

risk factors or indicators included in the risk assessment instruments or methods were not analyzed in NIJ-sponsored research. One of the key reasons for this is that using the risk assessment instruments and methods discussed below often relies at least in part on the ability to conduct interviews with the individual who is being assessed. As the NIJ-sponsored studies generally analyzed information available in unclassified, secondary sources (e.g., newspaper reports, court records, biographies, government sources), information on certain risk factors (e.g., underlying motivations and thought patterns) was not always available. As a consequence, a lack of findings related to these factors does not mean that no relationships were found in NIJ-sponsored research but rather that the relationships were not tested. When no relationship or a negative relationship between a specific risk factor or indicator and engaging or attempting to engage in terrorism was found, this is indicated.

Extremist Risk Guidelines (ERG 22+)

The ERG 22+ methodology was developed by the United Kingdom's National Offender Management Service (NOMS) in order to assess the risk posed by extremist offenders and facilitate the development of targeted interventions aimed at managing this risk (Lloyd & Dean, 2015).⁴³ Based on casework with offenders and relevant social and behavioral science theory and research, NOMS identified 22 general risk factors for engaging in extremist crime (which includes but is not limited to terrorism). These factors are related to three dimensions: extremist engagement (the process by which individuals become involved with an extremist group, cause, or ideology); extremist intent (the mindset associated with the readiness to commit an

extremist offense); and extremist capability (the ability to perform the offense) (Lloyd & Dean, 2015). Individuals are not assigned scores based on the ERG 22+; rather, the guidelines are used to suggest factors that may play a role in extremist offending.

Table 5 lists the 22 factors included in the ERG 22+ and compares them with the potential risk factors and indicators identified in NIJ-sponsored research. As can be seen, the risk factors and/or indicators associated with attempting or engaging in terrorism identified in NIJ-sponsored research overlap to at least some degree with 10 of the risk factors for engaging in extremist crime included in the ERG 22+. These include risk factors related to expressing grievances; having family or friends who support extremist offending; having mental health issues; over-identifying with a group or cause; having attitudes that justify offending; supporting harmful means to achieving a specific end; supporting a harmful end; having individual knowledge, skills, and competencies; having access to networks, funding, and equipment; and having a criminal history.

The amount of overlap is particularly interesting given that the ERG 22+ includes risk factors for engaging in extremist crimes that do not necessarily reach the threshold of engaging or attempting to engage in terrorism, which was the focus of the NIJ-sponsored findings discussed above. (In fact, in many cases, individuals who engaged in extremist crimes that did not reach this threshold were used as the comparison group in NIJ-sponsored analyses.) Future research will be needed to determine whether there are particular risk factors and indicators included in NIJ-sponsored research that can distinguish between those who do and do not engage in nonviolent extremist crimes.

⁴³ While initially developed for use with those already convicted of extremist offenses, the ERG 22+ has also informed community approaches to preventing individuals from engaging in these offenses (Lloyd & Dean, 2015).

Table 5: Comparison Between the Risk Factors Included in the ERG 22+ and the Potential Risk Factors and Indicators Identified in NIJ-Sponsored Research

ERG 22+ Risk Factors (Relevant Dimensions Are in Parentheses)	Risk Factors Identified in NIJ-Sponsored Research (Relevant Indicators Are in Parentheses)
Need to Redress Injustice and Express Grievance (Engagement)	Having Personal and Political Grievances — Lone Actors Only (Others Aware of Grievance, Producing Public Statements About Extremist Ideology or Grievance — Both Among Lone Actors Only)
Need to Defend Against Threat (Engagement)	
Need for Identity, Meaning, Belonging (Engagement)	
Need for Status (Engagement)	
Need for Excitement, Comradeship, Adventure (Engagement)	
Need for Dominance (Engagement)	
Susceptibility to Indoctrination (Engagement)	
Political/Moral Motivation (Engagement)	
Opportunistic Involvement (Engagement)	
Family or Friends Support Extremist Offending (Engagement)	Having a Terrorist Friend*
Transitional Periods (Engagement)	
Group Influence and Control (Engagement)	
Mental Health (Engagement)	Having Psychological Issues Having Received a Diagnosis of Schizophrenia or Delusional Disorder — Lone Actors Only
Over-Identification With Group or Cause (Intent)	Having a Deep Commitment to an Extremist Ideology (Attending More Extremist Group Meetings)
Us and Them Thinking (Intent)	
Dehumanization of the Enemy (Intent)	
Attitudes That Justify Offending (Intent)	Having a Deep Commitment to an Extremist Ideology (Others Aware of Extremist Ideology, Producing Public Statements About Extremist Ideology or Grievance — Both Among Lone Actors Only)
Harmful Means to an End (Intent)	(Verbalizing Intent to Family and Friends, Broadcasting Intent — Both Among Lone Actors Only)
Harmful End Objectives (Intent)	(Expressing a Desire to Hurt Others — Lone Actors Only)
Individual Knowledge, Skills, and Competencies (Capability)	Having Military Experience
Access to Networks, Funding, Equipment (Capability)	Having an Enabler — Lone Actors Only (Stockpiling Weapons — Lone Actors Only)
Criminal History (Capability)	Having a Criminal History

