arabs and Muslims, Nasser al-Bahri's account of his time in an al-Qaeda training camp is littered with references to a deep and long running division between fighters from the Arabian Peninsula and Egyptian members of the group (2013:97, 149). Subtle nods in his account allude to the idea that he himself is also happier to associate closely with those of similar backgrounds (2013:116). Even the presence of the overarching family-like structure previously described could not close this rift. Crucially, al-Bahri blames these divisions for his own falling out with bin Laden and eventual departure from the group. He states, 'it wasn't al-Qaeda that betrayed me, it was the Egyptians round…Osama' (2013:168). Elsewhere the division between Arab volunteers and those from elsewhere, that occurred in various militant contexts and that has been well documented in existing scholarship (see for example, Gerges, 2005:83), is also present in the accounts of those who took part in these conflicts (Collins, 2003:29; Nasiri, 2006; and Farivar, 2009:178). These individuals, however, do not narrate this split as having such an impact on their own

engagement in these groups. Whilst splits were found in other contexts, these divisions were less pronounced. This may, however, be explained by the more homogenous and less transnational nature of membership in other groups.

Whilst the sustained pressure of combat or life underground can build relationships of intense solidarity, for some these conditions can be equally destructive in breaking down or preventing feelings of relatedness. Here, Giorgio's account of his life in Prima Linea provides an illuminating example of some of the tensions, conflicts and tales of disunity found in a number of other accounts (2003 – see also O'Doherty, 2011; Schiller, 2009; Alpert, 1991). In particular, the changing tone of his narrative discourse is revealing in this regard. His autobiography opens with a vibrant and evocative description of his childhood vacations and early days as a teenage activist. However, as his account progresses through his engagement in militancy and what he calls the 'neurotic experience of living underground' (2003:175), this activity takes its toll to the extent that the colour in his narration slowly drains away over time. Instead, an emotionless, detached way of speaking about himself creeps in. Whilst many of his actions are undertaken alone, he also describes his experience of living with three other militants when preparing for a complex operation (2003:164). Giorgio is frank in describing the tensions – that at certain points almost culminate in violence – and deep sense of hatred of one another that develops between them (2003:169). He states, 'the life we lead does not encourage solidarity, but rather tension, resentment, and constant conflict' (2003:163). Here, the oppressive nature of life underground eats away at his ability to connect with anyone, and his narrative becomes one of a man breaking apart. Crucially, his desperation for connections with others who are not part of this militant world drives him to engage in actions that risk him being discovered – engaging the services of prostitutes (2003:178) – and incurring the wrath of his organisation – writing to a girlfriend despite being explicitly forbidden to do so (2003:128). It also leads him to reconnect with the family he has become estranged from.

Whilst instances of conflict and tension within groups are presented in accounts from across the dataset, the vast majority of examples of relations and kinship between members breaking down come from contexts in which authors were operating underground, usually in an urban setting, as part of a small team, often for extended periods of time. The inability to escape other members for even a short period, and the claustrophobic conditions of this particular type of militancy, appear to have

contributed to these conflicts. Here, the very means by which kinship is often said to be made, through shared time, residence and contact, can prove to be that by which relatedness is eroded. In this sense, understandings of how and where kinship forms in militant groups must always be properly contextualised. Whilst many of the accounts conform to anthropological and sociological arguments that prolonged contact and shared residence are crucial factors in creating relatedness, situations where there is little respite from others can then induce the very opposite, generating significant breakdowns in relations between members of militant groups.

Conclusion

Two forms of kinship found in militants' accounts have been considered in this chapter. In regard to the first, across the broad dataset of accounts, it was clear that different understandings of metaphorical kinship had a significant impact on individuals' engagement in militancy across various contexts, both Western and non-Western. The idea that this form of kinship is only relevant to some groups or in the motivations of individuals from certain backgrounds, cultures or locations is strongly rejected. However, as the examples given demonstrate, metaphorical kinship, and importantly its link to individuals' participation in violence, requires deep contextualisation. This includes consideration of an author's subjective understanding of bodily substance, time, place and land. Without this, it is not possible to understand either how individuals constitute their relationships with others, or how such relationships relate to their decision making regarding militant engagement. Militants' narratives reveal the fluidity and flexibility that comes with metaphorical understandings of kinship. It must be stressed that all individuals who are 'given' kinship – for instance, being born a certain nationality – nevertheless still pick and choose which elements of this kinship they draw upon. Similarly, it is not the case this kinship is necessarily only assigned to a select few. Instead, membership of these imagined communities, in certain circumstances, can be 'earned' through particular actions. Significantly, these understandings 'do' a wide range of things for these authors that both explain and/or make their participation in militancy somehow necessary.

