SHARED CUES, DIFFERENT VIOLENCE ORGANISATIONS: COMPARING VISUAL RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES OF EXTREMISTS, GANGS, PMC/MERCENARIES, AND MILITARIES

SHEELAGH BRADY

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SHEELAGH BRADY, B.A, M.A, M.Sc

RESEARCH SUPERVISORS
PROF. MAURA CONWAY
DR. JAMES FITZGEARLD
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Nothing is beyond you.

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AIT	Antifascist International Tabur
AK-47	Avtomat Kalashnikova or Kalashnikov
APC	Armoured Personnel Carrier
BG	Born-Global Firms
CMS	Critical Military Studies
EEG	Electroencephalographic
IR	International Relations
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IRPGF	International Revolutionary People's Guerrilla Forces
ISIMS	Integrated Social Identity Model of Stress
ISIL	The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
ISIS	Islamic State/ Daesh
KM	Kilometre
LA	Los Angeles
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
M16	Rifle
MC	Motorcycle
MP	Member of Parliament
MS-13	Mara Salvatrucha
NAGIA	National Alliance of Gang Investigator Association
NCLBA	No Child Left Behind Act
NSDAP	National Socialist German Workers' Party
PIRA	Provisional Irish Republican Army
PKK	The Kurdistan Workers' Party/ Partîya Karkerên Kurdistanê
PMC	Private Military Contractors
PMSCs	Private Military and Security Companies
PR	Public Relations
RAF	Royal Air Force
RAN	Radicalisation Awareness Network
RWE	Right Wing Extremist
SJWs	Social Justice Warriors
SOLI	Sons of Liberty International
TV	Television
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
U.S.	United States of America
VOs	Violent Organisations
YPG	People's Protection Units/Yekîneyên Parastina Gel
YPJ	Women's Protection Units or Women's Defence Units/ Yekîneyên Parastina Jin
WHO	World Health Organisation
WW1	World War One
WW2	World War Two

Abstract

Shard cues, different violence organisations: Comparing visual recruitment strategies of extremists, gangs, PMC/Mercenaries, and militaries

Sheelagh Brady

Extremists, gangs, militaries, and private military contractors (PMC)/mercenaries share the need to recruit, and all employ video for this purpose. How they use these videos to attract new members remains unclear, however. The study is a response to calls for a visual turn in violent extremism and builds upon an emerging shift within the literature, which examines the persuasive power of videos produced by some violence organisations (VOs), exploring the role that narratives, multimodalities, and symbols play in recruitment. It takes an empirical approach to answer the question, 'what visual strategies are used by violence organisations to recruit members to their group or call them to action?' Theoretically, it combines Hogg's theory on group membership and identity, Ellul's work on myths and the technique of propaganda, and Mirzoeff's approach to intervisuality. Through primary analysis of 117 videos, produced and/or circulated by VOs, it shows that VOs encode their videos with similar cues designed to enhance feelings of belonging, identity, and shared beliefs in order to persuade and influence viewers. It therefore makes a pertinent contribution to the literature regarding comparative analysis, which tends to treat these VOs as distinct groups, failing to adequately consider the significance of shared approaches. The findings indicate that VOs' recruitment and call to action videos should not be viewed independently, but as part of the broader ecosystem of online video content, designed not merely to entertain, but also to persuade; thus, they have implications for responding to extremist content.

Introduction

Violence organisations[1] (VO), like a growing number of businesses, have invested in their digital strategies to add a modern dimension to the classic recruitment message: "*We want you*". Incorporating the 'visual', in the form of posters, in the First and Second World War became a 'potent' military recruitment tool (Ryan, 2012), for example. These posters were designed to reach and influence people to join and to directly affect behaviour. Approximately 75 years later, the medium may have changed, but the 'visual' is still an important element of military recruitment, as seen in the increasing use of military recruitment videos. The benefits of video as a medium of recruitment and influence have not gone unnoticed by other groups, chief amongst them other violence organisations (VOs). It is the power of videos to influence and persuade that is of interest in this dissertation, an under-researched topic, especially regarding the use of videos as a recruitment tool by VOs'; thus making a key contribution by identifying the visual strategies used by VOs to recruit.

The research takes an empirical approach to answer the key question, 'what visual strategies are used by violence organisations to recruit members to their group or call them to action?' and examines the factors that influence these strategies and assesses whether they are similar or different across VOs. In so doing, it uniquely compares VOs that use violence legally and illegally. Building on smaller studies, this piece demonstrates VOs are more similar than they are different in their recruitment strategies and therefore are worthy of comparative analysis. It answers three questions:

1. What visual strategies are used by VOs to recruit members to their group or call them to action?
2. How are these presented within their videos?
3. What are the similarities and differences across VOs?

All four VOs use similar visual strategies to influence and persuade new recruits (and to call them and others to action), embedding their videos with cues that influence the response viewers have to them. This essentially supports the core argument of this dissertation: VOs encode their videos with cues that they believe will resonate with viewers, in a manner that allows the content creators to influence and persuade both their attitudes and behaviours. The argument is twofold. First, that it is cues designed around themes of belonging, identity, and shared beliefs (embedded within the videos), augmented, and enhanced through intertextual/intervisual and multimodal techniques that make the videos persuasive. Intervisual techniques are powerfully presented through the selection of images that resonate with viewers on a deep level, reinforced through multimodalities[2] such as music, speech, symbols, and text. Together, these techniques and modes reinforce videos' persuasive impact, demonstrating an interrelatedness of message, medium, and modalities. Second, these cues are very similar across the different VOs, cues not directed merely at recruitment, but equally to gain support from others (implied or actual), and to incite the opposition as reflected in the videos. The purpose of these persuasive cues, in this regard, is to control the three positions that viewers can take when decoding them: the dominant-hegemonic, a negotiated, or an oppositional reading. It is observed

[1] Violence Organisations are defined by the researcher as 'an organised group of individuals who partake in certain behaviours with the intention to hurt, damage, or kill someone or something, to protect and defend and/or to provide trade in professional services linked to conflict or warfare'.

[2] Multimodality describes "approaches that understand communication and representation to be more than about language, and which attend to the full range of communicational forms people use – image, gesture, gaze, posture, and so on – and the relationships between them" (Jewitt, 2009, p. 14).

within the dissertation that the audience is segmented into at least three distinct parts (recruits, similar groups and supporters, and opposition). They, despite their variances, do not represent different audiences, rather segmentations of the same one, diverging only in their potential reading of the content. This demonstrates that these videos, beyond targeting males, are not directed at a 'type' *per se*, rather, they are designed to capitalise on any male viewer, even if only to desensitise them to the claims being made (whether those claims be positive or negative).

Videos released by the groups are used to assess VOs visual strategies. For the purpose of this dissertation, a recruitment video was initially defined as *'any video that was labelled by the group as a recruitment video or any video that contained a specific 'call-to-action' to non-members of their respective groups*.' As the research evolved, however, the definition was altered to include *'any video that was circulated by the group or its members, regardless of its content'*. This approach was taken to ensure a sufficiently broad perspective, given that the range of videos circulated by such groups could be viewed by some as a recruitment tool despite the absence of an explicit call. Moreover, VOs often use discrete messages to avoid detection, provocation, and/or to avoid take down policies on social media.

Background

Violence is a core component of human behaviour. The earliest evidence of group conflict dates back over 10,000 years to Nataruk, west of Kenya's Lake Turkana[3] (Handwerk, 2016). The remains found there serve as a reminder that warfare often thought to be associated with more advanced sedentary societies, that control territory and resources, was not always the case because the people of Nataruk were hunter-gatherers who lived a far simpler lifestyle. This early example of violence illustrates that the capacity within humans to inflict violence against others is nothing new (Handwerk, 2016). It is recruitment to this form of violence, violence that is associated with groups, which is of interest here; violence inflicted by larger groups, for example, states, organised political groups, militia groups, and terrorist organisations (Krug, Mercy, Dahlberg, and Zwi, 2002). The World Health Organisation (WHO) in their typology of violence, label this as collective violence and define it as:

> The instrumental use of violence by people who identify themselves as members of a group, whether this group is transitory or has a more permanent identity–against another group or set of individuals, in order to achieve political, economic, or social objectives[4] (Krug, et al., 2002, p. 215)

Various types of collective violence have been classified, including: (i) Wars, terrorism and other violent political conflicts that occur within or between states; (ii) State-perpetrated violence such as genocide, repression, disappearances, torture, and other abuses of human rights; and (iii) Organised violent crime such as banditry and gang warfare (Krug, et al., 2002, p. 215). Each of these has multiple motives, motives often diverse enough for researchers to conclude that they are unsuitable for comparative analysis. It is worthwhile to explore these different forms of collective violence

[3] Lake Turkana, formerly known as Lake Rudolf, is a lake in the Kenyan Rift Valley, in northern Kenya, with its far northern end crossing into Ethiopia. It is the world's largest permanent desert lake.

[4] Committed to advance a particular social agenda includes, for example, crimes of hate committed by organized groups, terrorist acts, and mob violence. Political violence includes war and related violent conflicts, state violence, and similar acts carried out by larger groups. Economic violence includes attacks by larger groups motivated by economic gains – such as attacks carried out with the purpose of disrupting economic activity, denying access to essential services, or creating economic division and fragmentation (Krug, et al., 2002, p. 215).

comparatively (and more deeply) to see if there are similarities in respect of the recruitment strategies constructed by VOs to attract potential recruits. Violence is but one aspect of a group's activities, one that is often used extensively to explain the motivation, actions, and outcomes of a group and to argue why these groups are beyond comparison.

Many other interesting and pertinent factors exist across them that are worth exploring; for example, the dynamic of groups themselves and how they persuade people to join. Moreover, as Tilly (1978) notes, we do not need to identify some form of universal instinct of aggression nor search for pathological factors to explain collective violence. Collective violence historically stemmed from political processes; "[P]eople seeking to seize, hold, or realign the levers of power have continually engaged in collective violence as part of their struggles" (p. 1). This statement has resonance with all four VOs, although to differing degrees concerning levels of perceived power, implying their acts of violence are no different irrespective of the group who conducts it, rather as Tilly (1978) states, "the oppressed have struck in the name of justice, the privileged in the name of order, those in between in the name of fear" (p. 1). It is acknowledged that an assessment of this nature is likely to be met with criticism, given that if one were to suggest that violence used by extremist groups or gangs is the same as that used by the military, however, taking Tilly's (1978) approach, the *justification* is the difference, not the violence act itself. As a result, methods that examine comparative VOs need to research beyond the justification or lack thereof for their violence and investigate the violence element as a similarity on which to compare these groups.

Scope of Study

Four VOs (extremists, gangs, military, and Private Military Contractors (PMCs/mercenaries)) were chosen because of their shared use of violence to answer the question: *what visual strategies are used by violence organisations to recruit members to their group or call them to action*? and to examine whether they use the same visual strategies to do so. *Call to action*, for the purpose of this dissertation, is understood as a communication designed to elicit a response in the viewer. The research originated from a keen interest in the similarities between such groups and a scepticism that radicalisation did not explain in enough detail how this process occurred, due in part to its considerable bias towards Islamic extremism (Decker and Pyrooz, 2011; Schmid and Price, 2011). Furthermore, despite an increase in terrorism-related research in this area, the field still lacks sufficient comparative studies and theory testing, and suffers from selection bias (Ferguson and McAuley, 2020). This research contributes to filling this gap by better explaining how some people are attracted to violence, while others exposed to the same conditions are not, but as importantly, how some turn to legal groups which use violence as part of their goals and others turn to illegal ones, a comparison rarely fully explored in the literature. Haggerty and Bucerius (2018) are notable exceptions, remarking that "questions about the comparability between soldiers and terrorist have entered into discussions of the radicalisation *processes,* a literature which tends to treat the assorted steps towards radicalisation as characteristic only of the movement towards extremist violence by terrorists" (p. 769, emphasis in original).

Like Haggerty and Bucerius (2018), it is argued herein that violence associated with political extremism is not a distinct phenomenon unique to terrorism that warrants a specific form of analysis. Instead, it is only one form of collective violence, and therefore, these groups are suitable for comparative analysis. The choice of comparative organisations also illustrates this, given a recognition of consistency in the literature across these groups and with groups more broadly (Hogg, Hohman and

Rivera, 2008), which is often ignored; thus, de-exceptionalising terrorist and extremist groups. This allows comparison of in-case as well as across-case groups to understand the mechanisms that they use to recruit people or call them to action, and to see if there are similarities across the four VOs, which are often considered to be distinct, thereby adding to the current literature.

These issues are worth exploring given the possibility that an attraction to violence could be an attraction to such groups while plausible is unlikely to explain joining in its totality. The violence could be a ruse and be just one common denominator across these groups, while actual membership may be more the result of group dynamics and influence more broadly. Dismissal of these groups as viable comparisons only makes these questions harder to address. Furthermore, an approach like this tends to postulate that deciding to join illegal VOs is something totally different from the process of joining other groups. For this to be true, one might suggest that the population who join illegal groups, for example extremists, would be different from the average population, but research does not show this (Gill, 2016). Moreover, emerging research demonstrates the movement of individuals between different VOs (Brady, 2021, forthcoming). By showing that VOs are more similar than different in their recruitment strategies, significant learning may be achieved, for example, through research on accessible groups being applied to other VOs given the problems and challenges with gaining access to illegal VOs, such as criminal and extremist groups. This, in turn, may have a positive impact on addressing the lack of empirical research in the study of extremist and illegal groups more widely.

This research is timely. The visual, while not a new medium, is increasingly being used in videos by VOs not merely to entertain, but as a medium of communication and, more importantly, persuasion (Debrix, 2006; Phillips and Ghalwash, 2019). Exactly *how* they do this, however, remains unclear. Research pertaining to military recruitment suggests that these strategies tap into individual stresses and life crises to recruit (Elder, Wang, Spence, Adkins, and Brown, 2010). While in the context of extremist groups, Ganesh (2020) notes “emotion plays a central role in encouraging engagement in alt-right digital culture and assert that the emotional order that the alt-right constructs connect with the appeal of the populist radical right” (p. 893). It is not surprising that the findings of this dissertation resonate with this research; emotional draws are understood as influential in the context of groups more broadly (Tajfel, 1966). The findings suggest VOs influence and persuade through videos by glorifying myths and themes of belonging, coupled with embedding emotional triggers to evoke a response, namely joining. In the context of the visual, these are powerfully presented through the selection of images that resonate with viewers on a deep, often personal, social, and/or cultural level. The visual is used to first engage the viewer (as demonstrated through their use of branding), before glorifying the myth of hero and nation (through images from history, monuments, and nature), to give the impression of belonging, comradeship, and kinship, whilst evoking emotions within the viewer. Meaning is neither fixed nor absolute, which creates methodological challenges. Images, for example, those of groups, used to present feelings or impressions of belonging, authenticity, and comradeship are not always obvious. Nonetheless, these videos are a rich data source (given the multi-layered structure of meaning within them). As asserted by Geertz (1973) and Mach (1993), symbols often represent a shared marker of the identity, values, and history of the organisation. For example, flags serve a psychological function. They make a group appear more real, seem more unified, and appear as a collective (Callahan and Ledgerwood, 2016).

The persuasive power of these visuals (scenes and symbols) is applied and leveraged through techniques from advertising, evident in both medium and message. Chief amongst these techniques

is those that focus on target selection, positioning the message in front of that audience (s), and by building a rapport through establishing trust, legitimacy, and authority in the eyes of the viewer. It is the combination of these factors (known to influence group membership) that are used to create an environment conducive to influence or persuasion. These observations resonate with Althusser's (1971) process of interpellation, which suggests that we are constructed by ideologies that speak to us regularly through language and image. This perspective suggests that images and other forms of communication, interpellate or communicate with us about the viewer they want us to be. The images presented through this dissertation do exactly that, supporting Phillips and Ghalwash's (2019) findings that both military and extremist videos commonly use a style of content that directly addresses the viewer. In the context of recruitment and persuasion, this is important. It suggests, similar to Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) that agency is not only influenced by experiences and knowledge but also by future hopes and desires.

As important as it is to point to what this dissertation does, it is just as critical to state what it does not do. First, it is not a reception study. It does not examine how these strategies are received. Albeit no less necessary and of interest, it focuses on identifying the visual strategies used by VOs and how they influence people to join or respond to a call-to-action by VOs, rather than examine how viewers receive such strategies, thereby examining the recruiter's decision-making concerning content and strategy selection. As a result, it is less focused on the agency of an individual who is exposed to such content; instead, it concentrates on the strategies used by VOs to persuade and influence individuals to join. The research takes Alexander's (1992) position that "there is a dimension of free will, or agency, in every action" (p. 8), and in so doing investigates how visual strategies aim to tap into feelings of uncertainty and future desires to persuade and influence people to join such groups, in a manner that encourages them to exert agency in their decision. Second, this dissertation does not explicitly examine the role of the internet in these visual strategies. Instead, it focuses on the role of the videos and the content, viewing the internet mainly from the perspective of a host to such videos. It is acknowledged that the internet as a host has specific factors that make it different to the likes of TV and therefore, the research goes as far as to explore the workings of the internet in this regard. Third, it does not directly examine the nature of violence used by VOs for comparative purposes, instead it takes such use of violence as the reason for comparison, and from there explores the similarities and differences in their visual recruitment and call-to-action strategies. It then examines how these groups influence people to join and respond to their call to action.