* Potential risk factors and indicators that are in bold were identified based on comparisons with nonviolent extremists or the general U.S. population. (Potential risk factors and indicators identified in NIJ-sponsored research may be associated with more than one risk factor included in the ERG 22+.)

Violent Extremist Risk Assessment, Consultative Version 2 (VERA 2)

The VERA 2 is focused specifically on assessing the risk of *violent* political extremism (Pressman & Flockton, 2012). The 25 risk factors and indicators included in the tool are related to four areas — beliefs and attitudes; context and intent; history and capability; and commitment and motivation — and were identified based on research in the areas of radicalization and terrorism, collaboration with operational personnel, and feedback from experts in law enforcement, corrections, and forensic psychology. While the VERA 2 is generally intended for use after an individual has been convicted of a terrorism-related offense, its developers state that it can also be used to support investigative procedures (Pressman & Flockton, 2012). In all cases, however, it is recommended as a supplement, not replacement, for existing risk assessment instruments and procedures. Table 6 lists the 25 risk factors and indicators included in the VERA 2 and compares them with the potential risk factors and indicators identified in NIJ-sponsored research.

As can be seen in Table 6, the risk factors and/or indicators associated with attempting or engaging in terrorism identified in NIJ-sponsored research overlap to at least some degree with nine of the risk factors and indicators included in the VERA 2. Similar to the comparison with the ERG 22+, these include risk factors and indicators related to having grievances; having personal contact with terrorists (family or friends supporting extremist offending in the ERG 22+); having a commitment to a group or group ideology (over-identifying with a group or cause in the ERG 22+); having attitudes that justify violence (offending in the ERG 22+); expressing the intent to act violently or in a harmful manner;

having tactical, paramilitary, or explosives training (individual knowledge, skills, and competencies in the ERG 22+); and having access to funds, resources, and organizational skills (networks, funding, and equipment in the ERG 22+). Unlike the ERG 22+, the VERA 2 also includes risk factors associated with having family members or friends involved in violent action and having a prior criminal history of violence. Interestingly, the risk factor related to having mental health issues is not included in the VERA 2, although it was identified as a potential risk factor for engaging or attempting to engage in terrorism in NIJ-sponsored research and is included in the ERG 22+.

The Historical Clinical Risk Management-20, Version 3 (HCR-20^{v3})

The HCR-20^{v3} is a method used to assess the risk of violence among adults and is most frequently applied within correctional, forensic, and general or civil psychiatric settings (Douglas et al., 2013). Since the first version of the method was released in 1995, numerous studies have been conducted to evaluate its validity, and the most recent version of the HCR-20, released in 2013, incorporates revisions based on additional research on the risk factors associated with violence as well as advances in the field of risk assessment and management. The 20 items identified in the HCR-20^{v3} include historical factors (related to individuals' past behaviors and experiences), clinical factors (related to their psychosocial functioning, mental health, and behaviors in the more recent past, e.g., in the past six months), and risk management factors (related to areas of future functioning and adjustment) (Douglas et al., 2013). The method provides guidelines for evaluating both the presence of these 20 risk factors and their relevance to a particular individual.