In regard to the second half of the chapter, it is clear from the accounts analysed that militant engagement was almost universally marked by the creation of bonds of kinship between participants. Kinship is 'made' through everyday contact and common human experiences (such as eating), even within the unusual settings of militant groups. Analysis demonstrates that a better comprehension of how these regular, ordinary activities come to hold particular meanings that imbue the bonds within these groups with a specific importance can inform our understanding of how individuals' become emotionally tied in to these groups. What is also clear is that the kinship made through this means within these settings is capable of being unmade through the very same processes. The accounts examined also reveal certain potential fracture lines or moments. First, despite many groups eschewing common political constructs of identity such as nationality or ethnicity in favour of higher kin loyalties, the accounts examined reveal that, despite these lofty aims, old divisions still linger. Members of these groups find it difficult to escape pervasive cultural narratives that, for much of their lives, have defined how they see themselves and others. The multinational and diverse ethnic make-up of many militant groups then becomes both a strength and a weakness. Individuals who join often look to find others from similar backgrounds, and in their absence may become disillusioned with life inside these groups. On the flip side, individuals from different backgrounds inevitably bring their own, pre-existing prejudices and grievances that when collectively shared can create and exacerbate fracture lines within their membership. It should not be assumed that the development of familial structures within militant groups is necessarily a successful means for managing these internal conflicts, nor a positive factor in their long-term survival. Crucially, kinship in neither of the senses discussed in this chapter can be considered in any way 'fictive'. As the examples discussed have demonstrated, these understandings of one's connection to others dictate how individuals live their lives, chose to engage in violence and even sacrifice their lives for these bonds.

Conclusion: Reflections on Kin and Peers, Narrative and Militancy

Introduction

This thesis has demonstrated the importance of kin and peer networks for understanding individuals' engagement in militancy through a rich descriptive analysis of a unique dataset of autobiographical accounts. The first part of the thesis looked at existing approaches to the study of kinship and militancy, kin and peer networks and the transmission of ideology. The first chapter explored what kinship is and how existing scholarship, for the most part, applies only a very narrow reading of it – grounded almost exclusively in terms of genetic links – to the study of militant networks. This approach marginalises the voices of the actors involved and neglects crucial dimensions of how these individuals constitute their relations to others, shaping both analysis and the conclusions drawn. Chapter one then proposed an alternative approach, demonstrating how relatedness provides a much more flexible means to think about the myriad of ways individuals conceive of their connections with others. At the same time this approach allows analysis to remain cognisant of the continuing importance of biological links and traditional family, kin and peer roles.

The second chapter explored ideological transmission and argued that analysing actors' accounts – in particular, how individuals gather available narrative material to construct storyworlds – provides a more nuanced means for answering questions as to 'what', 'where' and 'how' beliefs, values and ideas are communicated, diffused and transferred in kin and peer groups. Furthermore, approaching kin and peer groups as narrative networks with inherent cultures of their own, helps shed light on how these connections not only communicate ideas and beliefs via stories but also negotiate and shape individually-held meanings. The second part of the thesis explained the method and methodology I employed in the thesis, as well as outlining the parameters of the study. Chapter three introduced the dataset of autobiographies and explained how this corpus of texts had been selected and compiled. I offered some limited quantitative analysis of the dataset, which highlighted the limited number of conclusions that could be drawn through numerical and statistical research alone. The fourth chapter

presented the theoretical basis for the narrative methodology employed. This chapter also developed a means for systematically interrogating accounts through the direct application of an analytic framework onto autobiographical texts.

The third part of the study, in chapters five to seven, undertook a rich descriptive analysis of the role, influence and impact of families, peers and metaphorical understandings of kinship and kinship practices that occur within militant groups respectively. These chapters answered the questions driving this study, exploring who it is that militants narrate as being significant in their engagement in violence and the different means by which these individuals understand kin and peers to have influenced them. This analysis demonstrated that non-biologically based forms of kinship occur in virtually every account examined and, in the vast majority of these cases, impacted significantly on these individuals' decisions to join, remain involved in, or desist from militancy.

The following chapter discusses the broader lessons of this study for thinking about the place of kin and peer networks in militant engagement. It considers the merits of interrogating militants' accounts and reflects on how a greater understanding of narrative can facilitate analysis of these underutilised texts. The chapter concludes by discussing the contribution of the study and outlines a number of avenues for further research.