These decisions have been made for several reasons. Chief amongst them is that the gaps identified that this dissertation aims to help fill make it an important topic. Furthermore, given the lack of research *vis-à-vis* studies examining the role of the internet and reception studies, this topic warrants more attention at this time; thus, the approach taken facilitates the overall aim of the research, which is to understand the visual strategies used by VOs and to identify their similarities and differences across VOs.

Contribution

The comparative approach taken here builds on existing literature on the *crime-terror nexus*, moving it beyond the fundamental distinction often offered between such groups that the difference lies in their motivations (profit-versus-ideology dichotomy) (Ballina, 2011), which has endured despite evidence to the contrary, for example, the Provisional IRA and other groups. As noted by Forest (2012), this perspective tends to undermine the significance of shared or similar interests between both

groups, the use of similar tactics and their desire to acquire resources and power to achieve their objectives. Furthermore, the merits of comparisons between illegal and legal groups are often also dismissed, with suggestions that the type of violence that distinguishes terrorism from ordinary crime or military action in wartime can be defined in objective terms (Hudson, 1999). This assumption may be flawed, however, because while there is a strong line of thought that terrorism is morally wrong, it is not always the case (Keller, 2005), and while military violence is mostly accepted, it may not always be moral. As a result, the research fills several existing knowledge gaps in areas such as comparative analysis, the application of diverse methodologies, and to visual analysis, as they pertain to VOs.

Firstly, this dissertation extends and broadens current research by conducting an examination into different types of VOs of which there is little comparative analysis. This lack of research is despite growing recognition of similarities, for example, between extremist groups and the military. Its comparative nature builds on this by examining a broader number and type of VOs. The expansion is important and worthwhile because, despite work, akin to that conducted by Decker and Pyrooz (2011) and Lindekilde (2016), which highlights the importance of comparing similarities and differences between terrorist organisations and gangs, researchers have yet to employ a satisfactory cross-comparison with other VOs, especially with the military. Even the work of Haggarty and Bucerius's (2018) was theoretical in design. This lack of analytical and empirical approaches, while often blamed on the perception that the VOs under review are incompatible for comparative analysis, is restricting the literature in this regard. As a result, this piece will make a contribution to knowledge.

Secondly, the research applies a theoretical framework which draws on theories relating to groups, myths, and the visual, demonstrating their combined utility in assessing visual recruitment strategies. This approach is justified given that it is not the presence of cues alone, but their persuasive impact that makes them effective forms of influence. Their effectiveness emanates not merely from their presence, but from a host of different elements, namely content, positioning, multimodalities used, and intertextuality/intervisuality. The theoretical framework taken, therefore, combines Ellul's theory of propaganda and Hogg's on group membership, with theories from advertising and the visual with a particular emphasis on how these theories explain VOs use of the visual to recruit and call to action. The rationale for this was significantly influenced by the desire to overcome the rather narrow approach of viewing extremist content through the lens of propaganda, which often attributes a negative connotation to this content. It is worth noting here that propaganda is not a purely positive or negative thing, something often portrayed that way of late concerning terrorist content. Moreover, propaganda alone is rarely enough to attract people to these groups, let alone powerful enough in itself to persuade and influence; thus, understanding how the combination of modes come together to influence and persuade is the corner stone of this study. This combination helps demonstrate their utility in assessing the visual strategies used by VOs to recruit members to their group or call them to action. It is important, because it provides a better foundation for comparative analysis, which is desirable when investigating both illegal and legal groups to avoid bias. This perspective is crucial given that the rationale for comparative analysis of different types of VOs is often dismissed because of what the groups are perceived to represent, or what motivates them, rather than viewed from the perspective of why people join. The approach is pertinent because despite the moral repugnance of some of their actions, VOs are often viewed as attractive for more positive reasons than often presented, something that is explored throughout this piece.

Finally, the approach taken here makes a significant contribution to the application of visual analysis to research on VOs. This is pertinent given that despite an increase in visual analysis in other fields; a shift often referred to as the 'visual turn' has yet to fully find its place in research of VOs. There are some notable exceptions; Ryan (2012) and Dauber, Robinson, Baslious, and Blair (2019) (military research); Morselli and Décary-Hétu (2010) and Schneiker, Dau, Joachim, Martin, and Lange (2018) (PMC/Mercenaries); Winter (2020) and Rieger, Frischlich and Bente (2019) (extremist groups); and Ilan (2020) (gang research). There is a dearth of research, nonetheless, with respect to the actual visual elements of these strategies and their relationship with persuasion. Notable exceptions, which this dissertation builds on, include works in the fields of psychology (Green, Strange, and Brock, 2002), political science (Patterson and Monroe, 1998), communication science (Moyer-Guse, 2008), criminology (Presser, 2016), and violent extremism (Holbrook and Taylor, 2019). It is also a response to calls for a visual turn in violent online extremism research (Conway, 2019) by using the visual as the primary data source. Furthermore, this approach adds an increased level of interdisciplinarity and challenges the notion that VOs are beyond comparison; thus, illustrating the benefits of de-exceptionalising terrorists. In so doing, it is an empirical response to calls for the application of visual methods to the study of VOs.

Structure of Study

This dissertation is divided into eight chapters and a conclusion. Chapter One is broken into four sections. It examines, firstly, the extant literature on group membership and identity, secondly the sense of belonging, camaraderie, and brotherhood these groups provide, and thirdly, the role of the visual in both group membership and the provision of this sense of belonging. It concludes with a discussion of the limited literature pertaining to how VOs use visuals to influence and persuade potential recruits. This research draws from military studies, criminology, terrorism, and extremism studies, but also from fields such as psychology, to investigate persuasion; sociology to examine group membership, and communications by exploring messaging and advertising; thus, broadening the framework from which recruitment to VOs is examined in a multi-disciplinary manner.

Chapter Two sets out the theoretical approach taken to this research, synthesising three key theories and concepts to explain how VOs make their videos persuasive. First it describes Hogg, et al.'s (2008) theories on group dynamics and belonging to explain how VOs design their videos in a way that taps into motivations to membership and ensures engagement, whilst providing a sense of belonging to the viewer between them and the group. Second, it explicates Ellul's (1973) concept of myths as a driver of action and their role in how people acquire meaning from the world around them and of their place within it. It also draws from Ellul's (1973) perspective of propaganda as a technique, highlighting how this approach influences how meaning is derived through myths in a manner that incites action. The third core element of the theoretical framework examines semiotics and Mirzoeff's concept of intervisuality, further unpacking how the visual is used to influence group dynamics, through the visual glorification of myths. The chapter then provides a synthesis to demonstrate the convergence and interconnectedness of these elements that makes videos an especially effective mechanism of persuasion, before ending with a brief acknowledgement of the constraints of the theoretical framework.

The methodological approach taken is outlined in Chapter Three. The first section examines the overall approach and research design. The second explores visual methods before examining video analysis in more detail. The third investigates specifically how this methodology is applied, in respect of case

selection and video analysis. It also identifies and discusses several challenges encountered regarding analysis, and how they were overcome and mitigated. The data for this research is drawn from an analysis of one hundred and seventeen videos, produced and circulated by VOs and/or by their members. The analysis provided within Chapters Four through Eight draw upon this primary (and rather unique) data, and present empirical findings to support the argument that cues embedded within the videos, augmented, and enhanced through intertextual/intervisual and multimodal techniques are what makes VOs recruitment/call to action videos persuasive. Moreover, that the four VOs use similar techniques.

Chapter Four explains how viewership is not something taken for granted by VOs, examining how they seek to ensure their videos engage their audience, and in so doing create an environment conducive to persuasion. It empirically shows this through one specific advertising technique, branding, chosen because of its dual role in the process of engagement and persuasion. Chapter Five builds on this, drawing from the process of military recruitment advertising to examine whether other VOs use similar advertising techniques to attract potential recruits. To do this, it derives from Ellul (1973) and Rech's (2014) work to explain how myths (through embedded cues) are used within these videos to reinforce intrinsic and extrinsic values to recruit and call to action.

Exploring this further, Chapter Six studies the audience of the videos (as constructed by the content creators), empirically demonstrating that VOs recruitment content can and reaches a more diverse audience than potential recruits. This is best described as a segmented audience, using embedded cues to resonate differently with different segmentations. As a result, these videos should be viewed not solely from the perspective of an independent piece of communication, rather as part of a broader eco-system of online content. The chapter draws on examples which illustrate Mirzoeff's approach to intervisuality to exemplify its argument. Chapter Seven moves beyond the visual to examine how different modes (specifically exploring the role of audio, through music and spoken word) are used to reinforce the visual cues and persuasive impact. Finally, Chapter Eight demonstrates how VOs use masculinity as a theme in which they frame both message and meaning. It draws from advertising to show that certain modes are effective not only to communicate and engage but also to provide hooks for targeting a particular group, males. These five chapters serve to illustrate the multi-layered nature of content, with different types of cues combined to help achieve the persuasive impact for both recruitment and call to action. The Conclusion draws together the implications of the findings and presents recommendations for further research.

Chapter 1 Groups, Belonging, and the Visual: Positioning Recruitment to Violence Organisations in the Academic Literature

> I shall define a group as a category of people fulfilling two criteria: the first, that an individual identifies himself as belonging to the category; and the second, that this identification is to him of some emotional significance (Tajfel, 1966, p. 78).

Introduction

The study of groups transcends many disciplines and fields of analysis; thus, benefiting from interdisciplinary scholarship informing both theory and understanding. In applying an interdisciplinary approach, it draws from this literature, specifically that pertaining to criminology, terrorism, extremism, military studies, and from the broader field of sociology to examine groups and benefits of membership. Comparing these literatures broadens the framework from which recruitment to VOs is routinely examined and illustrates that despite the lack of comparative analysis, many aspects pertaining to why individuals join VOs are consistent across specific groups. Similar to groups more generally, the individual literatures suggest that VOs provide a sense of belonging; social support in times of crisis or stress; feelings of pleasure and greater life satisfaction; and validation of perceptions, feelings, attitudes, and behaviours. Despite this wealth of literature, however, it fails to adequately explain how groups use this knowledge to attract new members to their organisations.

This research draws from (and builds on) the range of research mentioned above to provide an increased level of interdisciplinarity often missing from this area of study. Moreover, in examining these literatures together, despite their differences, it identifies similarities that often go unnoticed given the apparent disparities. The chapter examines these similarities. It discusses, firstly, extant literature regarding group membership and identity, secondly the sense of belonging, camaraderie, and brotherhood these groups provide, and thirdly, investigates the role of the visual in both group membership and the provision of this sense of belonging. It concludes with a discussion of the limited literature pertaining to how VOs use visuals to influence and persuade potential recruits.

Attraction to Groups

Early research on groups and the vital role they play in our lives focuses on the sense of well-being they provide (Wakefield, Sani, Madhok, Norbury, Dugard, Gabbanelli, Arnetoli, Beconcini, Botindari, Grifoni, Paoli, and Poggesi, 2016; Tuomela, 2007). Often viewed from the perspective of social integration, group membership was believed to provide a sense of meaning, purpose, security, and support in times of crisis or stress (Cohen, 2004; Abrams and Hogg, 2005). There are limitations with this concept in explaining group membership, however, as it suggests that high levels of social contact are the crucial component of well-being (Wakefield, et al., 2016). Yet well-being received from group interaction fluctuates for different members and groups (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). This resulted in a shift towards a social identity perspective, a social psychological theory of intergroup relations and group processes, created in the 1970s by H. Tajfel (Haslam, 2004). From this perspective, group identification is underpinned by, as Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, and Wetherell (1987) suggest, social categorisation, which generates a sense of in-group identification and belonging (Hogg, Sherman, Dierselhuis, Maitner, and Moffitt, 2007). Social identity theory views "groups cognitively as three or more people who share the same social identity and views group identification as a feeling of

belonging, a definition and evaluation of self in terms of shared ingroup attributes", meaning the group is central to one's sense of self (Hogg, et al., 2007, p. 1). Identification generates group behaviours (Hogg and Abrams, 1988). Sani, Herrera, Wakefield, Boroch, and Gulyas (2012) explain that group identification is the sense of belonging to a group in conjunction with the sense of commonalities we have with its members, which further impacts feelings of well-being (Wakefield at al., 2016). We appear more willing to provide help and support to a group with which we identify, and in return are more willing to accept it (Levine, Cassidy, Brazier, and Reicher, 2002; Platow, Voudouris, Gilford, Jamieson, Najdovski, and Papaleo, 2007). Social identity theory evolved to encompass a "focus on social influence and group norms, leadership within and between groups, self-enhancement and uncertainty reduction motivations, deindividuation and collective behavior, social mobilization and protest, and marginalization and deviance within groups" (Hogg, 2016, p. 7). Jetten, Haslam, Iyer, and Haslam (2010) further suggest that group identity can buffer against life's stresses by providing meaning and security, factors believed to enhance life satisfaction. Haslam, O'Brien, Jetten, Vormedal, and Penna (2005) propose Integrated Social Identity Model of Stress (ISIMS) to explain how group membership affects how we deal with stress, stating that a "potentially stressful task is likely to be seen as less stressful when a member of a group with which you identify tells you that the task is fun and challenging rather than complex and difficult" (Wakefield, et al., 2016, p. 801). Branscombe, Schmitt, and Harvey (1999) in the context of stress derived from discrimination, note that identifying more with a group can be a mechanism to cope with discrimination, as it helps increase life satisfaction. This is like optimal distinctiveness theory (Brewer, 1991):

> [P]eople, driven by conflicting motives for inclusion/sameness and distinctiveness/uniqueness, gravitate towards groups that optimally satisfy these motives – such groups are not only distinct from other groups (i.e., distinctive with clear boundaries) and specify shared attributes, but also furnish members with a distinct identity within the group (i.e., clearly structured internally) (Hogg, et al., 2008, p. 1270)

Hogg, et al. (2008) postulate that "people seek out groups to enjoy the pleasure of group affiliation, [noting that] depression of self-esteem signals the possibility of exclusion and engages behaviour designed to strengthen inclusion" (Hogg, et al., 2008, p. 1270). They (2008) suggest that motivations associated with group membership may be central to our existence, and highlight three areas, pleasure and pain, life, and death, and needing to have a certain knowledge about the world and your place within it.

Violence Organisations and membership influences

The literature concerning the four VOs reviewed considers many of the issues discussed above. Some benefits are discussed across all four; others are absent from one or more. This may be due, in some way, to the nature of the studies themselves and the perspective they come from. Furthermore, there has been a reluctance by many to position their work in foundation disciplines, especially post Sept. 11 with some portraying studies emerging post this event as a nearly new discipline. This may have contributed, at least in part, to the limited comparative, empirical, and interdisciplinary nature of research in this area. Some notable exceptions from Critical Terrorism Studies are worth highlighting with Della Porta (2006) and MacGinty (2019), for instance, applying learnings from other fields (social movement theory and peacebuilding, respectively) to the study of terrorism.

Many of the explanations as to why people join VOs come from a range of perspectives, which, at least in the context of terrorism and extremism, can be primarily broken down into the following factors:

individual socio-psychological; social; political; ideological and religious dimensions; the role of culture and identity issues; and trauma and other trigger mechanisms (RAN[5], 2016). While it is not possible to go through all the research pertaining to the role of these factors, it includes (not limited to) research on perceptions of grievance, injustice or discrimination (Ferguson and McAuley, 2020; Coolsaet, 2016), trauma (Simi, Bubolz, McNeel, Sporer, and Windisch, 2015), community support for the extremist group (Burgess, Ferguson, and Hollywood, 2007), desire for revenge (Crenshaw, 2003), self-identification with the extremist group (van Stekelenburg and Klandermans, 2007), and age and gender associations (Bakker and de Bont, 2016; Silke, 2003). Other factors, such as group dynamics; radicalisers/groomers; and the role of social media are also identified as potential influencing factors. Ranstorp (2010), like others, states that violent extremism is best conceptualised "as a kaleidoscope of factors" (p. 1). This implies that by virtue of this interplay between factors there are infinite individual combinations, making it challenging to forecast, predict, or identify causality. This helps support the assumption that no single theory will explain how and why people join terrorist groups, and is likely to imply that no single theory would explain how (and why) VOs use the visual to recruit and call to action. Despite this, many researchers continue to try to find a combination of factors that may have some predictive or causal impact. These explanations only offer minimal insight into the recruitment process. The research rarely considers primary motivations that drive people to join. This may in part be due to the lack of empirical studies with members of extremist groups and a starting point that often overemphasises motivations to join being driven by the activities and aims of the group. Rather than contemplating what benefits group membership may bring to individuals and the group at large. Similar problems apply to research on PMCs/mercenaries, which tends to focus on the material motivations, i.e., payment, rather than the potential ideological or political influences (Salzman, 2008; Singer, 2003).