Table 6: Comparison Between the Risk Factors and Indicators Included in the VERA 2 and the Potential Risk Factors and Indicators Identified in NIJ-Sponsored Research

VERA 2 Risk Factors and Indicators (Relevant Areas Are in Parentheses)	Risk Factors Identified in NIJ-Sponsored Research (Relevant Indicators Are in Parentheses)
Commitment to Ideology Justifying Violence (Beliefs & Attitudes)	Having a Deep Commitment to an Extremist Ideology* (Others Aware of Extremist Ideology, Producing Public Statements About Extremist Ideology or Grievance — Both Among Lone Actors Only)
Victim of Injustice and Grievances (Beliefs & Attitudes)	Having Personal and Political Grievances — Lone Actors Only (Others Aware of Grievance — Lone Actors Only)
Dehumanization/Demonization of Identified Targets of Injustice (Beliefs & Attitudes)	
Rejection of Democratic Society and Values (Beliefs & Attitudes)	
Feelings of Hate, Frustration, Persecution, Alienation (Beliefs & Attitudes)	
Hostility to National Collective Identity (Beliefs & Attitudes)	
Lack of Empathy, Understanding Outside of Own Group (Beliefs & Attitudes)	
Seeker, Consumer, Developer of Extremist Materials (Context & Intent)	
Identification of Target (Person, Group, Place) in Response to Perceived Injustice (Context & Intent)	
Personal Contact With Violent Extremists (Context & Intent)	Being a Member of a Terrorist Group for an Extended Period of Time Having a Terrorist Friend (Attending More Extremist Group Meetings)
Anger and Expressed Intent to Act Violently (Context & Intent)	(Expressing a Desire to Hurt Others, Verbalizing Intent to Family and Friends, Broadcasting Intent — All Among Lone Actors Only)
Expressed Desire to Die for Cause or Martyrdom (Context & Intent)	
Expressed Intent to Plan, Prepare Violent Action (Context & Intent)	
Susceptible to Influence, Authority, Indoctrination (Context & Intent)	
Early Exposure to Pro-Violence Militant Ideology (History & Capability)	
Network (Family, Friends) Involved in Violent Action (History & Capability)	Having a Terrorist Friend
Prior Criminal History of Violence (History & Capability)	Having a History of Criminal Violence
Tactical, Paramilitary, Explosives Training (History & Capability)	Having Military Experience
Extremist Ideological Training (History & Capability)	
Access to Funds, Resources, Organizational Skills (History & Capability)	Having an Enabler — Lone Actors Only (Stockpiling Weapons — Lone Actors Only)
Glorification of Violent Action (Commitment & Motivation)	
Driven by Criminal Opportunism (Commitment & Motivation)	

* Potential risk factors and indicators that are in bold were identified based on comparisons with nonviolent extremists or the general U.S. population. (Potential risk factors and indicators identified in NIJ-sponsored research may be associated with more than one risk factor or indicator included in the VERA 2.)

Table 6: Comparison Between the Risk Factors and Indicators Included in the VERA 2 and the Potential Risk Factors and Indicators Identified in NIJ-Sponsored Research (continued)

VERA 2 Risk Factors and Indicators (Relevant Areas Are in Parentheses)	Risk Factors Identified in NIJ-Sponsored Research (Relevant Indicators Are in Parentheses)
Commitment to Group, Group Ideology (Commitment & Motivation)	Having a Deep Commitment to an Extremist Ideology (Attending More Extremist Group Meetings)
Driven by Moral Imperative, Moral Superiority (Commitment & Motivation)	
Driven by Excitement, Adventure (Commitment & Motivation)	

Table 7 lists the 20 risk factors for violence included in the HCR-20^{v3} and compares them with the potential risk factors and indicators associated with engaging or attempting to engage in terrorism in NIJ-sponsored research. When the exact timeframe in the past during which individuals experienced or were exposed to specific risk factors was not clear, these risk factors were considered historical factors as opposed to clinical factors. In two cases, however, risk factors that individuals were experiencing or exposed to at the time they engaged or attempted to engage in terrorism were considered future risk factors based on the assumption that (1) risk assessments would have been conducted before individuals attempted to engage in terrorism and (2) those assessing the potential risk of violence would have viewed these factors as potentially impacting the individuals' future functioning and adjustment.

As can be seen in Table 7, the risk factors and/or indicators associated with attempting or engaging in terrorism identified in NIJ-sponsored research overlap to at least some degree with nine of the risk factors for engaging in violence included in the HCR-20^{v3}. Similar to the comparison with the ERG 22+, these include risk factors related to having a major mental disorder (mental health issues in

the ERG 22+) and a history of engaging in nonviolent antisocial behavior (crime in the ERG 22+). Similar to the comparison with the VERA 2, these include the risk factor related to having a history of problems with violence (a prior criminal history of violence in the VERA 2). Similar to the comparisons with both the ERG 22+ and VERA 2, these include risk factors related to having attitudes that justify violence (offending in the ERG 22+).