What We Can Learn from Militants' Self-Narratives

Research on militancy has not escaped the narrative-turn that has taken place across the social sciences in the last 20 years. This study draws upon, and sits within, a recent body of theoretical work that seeks to understand and analyse not just the content of militant narratives, but also their texture (Kendall, 2015, 2016; Miller, 2015; Glazzard, 2017; Creswell and Haykel, 2017; Holbrook, 2017, 2019). Studying militants' autobiographies through such means tells us a great deal about how these individuals understand the world and their actions. In doing so, this thesis adds to a broader body of scholarly work on autobiography, narrative and conflict (Clark, 2013; Coates 2015; Copeland 2019; Steans, unpublished; Steans, forthcoming). The accounts examined give further weight to the idea that militants are both interested in and consumers of, stories as well as keen storytellers themselves (see

for example, Gilbert Ramsay – quoted in Copeland, Morrow and Moore, 2017:12; Hegghammer 2017:191-192; Copeland 2018:247). The importance of narrative to these individuals is evidenced by the frequency with which instances of transportation to narrative worlds – or periods of being so subsumed in a text that the reader, momentarily at, least leave the real world behind – occur in the texts examined. Such findings support Andrews' (2014) position that for these individuals the real and imaginary are not that far apart, but rather share a boundary that is permeable. I then make a case for approaching militants' accounts as a means to explore and analyse the personal storyworlds that militants create and place their actions within when comprehending the world. Doing so allows us to examine where narrative materials are gathered from (whether these be from kin or elsewhere) and interwoven into these storyworlds. In contrast to statistical research or large-N studies, this approach allows for the transmission of beliefs, ideas and ideology to be considered in a nuanced manner. In particular, it allows analysis of where the different facets and the building blocks of an individual's outlook and view of the world are taken from. Furthermore, this thesis has demonstrated that stories do things for these individuals. It is through stories that militants bridge the rift between holding beliefs that appear incongruous and engaging in actions that otherwise seem to contravene these beliefs.

However, this thesis makes another notable contribution. Although other studies have analysed what it is that those within extremist milieus consume – that is the contents and form of ideological texts and militant produced media (Ramsay 2013; Holbrook 2017, 2019) – this research does not examine how these texts are consumed. Subjecting autobiographies to narrative analysis makes observing such consumption possible. Significantly, the corpus of accounts examined reveal that consumption is often a shared process; something only undertaken with peers. Certain texts appear designed to be consumed for the purpose of collective entertainment as much as for information or guidance. Whilst this study has stressed the importance of certain gatekeepers responsible for dictating how stories circulate, my analysis also sheds light on the importance of individuals who perform similar roles when considering the physical distribution of texts. Accounting for the role of these figures adds another dimension to the analysis of networks and their capacity to influence members by exposing them to ideas and beliefs through a different medium to direct interaction.

At a more general level, the thesis presents a methodology to account for the process of transmission. Access to empirical data continues to be one of the central challenges for researching political violence. Despite this, autobiographies – and the systematic analysis of a corpus of these texts - remain an underutilised source of data and insight. Of course, this is not the first study to interrogate militants' self-narratives. However, existing studies have been dominated by psychological understandings of narrative. Like terrorism studies itself, narrative sits across many different disciplines. A central contribution of this thesis has been to draw together and demonstrate how theoretical insights drawn not only from psychological accounts of narrative but also those found in literary studies, philosophy, sociology, international relations and, more recently, narrative criminology can be brought to bear in analysing these texts. Clear accounts of how to analyse data through narrative analysis remain rare. I go some way to rectifying this problem by providing a detailed explanation of the methodology used. Narrative analysis has often faced criticism for being overly reliant on the curiosities and judgement of the analyst and by this line of argument it is often difficult to replicate. In addition to laying a more robust theoretical footing for undertaking narrative analysis, I demonstrate how a corpus-based approach - can be analysed in a methodical and systematic manner (see for example, Moore, Youngman and Copeland, forthcoming).

This methodology has significant application for policymakers and practitioners. First, it allows us to assesses the modes of transmission by which ideas and beliefs that relate to violence are passed on. Second, it helps us to understand the contexts in which militants quit. Third, a greater appreciation of narrative as a means to systematically assess the texture of militant narratives is crucial for understanding their appeal and resonance. Although applied here to individuals' accounts of their experiences, this framework may also be applied to different forms of militant output including propaganda, media interviews and communiqués. In doing so, this may assist law enforcement practitioners in attempting to disrupt extremist narratives. At the same time, the framework can be used to develop effective alternative narratives (as opposed to counter-narratives). Finally, this methodology and framework is useful for assessing the individuals that surround the authors of narrative accounts. Militants are not always forthcoming, and sometimes deliberately misleading, in attributing influence for their own views and actions to those around them. Here the narrative methodology advocated – that

tugs at the smaller, less visible threads found within accounts can reveal much more than the author intended – and can be used as a tool to help assess whether bystanders such as friends, peers, kin and family members share the same extremist beliefs.