The focus of profit as a motivation to join PMCs/mercenaries is often similar in focus to that in gang research, which often justifies joining in the context of profit. Despite this, gang research (at least) shares similarities with extremism research. It broadly considers factors such as community, family, school, peer influence, and individual attributes (Smith, Gomez, Auyong, and Ferguson, 2019) to explain gang behaviour. Findings suggest that gang members emerge from low socio-economic backgrounds (Pedersen, 2014; Rizzo, 2003; Spergel, 1995) neighbourhoods with existing gangs (Alleyne and Wood, 2014) juvenile delinquency (Hill, Lui, and Hawkins, 2001). From a family perspective, the research points to poor parental management (Sharp, Aldridge, and Medina, 2006; Thornberry, Krohn, Lizzotte, Smith, and Tobin, 2003), family criminality (Eitle, Gunkel, and Van Gundy, 2004; Sharp, et al., 2006) and gang involved family members (Spergel, 1995). Poor school performance (Spergel, 1995; Thornberry, et al., 2003); and peer pressure (Dishion, Patterson and Griesler, 1994; Monahan, Steinberg, and Cauffman, 2009) are also presented as possible causes. Individual attributes have been researched mainly from the perspective of age, (Rizzo, 2003; Glesmann, Krisbery, and Marchiona, 2009) gender (Bennett and Holloway, 2004; Hill, Lui, and Hawkins 2001) and ethnic origins (Gatti, Tremblay, Vitaro, and McDuff, 2005; Merrin, Hong, and Espelage 2015; Sharp, et al., 2006). Like research on extremism, no single factor thoroughly explains joining (Alleyne and Wood, 2012).

Academics studying military recruitment have also investigated the role that factors like disadvantage, lack of social connections, and behavioural problems play in influencing joining. Studies have shown

[5] The Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) was founded in 2011. It is an EU funded network of frontline practitioners who work with those vulnerable to radicalisation and those who have already been radicalised. RAN engages in both preventing and countering violent extremism in all its forms and rehabilitating and reintegrating violent extremists.

that entry into military service is linked to lower family income, less educated parents, and larger family sizes (Kilburn and Klerman, 1999); and that children of current or former military personnel are more likely to enlist (Rech, 2014). This mirrors findings in both gang and extremist research, which shows higher rates of membership amongst those with a previous family member in the group. Kleykamp's (2006) study aimed to widen the understanding as to what factors influence joining the military after high school, by examining a cohort of high school graduates from Texas in 2002. This research examined influences including educational goals, institutional presence of military in communities, race, and socio-economic status. It finds that a higher military institutional presence increases the odds of enlisting in comparison with going to college or joining the labour force, while also highlighting the lack of studies which examine the effect of institutional presence on actual enlistment behaviour. Findings around accessibility are highly relevant here, as they may illustrate similarities to that of Pedersen (2014) who, in respect of gangs, found that 62% of their sample joined gangs from neighbourhoods with at least one gang. Accessibility has also been highlighted as important, in relation to extremist groups; "a desire to become a [Provisional Irish Republican Army] PIRA member, therefore, is of little use if the would-be member does not possess the structural opportunities to join" (Gill and Horgan, 2013, p. 441). Might joining groups present in the community be viewed as an extension of a community network rather than joining a new distinct group? While research in this area is limited, gang literature might provide valuable insights. For example, Forman (2002) identifies a strong connection between place, local culture, and groups, while Kintrea, Bannister, Pickering, Reid, and Suzuki (2008) highlight the connection between place and sense of ownership and territorial control. More recently, Henderson (2020) posits that communities can provide a web of support that often works in contrast to the dominant culture. This literature suggests that there may be merits in examining whether certain groups within neighbourhoods are mere extensions of the community or are unique organisations.

The research discussed in this section relates largely to joining, as opposed to recruitment, per se, with much of this literature, tending to suggest that factors like socio-economic background, community, family, peer influence, and individual attributes influence people to join VOs. It does not explain, however, if and how groups engage around these factors to recruit, an area limited in the literature, which this dissertation contributes to.

Motivations, membership, and identity in violence organisations

Apart from research into PMCs/mercenaries, which is limited, the other three areas of study broadly examine the social and psycho-social factors that influence people to join. They often explain joining as a means of problem solution (with associated benefits), rather than benefit driven. Joining any group, even if deviant, may not be illogical from the perspective of those who join. It may be more routine than we care to admit considering the similarities across all four VOs, given that to do so demonstrates that behind the terms or different narratives, important parallels exist. Similar to groups more broadly (Hogg, et al., 2008), membership of VOs provides a sense of belonging; the provision of social support in times of crisis or stress and/or help people deal with stress, the provision of feelings of pleasure and greater life satisfaction; the validation of perceptions, feelings, attitudes, and behaviours; and influences the construction of our world view. This suggests that while the search for identity and belonging in VOs might predict support for violence-oriented organisations, it is not absolute (MacDougall, van der Veen, Feddes, Nickeloson, and Doosje, 2018); rather, it is to suggest that their impact on group membership is unlikely to be largely different from groups more generally.

The sense of belonging provided by VOs is consistent across the four literatures, which is often considered in relation to brotherhood and camaraderie. Within this framing, three other themes are commonly discussed: stress and crisis, life satisfaction, and validation of perception. These themes are further discussed herein because of the high degree of consensus within the literature on groups, both broadly and in the context of VOs specifically.

Sense of belonging

It is widely accepted that groups provide a sense of belonging. In the context of extremism research, Ozeren, Sever, Yilmaz, and Sozer (2014) state that this sense often values the individual and provides solutions to practical problems. The provision of support to solve problems echoes the work of Levine, et al. (2002) and Platow, et al. (2007), who find that people appear more willing to help and support members of groups they identify with. This sense is often framed around fun and adventure. Young people often seek out adventure and/or (in their eyes) a worthy cause, seek out terrorist organisations and act in line with them or on their behalf in search for personal fulfilment and acceptance. They become part of a group who shares common experiences, for example, feeling alienated in a diaspora (Schmid and Price, 2011). Jensen, LaFree, James, Atwell-Seate, Stevenson, and Tinsley (2016) found that feeling like a member of the community that has been collectively victimised may be a key element of setting the seed for radicalisation. This has parallels with work on perceived grievance and feelings of uncertainty (Hogg, et al., 2008). It also aligns with Branscombe, et al. (1999) who note that groups act as a coping mechanism for discrimination.

The research on gangs also references, often more directly, the sense of belonging. Basra and Neumann (2016) note that jihadist groups and gangs offer similar factors, including experiences of power, violence, adventure, provide strong identity, a sense of rebellion, and are anti-establishment. Pedersen (2014) finds that reasons for joining gangs often include friendship, a sense of community, and belonging. Like extremism research, Pedersen (2014) observes that gangs often provide opportunities for excitement and adventure, while providing feelings of safety, something also noted by Decker and Van Winkle's (1996) research. Decker and Van Winkle (1996) discovered that the sense of safety and security is often further influenced by the presence of a family member and or friend in the group. This sense of security aligns with Cohen's (2004) research on groups more generally. This may be due to the influence families and friends have on our lives (Delle Fave, Brdar, Freire, Vella-Brodrick, and Wissing, 2011). This is similar to terrorism research on friendship and kinship ties to movements (Bond, 2014; Lindekilde, Bertelsen, and Stohl, 2016; Ozeren, et al., 2014; McCauley and Moskalenko, 2008; Post, Sprinzak and Denny, 2003; Sageman, 2004).

Recruitment to the military is also often influenced by a lack of connectedness, as hypothesised by Elder, et al. (2010), given that membership provides a sense of belonging. This is a well-known feature of military units, given the military reputation for camaraderie (Eighmey, 2006). In contrast, relevant research relating to PMCs/mercenaries in this area is limited. That which is available tends to suggest that people who join do not have an attachment to the cause for which they fight (rather motivated by profit). A similar motivation is found in the military, "the promise of U.S. citizenship, evidenced by the U.S. Army's policy of endowing citizenship to immigrants who serve in the armed forces" (Varin, 2012, p. 191). Motivation for money has also been found to influence some terrorists (Horgan, 2005). Varin (2012) asserts that the reasons that drive an American to enlist in the armed forces or to join a PMCs are not significantly divergent, suggesting that camaraderie, lifestyle, idealism, and patriotism

lured both groups to Iraq. Fainaru (2008) reiterates this, noting PMCs attract individuals with a promise for "the camaraderie and the addictive thrill - Iraq as a reality, not as an abstraction" (p. xvi).

Brotherhood and Comradeship

Specific feelings of camaraderie and belonging are often presented via the notion of brotherhood and comradeship, across all four VOs. Varin (2012) notes, about the French Foreign Legion, that "the esprit de corps that is developed through training and traditions is cemented by the camaraderie that inevitably grows from shared experiences" (p. 112). Eighmey (2006) also recognise that the military's reputation for camaraderie attracts young men who lack social support. Enlistment to the military is also thought to be motivated by the desire to develop self-discipline and for a chance of a new start (Eighmey, 2006; Elder, et al., 2010), with Eighmey (2006) noting that involvement in problem behaviours, like fights, increases the likelihood of military service over going to college. This notion of a transformative opportunity that the military provides is like the 'redemptive factor' often discussed in respect of extremist groups, which will be discussed further shortly.

The complexity of motivations is also evident in gang research. Aumair and Warren (1994) note that Australian gangs often provide a supportive environment for marginalised males to enact masculinity, whilst also providing an environment where they can foster "pride, brotherhood, solidarity, challenge, and success" through illegitimate means including violence, property crime, and substance abuse (Aumair and Warren, 1994, p. 6). This is consistent with other empirical research, which suggest people join gangs to hang out (Cruz, Rosen, Amaya, and Vorobyeva, 2017) and not to pose the violent threat to mainstream society as often depicted on the media (White, Perrone, Guerra, and Lampugnani, 1999). Cruz, et al. (2017) further ascribe that brotherhood and identity are powerful factors for marginalised youth who are disconnected from society, reporting that many gang youths gained self-confidence from gang membership.

Pedersen (2014) finds that social bonds of brotherhood are stronger among street gang members with a gang identity than among similar street gang members without a clear identity. Similarly, Hassan (2012) finds that a confluence of factors, such as strong bonds of brotherhood and sense of belonging, reputation building, and the prospect of fame or glory were positive factors influencing young men to join al Shabab. Fink (2014) in the context of extremist groups, also notes that these networks and groups provide an opportunity for a cohesive community to form, with each individual likely to be interacting in the interest of achieving a shared goal. For example, alleviating shared deprivation. People within the group start identifying with the group, and although they have joined mainly voluntarily out of own self-interest and personal goals, they realise they are all interdependent of each other, which is required in the pursuit of achieving their collective desired outcomes and goals. Fink (2014) suggests that, within these communities, members form a relationship of 'brotherhood'. Similar to how the spirit grows in the French Foreign Legion, Fink (2014) postulates that as cohesion intensifies so does the level of commitment and camaraderie, "the network takes various conscious and unconscious steps that subsequently intensify the relationships amongst its members (i.e., forming a 'brotherhood'), radicalisation process and the embracement of political violence" (p. 15). White (1983) finds similar results regarding long-term IRA members, asserting that the more forceful a group is, the higher the level of solidarity and devotion to fellow members, indicating further that when these groups move underground into isolation solidarity is significantly increased. Ferguson and McAuley (2020) also in the context of extremism in Northern Ireland note:

> once the individuals join extremist groups within these already segregated homogeneous partisan communities, the small group pressures become amplified. Inside these extremist cliques, the individuals are further insulated from the outside world and different opinions; thus involvement in these groups creates groupthink-like conditions which foster conformity and remove barriers towards their involvement in extremist violence (p. 224).

Fink (2014) also finds these similarities with military units, suggesting that both "terrorists and soldiers rely on one another for their survival that in turn fosters extreme group solidarity" (p. 16).

Some critics, however, suggest that the notion of brotherhood in these groups should not be exaggerated, as they owe much to Hollywood and popular culture as they do to the real life of the military, further stating that "the band of brothers was not a place soldiers wanted to be but a place they had to be to fulfil some very basic needs" (Daddis, 2010, p. 116). Daddis (2010) suggests that the notion of brotherhood has become a feel-good factor and that "we have too comfortably embraced the notion of male bonding as the accepted explanation of combat motivation and effectiveness without careful, critical review" (p. 117). This notion is often powerfully illustrated in the visual, where "the band of brothers myth [is] an established and symbolic story that presents male military units as elite, exceptional, and essential" (MacKenzie, 2020, p. 341), often "typically associated with positive characteristics of loyalty, camaraderie, courage under fire and indescribable bonds" (MacKenzie, 2020, p. 353). This perspective may have relevance for the research, in the context of *myths*, as it implies brotherhood is a sold notion. Even if these groups do provide a sense of brotherhood and belonging, however, this is not unique to VOs. A sense of belonging alone, therefore, is unlikely to explain why individuals join VOs specifically. Other groups provide a similar sense, for example, the community more generally. Delanty (2003) suggests that community is a concept that designates 'both an idea about belonging and a particular social phenomenon, such as expressions of longing for community, the search for meaning and solidarity, and collective identities' (p. 3). Moreover, sport has been long explored as an opportunity for building social inclusion and providing a sense of belonging (Schaillée, Spaaij, Jeanes, and Theeboom, 2019). For example, Barret (2019) investigates the social significance of cricket for a local South Asian Population in North Carolina, United States and finds that playing cricket can contribute to (amongst other things) developing a sense of belonging and attachment to place. This raises the question, why would individuals select to join VOs over others, if the core reasons for joining was a sense of belonging, why choose illegal groups over legal ones? Drawing on Delanty's point, could it simply be that these groups sell concepts of belonging better than others?

Stress and crisis

Group research more generally shows that groups provide support for dealing with stress and crisis. Much of the research on three of the four groups speaks both directly and indirectly to this, as possible motivations for joining VOs. While studies relating to PMCs/mercenaries are limited in this area, from those available in the other three, stress and crisis are primarily framed around trauma, alienation, grievance, and frustrations. These studies largely assert that stress and crisis are possible drivers to VOs, rather than viewing group membership as a mechanism to cope, manage, or mitigate the uncertainty, and or anxiety such factors cause, a nuanced but significant difference. In respect of terrorism, researchers exploring individual socio-psychological factors to explain joining note that these factors:

> include grievances and emotions such as: alienation and exclusion; anger and frustration; grievance and a strong sense of injustice; feelings of humiliation; rigid binary thinking; a tendency to misinterpret situations; conspiracy theories; a sense of victimhood; personal vulnerabilities; counter-cultural elements (RAN, 2016, p. 3)

Kimhi and Even (2006) incorporate similar thought in their research, noting that terrorism is a complex multifactorial phenomenon but also a phenomenon of multiple trajectories, including religious, nationalist, motives of escape, and of retribution. Horgan (2008) attempts to identify several specific factors too, which he says may provide a framework for "openness to socialisation into terrorism" (p. 85). They include a presence of emotional vulnerabilities; dissatisfaction with their current activities, whether it be political or a social protest; identification within victims – either real or less tangible, may be targeted by police or military; sense of reward that the member has in being in the movement; kinship and other social ties. These factors are only likely to influence getting involved in these groups. Horgan (2008) claims that other unique factors are likely to influence the stage of belonging, asserting that "being involved in terrorism reflects a dynamic, though highly personalised, process of incremental assimilation and accommodation", gradually occurring over time (p. 85).

Trauma appears to be an important influence on group membership in research relating to extremism, gangs, and the military. The exposure to trauma or a trigger has been identified as possibly having a causal impact on an individual's journey to extremism (RAN, 2016). Borum (2011) states that exposure to trauma was one of the early explanations of terrorism and is linked to psychopathological explanations. While they are still viewed as relevant by many, it is a topic of much contention. Gill, Horgan, and Deckert (2014) argue that "although it is important to consider distal risk factors, shorter term risk factors are more operationally significant" (Corner and Gill, 2015, p. 25). Weggeman, Bakker, and Grol (2014) found that some of their sample had been exposed to traumatic experiences before joining a violent group in Syria. These experiences included the loss of a loved one, difficulties in school or work, and trouble with authorities. The converse has also been found, however, for example, the UK House of Commons Report (2006) into the 7 July 2005 London[6] terrorist attacks, noted with regard to the perpetrators: "in a few cases there [was] evidence of abuse or other trauma in early life, but in others their upbringing has been stable and loving" (p. 31). Post, Sprinzak, and Denny (2003) also find the presence and influence of feelings of victimisation, primarily related to being evicted from homelands, helped influence respondents to merge their identity with that of the group.

Miller-Idriss (2017) also examines marginalisation as a motivation to groups through a study which examined "iconological images and symbols depicted in far right subcultural style, focusing on two ways in which the emotional appeal of the styles leads to the articulation of a hegemonic masculinity associated with the far right" (p. 200). Miller-Idriss (2017) claims that content plays on emotional impulses that appeal to marginalised men that desire comradeship and belonging and have an urge to express anger and frustration at mainstream society. Iconography and reference used by the far-right, like images of (or reference to) male soldiers and warriors, acts to emphasise feelings of conformity, trust, comradeship, courage, heroism, loyalty, and belonging. Specifically, her findings suggest that "clothing and subcultural style have the potential not only to reflect but also to create, cultivate, and strengthen identities, including masculinity and femininity and their intersections with

[6] Fifty-two people died and 700 were injured when four bombs went off across London, UK, on 7 July 2005.

nationalism" (Miller-Idriss, 2017, p. 212). Pedersen (2014) finds similar results in relation to gangs. Males were found to be more at risk, with males from immigrant communities at higher risk due to feelings of marginalisation (Goldman, Giles, and Hogg, 2014). Vigil (2002) also highlights the link between gang membership and immigration histories, coupled with experiences of discrimination, and failure to acclimate within society. Cohen (1955) noted that gangs often are a resource for achieving social status, where socio-economic marginalisation is felt. Inter-gang violence can also help achieve this position, protecting and even amplifying one's social status (Gould, 1999), and can be a strong motivator to adhere to the street code (Anderson, 1999).