What is perhaps most striking, however, is that five of the risk factors included in the HCR-20^{v3} that were also found in research sponsored by NIJ were not included in either the ERG 22+ or VERA 2, both of which were developed to assess the risk of criminal behavior among extremists. Specifically, risk factors related to having a history of problems with relationships, employment, and traumatic experiences, as well as having future problems with one's living situation and personal support, were all associated with the likelihood of engaging in violence in the HCR-20^{v3} and among terrorists examined in NIJ-sponsored research.

Overall Comparison

While the previous three subsections examine how the potential risk factors and indicators identified in NIJ-sponsored

Table 7: Comparison Between the Risk Factors Identified in the HCR-20^{v3} and the Potential Risk Factors and Indicators Identified in NIJ-Sponsored Research

HCR-20^{v3} Risk Factors	Risk Factors Identified in NIJ-Sponsored Research (Relevant Indicators Are in Parentheses)
History of Problems With Violence	Having a History of Criminal Violence*
History of Problems With Other Antisocial Behavior	Having Been Involved With a Gang or Delinquent Peers
History of Problems With Relationships	Having Trouble in Romantic Relationships Having Trouble in Platonic Relationships Having Been Abused as an Adult Being Distant From One's Family Being a Loner/Socially Isolated Having Been Involved With a Gang or Delinquent Peers Having a Terrorist Friend Having an Enabler
History of Problems With Employment	Having a Sporadic Work History Being Unemployed
History of Problems With Substance Use ⁴⁴	
History of Problems With Major Mental Disorder (psychotic, major mood, or other major disorder)	Having Received a Diagnosis of Schizophrenia or Delusional Disorder — Lone Actors Only
History of Problems With Personality Disorder	
History of Problems With Traumatic Experiences	Having Been Abused as an Adult
History of Problems With Violent Attitudes	Having a Deep Commitment to an Extremist Ideology (Expressing a Desire to Hurt Others, Others Aware of Extremist Ideology, Producing Public Statements About Extremist Ideology or Grievance, Verbalizing Intent to Family and Friends, Broadcasting Intent — All Among Lone Actors Only)
History of Problems With Treatment or Supervision Response	
Recent Problems With Insight (mental disorder, violence risk, need for treatment)	
Recent Problems With Violent Ideation or Intent	
Recent Problems With Symptoms of Major Mental Disorder (psychotic, major mood, or other major disorder)	
Recent Problems With Instability (affective, behavioral, cognitive)	
Recent Problems With Treatment or Supervision Response	
Future Problems With Professional Services and Plans	
Future Problems With Living Situation	Being Unemployed
Future Problems With Personal Support	Being Distant From One's Family Being a Loner/Socially Isolated Having a Terrorist Friend Having an Enabler
Future Problems With Treatment or Supervision Response	
Future Problems With Stress or Coping	

* Potential risk factors and indicators that are in bold were identified based on comparisons with nonviolent extremists or the general U.S. population. (Potential risk factors and indicators identified in NIJ-sponsored research may be associated with more than one risk factor included in the HCR-20^{v3}.)

⁴⁴ Research conducted by START found that having a substance use problem was not associated with an increased likelihood that individuals engaged or attempted to engage in terrorism (P. James, personal communication, February 4, 2016).

research map onto the risk factors and indicators included in the ERG 22+, VERA 2, and HCR-20^{v3}, this subsection does the reverse; i.e., it maps the types of risk factors and indicators included in these instruments and methods onto those identified in NIJ-sponsored research. In this manner, it is possible to identify categories of potential risk factors or indicators that are not included in these instruments and methods but that may need to be considered when assessing the risk that an individual may engage or attempt to engage in terrorism.

As the first step in this process, the potential risk factors and indicators identified in NIJ-sponsored research were grouped into 10 broader categories. These included having (1) a past history of violence; (2) a past history of criminal activity or delinquency; (3) extremist associates; (4) an extremist ideology and/or grievances; (5) the intent to

commit violence; (6) skills and resources for committing violence; (7) mental health issues; (8) trouble in professional, educational, and economic domains; (9) trouble in relationship domains; and (10) specific demographic characteristics.⁴⁵ Table 8 lists the 10 categories of potential risk factors and indicators identified in NIJ-sponsored research and indicates whether they are included in the three risk assessment instruments and methods discussed above.⁴⁶