It is also vital to identify and highlight the limitations, as well as the strengths, of this methodology. Some narrative elements, for instance, remain difficult to fully capture and integrate into the analytic framework. The changing tone of an author's narration often proves indicative of their feelings of kinship, or a lack thereof, with those around them. Moreover, the 'colour' of their narrative discourse often shifts, draining and creeping back into their accounts as does their sense of isolation, despair and hope. Analysing these elements requires an appreciation of a text as a whole and a means to track any change in narrative discourse, however subtle, over the course of reading a text and the events depicted within it. Here it is crucial to recognise that this framework should be seen as a starting point rather than something that exhaustively captures every means through which elements of a narrative may prove revealing. Despite the systemisation afforded by the framework, the role of the analyst, their creativity and intuition remains central in interrogating texts. Narratives are complicated, multi-layered and can be read in a multitude of ways. A proper analysis of narrative is sensitive to context, the fluid nature of language and meanings and, often, the absence of certain variables. Such analysis cannot therefore be completed by computerised software alone. Even though analysts using the framework must be cognisant of their own potential biases, the interests and experience that they inevitably bring to the table should be seen as supplementary, rather than detrimental for studying narrative texts.

Kin and Peer Influences

The existing literature emphasises the importance of kin and peers for exposing individuals to those already involved in militant groups and those who hold extremist beliefs. This study does not dispute this notion but rather, offers ample further evidence of kin, families and peers performing such role. Yet without further contextualisation these conclusions are of limited value; such links do not in

themselves explain how or why individuals come to be involved in violence nor do they explain how their influence and impact changes over the course of an individual's engagement.

Analysis of the corpus of autobiographies complied reveals that kin and peer influences are divergent, complex and highly sensitive to context. That said, this thesis nevertheless identifies and draws together a number of conclusions that hold across different contexts, as well as those that relate to interrogating these relationships. As a starting point, it demonstrates how relatedness provides a better starting point for thinking about the connections individuals enjoy towards others. Abstract theorising, however, is of little value without practical application. My analysis has demonstrated that the model presented can be leveraged in practice. Crucially, whilst this approach allows analysis to move beyond traditional roles associated with kin and family members it does not discount their continued importance in many militants' accounts. In various different contexts, certain family figures occupy similar roles and impact upon individuals' understanding of the world in comparable ways.

Fathers featured prominently in the accounts examined. However, even in the cases of militants who had fathers who were members or supporters of militant groups, across the board the authors examined were reticent about attributing influence for their own actions or thinking to them. Fathers instead were frequently painted as focused on their family not on conflicts or political causes, although narrative analysis often revealed that their political views were stronger than the authors made out. It is here where relatedness and a narrative reading of these accounts came into their own in another regard; the ability to account for how relationships, and their impacts, change over time. Many of those militants who sought or found father figures in militant groups described how they themselves would later transition to take on these roles for younger members. Significantly, acting in such capacity was often described as influential during these individuals decision-making about whether or not to desist from these groups. By contrast many militants were much more open to ascribing responsibility to their mothers for shaping their views of the world. Across contexts mothers were charged with keeping traditions – including those associated with militancy – alive, and making sure that they were passed on to their children. Commonly, mothers were also narrated are acting as moral arbiters, again, having the responsibility for teaching and enforcing conceptions of right and wrong within the family. Here, mothers were understood as having a significant and lasting influence. If personal beliefs are thought

of as layers, that like sediment build on top of one another, it is those taken on from mothers that appear to form the foundational tiers. Significantly, a number of militants described having to undertake significant cognitive work or having to seek justifications from elsewhere to overcome prohibitions against violence inherited from their mothers.

Albeit only present in a small number of accounts, it is revealing that mothers were the only family members that militants recalled openly discussing their involvement in violence with. Descriptions of the influence and impact of siblings were by comparison to those of parents, largely missing in my dataset. Analysis not only revealed the impact of these different familial figures but how militants, from various different contexts appeared happier to attribute influence for their views of the world, and by extension their actions, to some family members (notably mothers) than others (fathers or siblings). This may in part relate to gendered and age-based assumptions on the authors' behalf, indicating that their fathers or siblings would be more likely to face repercussions if they were to disclose openly their influence in the same vein as they do about their mothers. Given that the autobiographies in the dataset are largely written by men, the reticence to attribute influence to fathers may also reflect the concerns of these individuals regarding their masculinity along with the need to demonstrate their own independence.