Military studies literature suggests that recruitment strategies are often designed to tap into an individual's stresses and life crisis to recruit rather than an individual's reaction to trauma. Elder, et al. (2010, p. 457) describe the benefits of the military as a 'camouflaged safety net' as there are many incentives to those who enlist, for example, healthcare, childcare, educational allowance. Cowen and Siciliano (2011) note that armed forces are now state institutions that provide economic security in a competitive global economy. The US military tap into this through moral waivers to encourage enlistment of individuals with criminal convictions. This increased in the aftermath of a 2004 Pentagon study which aimed to "better define relationships between pre-Service behaviours and subsequent Service success" (Cowen and Siciliano, 2011, p. 1516). Bowman (2006) reports that between 2004 and 2005, the number of individuals recruited with convictions for serious criminal misconduct increased by 54%. The timing coincided with the Iraq war and marked an increased presence of gang members joining the US military, with gang graffiti common to Chicago and LA found in military installations across Iraq (Main, 2006; Turse, 2006). Cowen and Siciliano (2011) suggest that the use of moral waivers "highlights the shuttling of bodies from a system of criminalisation to incarceration to militarization" (p. 1519) and that the US prison system became a "means of warehousing a radicalised reserve army of predominately young male labour" (p. 1517). Devalued masculinities (machismo, strength, and physicality) experienced a regrowth through insecurity and increased entanglement of security industries into an interlinked system of social reproduction, which provided solutions to the problem and an opportunity for surplus populations (Cowen and Siciliano, 2011).

This transformative or redemptive narrative used to attract former criminals to the military is also evident in the literature of the other VOs. Basra and Neumann (2016) find that jihadist groups often provide an opportunity to break from criminal pasts and repent for sins, with support from radical clerics that justify crime to their recruits by saying it was permitted under religious rules (dar-al-harb – lands of war). Similar justifications can be found in gangs, who often claim that society has failed them, and criminality is their way to survive. The justification of violence by the military is also largely vindicated in wartimes, but increasingly in the fight against terrorism, often best described as a shift from wars of necessity to wars of choice.

While crisis and stress may be factors motivating some to join VOs, they do not fully explain it. It rarely is nuanced enough to explain why certain groups and not others and seldom considers the perspective that group membership may be seen as a mechanism to mitigate the impact of these stresses. While similar, this difference would likely provide more relevant and noteworthy results, especially around the perceived benefits these groups provide.

Life satisfaction

There is little research into the increased levels of life satisfaction gained from membership of extremist groups or gangs, which is not surprising given the limited empirical studies with members. Many VOs are commonly viewed as deviant and often assumed to appear less likely to be life-enhancing in comparison with other, non-deviant groups. Research is available in respect of military recruitment in this regard. Sani, et al.'s (2012) found that army unit identification was a positive predictor of life satisfaction, when comparing social contact and group identification as predictors of mental health, using family and the military as samples. They found that group identification "(1) affords a sense of structure and meaning, and (2) constitutes a precondition for positive social relationship based on trust, support, and respect. This, in turn, paves the way for positive mental states and mental health" (Sani, et al., 2012, p. 788). That said, it does not indicate whether these benefits were factors in influencing people to join or rather an unexpected benefit of joining. Nonetheless, it may provide insight that could be tested within the other VOs and might have implications for understanding of extremism research more specifically, given that some attempt to explain people's decision to join extremist groups based on mental health issues. This perspective, however, is highly contested. Gill (2016) notes that extremists (group members) do "not tend to be psychopathologically damaged, or for that matter highly uneducated and impoverished because of the selection factor" (p. 107). Groups recruit individuals who can do the job, which often requires skills and know-how, so healthy, stable people are preferred (Gill, 2016; McCauley and Moskalenko, 2008). Silke (2003) too posits that individuals with mental health issues are likely to be weeded out in the recruitment process. Nonetheless, joining these groups may increase exposure to violent and/or traumatic situations, which might further impact mental health:

> the terrorist lifestyle involves exposure to similar violent and traumatic situations found in military entities. The process of experiencing continuing violence may lead to changes in cognitive processes that later affect their mental wellbeing. Like military groups, individuals involved in terrorism may also experience psychological responses to their individual actions as well as group activity (Corner and Gill's, 2019, p. 501)

Examining life satisfaction alone, therefore, does not sufficiently explain how people are recruited into VOs. While groups may sell the idea that joining will make life better, how they frame this is unclear.

Validation of perceptions, feelings, attitudes, and behaviours

Hogg, et al. (2008) assert that groups often provide validation for our perceptions, feelings, attitudes, and behaviours, which might help explain why certain groups attract people over others. If society or groups accessible to us do not provide this benefit, it is logical that one would seek groups that do, especially if groups are central to our existence (Buss, 1999). If one considers Branscombe, et al.'s (1999) findings that group membership provides a mechanism to cope with discrimination and Brewer's (1991) optimal distinctiveness theory, which suggests that people gravitate towards groups that optimally satisfy these motives, then selecting which group to join and which not to, is worthwhile to understand. The research across all four areas is limited regarding why people join certain groups *over others*. Studies on extremist groups do not explicitly speak to joining to validate their perceptions from a positive perspective; rather, it is more commonly written in terms of opposition to societal values, as illustrated in the word *extreme*. A term that "can be used to refer to political ideologies that oppose a society's core values and principles" (Neumann, 2010, p. 12). In "the context of liberal democracies, this could be applied to any ideology that advocates radical or religious supremacy

and/or opposes the core principles of democracy and universal human rights" (Neumann, 2010, p. 12). Approaching from the perspective of potential members, however, it could be that these groups provide individuals with access to others who share their feelings, attitude, and beliefs, rather than an opportunity to oppose those within society. While it is acknowledged that this is another nuanced perspective, it is nonetheless an important one. The belief that groups provide validation of the world around us is evident in gang research. Shap (2014) posits that "gang violence is largely due to issues of identity, values, and gang cohesiveness rather than the result of the pathologically based environmental conditions" (p. 78).

One of these motivations alone is unlikely to influence joining to any of the four VOs in its entirety. Instead, as noted by Kimhi and Even (2006), Horgan (2008), and Ranstorp (2010) it is likely to be a confluence of factors, a confluence also likely to influence people to join other groups. This literature, therefore, serves largely to identify possible motivations for joining groups, as opposed to explaining what makes people *choose* a specific group over another. Many have excused this void, by differentiating between those joining VOs over other groups by drawing on their violence, however, per Murer (2014) the violence used by these groups, is but "one form of social action among a whole range [of] social acts" (p. 2). Murer (2014) notes that groups like gangs, terrorists, militias, and communal factions, can be viewed as "highly social environments, especially for those who feel that they have limited opportunities for social capital accumulation or mobility within larger society or indeed have been expelled from a mainstream social mobility milieu altogether" (p. 2). These organisations create a collective narrative to make sense of their use of violence in their specific group's name, "weaving them into the very identity fabric of the group" (Murer, 2014, p. 3), where violence is viewed as an output of the group. This perspective is pertinent in the context of this dissertation, as it helps show how groups use violence to influence and communicate, like other factors that help shape their inter and intra-group relations. But this is only one tool, another of key interest here is the use of the visual as a means of communication and recruitment. This is not to suggest that violence and the opportunity to use it within certain groups is not in and of itself an attractive feature that motivates some to join. Instead, it examines how groups frame violence and other factors in their visual content to attract recruits. In so doing, it aims to explain better the approach used by VOs through their visual strategies to recruit new members to their respective organisations.

The role of group identity and persuasion in VO recruitment literature

There is only limited attention paid to why some groups are perceived as more meaningful than others within the literature highlighted earlier in the chapter. Moreover, there are other problems with some of this literature. In the context of extremists, for example, knowledge and perceived understanding of the recruitment process often assumes that radicalisation precedes recruitment (Schmid and Price, 2011). A point highly criticised, despite its perceived popularity, because not all terrorists are recruited, never mind radicalised (Borum, 2011). Hudson (1999) in part supports this, noting that some are recruited, others are self-learned. Take, for example, the long-dead al Qaeda recruiter Anwar Al Awlaki[7]. Sageman (2004) offers an alternative model, which he refers to as *enlistment.* This approach is garnering some support and explains joining in a manner similar to how people join the military now. A shift occurred in military recruitment in many countries during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s

[7] Al Awlaki was suspected of being a senior recruiter for Al Qaeda.

from conscription to enlistment, making the study of military recruitment much more popular. That said, similar to extremism and gangs, research that specifically pertains to military recruitment is somewhat limited (Elder, et al., 2010; Kleykamp, 2006; Rech, 2004). The available studies are primarily normative, have an uncritical outlook, and/or have too general an attitude towards global militarism. Rech (2014), in his study on recruitment, counter-recruitment, and critical military studies, argues that the way military recruitment has been studied is analogous to current approaches to Critical Military Studies (CMS). He notes that CMS is limited either by an unwillingness to develop a critical moral stance towards violence or by too general an attitude toward militarism which is often blind to militarism affects. Elder, et al. (2010) reiterate this, positing that the research is typically descriptive and does not give adequate attention to channelling mechanisms for military service. Both note an exception in the work of Kleykamp (2006), however, as discussed earlier. As research in this area is relatively limited, much of what is available is framed within the concept of entitativity (i.e., the perception of a group as a single entity). Entitativity is best described as a feeling of *group-ness* within social units and is a way in which people categorise the social groups they observe, the people in them, and the units to which they themselves belong (Lickel, Hamilton, Wieczorkowska, Lewis, Sherman, and Uhles 2000).

Callahan and Ledgerwood (2016) note that "research on group identity symbols suggests that symbols can sometimes stand in for actual characteristics when group members are striving towards a desired group image" (p. 529). Hogg, et al. (2008) find in the context of their theory of uncertainty reduction that people are attracted to groups with high levels of entitativity when they are self-uncertain. The concept of entitativity is relevant to all four VOs. Albeit three of the four groups are highly contested as to what they are, evident in the considerable amount of literature and contestations about definitions. From the perspective of the group, members or potential members of such groups are often viewed as very distinct with common goals and shared attributes. Research on entitativity has traditionally studied the intrinsic characteristics of group members that make groups seem to be perceived as real. The factors are usually divided into two categories, namely the member's physical characteristics and member's actions. The physical characteristics of members are believed to influence the perceived homogeneity of the group and the actions are perceived to indicate a sense of cohesion (Lickel, et al., 2000). Lickel, et al. (2000) claim that members who tend to look similar and who share a common past or goal tend to be viewed as more entitative by an outsider looking in. This is relevant here given that much of the research across all four VOs considers the actions or activities of the group as attraction factors rather than the benefits the group gives or is perceived to give, or from the perspective of sameness.

Apart from PMC/Mercenaries, a potential influence of a shared common past is present in relevant literature relating to the VOs. This is despite recognition of shared military experiences in many cases. Past histories and identities, and shared culture significantly influence VOs. In terrorism research, Ryan (2007) examines some factors that influence culture and identity within similar groups. He reports that radicalisation and recruitment rhetoric is woven above four p's, persecution, precedent, piety, and perseverance. Ryan (2007) notes that contemporary Islamists refer to just wars in defence of Islam as a justification for much of their violence. He further notes that comparing past justifications with today's actions enables today's fighters to compare themselves with Islam's early day heroes. For example, in referring to the events of September 11th in New York, it is said that "the holy Tuesday operations in Washington and New York… was one of the great days of the Muslim… It brought… memories of the battles of Badr, Hitteen, al-Qadiseyyah, al-Yarmouk and Ain Jalout" (Ryan, 2007, p.

987). Ryan (2007) notes that reference to Badr is widespread amongst militants, purporting that the mujahidin fighting in Bosnia Herzegovina and Libya often labelled their actions referencing Badr. The Battle of Badr was reportedly fought at a time when there was a direct threat to the Muslim community.

Contemporary militants often associate themselves and their actions with the “piety and virtues of past heroes” (Ryan, 2007, p. 987), evident in the practice of kunyah (taking on the historical names of past heroes) linking them to past martyrs. Anderson (2004) notes a similar approach by Irish Republicans in the 1930s, where history classes were given to young IRA recruits. In these classes, the recruits were informed that origins of ‘the troubles’ date back to the Norman invasion of Ireland in 1169. They also used reference to specific individuals as heroes and champions of their cause. James Connolly and Wolfe Tone, and later Bobby Sands, were commonly used references to martyrdom to the Irish cause (Ryan, 2007). In the context of piety, many groups highlight their activities as representative of God's work, implying their actions enjoy the support of God (Ryan, 2007). Post, Sprinzak, and Denny's (2003) findings align with Ryan's (2007) in that their respondents had boyhood heroes, with the religious looking to religious people and the secular to revolutionary heroes. Recent research by Hakokongas, Halmesvaara, and Sakki (2020) note similar historical reference in memes, stating that to do so is part of selective remembering:

> The content of history-related memes typically has the form on a historical image and a text that creates a rhetorical function, inviting the audience to interpret the image as an analogy, to compare the present situation to the past, and think that the agenda of the present radical groups is legitimate. Some memes may also arouse either anger or a feeling of nostalgia: that things were somehow better in previous times (Hakokongas, Halmesvaara, and Sakki, 2020, p. 5)

With respect to gangs, the level of entitativity may also be relevant to membership. Decker, Bynum, and Weisel (2001) note that the composition of gangs is very important, and that the organisation can be determined by the level of membership and leadership; the holding of regular meetings; the existence of written rules, and involvement in or relationships with the owners of legitimate businesses. Pedersen (2014) notes that the Hells Angels often hold gatherings to recruit. Smith, Rush, and Burton (2013) hypothesised that as gang members become older, the level of sophistication and organisation of the gang increases and as the gang becomes more structured, recruitment becomes more sophisticated. Their assumption is that gang structure’s change "to fit the older gang members, or perhaps the older gang members change the gang as interests, knowledge, education and training" (p. 3) evolve. These changes, they argue, may reflect new leadership or realities on the ground. This may be similar for terrorist groups. Al Qaeda is different since the death of Osama Bin Laden and the ascension of Zawahiri (Smith, Rush, and Burton, 2013), but is no less threatening.

This might indicate parallels to extremist research which, like gang research suggests that contrary to popular belief, all individuals are not solely recruited into gangs, rather some join of their own accord (Bliss-Holtz, 2011). Howell (2012) supports this position, noting that it was a myth that adult gangs try to draw young people to gangs. This demonstrates the lack of clarity around how exactly gangs recruit individuals. Clarke and Felson (1993) make a distinction in terms of gang criminality that is noteworthy in the sense of entitativity; they divide these actions as 'criminal involvement' and 'criminal events'. They note that criminal involvement is "the processes through which individuals choose to become initially involved in particular forms of crime, to continue or desist from that involvement" (Taylor and

Horgan, 2007, p. 592). This is similar to Horgan's (2008) phased approach to extremism; before engaging in acts. Clarke and Felson (1993) note that different stages of involvement imply different decision-making factors, and therefore need to be considered separately. Criminal event decisions are defined as "the decision process involved in the commission of a particular crime (i.e., the criminal event) and are dependent upon their own special categories of information" (Taylor and Horgan, 2007, p. 592). Clarke and Felson (1993) suggest that "involvement decisions are characteristically multistage and extend over substantial periods of time, while event decisions, on the other hand, are frequently shorter processes, utilising more circumscribed information largely relating to immediate circumstances and situations" (Taylor and Horgan, 2007, p. 592). Taylor and Horgan (2007) argue that these distinctions also have relevance to terrorism.