As can be seen in Table 8, nine out of the 10 categories of potential risk factors and indicators associated with engaging or attempting to engage in terrorism in NIJ-sponsored research are included in at least one of the existing risk assessment instruments or methods, the exception being specific demographic characteristics. Six of the categories are included in the HCR-20^{v3}, which was developed to assess the risk of individuals engaging in general

Table 8: Comparison Between Categories of Potential Risk Factors and Indicators Identified in NIJ-Sponsored Research and Those Included in Existing Risk Assessment Instruments and Methods

Categories of Potential Risk Factors and Indicators			
Category	ERG 22+	VERA 2	HCR-20 ^{v3}
Past History of Violence		X	X
Past History of Criminal Activity and Delinquency	X		X
Extremist Associates	X	X	
Extremist Ideology and/or Grievances	X	X	
Intent to Commit Violence		X	X
Skills and Resources for Committing Violence	X	X	
Mental Health Issues	X		X
Trouble in Professional, Educational, and Economic Domains			X
Trouble in Relationship Domains			X
Specific Demographic Characteristics			

⁴⁵ The individual risk factors and indicators associated with each of these broader categories are identified in the Appendix.

⁴⁶ In some cases, an individual risk factor or indicator associated with a particular category may map onto one of the risk factors included in the ERG 22+, VERA 2, or HCR-20^{v3}, but the category itself may not be present in the instrument or method. For example, “having a violent extremist friend” mapped onto the “history of problems with relationships” and “future problems with personal support” risk factors in the HCR-20^{v3} — both of which include references to relationships with individuals who exert a negative or antisocial influence — but a category of risk factors and indicators associated specifically with having “extremist associates” was not included in the HCR-20^{v3}.

violence, and five are included in each of the instruments and methods developed specifically to assess the risk of individuals engaging in extremist crime and/or violence (the ERG 22+ and VERA 2).

While there is clear overlap in the categories of risk factors and indicators identified in NIJ-sponsored research and those included in the ERG 22+, VERA 2, and HCR-20^{v3}, there are also some distinctions based on whether the instruments and methods are focused on assessing the risk of general violence versus extremist crime and/or terrorism. On the one hand, only the HCR-20^{v3} includes risk factors and indicators related to having (1) trouble in professional, educational, and economic domains and (2) trouble in relationship domains, both of which were found to be associated with engaging or attempting to engage in terrorism in NIJ-sponsored research. On the other hand, only the ERG 22+ and VERA 2 include risk factors and indicators related to having (1) extremist associates, (2) an extremist ideology and/or grievances, and (3) skills and resources for committing violence, which were also found to be associated with engaging or attempting to engage in terrorism in NIJ-sponsored research. Overall, this suggests that while many of the risk factors and indicators associated with engaging or attempting to engage in terrorism may be similar to those associated with engaging in general violence, other risk factors and indicators may be unique to those involved in extremist-related crime and terrorism.

Overview of Findings and Next Steps

Before summarizing the overall findings from the NIJ-sponsored research discussed in this paper, it is important to reiterate some of its limitations. For example, it is likely the case that some of the individuals included in the analyses conducted by these

four NIJ-sponsored project teams overlap, and that, because of this, similarities between the projects' findings may be due in part to the fact that they analyzed some of the same individuals. There are also issues related to missing data and the possibility that some of the findings presented would not be the same if data were available for all of the individuals included in the projects. Further, even when data were available for individuals, it may be the case that some of the information collected was not accurate. Likewise, assessing whether individuals have experienced or been exposed to certain risk factors may require subjective judgments on the part of researchers, and it is possible that different research teams might reach different conclusions. Finally, once again, it is important to note that not all individuals who experience or are exposed to risk factors — or exhibit indicators — associated with engaging or attempting to engage in terrorism go on to do so. Radicalization to terrorism is a complex process, and research that analyzes samples of terrorists can help to identify characteristics, experiences, and behaviors that are generally associated with engaging or attempting to engage in terrorism, but further investigation is required to determine whether these characteristics, experiences, and behaviors are relevant in the case of a particular individual.

Still, keeping these limitations in mind, the research sponsored by NIJ has made a strong contribution by identifying numerous risk factors and indicators potentially associated with engaging or attempting to engage in terrorism. Importantly, in many cases these findings emerged from analyses that compared extremists who engaged or attempted to engage in terrorism with extremists who did not (or with the general U.S. population); and, as a consequence, there is evidence that these potential risk factors and indicators may help practitioners to