Autobiographies also provide insight into who has credibility, authority and influence within networks. Significantly, they shed light on how this standing is established, maintained and challenged. This includes the points at which family, kin and peer networks overlap or intersect. For instance, militants often described how family connections or reputation translated into standing within peer networks. As argued in chapter two, I have demonstrated that kin, and particularly, peer networks should be approached both as narrative and physical networks. As well as providing opportunities for individuals to physically interact with those involved in militancy, such networks also come to shape individually-held meanings and provide stories that attach status or provide templates for individuals to follow into militancy.

My findings support existing research (see for example, Edwards 2014) that demonstrates that even in the case of networks that might be viewed as 'extremist' or 'militant', often concurrently contain moderating elements or influential figures that inhibit violence. Narrative networks include

countervailing assumptions about violent activism. Even where these networks are sympathetic to militant groups or the violent means through which they wish to realise their stated aims, this does not automatically equate to a desire to see members mobilise or participate in violence themselves. The cultures of these networks not only shape understandings of events but also provide a story about the role members should take in them. Significantly, these collective narratives often inform the parameters of activism, especially in reinforcing the actions deemed 'proper' for individuals of certain social positions, classes or genders. These networks employ means – notably negative sanctions such as the threat of expulsion or public admonishment – that dissuade or prevent individuals from progressing from support to action. These often prove effective in restraining and shaping activism. These then findings speak to Busher, Holbrook, and Macklin's arguments about the 'internal brakes' that militant networks often contain (2019). Although the dataset focuses on those who involved themselves in violence, almost all of the autobiographies include descriptions of many more individuals who refrained from violent activism. The capacity of these networks to moderate activism brings into question whether actions undertaken by law enforcement practitioners to disrupt or dismantle them is always the most productive course of action.

The Importance of 'Metaphorical' Understandings of Kinship

My findings demonstrate that militants from different contexts think about their own kinship in a much broader sense than something merely dictated by biological connection. Thus, in trying to properly understand their actions, any analysis must be sensitive to this broader comprehension of kinship. Through narrative analysis it is possible to identify how certain understandings of time, place, land, blood and other bodily substances are all frequently employed, metaphorically. These tropes play a role, in sometimes overlapping ways, in militants-narratives. Considerations of these tropes allow individuals to locate themselves temporally and spatially, something that imbues their actions with significant meaning. Commonly, militants attached great weight to notions of themselves as the latest manifestation of a heroic chain of endeavours or part of a legacy that would live on long after their deaths. In this sense, the weight of both the past and the future were brought to bear on their actions,

not only making the decision to take up arms in the first place but also in the very way they engage in militancy. For instance, fears of the future repercussions of shameful or cowardly acts were repeatedly narrated as directly influencing the author in trying circumstances or where it would be much easier to desist or give up.

Blood frequently provided a means through which this transcendence was narrated and understood. However, it was also indicative of the divergent and flexible ways in which militants conceive of and employed the concepts that relate to metaphorical kinship. Invested with permanency, yet able to be made through heroic deeds, blood performed may other tasks, not least transmitting beliefs, characteristics and proclivities for certain actions whilst simultaneously preserving and burdening future kin with the shame or honour of present-day actions. Significantly, these dimensions of kinship were central in how militants explained their actions to themselves. It is crucial to stress here then there was nothing 'metaphorical' in how these understandings impacted on upon militants' engagement in violence. The accounts examined make clear that these individuals were willing to kill and die for these kin just as much as those that they were for those with whom shared genetic, familial or bonds of friendship with.

Metaphorical understandings of kinship, however, are never given in their totality. Rather, the individuals examined picked and choses from a body of narrative materials, made available to them through the connections that they see themselves inheriting, or in other circumstances actively worked to construct. In certain cases, the desire to obtain myths, legends and narratives associated with certain forms kinship that could be folded into one's own storyworld appeared to be significant factors in why these individuals choose to involve themselves in certain conflicts. That individuals played an active role in fashioning how they conceived their own kinship, however, did not mean that they are impervious to other renderings of how these connections should be conceived. The accounts examined demonstrate that kin and peers already involved in militancy, as well as groups themselves, commonly sought to 'activate' or appeal to certain – often very local – understandings of kinship in attempting to mobilise others.