In contrast, military studies suggest that recruitment strategies are built around persuasion, more specifically around culture and identity. Rech (2014) posits that while cultures of militarism differ greatly depending on location, they are all primarily influenced by "nationalism, political, geographical and historical images" (p. 245). For many nations, the military is embedded in culture with the image of a fighter reportedly in film, plays, fiction, and commercials (Levy and Sasson-Levy, 2008). This iconic image often personifies "virtues, struggles and hopes" (Daugberg and Sorenson, 2017, p. 4). These imageries are used to underpin recruitment campaigns, given that the formal process of recruitment is through persuasion. The image in Figure 1.1 visually depicts Rech's (2014) following statement:

> the media of recruitment (posters, TV ads, online games) provide opportunities to understand how violent visions, metaphors and templates are central to state-centric narratives of global politics, and how states deploy nationalism, domestic histories and mythologies of warfare, and mediate anxiety, threat and otherness in the name of consent and acquiescence (p. 245)

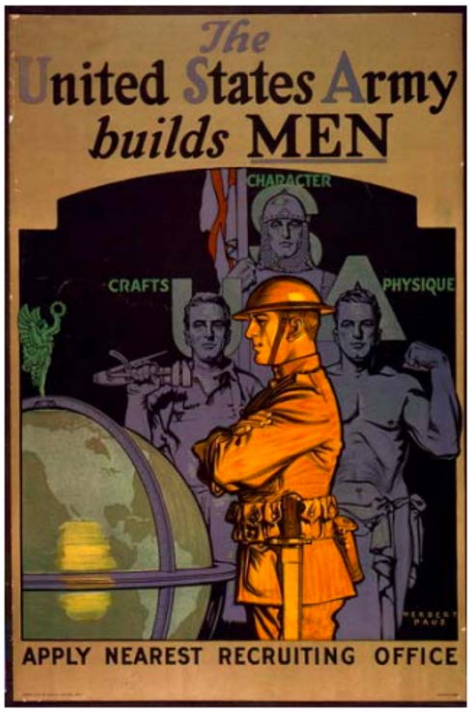


Figure 1-1 Image of a Military Poster, 1917

Similar to the use of historical cues amongst extremist groups, Cowen and Sicilano (2011) note that the image of the soldier has become one of a model social citizen, whose service is viewed with the

virility and strength of the nation. Their service to the country is seen as something that warrants public support and entitlement. In the US, this has been operationalised by an expansion of social services for soldiers, for example, citizenship for 'aliens' in return for service. Harding and Kershner (2011) also note that the culture of militarism is 'deeply embedded' in the US, which makes military recruitment an important set of practices. The 'No child left behind'[8] (NCLBA) law, which was signed into effect on 8 Jan 2002 by George W. Bush as an educational federal grant act, illustrates this. This act allowed military recruiters nearly unimpeded access to the personal information of enrolled students. Parents had the right to sign an opt-out clause, but the law did not require schools or the government to inform parents of either the law or their rights. Ferner (2006) notes that there are similar access rights in the Pentagon's Joint Advertising Marketing and Research database, which allows military recruiters access to streamline solicitations on gender, age, ethnicity, and recreational interests, amongst other variables. The practice of data collection for targeted recruitment is not new, or for that matter, uncommon. Military scholars note that it is hugely important to gather data about the target group (Sinczuch, 2010; Bailey, 2007), as military recruitment strategies are shaped by different factors, including class, gender, sexuality, and race (Basham, 2013). Successful recruitment requires intricate economies of advocacy, not only from the state and militaries but also from a range of corporate advertising, creative, and market research agencies (Rech, 2012). This happens at an intersection of reality and fiction, recreation, and simulation. This raises an exciting proposition; if the military use certain traits to identify possible recruits by the use of potential predisposing factors, is it not highly likely that extremist groups, gangs, and PMCs/mercenaries could do the same to recruit?

These findings resonate with the available literature relating to all four groups, but which tends to consider beyond recruitment only from a limited perspective. While some assert that certain VOs are particularly adept at identifying potential recruits, there is little research into the success rate of recruitment. Moreover, limited research explains how membership is marked, and what is the actual process? Post, Sprinzak, and Denny (2003) shed some insight into this, it is acknowledged, finding that only 15% of secular and 30% of religious groups reported a formal recruitment process. What processes exist for the others? Despite the dearth of research in some specific areas of recruitment, the depth and breadth of research drawn on here, which is only a portion of that in the four respective areas of study, is consistent with that relating to groups more generally. VOs provide a sense of belonging through the provision of feelings of brotherhood and comradeship, provide an opportunity to deal with stress and crisis, and provide for better life satisfaction. The literature, however, (at least, for the most part) does not sufficiently explain how groups tap into this to recruit, nor why certain groups are selected over others.

The concept of entitativity moves the discussion forward in this regard by aiming to explain why certain groups are viewed as 'more real' and 'more similar' than others and what makes them more attractive which may help enlighten why certain VOs are chosen over others. That said, there is a lack of research to suggest that VOs, except for the military, use this knowledge of entitativity to recruit. In this regard, Callahan and Ledgerwood (2016) highlight the need for a separate body of research that examines this in the context of the visual. This is highly relevant here, given the study explores VOs use of iconic events and people in their videos. Callahan and Ledgerwood (2016) note that "research on group identity symbols suggests that symbols can sometimes stand in for actual characteristics when group members are striving towards a desired group image" (p. 529). Geertz

[8] This law was designed to improve academic attainment in disadvantaged state-funded schools (Zgonjanin, 2006).

(1973) and Mach (1993) claim that symbols often represent a shared marker of the identity, values, and history of the organisation. This holds true for gang research. Grund and Densley (2012) state "the gangs discussed here are self-formed associations of peers that have adopted a common name and other discernible "conventional" or "symbolic" signals of membership (Gambetta, 2009; xix). They are composed of individuals who recognise each other as being "members" of a "gang" and who individually or collectively engage in or have engaged in a pattern of criminal activity" by virtue of a shared image (p. 392). Similarly, in the context of entitativity, Cowen and Siciliano (2011) note that "military markets itself through radicalised hyper-masculinities that paradoxically constitute a threat 'at home'" (p. 1529), given they now seek to recruit the very people that police pursue; active, aggressive, and powerful radicalised individuals are the exact people the military aim to recruit in their campaigns.

Various VOs use signs and symbols to communicate such messages to sympathisers and members (Bolt, 2012). The attachment of symbols to group identity, including flags, logos, and emblems are not new, they have been widely used throughout history and cultures, resulting in a general belief that they are important. There is little research, however, as to the psychological meaning behind these symbols. To fill this gap, Callahan and Ledgerwood (2016) study their psychological function and relationship between group identity symbols and a perceived increase in entitativity. They consider the literature on entitativity and symbolic group identity with the assumption that symbols can make a group appear more real, seem more unified, and represent a collective. They state that where groups appear more real, or have a high degree of entitativity, they can "seem more threatening and effective" and speculate that "symbols could have an important impact on people's judgements about the groups that possess them" (Callahan and Ledgerwood, 2016, p. 529). They further claim that as a result, groups are often more likely to include the use of symbols when they want to convey that impression:

> we might expect that – if symbols can indeed make groups seem more united and intimidating – group members would be more likely to create and display group identity symbols when they are motivated to convey that impression of their group to others (Callahan and Ledgerwood, 2016, p. 529)

Correll and Park (2005) note that the more real a group is perceived by someone, the more likely it is to fulfil one's needs. Callahan and Ledgerwood (2016) state that "if identity symbols increase the perceived entitativity of in-groups as well as outgroups, then symbols may make groups more rewarding to belong to, help attract, and keep members, and make them generally more effective in meeting their members' needs" (p. 544). This makes symbols an important method of communication for groups to "manage their social identities, constructing and communicating it to themselves and others" (p. 544). Nonetheless, there remains only limited research as to the influence of symbols, despite a well-understood use of same. This is highly relevant given all four VOs use of flags, symbols, and emblems within their online and offline content.

Role of social media in recruitment activity

While the dearth of literature pertains to how groups recruit, the increased use of social media is increasingly been used to explain "connectivity, virtual participation and an echo-chamber for likeminded extremist views" (RAN, 2016, p. 4). Conway (2012) cites the internet as necessary in explaining the emergence of radical settings, claiming that the evolution of the internet has meant previously hard to reach sympathisers are more accessible and language barriers are removed. This,

coupled with cheaper access and availability, has increased the numbers of people using the internet; VOs are no different. Gill (2016) reiterates this, in the context of extremism, stating that a benefit of the internet is the "ease of access to individuals on an international scale" (p. 89). These virtual interactions involve " (a) reinforcing of prior belief (b) seeking legitimisation for future actions (c) disseminating propaganda and providing material support for others (d) attack signalling, and (e) attempting to recruit others" (Gill, 2016, p. 89). Awan, Hoskins, and O'Loughlin (2011) claim that it has lent itself to the construction of a hyper-reality, in which the phenomenon of radicalisation appears to be more real than reality itself. While much research refers to religious extremism in this area, Feldman (2013) reports that far-right groups also use the internet to further their cause. Because of the changes the internet has facilitated, an increased amount of research over the last few years has emerged, ranging from the general to context specific studies; Dauber and Ilter (2019) investigated the relationship between social media and radicalisation, Gaudette, Scrivens, and Venkatesk (2020) explored the role of the internet in facilitating violent extremism (from the perspective of right-wing extremism), and Droogan and Waldek (2019) examined social media and terrorism from the perspective of the Asia-Pacific region, to exemplify but a few. Research specifically pertaining to the visual is also increasing, which will be discussed shortly. This largely comes from the perspective of legitimacy and how the groups aim to achieve it. In contrast, this dissertation examines the visual from the perspective of recruitment, and in so doing, considers the use of the visual as a strategic form of communication and influence.

In the context of gangs, the availability of expansive bandwidth, inexpensive wireless devices, and mobile technologies have made the internet more accessible and attractive to the criminal fraternity (Nix, Smith, Petrocelli, Rojek, and Manjarrez, 2016). Decker and Pyrooz (2011) posit that gangs use the internet to upload videos of fights to spark retaliation, demonstrate toughness, and bravado. It is suggested that the internet plays a role in the evolution of gangs and radicalisation because of the ability to broadcast key symbols, images, and rhetoric worldwide in seconds. Womer and Bunker (2010) make similar assertions, stating that gangs (for example, MS-13 and 18th Street) use the internet for advertising their power and danger, through bragging about their activities. Nix, et al. (2016) found, similarly, that Mexican cartels actively use Facebook to communicate and conduct business. Nix, et al. (2016), however, state that gang's social networking sites "did not actively recruit new members but rather provided a venue where individuals who may share gang values can congregate and legitimate those beliefs" (p. 4). Similarly, Decker and Pyrooz's (2011) assert that gangs do not use the internet to recruit, unlike in the case of terrorism, proclaiming that gangs rarely use the internet to further their instrumental goals, rather use it to appeal to the symbolic needs of the gang. Drawing this together, Patton, Lane, Leonard, Jamie, Jocelyn, and Smith Lee (2016) suggest that gang behaviour online can broadly be broken down into three behaviours "(1) promoting one's gang affiliation; (2) reporting one's part in a violent act, and (3) networking with gang members across the country" (p. 1001). Recent research, however, has found that gangs are now using the internet to recruit (Scotter, 2019).

The military's use of social media is most clearly aligned with their recruitment strategy, most noticeably in relation to their use of video, as will be discussed shortly. In contrast, PMCs have been found to use social media and visual content as a method of distraction from their activities (Schneiker, et al., 2018). The perception often portrayed in the media about PMCs, is that they are dogs of war (Saner, 2016), mercenaries (Hager and Mazzetti, 2015), and war profiteers (Stanley, 2012), all of which present them in a negative light. Research shows, however, they also use their websites and

advertisements to boost their image, in which they use logos and flags, presenting a more positive perception (Joachim and Scheiker, 2017; Kruck and Spencer, 2013; Schneiker, et al., 2018). Jackson, Joachim, Robinson, and Schneiker (2020) note they "use their corporate promotional materials to 'sell' national security as military security in ways that normalised (state-sanctioned) militarized political violence" (P. 15). Jackson, et al. (2020) posit that PMCs frame themselves using "authenticity, belonging and real-ness" to generate a positive emotional connection with the military (p. 15). This is consistent with companies more broadly, which use specific language and pictures as a form of discourse to share their image (Fuchs, 2005).

The use of media to counteract negative perceptions is not solely the purview of PMCs, Ryan (2012) purports that the US military used posters in the Second World War (WW2) to counteract rumours about military females, presenting favourable content that appealed to women, while also reassuring families, that this type of job was honourable for female family members. Ryan (2012) claims that these posters were a *potent* recruitment tool (p. 250) (See Figure 1.3).

FIGURE 1. John Falter, 'Will Your Name Be There?', US Navy, 1944 (Naval Historical Center, 70-623-C).

FIGURE 2. John Falter, 'Wish I could Join Too!', US Navy, 1944 (Naval Historical Center, 81-156-N).

Figure 1-2 US Naval Recruitment Posters from 1944, Ryan (2012), p. 252

It is evident that the internet has presented an opportunity for VOs to engage online for many of their activities, and social media as a mechanism to communicate directly with supporters, opposition, and potential recruits. But similarly, to the use of recruitment posters in WW2, this dissertation examines the role of video to recruit, although cognisant of the fact that both the internet and social media assist in getting these videos viewed, an important element of persuasion.

Role of the visual in creating group identity, thus influencing recruitment and call to action

It is the role of the visuals within the medium of video, as they pertain to recruitment, that is of greatest significance in this research. Given what many have called the digital revolution, and the advent of Web 2.0, video sharing sites became popular. Similar to people at large, the sharing of videos became a common occurrence for VOs and with this, a growing body of research. This is probably most apparent in the investigation of video use by groups like ISIS (Anzalone, 2010; Chouliaraki and

Kissas, 2017; McDowell-Smith, Speckhard, and Yayla, 2017). Claims that groups like al Qaeda used staged attacks captured on video in the early days of the war in Iraq, however, are also common[9] (Gurri, Denny, and Harms, 2010). A similar pattern of video analysis is evident on right-wing extremism (Gaudette, Scrivens, and Venkatash, 2020; Munger and Phillips, 2020; Ribeiro, Ottoni, West, Almeida, and Meira, 2020). Reiger, Frischlich, and Bente (2013) compared both, investigating the psychological effects of right-wing and Islamic extremist videos. Bean and Edgar (2017) contrasted videos from illegal groups with legal ones, examining ISIL videos and US Counter-Extremism video messages. Weisburd (2009) examines the use of visual motifs by jihadists and street gangs in their videos. Moreover, as technology and sophistication developed in terms of video, a shift from amateur video production to more strategically crafted videos began appearing (Dauber and Winkler, 2014):

> insurgents adopt similar approaches to state SC [Strategic Communications]. They repeat branded messages that target various tiers of audience. These may address local problems. They may be national, depicting failures of government, highlighting state agencies' direct or proxy attacks on family and livelihood. Moreover, they may appeal to wider global constituencies. Mindful of diaspora communities, united by religion, ethnicity or nationality, higher values of faith, community and destiny are called upon. All are swathed in easily identifiable brand philosophy that captures narratives of historical grievance and suffering (Bolt, 2012, p. 5)

Pinkey and Robinson-Edwards (2018) noted a similar shift in gang videos, moving from using music videos as a form of expression (Haut, 2014; Johnson and Schell-Busey, 2016) to more recently using them as a tool to send threats, promote gang culture, flaunt illegal substances, and to establish an identity similar to extremists (Dmello and Bichler, 2020; Irwin-Rogers and Pinkney, 2017). It is highly contested, however, whether these videos (at least drill videos) reflect reality or a mixture of myth and fantasy (Howell, 2007; Lauger, 2012; Van Hellemont and Densley, 2019). In this frame of expression, Surette's (2015) devised the concept of performance crime, crime that "encompasses the spectacle of recording, sharing and uploading crime in order to distribute the performance to new media audiences […] purposely created and distributed by offenders" (p. 199).

There has been less research in this area in respect of PMCs/Mercenaries, however, this is unlikely to remain the case if emerging research informs future direction. Jackson, et al. (2020) note that PMCs attempt to position themselves as legitimate voices in the discourse on national security, which is facilitated, in part, by video. As a result, increasing research is likely, given that interest in military recruitment increased as militaries shifted from posters and ads to video and gaming. Videos hosted on social media, as part of recruitment strategies, showed recruits how the military would allow them to grow as individuals and become their 'enterprising self' (Miller and Rise, 2008), reaching respectability (Wells, 2014), responsibility (Burchell, 1993), and/or personal development (Dean, 2010). Strand and Berndtsson (2015) compared different approaches taken in the Swedish and British military recruitment strategies. They find the Swedish apply a soft approach, attracting recruits by appealing to their altruistic side, focusing on how they can help others. Words akin to combat, weapons, and soldier were excluded from recruitment campaigns due to fears that it would dissuade people from joining. Conversely, the British campaign was found to firmly sit within 'warrior

[9] The US military reportedly discovered 23 terabytes of video footage in eight media labs in Iraq that members of al-Qaeda in Iraq had yet to be uploaded (Dauber, 2009).

discourse'. Terms such as soldier, weapon, and combat are commonly used. Recruitment videos for combat soldiers include images and noise of gunfire, helicopters, and contain dramatic music. Furthermore, their video game 'Start thinking like a soldier' is set in an in-theatre exercise. That said, even with that style of campaign, the dangers of war and conflict are hidden behind a campaign that promotes self-fulfilment and self-identity (Strand and Berndtsson, 2015).

Figure 1-3 Image Retrieved from British Army Ad: Start Thinking Soldier (British Army, 2010)

These examples illustrate a growing research base in this area, a research which reflects the trend in video production and use by these groups. That said, many do not specifically examine these videos from the perspective of recruitment or persuasion and how they are designed to influence and persuade critical elements of this study. These are important omissions that this dissertation seeks to fulfil, because as highlighted by Archetti (2018) “persuasion to think and act in a way desired by the originator of a message cannot be simply inferred from the content of the communication” (p. 9). This dearth of specific research and that pertaining to role of visuals on purposive persuasion is acknowledged (Mielczarek and Perlmutte, 2014). Nonetheless, a smaller but no less rigorous number of examples have attempted to examine the persuasive power of videos in respect of some VOs, exploring the role of narratives, multimodalities, and symbols, which this study builds on.