Making and Breaking Kinship Within Militant Groups

The idea that individuals seek, and in many instances find, belonging within militant groups has become something of a truism within research on extremism, despite there being little evidence to support it. Few of the authors examined stressed their desire to find such a place within groups, although this omission in itself may, at least in part, result from their fears of such an accusation being levelled against them. Nevertheless, it is clear that significant bonds – that rival any of those given by genetic links – commonly developed between members of these organisations. Narrative analysis reveals that these connections often formed unconsciously, or even in the face of concerted efforts of militants to resist becoming attached to those around them. The kinship within groups was then both strongly felt and a powerful factor in shaping militants' actions. Significantly, these bonds or their absence, often appeared to dictate how individuals reacted to setbacks and points when their faith in the cause or the possibility of achieving it through violence were challenged. At its outset, this thesis posed the question as to why Amer Deghayes chose to remain in Syria after the death of his brothers and best friend. This study demonstrates how individuals become strongly tied into groups via the relationships they form with fellow members and the difficulty they find in severing these bonds. Of those militants who desisted, many recalled their surprise that the relationships they formed with others in groups did not survive this process. Included are both those whose break with their group was acrimonious and those who enjoyed a more affable departure. The implication then, for these individuals at least, was that these personal connections outweighed and transcended ideological commitments or those to the group and cause.

Furthermore, this thesis begins to address another considerable gap in our understanding of kinship within militant groups; notably how these bonds are created, solidified and maintained between members. Despite the significance often afforded to bonds born of combat, digging under the surface reveals that their roots are firmly grounded in more mundane activities. Building on existing research that stressed the importance of social practices with ideological connotations in building shared identities within extremist milieus and groups (Ramsay, 2013; Hegghammer, 2017), this thesis demonstrates how the everyday, non-ideological practices contribute to both collective identity and

kinship in these organisations. Informed by relevant anthropological and sociological literature, analysis reveals that shared time, locality and residence, as well as humour and the shared consumption of food all 'make' kinship within militant groups.

Whilst some militants are explicit in stating that groups became a family for them, a narrative reading of the accounts of many others clearly demonstrated how these groups took on this guise through these everyday practices. However, for militant groups, resembling a family doesn't appear to necessarily guarantee harmonious relations between members or long term success. Instead, this may force divisions underground or even promote competition within these organisations. Whilst many groups sought, and professed, a particular kinship and solidarity between their members, the accounts examined reveal that it is difficult to foster and maintain such ties and spirit in practice.

This study makes a further contribution in demonstrating not only how kinship is made in such circumstances but also how personal connections often break down through the same processes. Here, the significance of context cannot be overstated. Although it might seem simplistic to conclude that 'too much of a good thing' can lead to such outcomes, analysis revealed that, in circumstances where contact and shared residence with other members was unremitting (for instance urban operations as opposed to training camps), relationships became stretched and often irrevocable. At the same time this study highlights how even those groups that claim to eschew pre-existing markers of difference or foundations of identity – primarily nationality and ethnicity – were often unsuccessful in achieving this. Former divisions or cultural barriers frequently lingered, even if only under the surface – something that narrative analysis helped expose. These fracture points then may provide opportunities for law enforcement practitioners to exacerbate, aggravate or disrupt the internal unity of militant groups.

Contributions of the Study and Future Applications

This study has made a number of significant contributions. First, it has significantly advanced our understanding of how kinship is understood by militants themselves, and influenced and impacted upon their actions and involvement in violence. Kinship operates across contexts, but is too often reduced to simply another binary variable, seen as something useful only for plotting the composition

of networks. Analysis of the impact of kinship is often left to rest on unproven assumptions when it comes to the nature of how these relationships influence individuals. In testing these presumptions, this thesis has drawn on a new dataset of militant authored autobiographies from various contexts. The result is a rich and nuanced analysis of the varying roles and relations grounded in their contextualised settings. Second, this research has generated a number of insights for thinking about how those in militancy conceive their personal relations with others. It offers an understanding of relatedness, grounded in a theoretically informed reading of anthropological and sociological conceptualisations of kinship, friendship and family, that allows a broad range of different relationships to be analysed, conceptualised and plotted on the same spectrum. Existing literature focuses almost exclusively on the impact of kin and peers during the initial phases of mobilisation. Significantly, relatedness is cognisant of and allows analysis of the way relationships change over time. The result is a more comprehensive picture of how kin and peers impact upon individuals' engagement, continued involvement in militancy, and, potentially, their desistence. Third, this study has contributed to the study of militants' accounts at the methodological level. It has brought together different accounts of narrative and developed an analytical framework for the practical application of these theoretical insights. This approach is especially beneficial for the analysis of militancy where accessible data will always be incomplete.