Before exploring this research further, it is worth highlighting that much of the literature referenced above, across the four VOs and groups more broadly, largely refers to males and groups of predominately males. This is echoed in the works of Cowen and Siciliano (2011) with regard to the military, and Kinnvall (2015) and Pearson (2018) in relation to extremist groups, which examines the role of hyper-masculinities in recruitment to VOs. This lack of literature is not because females do not partake in VOs. Studies like those undertaken by Dissanayake (2017) (role of women in LTTE); Bloom, Gill, and Horgan (2012) (role of females in PIRA); Windsor (2020) (female recruitment to ISIS); and Jacques and Taylor (2010) (review of the literature on female involvement in terrorism) represent just a small number of studies that exemplify females’ presence in the context of extremism, for example. Moreover, other literature such as that by Fitts (2008) in the context of gangs and Crone (2020) in relation to extremism highlights the objectification of females by such groups in their research. Ryan (2012) also recognised this in the context of recruitment to the military in WW2. The dearth, however, of specific research pertaining to females and their related recruitment to such groups is limited and actually often overlooked in the literature, which can lead to reducing the role they play in such groups (Wickham, Capezza, and Stephenson, 2020). As a result, Pearson and Winterbotham (2017) note the importance of not viewing the process by which females are recruited to extremist groups as identical

to males. This is despite noted similarities in the use of extrinsic and intrinsic values for recruiting females to extremist groups (Wickham, Capezza, and Stephenson, 2020) and in recruitment of males to the military (Fransen, 2019). It is the way these values are presented in the content that is important, with O'Brien (2019) explicating that a good gender-based recruitment campaign should include tailored brand appeal and content to that group (O'Brien, 2019). This is echoed in the emergent literature relating to the visual and multimodalities, in which methods of persuasion to recruitment and call to action largely relate to studies of groups of males. While this is a significant limitation to knowledge, it is less impactful on this research given that the majority of videos analysed predominately include and refer to males, nor do the research findings suggest they are applicable to both genders equally. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight this significant knowledge gap.

The visual and multimodalities as methods of persuasion to recruitment and call to action

Frischlich, Rieger, Morten, and Bente (2018) examine narrative persuasion in extremist propaganda and counter violent extremism videos, finding that narrativity increases persuasive processing of both types of videos, fosters amplification intentions and increases attraction to extremists versus counter-activists. Yoder, Ruby, Pape, and Decety (2020) furthered this research by investigating narratives as an explanation for behaviour, building on the work of academics in the fields of psychology (Green, Strange, and Brock, 2002); political science (Patterson and Monroe, 1998); communication science (Moyer-Guse, 2008) criminology (Presser, 2016); and violent extremism (Holbrook and Taylor, 2019). Yoder, et al. (2020) differ between narratives and narrativity, attempting to examine "how narrative types (like the social and heroic martyr narratives used by ISIS) interact with narrative transportation in shaping subjective perceptions of a propaganda video's recruitment appeal" (p. 1). Drawing from the field of neuroscience, they note that:

> [C]urrent behavioral and EEG [electroencephalographic] studies show that the two main narratives that ISIS uses in Western recruitment videos—the heroic and social martyr narratives—are associated with distinct patterns of spectral power and appeal to different combinations of psychological predispositions" (Yoder, et al., 2020, p. 4)

This research is noteworthy for at least three reasons (i) its findings cast further doubt on claims that there are specific psychological predispositions to terrorism (Horgan, 2008); (ii) it suggests that the counter-narrative approach may be somewhat flawed (Leuprecht, Hataley, Moskalenko, and McCauley 2010); and (iii) human communication is far more complex than we might often consider. Moreover, it has parallels with military literature pertaining to the design of recruitment strategies around different individual factors (Bailey, 2007; Basham, 2013; Rech, 2012; Sinczuch, 2010).

Another relevant area of research into video analysis worth highlighting, specifically in relation to persuasion, is the use of multimodalities to convey message and meaning. Kress (2011) asserts that "meaning is shared among all modes – intensity, framing, foregrounding, highlighting, coherence and cohesion . . . even though they will differ from mode to mode" (p. 47). Music as a form of persuasion has been widely studied in the fields of communication and sociology, particularly from the perspective of how music influenced social movements (e.g., Bloodworth, 1975; Carter, 1980; Denisoff, 1983; Kosokoff and Carmichael, 1970; Knupp, 1981; Stewart, Smith, and Denton, 1989; Thomas, 1974). This suggests that certain forms of music, protest songs, tend to function largely as "in-group" messages, thereby promoting unity among members (Knupp, 1981, p. 388). In contrast, Stewart, Smith, and Denton (1989) found that only 3% of the songs they analysed (714) "appealed

overtly to outsiders or to potential legitimizers" (p. 226-227). This is supported in the finding that songs rarely succeed in their attempts to persuade those who are not already sympathetic to the cause (Sellnow and Sellnow, 1993). Persuasive songs focus on a specific group's movement, serve to reinforce the ideology of the movement, while also promoting cohesion and maintaining high morale among members (Denisoff, 1983; Sellnow, 1999). This was present in a wide range of the videos analysed, but most noticeably through the Nashid (religious songs sung by some Muslims, often sang without music) in ISIS videos.

The use of music to evoke and influence is also well-known in the field of advertising; "advertising music is perhaps the most meticulously crafted and most fretted-about music in history" (Huron, 1989, p. 572) because it establishes credibility and authority. Phillips and Ghalwash (2019) highlight this in the context of an ISIS video, *The Chosen Few*[10] (2015), stating that the "power of this video does not lie merely in its visual images but rather in its multimodality: in the interweaving of voice-over, music and visual resources" (p. 7). It is the "voice-over that calls our attention", "the voice-over that reminds", and "the soothing music fills the mind with images" (Phillips and Ghalwash, 2019, p. 7). Pieslak, Pieslak, and Lemieux (2018) also highlight the role of music in Daesh videos', asserting that they want:

> To look and sound different from other groups; they create their own unique propaganda within the jihadi underground, such unique propaganda production that they view quantity and quality of audio and video media as vital to maintaining and projecting their strength and image" (p. 10).

This also pays reference to the concept of entitativity as groups see the need to be different from others. A similar trend is also noted in relation to US and Canadian military recruitment videos, "music helps to invoke these feelings by embodying, 'driving, excited anticipation,' infusing a sense of the 'hopeful and heroic' as well as the 'triumphant', and 'patriotic'" (Newman, 2019, p. 2). There are also parallels in the context of gangs, the role of music is widely researched, most noticeably drill music.

In the context of entitativity, and its relationship with symbols as mentioned above, researchers have examined the role of symbols and imagery in videos as a means of persuasion. Logos, for example, are a well-known tool of branding and brand building (Oswal, Mistry, and Deshmukh, 2013). Names, trademarks, and logos are a means through which shared identities are constructed (Coombe, 1998). VOs have been found to use iconography and subliminal propaganda to both brand the user (or the group they relate to) and to promote a sense of belonging to and commonalities with said group (Bolt, 2012; Coombe, 1998; Higham, 2013). All VOs have used similar content within propaganda for years, terrorist groups in the form of magazines and manifestos; gangs in recruitment material and manifestos (Brotherton and Barrios, 2003); military in terms of posters (Ryan, 2012); and PMCs/Mercenaries in trying to influence the way they are perceived (Joachim and Schneiker, 2017; Kruck and Spencer, 2013; Schneiker, et al., 2018).

Despite the known and increasing use of visual content, there remains a lack of research in this area, something noted in the wider International Relations (IR) and Security Studies fields, for example, Critical Military Studies. Exploring this void has the potential, however, to provide some important insights if conducted more. Weber (2008) purports that visual language, the language of

[10] The Chosen Few video depicts the life and death of Abu Muslim, a Canadian recruit (reportedly Andre Poulin), in which he presents himself as a typical young man and calls on people to join, suggesting you don't have to be a radical to join.

contemporary popular culture is both a grammar and a syntax, noting that "it is expressed less through words (although these can be visual) than through still, moving and manipulating media (photography, film, web-based windows" (p. 138). He further asserts as a criticism of mainstream IR, that it "fails to understand how popular visual expressions participate in these framings because it does not make the link between linguistics and the visual" (Weber, 2008, p. 138), asserting that this is largely due to tradition and perceptions around popular culture. In failing to analyse the visual, "disciplinary IR [International Relations] risks misunderstanding contemporary subjectivity, spatiality, and temporality" (Weber, 2008, p. 138). This is changing, however, with critical security scholars increasingly engaging with the visual (Cooper-Cunningham, 2020). This is noteworthy for this research, as it emanates from the position that visual language in recruitment and call-to-action videos is a strategic and well-understood expression of communication and influence, one which should be better understood.

Moreover, and notwithstanding this growing reservoir of research, there is still a necessity for scholars to examine more deeply the persuasive power of videos within the context of VOs, which this study does in exploring the persuasive role video plays in recruitment and call to action to VOs. Failure to do this will limit our knowledge and understanding of how these groups recruit; “purely verbal analyses not only miss the information contained in the pictures and nonverbal sounds, they even fail to interpret the verbal content appropriately because that content is modified by its combination with picture messages” (Graber, 1980, p. 145). As importantly, we must also avoid the “tendency to assume that the mere existence of propaganda material equals consumption by audiences and influence on them,” (Archetti, 2018, p. 9).

Conclusion

A lot is written about why people join extremist groups, gangs, and militaries yet there is little comparative analysis between illegal violence organisations, such as terrorist groups, with legal ones, for example, the military. By drawing from criminology, terrorism, extremism, military studies, and sociology more broadly, this chapter illustrates that despite this lack of comparative analysis, there are many similarities regarding why some individuals join VOs between the respective literatures. Many of these similarities are also present across the literature pertaining to groups more broadly (Hogg, et al., 2008). Similar to groups more generally, the literatures commonly discuss the sense of belonging, provision of social support in times of crisis, provision of feelings of pleasure and greater life satisfaction, and the validation of perceptions, feelings, attitudes, and behaviours that these groups provide. Drawing together these literatures requires careful consideration and selection, given that terms, definitions, and approaches are often highly debated and contested, not just relating to extremist research but also pertaining to the other VOs. Previously, where comparisons have been made across VOs, similarities are often dismissed because of selective motivations or aims. The inclusion of literature from broader disciplines, therefore, allowed the chapter to explore beyond these contestations through comparative analysis, whilst adding an increased level of interdisciplinarity, which is often missing. This is important given the illegal and violent nature of several of these groups. Some may argue there is no value to comparing these with organisations that use violence legally. Therein lies a challenge with conducting research of this nature but one this dissertation takes on because, despite these differences, examining these groups together provides an opportunity to identify similarities that may go unidentified if not compared.

This dissertation is a pertinent example of the value of this comparative approach, which seeks to move the literature beyond examining why people join such groups, to examine how and why VOs use the visual (and other related modalities) to recruit and call to action; thus, building on an emerging research landscape. The chapter--while highlighting the dearth of literature on how groups recruit--has sought to demonstrate through available literature that there are merits to furthering our understanding of VOs (focusing specifically on use of visual strategies to recruit and persuade). It is within these gaps that this research and chapter positions itself, examining the comparative value of the extant literature on legal and illegal VOs from the perspective of the role of visual strategies in recruitment and call-to-action.

To do this effectively requires a theoretical framework, which the next chapter sets out. This framework is structured through the lens of advertising but combines Ellul's theory of propaganda with Hogg's on group membership, with theories from the visual, including semiotics and intervisuality, with a particular emphasis on how these theories when combined help explain VOs use of the visual to recruit and call to action, through influence and persuasion.

Chapter 2 Theorising Group Behaviour and Recruitment: Combining theories of belonging, myth, and intervisuality to explain persuasion

> We all want to feel a sense of belonging. This isn't a character flaw. It's fundamental to the human experience. Our finest achievements are possible when people come together to work for a common cause. School spirit, the rightful pride we feel in our community, our heritage, our religion, and our families, all come from the value we place on belonging to a group (Wiseman, 2013, p. 37)

Introduction

To answer the core question of this study 'what visual strategies are used by violence organisations to recruit members to their group or call them to action?', the dissertation examines the visual strategies used by VOs in their videos—videos which this study views as recruitment advertisements. It presents the argument that VOs embed cues into these videos designed around themes of belonging, identity, and shared beliefs that are augmented and enhanced through intertextual/intervisual and multimodal techniques to create an environment conducive to persuasion. The mechanism by which VOs do this is not a simple process, rather it is a complex one that requires a framework which combines several theoretical perspectives. This reflects the well-debated position that no single theory will explain how and why people join terrorist groups (Borum, 2004; Hardy, 2018). Similarly, no single theory is likely to explain how (and why) VOs use the visual to recruit and call to action; thus, this chapter combines three key theories and concepts to explain how VOs make their videos persuasive.

First, Hogg, et al.'s, (2008) theories on group dynamics and belonging are used to explain how VOs design their videos in ways that tap into membership and ensure engagement, whilst providing a sense of belonging to the viewer between them and the group. Second (and building on Hogg, et al.'s (2008) theories of belonging), Ellul's (1973) concept of myths as a driver of action is probed alongside how myths are utilised to give meaning to the world. Ellul's (1973) perspective on propaganda as a technique is also apt here and is discussed as a sub-concept within the framework, explicating elements of it as they pertain to myths. Ellul (1973) asserts that to be effective in persuasion, content (created via techniques of propaganda, or as contended here, advertising) must tap into myths that influence us on a deep psychological level. The applicability of both of Ellul's (1973) concepts (myths and propaganda as a technique) are discussed in the context of how content creators choose their visual images and arm them with tailored material in a way that persuades the audience. Combining Hogg, et al. (2008) and Ellul's (1973) theories helps to explain how these videos serve as a means of recruitment, highlighting the choices around the specific visual content used and how it is designed to maximise motivations to group membership. The third core element of the theoretical framework examines semiotics and Mirzoeff's concept of intervisuality. Both provide insights into how visuals derive their meaning and, importantly, to whom these videos are targeted; that is, to further unpack how group identity and entitativity are visually influenced. Combining these three elements (group membership and identity; myths and the technique of propaganda; intervisuality and semiotics) helps illustrate how VOs create an environment conducive to persuasion. This process is not linear and is difficult to compartmentalise, as it is the *interconnectedness* of these elements that makes videos an especially effective mechanism of persuasion. To explain this interconnectedness requires a synthesis

of the three key theoretical elements. To do this, the chapter describes and discusses four core elements of convergence across these theories to illustrate their utility within the framework: how individuals make sense of the world, group affiliations and identity, reduction of anxiety and stress, and uncertainty. Synthesising these elements helps to better explain the role VOs' visual strategies play in creating an environment conducive to persuasion.

Group dynamics - Theorising Motivations

Hogg, et al. (2008) contend that there are three key motivations to group membership and group identity, "pleasure and pain, life and death, and needing to have certain knowledge about the world and our place within it" (p. 1270), motivations that may be central to our existence. Hogg, et al. (2008) try to explain this by building on research in this area through uncertainty-identity theory, which suggests that group membership helps us define for ourselves and for others who we are. They postulate that "people seek out groups to enjoy the pleasure of group affiliation, [noting that] depression of self-esteem signals the possibility of exclusion and engages behaviour designed to strengthen inclusion" (Hogg, et al., 2008, p. 1270). The motivation to pursue things that add pleasure and avoid pain has its tradition in learning theory, in psychology. Baumeister (1993) and Sedikides and Strube (1997) note that this may influence group membership through self-esteem, suggesting that people like to feel good about themselves, and conduct behaviour that increases such feelings. Groups provide a sense of inclusion, which reinforces self-esteem. This is theorised in sociometer theory, which suggests, "self-esteem is a critical index of social connectedness and, by implication, social inclusion and group belonging" (Hogg, et al., 2008, p. 1270). The theory asserts "people are motivated to affiliate, belong, and be included" (Hogg, et al., 2008, p. 1271). The second motivation is life and death, which suggests that "when people think about or are faced with their own mortality, they experience acute anxiety about their existence (existential anxiety)" (Hogg, et al., 2008, p. 1270). Terror management theory posits that anxiety is resolved by individuals surrounding themselves with others who share their world view (Greenberg, Solomon, and Pyszczynski, 1997). This latter theory proposes that groups protect people from fear of death, reduce feelings of existential anxiety, while raising self-esteem. Third, Hogg (2007) claims that group membership can be effective in resolving uncertainty in life, explaining this through uncertainty-identity theory. Like optimal distinctiveness, it focuses on better understanding motivations behind group identification. The uncertainty-identity theory claims "the groups we belong to define for ourselves and for others who we are—they circumscribe our self-concept" (Hogg, et al., 2008, p. 1273).

Hogg, et al. (2008) observe that "group membership furnishes one with a social identity that describes and prescribes perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours that define the group" (p. 1274). It helps reduce uncertainty for individuals around things like knowing who the people are around them, how they should behave, know whom to trust, etc. In refining their theory further, Hogg, et al. (2008) explore whether certain groups have characteristics that make them better suited to uncertainty reduction. They draw on the notion of entitativity, noting that a group with high levels of entitativity is "one that is distinctive with clear boundaries, is clearly structured internally, and in which there are shared fate, common goals, and shared attributes" (p. 1274). Hogg, et al. (2007) claim that people favour identifying with such groups when "they are contextually self-uncertain, and that increased uncertainty strengthens identification only when the group is high entitativity" (p. 6). Hoffer (1951) suggests that such chronic or extreme levels of uncertainty may motivate people to identify strongly as 'true believers' with highly entitative groups. Baron, Crawley, and Paulina (2003) posit that such groups may develop "orthodox and ideological belief systems, have powerful leaders and zealous

followers, be harsh to marginalised members and dissidents, and generally resemble extremist or 'totalist' groups" (Hogg, et al., 2007, p. 7). Extreme uncertainty may provide favourable conditions for tightening the hold of ideology, orthodoxy, and extremism in such groups via social identification (Staub, 1989).