This research suggests several avenues for further study. First, as noted, one such area might be to interrogate how militant groups seek to construct and exploit 'metaphorical' notions of kinship in attracting individuals to join them. In particular, it would be possible and potentially profitable to interrogate how notions of kinship are incorporated into militant communiqués and propaganda, using the analytical framework outlined here. Second, this study focuses on the autobiographies of those who have gone on to engage in violence. That said, these account frequently contain instances of kin and peers attempting to restrict the author or others from participating in militancy. A potentially valuable avenue for further research would be to examine autobiographies written by those from similar settings or who engaged in similar behaviours before stopping short of partaking in violence. Joosse et al. (2015) demonstrate that the stories told in the broader milieu in which a particular militant group is situated can prove effective in preventing largescale mobilisation. However, such research has not been attempted in other contexts, nor have researchers sought to investigate if there are commonalities in

how stories from different settings seek to discourage individuals from seeing militancy as an attractive or necessary option.

This research has been inspired by, and draws from, qualitative sociological studies of networks, in particular the work of Gemma Edwards (2014). In conducting this study, a number of potential avenues for bringing together formal social network methods and narrative analysis have emerged. The development of a means for visualising the flow of narratives within these networks might hold considerable analytic utility. Marrying up these different ways of approaching the study of networks may also make it possible to build a picture of how physical and narrative representations of militant networks line up or diverge. With a temporal dimension accounted for, such mapping could investigate how the narrative capabilities of these networks (including the distribution of narrative texts) are impacted by, and impact, upon their physical makeup or how they shift and change in response to events and shifts in membership. This study then represents only an initial step for thinking about and profitably interrogating militant networks as narrative networks.

This thesis has also made several claims, about the approach taken and the subsequent findings, which are of relevance for law enforcement practitioners. It is, therefore, necessary to explain where these benefits may lie. The most recent version of the UK government's counter-terrorism strategy (CONTEST) places significant emphasis on ensuring that at risk persons and communities are 'resilient to terrorist narratives' (HM Government, 2018:33). However, even within this relatively short report there remains a significant lack of clarity as to what is meant by the term 'narrative' – something that then inevitably hinders any efforts to counter or build resilience to them. This study then aims to contribute to policymakers' understandings by translating and demonstrating how various rich bodies of academic work on narrative can help better inform their conceptualisation and means of addressing these threats.

This research also helps address some gaps identified in a report by the Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism (OSCT). The report focuses on ways work from the social and behavioural sciences can inform and support the work of counter-terrorism practitioners (2010). Amongst these is a call for research that helps understand how terror networks work. Much work has investigated these networks as a collection of nodes and ties. However, structural models only tell us so much about how networks

function in practice. This thesis contributes to other qualitative work that demonstrates the moderating effect of particular networks, or individuals within them (Edwards 2014). As the OSCT report itself makes clear, the same problems may be approached in different ways. Adding qualitative analysis (including the study of autobiographies, diaries, journals, documents, etc.) to structural modelling then often raises questions as to the efficacy of taking down or targeting specific figures or elements of networks – with evidence that doing so may in fact result is an upsurge of violence with those responsible for constraining it removed (Youngman 2019). This thesis then adds to this work, not in providing examples of the impact of the removal of particular figures, but rather in demonstrating how network cultures and self-narratives also play a role in restricting militant violence.

As part of Prevent, the OSCT report also calls for academic research that investigates the role played by new and conventional media (broadly defined) as conduits which inform support or resistance to violent extremism (2010). Those convicted of terrorism offences are often found to have a range of material in their possession, not all of it that could necessarily be considered 'ideological' in nature (Holbrook, 2017, 2019). This thesis then helps to inform practitioners' understandings of the importance of other, primarily narrative, texts in how these individuals contextualise their actions and understand the world. Finally, the thesis may eventually help practitioners better understand the contexts in which people engage and desist from militancy. In particular, with further work the analytical framework might be developed into a dedicated tool for this purpose. Bearman and Stovel (2000), for example, convincingly show how plotting and modelling narrative elements within individuals' accounts can identify distinct phases of 'becoming' and 'being' when it comes to the adoption of violent identities. Developing the framework from this thesis in a similar manner, may result in something that, when transposed directly onto militants' accounts, could be used by practitioners to help assess precisely where and when a move to, or away from, violence has taken place.