Hogg, et al.'s (2008) theories around group dynamic and identity are relevant and pertinent to this study, as they help explain a core element of joining or recruitment, that is motivation. Using a framework that considers these motivations (pleasure and pain, life and death, and needing to have certain knowledge about the world) is apt not only in the context of explaining how VOs recruit but also because such motivations are often overlooked within the radicalisation to violent extremism literature; thus, the application of such theories to VOs provides an important perspective. In addition, these theories also acknowledge and consider direct benefits of joining (for example, positive feelings; improved self-esteem). This helps to explain reasons why individuals are attracted to such groups, which is slightly different from motivations. These are important as they help illustrate the positive benefits of joining VOs, moving beyond the approach often taken to explaining the benefits in relation to violence and illegal acts (illegal VOs, at least). These theories are also relevant in relation to identity (individual and social) and entitativity, as the four VOs being studied are primarily seen as single identities, distinct from others, at least from the perspective of potential members; thus supporting the comparative approach taken here. Finally, these theories help explain how groups respond to uncertainty, which is very pertinent in explaining why individuals are attracted to VOs. This element will be discussed further shortly, including theories around group dynamics within the theoretical framework, which seek to explain factors associated with group membership to attract people to their groups.

Myths as a lever of persuasion

The second element of the theoretical framework is myths. According to Ellul (1973) myths (those associated with work; happiness; nation; youth; hero) drive action rather than ideology. Myths provide meaning, which helps us make sense of our worlds. They work together, as opposed to in isolation, interacting with each other to reinforce prevailing ideologies (Karim, 2001). Ellul (1973) notes that myths and ideologies differ in three ways:

> First the myth is imbedded much more deeply in the soul, sinks in roots farther down, is more permanent, and provides man with a fundamental image of his condition and the world at large. Second, the myth is much less 'doctrinaire'; an ideology (which is not a doctrine because it is believed and not proved) is first of all a set of ideas, which, even when they are irrational, are still ideas. The myth is more intellectually diffuse; it is part emotionalism, part affective response, part a sacred feeling, and more important. Third, the myth has stronger powers of activation, whereas ideology is more passive (Ellul, 1973, p. 116)

Myths are used to make ideas and images appear natural and universal and induce or trigger action unlike ideologies or propaganda. Myths have a high degree of universality (Campbell, 1968). Ideologies do not. That said, it is not disputed that some myths are shaped similarly to ideologies, for example by histories, cultures, and environments (Karim, 2001). This differentiation, however, is important in this study, given that a lot of research into extremism focuses on ideology. Ellul (1973), similar to the position taken here, remarks that new myths are influenced by old myths. It is through this process that new myths can be influenced by factors akin to those that influence ideologies. This conforms to Ellul's suggestion that there are core myths that provide the basis for all others; for example, those

built around "notions of the self, the other, time, species, knowledge, creation, destruction, causes and effects" (Karim, 2001, p. 119). These myths influence second-order myths, for example, myths of kinship, community, nation, race. It is these second-order myths that Ellul (1973) asserts impact individuals deepest, those based on collective myths around human's principal orientations: the myth of work, happiness (which is not the same thing as the presupposition of happiness), nation, youth, and hero (Ellul, 1973).

Ellul's concept of myths also has relevance in respect of advertising (and the visual), given that advertisers operationalise Ellul's myths, often seeking to glorify them to induce action. This is also evident in military recruitment strategies, which resemble the work of Szanto (1978). Szanto (1978) contends that military recruitment advertising is designed in a manner to tap into these myths, glorify military service, exploiting the myth of youth, by offering "exploration and discovery, potential, the future, risk for great reward" (Szanto, 1978, p. 46). This is evident in Fig. 2.1, which depicts a US military recruitment ad from the era that gives the impression the military will provide opportunity for travel and discovery (geographical and sexual).

Figure 2-1 N. W. Ayer Advertising Agency Records from the 1970s

They often also tap into the myth of the hero, by presenting military service as a means by which one can give back to society and alleviate its problems:

> The propagandist will usually admit that society is not perfect. However, he will claim it is perfectible, a priori within the myth of Science, and the shining knight, through individual action, can save or improve or ameliorate or cleanse the society, and bring it closer to perfection. The propagandist nurtures the myth of the hero because he knows it is impotent in fact but powerful in image – he knows that the individual alone can never alter the economic base of the capitalist state (p. 50)

Myths, about hero and self, have been used to justify colonising lands in the name of civilisation and Christianity (Karim, 2001), which echoes the justification of some mercenaries, that their actions are

in response to the 'enemy' and threat to the status quo. Karim (2001), in his interpretation of Ellul's work, states that pre-propaganda "feeds audiences with mythical narratives, creating psychological readiness" (p. 122). Pre-propaganda includes things like education, advertising, movies, and magazines (Karim, 2001). No one is immune from propaganda[11], to be effective, it must be immersive and persuasive, penetrating both our consciousness and subconsciousness.

Ellul's (1973) concept of myths is influential here in the context of VOs visual content because it helps explain how certain content choices are operationalised (and glorified) by VOs to influence and persuade. In addition, it helps illuminate how the visual content of VOs videos is symbolically constructed (Karim, 2001). To this end, the dissertation adopts Ellul's concept of myths (work; happiness; nation; youth; hero) and takes the position that myths drive action rather than ideology. Moreover, the application of this concept is relevant in relation to the audience, as myths help influence how viewers see themselves and the world around them, which in turn helps influence meaning, allowing them to feel part of something bigger than themselves. Given their ability to influence at the psychological level (regarding emotions, response, and feelings) myths resonate at a level that makes them appear natural to the audience; thus, influence the viewer. They (myths) act as a mechanism by which group dynamic and motivations can be visually influenced, through what Ellul (1973) refers to as the technique of propaganda (or as argued here, through techniques of advertising).

A core element of Ellul's (1973) concept of myths and the visual, highlighted within the framework, is his perspective of propaganda as a technique, as it is through this technique that action is triggered. Ellul (1973) suggests that propaganda is a complex sociological phenomenon and a web of influences to which someone or a group are exposed. This takes a similar position (as this research does) to Lasswell (1935), who postulates that:

> Propaganda may be defined as a technique of social control, or as a species of social movement. As a technique, it is the manipulation of collective attitude by the use of significant symbols (words, pictures, and tunes) rather than violence, bribery or boycott (p. 189)

Through this lens, the technique of propaganda is viewed as neutral (i.e., not inherently good or bad), a position adopted in this research. Taking a neutral position to such content does not suggest that the content itself is neutral. Neutrality in this regard pertains to the lens through which these videos are viewed (advertising as neither inherently positive nor negative), because analysis of media broadly acknowledges that a medium is not neutral. The German Third Reich is often presented as an example to illustrate this, where media images were used to produce a national ideology of Nazism. Taking this approach ensures the use of propaganda, both by nefarious actors and states, for example, can be explained in the same framework. This is important if Ellul (1973) contention that propaganda is an important factor that makes institutions of modern society function is correct. Viewing propaganda as a technique also serves to demonstrate the normalcy by which it is used, which implies a somewhat perceived naturalness and regularity to both. Ellul (1973) proposes that people need automated

[11] Ellul (1973) asserts that for propaganda to be effective some degree of education is required. He suggests that intellectuals are "virtually the most vulnerable of all to modern propaganda", given: (1) they absorb the largest amount of second hand, unverifiable information; (2) they feel a compelling need to have an opinion on every important question of our time, and thus easily succumb to opinions offered to them by propaganda on all such indigestible pieces of information; (3) they consider themselves capable of "judging for themselves" (vi). Thereby calling into question the idea that education is the prophylactic against propaganda.

responses to make the decision less complicated and need propaganda to streamline the stimuli to which we are exposed, easing the burden on decision making. This supports the position that propaganda as a technique should be viewed through a neutral lens, rather than with a purely negative connotation.

For propaganda to be effective as a technique, it must reverberate deeply with those who receive it and myths enable content to do this, as they act as a basis of providing meaning (Ellul, 1973). The elaboration of the role of propaganda regarding myths is relevant to this study because it is through the technique of propaganda that influence is achieved (operationalised in this case through techniques of advertising, in video), which collectively create an environment conducive to activating principles of persuasion (using the visual and non-visual to operationalise same). The approach is akin to that of Pratkanis and Aronson (2001) who (when examining the link between propaganda and psychology of people) assert that propaganda is the abuse of persuasion, defining it as "mass 'suggestion' or influence through the manipulation of symbols and the psychology of the individual" (p. 11). This insinuates that the negativity is associated with the manipulation, not necessarily the message which contrasts to many definitions commonly used in the study of VOs, which is akin to Bartlett's (1940) research:

> It is a part of the regular method of propaganda to use the symbol, which stirs the sentiment, always in an atmosphere of stress, strain or crisis. Thus the generalisation which fit the sentiments will be met by the enthusiastic sweeping away of criticism which fits the emotions (Bartlett, 1940, p. 65)

Moreover, effectiveness is not simply the result of exposure to certain content:

> Propaganda is an art requiring special talent. It is not mechanical, scientific work. Influencing attitudes requires experience, area knowledge, and instinctive 'judgement of what is the best argument for the audience'. No manual can guide the propagandist. He must have "a good mind, genius, sensitivity, and knowledge of how that audience thinks and reacts (Bogart, 1995, p. 195-196)

This has parallels with descriptions of advertisers "business people, marketing and advertising professionals included, rarely have much time for theory. Advertising professionals are practical people who develop experience in particular areas and know what works for them in a given situation" (Hackley, 2005, p. 26-27).

Viewing propaganda as a technique that activates myths is important to the framework, as it explains how myths (as portrayed in the visual) activate a response in the viewer through the content in which they are framed. Ellul's (1973) concepts of myth and propaganda, therefore, have significant potential for understanding the role of the visual in recruitment and call to action, specifically in relation to how VOs use such content to tap into elements of group dynamics, such as identity, belonging, and entitativity. This approach also has parallels with advertising. No one is immune to propaganda, similarly, few people are unaffected by advertising (Snyder and DeBono, 1985). Bolt (2012) notes that "few people are unaffected by marketing language (sell yourself, sell the dream, buy into, image, image makeover) or brand jargon (brand loyalty, brand image, brand identity)" (p. 36). This is especially true today given the reach of advertisement through mediums such as pictures, newspapers, magazines, radios, and television. More recently, the internet can be added to this list. This research does not explicitly examine the role of the internet in these visual strategies, rather it

focuses on the role of the visual (video content), viewing the internet mainly from the perspective of the host to these videos. It is worth mentioning, however, that they are not likely to be effective on their own. Advertisements are but one tool by which the technique of propaganda works. They have limited impact if not part of a wider process.

Persuasive power of images

The third core element of the theoretical framework examines Mirzoeff's concept of intervisuality and semiotics. Both provide insights into how visuals derive their meaning and, importantly, to whom these videos are targeted; further unpacking how group identity and entitativity are visually influenced beyond myths. Mirzoeff (2003) suggests that the "remarkable ability to absorb and interpret visual information is the basis of the industrial society and is becoming even more important in the information age" (p. 5), postulating that visualities can become instruments of domination in relation to how we find meaning (Mirzoeff, 2011). The meaning of the visual, however, is as much about context as it is about the image itself. Images construct a visual vernacular which has the potential to transfer a different meaning than individual images may present (MacKenzie, 2020). Meaning derived from an image does not lie exclusively in the image but is also the result of a process of viewing and interpretation. Meaning is not singular or absolute, rather multiple and changeable, and something that can be created each time viewed. While there can be multiple meaning to images, they can largely be grouped into two categories, denotative and connotative, although acknowledging that the boundaries of these terms can be blurred (Barthes, 1981). Denotative and connotative perspectives infer images can have two functions, an informative one and an expressive one, with the ability to evoke complicated feelings and associations. Barthes (1981) introduces another term concerning connotation, that of myth. His differs somewhat from Ellul's interpretation of myth, but both view myth as having a common element; that myths take on the appearance of universality. It is not argued here whether they are or are not universal. Barthes (1981) uses the term myth to describe the hidden set of rules and conventions through which meanings are made to appear universal while asserting that they are specific to certain groups, further stating that they often act as false signifiers commonly accepted as fact, symbolism, and rhetoric (Barthes, 1992). This concept of 'myth' also allows the connotative meaning of an image to appear natural.

In furtherance of understanding the role of the visual in relation to meaning, Barthes in the late 1960s built on Julia Kristeva's earlier coining of the term intertextuality to explain how texts derive their meaning, questioning the notion that text had a stable and unquestionable truth derived from the author. Barthes views meaning as something that is derived through its relationship with other texts[12]. Intertextuality is an important element of the framework, therefore, as it moves the lens from the meaning as intended by the author to that of the viewer and interpreted meaning. Intertextuality is

[12] To explain this further, Barthes (1981), similar to De Saussure, breaks down signs further into two elements; a signifier, which can be a sound, written word or image, and a signified, which is concept evoked by the word or image, or sound, (meaning behind the signifier). Peirce (1932) further contends that the signifier can be distinguished not only from the signified (meaning) but also from the referent, or the object itself. He also added a categorisation to signs, based on the different relationships between signifiers and signified. Peirce (1932) dissects signs into three, iconic, indexical, and symbolic. Iconic is understood to resemble their object in some way, while symbolic signs may have no apparent relationship to their objects. The example of language is often given as an example of a symbolic system, where the word of an item represents the item, for example, cup. There is no natural link between the image of a cup and the word, other than it is an applied one through language. In this context, the relationship between the word and image is arbitrary. In contrast, an indexical sign denotes an existential relationship between the image and meaning. A fingerprint is often provided as an example to illustrate this. These differences are important here, given that a combination of the three types is primarily used in advertisements, commonly used to create selling messages.

also an integral part of advertising. Panigrahi (2013) asserts that its use is a conscious strategy that makes advertisements memorable and attractive by keeping the viewer in an active stage of interpretative activity. Both advertising and videos draw from different fields to do this, and use a range of different linguistic, visual, and aural texts to complement each other; illustrating the importance of both the message and the medium. In the same way, intertextuality is an integral part of text and advertisements, it is an integral part of recruitment videos, which have an intertextual relationship within their content and between each other. In relation to the visual, Camille (1991) coined the term intervisuality as a parallel concept to intertextuality, applied to visual studies. It was its expansion from "the interdependence of visual systems, [to] their interlacing with non-visual systems" however that has been attributed to Mirzoeff (Sun, 2017, p. 112). Mirzoeff (2000) provided the rational for this divergence, noting that "in the visual image, intertextuality is not simply a matter of interlocking texts but of interacting and interdependent modes of visuality" (Mirzoeff, 2000, p. 209). In this latter context, Karkov (1999) defines intervisuality as "images that call to mind other images that are formally similar, but which have different contexts and thus different connotations" (p. 17-18).

Intervisuality, as applied by Mirzoeff, is an appropriate component of the framework because it helps explain how viewers interpret images and appreciates that meaning is derived not solely from the image, but also through the visual cross-referencing of various modes, media, and influences; thus serving as an effective theoretical approach that allows one to see meaning beyond the message and medium, one that crosses genres and conventions (Wieder, 2020). This perspective is important in respect of recruitment videos because the intended meaning does not exist solely in a single video itself, rather "in the unremitting intertextuality and intervisuality within it" (Sun, 2017, p. 116). This approach, therefore, is useful as it helps trace the interrelationship between images, but also to examine the interplay between the visual and the verbal, making it a more useful perspective for this research. Moreover, it facilitates the examination of videos not as stand-alone pieces of data, but as part of a wider eco-system of online content.

The concept of intervisuality is also pertinent as it aids in understanding the process by which content creators encoded and embedded cues into the videos, a process that is also influenced by a multiplicity of factors, personal, social, and cultural. Not that the viewer will necessarily see the creator's meaning, but not seeing it does not mean it is not present. In fact, the absence of certain images, for example, females, is also a cue which influences meaning similarly as the presence of certain images does. If meaning is derived from images through other images and text, coupled with Mannay's (2016) assertions (that images have the power to evoke our emotions, memories, and feelings, through association with other factors), then one could suggest that they may be a source capable of manipulating our automatic responses, through the use of images, sound, and text, but also due to the interrelationship between them. To make an assertion of this nature, however, it is not sufficient to understand how meaning is derived from images, one must also understand how and why meaning is embedded in them.

Embedding meaning is achieved through encoding and decoding. This involves producers planting their intended meaning into the image and providing the viewer with certain signs for them to decode. Hall (1993) asserts that there are three positions that viewers can take when decoding cultural images: the dominant-hegemonic reading, a negotiated reading, or an oppositional reading. A dominant-hegemonic reading is where the viewer identifies with and receives the dominant message,

unquestionably. Producers can try to influence such dominant meanings. A dominant meaning can also be the meaning that most onlookers get from the image, one less influenced by the producers and more by the specific cultural setting in which it is viewed. The second, a negotiated reading, is where the viewer negotiates an interpretation from the image and dominant meaning, while in the third type, the oppositional reading, the viewer disagrees or rejects the ideological positioning of the image. Unlike the passivity of the first type, the other two require some level of interaction, which happens both at the conscious and subconscious level. Sturken and Cartwright (2001) argue that in terms of popular culture, an oppositional reading can include more than a simple rejection or disagreement. It can involve 'appropriation', where the viewer makes do with the image because they cannot change the cultural connections of the image but reconfigure it for use. Appropriation is not always an oppositional reading, however. Lomax and Fink (2014) assert that, while images are often a product of the historical situation in which they were taken, they can be reformatted and reinvented to deliver a new message. Appropriation of images and symbols by VOs is increasingly being studied, at least in the context of extremists (Daniels, 2018; Donovan, Lewis, and Friedberg, 2018; Karl, 2019). Appropriation is pertinent here, especially regarding symbols, because both insurgents and states have always used symbols and images to communicate messages to sympathisers and subjects (Bolt, 2012; Higham, 2013).