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Appendices

Appendix One: Dataset of Militant Authored Autobiographies

Protagonist	Title	Date of First Publication	Original Publisher
Adair, Johnny	*Mad Dog*	2007	John Blake Publishing
al-Bahri, Nasser	*Guarding bin Laden: My Life in al-Qaeda*	2013	Thin Man Press
al-Berry, Khaled	*Life is More Beautiful Than Paradise: A Jihadist's Own Story*	2009	American University in Cairo Press
Alpert, Jane	*Growing Up Underground*	1981	Carol Publishing Corporation
Aref, Yassin	*Son of Mountains: My Life as a Kurd and a Terror Suspect*	2008	Troy Book Makers
Baumann, Bommi	*Terror or Love? The Personal Account of a West German Urban Guerrilla*	1975	Arsenal Pulp Press
Black, John	*Killing for Britain*	2008	Flashpoint Press
Cabezas, Omar	*Fire from the Mountain: The Making of a Sandinista*	1982	Crown Publishers, Inc.
Calderwood, Alec	*Inside the UDA: Volunteers and Violence* (by Colin Crawford)	2003	Pluto Press
Campbell, Flair	*Children of the Revolution: The Lives of Sons and Daughters of Activists in Northern Ireland* (by Bill Rolston)	2011	Beyond the Pale Publications
Collins, Aukai	*My Jihad: The True Story of an American Mujahid's Amazing Journey from Usama Bin Laden's Training Camps to Counterterrorism with the FBI and CIA*	2002	Lyons Press
Collins, Eamon	*Killing Rage*	1998	Granta UK
Conway, Kieran	*Southside Provisional: From Freedom Fighter to the Four Courts*	2014	Orpen Press

de Soyza, Niromi	*Tamil Tigress: My Story as a Child Soldier in Sri Lanka's Bloody Civil War*	2011	Allen & Unwin
Drif, Zohra	*Inside the Battle of Algiers: Memoir of a Woman Freedom Fighter*	2017	Just World Books
Duddy, Sam	*Inside the UDA: Volunteers and Violence* (by Colin Crawford)	2003	Pluto Press
Eldin, Mikail	*The Sky Wept Fire*	2013	Portobello Books
Ervine, David	*Voices from the Grave: Two Men's War in Ireland* (by Ed Moloney)	2010	PublicAffairs
Farivar, Masood	*Confessions of a Mullah Warrior*	2009	Atlantic Monthly Press
Giorgio	*Memoirs of an Italian Terrorist*	2003	Basic Books
Hamilton, David	*A Cause Worth Living For: My Journey Out of Terrorism*	1997	Highland Books
Hammami, Omar	*The Story of An American Jihaadi Part One*	2012	Online
Hansen, Ann	*Direct Action: Memoirs of an Urban Guerrilla*	2001	AK Press
Hasselbach, Ingo	*Führer-Ex: Memoirs of a Former Neo-Nazi*	1993	Random House
Hughes, Brendan	*Voices from the Grave: Two Men's War in Ireland* (by Ed Moloney)	2010	PublicAffairs
Khaled, Leila	*My People Shall Live: The Autobiography of a Revolutionary*	1973	Hodder and Stoughton
Little, Alastair	*Give a Boy a Gun: From Killing to Peace-Making*	2009	Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd
McClinton, Cornelius Kenneth	*Terrorist to Evangelist: The True Story of Cornelius Kenneth McClinton* (by G. Brent Riggs)	2011	Tate Publishing & Enterprises
McDonnell, Manny	*Lighting Candles: A Paramilitary's War with Death, Drugs and Demons*	2014	Black & White Publishing
McQuiston, Billy	*Children of the Revolution: The Lives of Sons and Daughters of Activists in Northern Ireland* (by Bill Rolston)	2011	Beyond the Pale Publications
Meehan, Martin	*Children of the Revolution: The Lives of Sons and Daughters of Activists in Northern Ireland* (by Bill Rolston)	2011	Beyond the Pale Publications

Nasiri, Omar	*Inside the Jihad: My Life with Al Qaeda*	2006	Basic Books
O'Callaghan, Sean	*The Informer*	1998	Book Club Associates
O'Doherty, Shane Paul	*The Volunteer: A Former IRA Man's True Story*	1993	Strategic Book Publishing
Robert	*Children of the Revolution: The Lives of Sons and Daughters of Activists in Northern Ireland* (by Bill Rolston)	2011	Beyond the Pale Publications
Rudd, Mark	*Underground: My Life with SDS and the Weathermen*	2009	William Morrow
Rudolph, Eric	*Between the Lines of Drift: The Memoirs of a Militant*	2013	Online
Schiller, Margrit	*Remembering the Armed Struggle: Life in Baader-Meinhof*	2008	Zindane Press
Singh, Charanjit	*Fighting for Faith and Nation: Dialogues with Sikh Militants* (by Cynthia Keppley Mahmood)	1996	University of Pennsylvania Press
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		Family	Peers	Metaphorical Kinship	Kinship Practices Within Militant Groups
PARATEXTS					
THE STORY	*Supplementary events* *What is excluded?*			.	
NARRATIVE DISCOURSE	*Genre* *Collected Stories* *Trope* *Agency*		.		

	Time				
	Coherence		.		