Visual images are a system of representation, like language, and as a result, conform to certain rules and conventions about how they are organised. This makes them an excellent source of data. Like most data sources, however, they are not without issue. For one, there is debate over whether images reflect the world as we see it, or whether we construct the world and meaning through the images we use. Language does not reflect an existing reality; instead, it helps us organise and construct our understanding of it (Mills, 1997). Road signs are often used to illustrate this, conventions associated with road signs are learned so we can derive sense out of the associated image. Like understanding road signs, over time, their meanings become somewhat automatic; we give little thought to the process of seeing and decoding. The way in which signs give meaning to images is a process derived from semiotics. Semiotics, or the study of signs, "invites us to study hidden meanings and critique the power relations inherent to visual representations, for that reason applying semiotics is particularly useful when exploring advertising and promotional media" (Mannay, 2016, p. 75), but also VOs recruitment and call-to-action videos.

The meaning of signs is not fixed, clues for understanding may include elements such as colour, tone, contrast, composition, depth, perspective, and style of address to the viewer. Images can affect us all and do so differently. As Mannay (2016) states, "imagery evokes memories, reflections, and feelings but interpretation depends on our accumulated cultural knowledge, and experience imposes a set of available frames for reference" (p. 63). Branding is an apt example in this regard, with logos and symbols a well-known tool of brand building (Oswal, Mistry, and Deshmukh, 2013). Another pertinent observation worth mentioning in relation to branding is its role in reducing uncertainty (Yin Wong and Merrilees, 2007); thus demonstrating another thread that runs through the components of this framework. Semiotics is also informed by the understanding that the meaning of signs and symbols is not fixed. The same sign could have a different meaning depending on the context of its use. For example, the Swastika, at least in the West, is now synonymous with Hitler, WW2, and fascism, however this was not always the case. The origins of the symbol's use dates to Sanskrit[13], and is

[13] Sanskrit is the classical language of Indian and the liturgical language of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism.

commonly viewed as an Indian sign, meaning well-being. Moreover, a sign may be such that it speaks to a small group in a way that the very presence of the sign provides meaning to the rest of the content. Yet, the significance of this meaning may go largely missed by those who do not notice or recognise the sign, acting as a visual vernacular to certain groups, whilst excluding others.

This has been recently highlighted by Cynthia Miller-Idriss (2019) in her piece on 'Co-opted and Missed Meanings in Far-Right Iconography.' Miller-Idriss (2019) contends that "symbols and iconography move between online and offline spaces as they are deployed and co-opted by the far-right" (p. 133). This finding is important in that it challenges De Saussure's (1966) assertions that symbols are not arbitrary:

> One characteristic of a symbol is that it is never wholly arbitrary; it is not empty, for there is the rudiment of a natural bond between the signifier and the signified. The symbol of justice, a pair of scales, could not be replaced by just any other symbol, such as a chariot (De Saussure, 1966, p. 120)

An assertion by Miller-Idriss (2019) in this regard worth noting and highly pertinent here, is that while De Saussure's theory may have held at its time of writing, it does not work in the digital era:

> The internet itself has helped disrupt the logical or linear association between symbols and their intended meanings. On the one hand, online communities contribute to the rapid and global spread of far-right symbols, enabling icons and symbols from nationalist resistance movements from one particular geography to be claimed and appropriated by social and political movements in different locations (Miller-Idriss, 2019, p. 131)

In relation to encoding, advertisements often encode signs that attach their product or idea to concepts of nation, family, community, and democracy, with ads often creating ideologies associated with patriotism and nationalism:

> Ads that sell concepts of the nation and the family as norms speak to viewers as if they are members of these social realms. Membership in an exclusive club is often a selling point that allows customers to feel that they can aspire to such exclusivity whilst feeling anxious about whether or not they really do belong there (Sturken and Cartwright, 2001, p. 220)

Semiotics, therefore, is an integral part of the intervisual process and plays a specific role in-group identity; thus, an important component of the framework. Visual symbols have increasingly been viewed, in comparison to verbal symbols, as "more effective in telling stories, transmitting values, evoking emotions, and persuading people" (Sun, 2017, p. 110); thus, understanding the role of visual symbols is important in relation to persuasion. In the context of the intervisual, images are not "stable referents in some ideal iconographic dictionary" but their meaning is derived from different, often competing systems (Camille, 1991, p. 151). Including semiotics in the framework is, therefore, equally important as intervisuality as they (symbols) also serve to make content persuasive (Gurri, Denny, and Harms, 2010).

Synthesis

The theories presented above, while explaining pertinent and relevant aspects of VOs visual strategies and their relationship with persuasion, do not (in themselves) sufficiently provide the necessary framework for this dissertation; thus, it is essential to provide a synthesis of specific components from

each to better explain how VOs equip their visual strategies to persuade and influence recruitment and call to action. It is this combination of parts that creates the theoretical framework used to explain VOs' videos role in persuasion and influence.

If *influence is the psychology of persuasion*, then what is persuasion? O'Donnell and Kable (1982) define it as:

> [A] complex, continuing, interactive process in which a sender and a receiver are linked by symbols, verbal and nonverbal, through which the persuader attempts to influence the persuadee to adopt a change in a given attitude or behaviour because the persuadee has had perceptions enlarged or changed (p. 9)

This definition implies interactivity, or at least a transactional relationship, between the persuader and persuadee, and a mutually satisfying endpoint. This is often not the case, however, if one considers the principles of persuasion presented by Cialdini (2006) influence or attempts to influence often go unnoticed by the receiver. In contrast to O'Donnell and Kable, and more in tune with Cialdini (2006), Simons (2001) defines persuasion as "human communication designed to influence the autonomous judgements and actions of others" (p. 7). This is a more applicable definition, given that, as per Cialdini (2006) and Ellul (1973), it speaks to the automatic nature that influence and persuasion can have, or at least attempt to have on an individual. In this situation, persuasion does not involve coercion, inducement, or pressure to conform to bring about change, rather, compliance is achieved through a relatively automatic process of influence. A well-known example of how these automatic responses can be manipulated, often called conditioning, is evident in the research of Ivan Pavlov[14]. A similar real-world example was evident in Nazi Germany, aimed at indoctrinating children in lessons of hate, so they would grow up believing that the Aryan race was superior (Eastwood, 2011). This was in line with Hitler's desires that Germany:

> Shall educate a youth before which the whole world shall tremble, rough, exacting, cruel youth. That is what I want. Our youth must possess all these qualities. It must be pitiless before the sight of suffering. It must be without weakness or softness. I want to see the glint of the wild animal in their eyes" (In Eastwood, 2011, p. 1293)

Conditioning might also explain why, despite an oath to do no harm, over 50% of physicians during the Weimar Republic became early joiners of the Nazi Party (Haque, De Freitas, Viani, Niederschulte, and Bussztajn, 2012). These examples serve to illustrate why identification and understanding of these automatic responses in humans are important, as they can be manipulated in the right hands. In the same way, they can be used to increase the likelihood of people joining. Responses of this nature draw on in-depth psychological and behavioural responses that are powerful, yet subtle, nearly mechanical in their activations, which enable those who can identify them to exploit them (Cialdini, 2006).

Automatic responses in humans usually develop from psychological principles and stereotypes we have learned to accept from an early stage, many of which we do not even perceive (Hinton, 2017). Such responses are a product or outcome of the world we live in. The world has become more complex, and stimuli more abundant. Humans have had to develop shortcuts to manage them. This was aptly noted by Whitehead, who states that "civilization advances by extending the number of

[14] Ivan Pavlov conducted experiments with his dogs and found that objects or events could trigger a conditioned response. He noted that the presence food (stimulus) would trigger an unconditioned response (salivation). He demonstrated that the dogs started to associate other neutral stimulus to elicit the same outcome, a learned and conditioned response.

operations we can perform without thinking about them" (Cialdini, 2006, p. 7). These reduce or alleviate mental strain in humans and are managed by the brain through pre-programmed tapes that result in automatic responses. It is an almost mechanical process of activation. These responses are often very difficult to identify yet are powerful and can be used as weapons of automatic influence, in the hands of those who learn to manipulate them. It is the exploitation of these responses that allow individuals or groups to influence or persuade others to do things that seem totally at odds with rational thought, for example, mass suicide. Cialdini (2006) explains that exploiters "learn quickly exactly how to profit from our tendency to respond mechanically according to these principles" (p. 9), likening the power of this automation like that of gravity, momentum, and inertia, rendering "the ability to manipulate without the appearance of manipulation" (p. 11). This suggests that our natural or most deep-seated psychological responses can be used against ourselves if requests are structured correctly; thus, for influence and persuasion to be effective, this approach suggests that the message needs to trigger our automatic responses and make us feel that what we are doing is natural rather than a coerced act.

Elements of the theories presented above have strong parallels with this understanding of persuasion. Four core elements of convergence across these theories are explicated here to illustrate their utility in explaining what visual strategies are used by VOs to recruit members to their group or call them to action. These elements include how individuals make sense of the world, group affiliations and identity, reduction of anxiety and stress, and uncertainty. These are pertinent, as Ferguson and McAuley (2020) state:

> The importance of social identity and psychological and emotion vulnerabilities combined with perceptions of community victimization in persuading individuals that the problems they face are due to threats to their community. Indeed, Hogg (2014, 2016) argues that identifying with or accentuating the entitativity of the group is an effective strategy to reduce feelings of uncertainty and threat (p. 218).

Hogg, et al. (2008) posit that group membership helps people make sense out of the world and helps them define themselves; thus suggesting that recruitment to groups is a mechanism by which people find their position in society. Ellul (1973) postulates that myths aid in this process by making ideas and images appear more natural and universal. Mannay (2016) explains how the visual also provides meaning. Mirzoeff (2003) echoes this, highlighting that human's ability to interpret meaning from images is central to industrial society. Myths and images are recognised (within the context of propaganda) to act or be accepted as examples of truth or fact, when they may be false signifiers (Barthes, 1992). The provision of meaning, in a form that appears natural and universal, is pertinent therefore with respect to persuasion, despite its accuracy (or lack thereof). For example, Cialdini (2006) draw specifically on the perception of universality in relation to his principle of reciprocity (one of his six principles of persuasion). This principle says that "we should try to repay, in kind, what another person has provided us" (Cialdini, 2006, p. 17). A noteworthy aspect of this principle is that it is perceived to be universal. Gouldner (1960) postulates that there is no human society that does not subscribe to this rule. Reciprocity is one thing that makes us human, stating "we are human because our ancestors learned to share their food and their skills in an honoured network of obligation" (Leakey and Lewin, 1978, p. 16). A relevant factor in respect of reciprocity found by Regan (1971) is that the power of this principle is so strong that it overcomes factors of like or dislike of the person

asking for the favour. Going against this principle is difficult, given that it means going against the natural, cultural forces to reduce its impact.

The benefits of seeing something as universal and natural is that it makes decisions about it easier. Sir Joshua Reynolds states that "there is no expedient to which a man will not resort to avoid the real labor of thinking" (Cialdini, 2006, p. 61). Propaganda prevents us from having to do serious thinking, by having meanings supplied to us (Tal and Gordon, 2016), as does advertising. Humans look for consistency, firstly to reduce brain strain, and secondly to supply a safe hiding place. If what we see is consistent with what we know, we are ok to agree, safe in the knowledge we are making the right decision. In relation to persuasion, Freedman and Fraser (1966) found that starting with small requests leverages power more effectively than starting with bigger ones. They also found that as the requests got larger, further requests do not have to relate to the early requests, because commitment has already been established:

> Once he has agreed to a request, his attitude may change, he may become, in his own eyes, the kind of person who does this sort of thing, who agrees to requests made by strangers, who takes action on things he believes in, who cooperates with good causes (Freedman and Fraser, 1966, p. 201)

Once a person's self-image is altered, exploiters can conduct subtle alterations to influence change, noting that these changes are most effective when they are active, public, and effortful. Aronson and Mills (1959) note that people “who go through a great deal of trouble or pain to attain something tend to value it more highly than persons who attain the same with minimum effort" (p. 177). For example, this might in a small way explain the use of tribal rituals[15] and fraternity hazing[16]. While violence is used to bond people to their decision, it is often less about such violence and more about the ceremony, allowing ordinary people to participate in such activities. Hazing is a way of establishing social bonds, whilst also a way of conveying group power dynamics and forcing codes of loyalty and secrecy (Belkin, 2012). This may explain in some way the use of rituals, hazing, or boot camps in the process of recruitment by VO, as identified in right-wing groups (Latif, Blee, and DeMichele, 2018). Many military recruits are put through intense physical challenges before being admitted, which helps prepare them for group loyalty (Moskalenko, 2010). Phillips and Ghalwash (2019) also illustrate that even despite austere training environments, the Marines meet their recruitment quota.

Another core element of group dynamic that is said to motivate people to join groups relates to the benefits associated with belonging and identity. Hogg, et al. (2008) highlight that group belonging provides a feel-good factor and improves self-esteem through inclusion and Branscombe, et al.'s (1999) contend that feelings of alienation may be a driver to group membership. Regarding the visual, the use of signs and symbols within a video (often called a signature) is something relatively unique to the creator which “reflects distinct characteristics and choices for every piece of persuasive visual media” (Gurri, Denny, and Harms, 2010, p. 107). The role of symbols in-group membership and identity is well researched. It “suggests that symbols can sometimes stand-in for actual characteristics when group members are striving towards a desired group image" (Callahan and Ledgerwood, 2016, p. 529). This holds for gang research; "the gangs… are self-formed associations of peers that have adopted a common name and other discernible "conventional" or "symbolic" signals of membership"

[15] “Ritual cognition builds upon social learning biases that may have become specialized for affiliation within social groups” (Watson-Jones & Legare, 2016).

[16] Hazing is a ritual that involves risk, pain, or harm, or a combination of all or some, to gain some form of initiation.

(Densley, 2012, p. 391). Symbols often represent a shared marker of the identity, values, and history of the organisation (Geertz, 1973; Mach, 1993). Such gangs are comprised of individuals who recognise each other as being members, based on a shared association with that image. The attachment of symbols to group identities, such as flags, logos, and emblems, are nothing new. They have been widely used throughout history and across cultures, resulting in a general belief that they are important (Callahan and Ledgerwood, 2016). From this perspective, it is evident that it is not just the image that is important, but a host of other factors within it.

Myths do this too, with Ellul (1973) noting that it is the glorification of myths that drive action, as often evident in the visual. To explain, Ellul (1973) suggests that the propagandist builds on the "knowledge of the man, his tendencies, his desires, his needs, his psychic mechanisms, his conditioning" (p. 4), shaping his "procedures on the basis of our knowledge of groups and their laws of formation and dissolution, of mass influence and of environmental limitations" (p. 4). Ellul (1973) posits that core myths are constructed around several concepts, two of which are self and other, which inform second order myths that include myths of kinship, community, and nation, all of which reflect elements of belonging. This is pertinent in relation to group affiliation. To belong to a group is to suggest that there are those who do not (the other). The *other* is reinforced through myths of hero and youth, for example, which serves to provide a sense of in-group and out-group dynamics. For those within the group, other members provide a sense of what their behaviour should be, especially when they are viewed as similar. This is somewhat akin to myths, which help influence how viewers see themselves and the world around them, which in turn helps influence meaning, allowing them to feel part of something bigger than themselves. Moreover, myths associated with themes such as nationalism, tradition, nostalgia, leader glorification, and scapegoating are known to create a sense of belonging and they are also common themes used to persuade (Gurri, Denny, and Harms, 2010). They are chosen as they are “appealing for neuro-psychological, cultural, and contextual reasons that make them an important weapon in the arsenal of any communicator” (Gurri, Denny, and Harms, 2010, p. 104). The themes are persuasive as they operate at a high level of universality, and as also suggested by Cialdini (2006) and Ellul (1973) they operate effectively across boundaries and cultures. Such themes are often enhanced through master narratives, for example, masculinity. Unlike persuasive themes, master narratives are more deeply rooted in culture and context, which are both elements that influence the meaning of the visual. Gurri, Denny, and Harms (2010) observe that narratives “arise from the rich social heritage of particular communities and settings, and reflect shared hopes, concerns, and aspirations” (p. 106). One noted example of this is the American Dream, which draws on history and those who have gone before us, to prepare the ground so such dreams can be achieved. This is also relevant with VOs, and specifically in the work of Yoder, et al. (2020), who find strong evidence that ISIS heroic narratives “are specifically processed, and appeal to psychological predispositions distinctly from other recruitment narratives”, further suggesting that both use “heroic and social narratives to expand its appeal to different recruitment pools characterized by different psychological dispositions and needs associated with attraction to extremism” (p. 1).

Semiotics serves as a means of exampling how VOs use certain signs and symbols to reinforce the perception of belonging and affiliation, for example, through their use of branding. The link between myths of nation and community and the visual is observed in advertisements, which often encode signs that attach their product or idea to such myths (Sturken and Cartwright, 2001). Mannay (2016) also highlights how semiotics can evoke feelings and emotions, characteristics Ellul (1973) claims make up myths. In fact, it is this aspect of myths amongst others that helps myths drive action, an action

which Lasswell (1935) suggests (within the context of propaganda as a technique) can act as a technique of social control. This also resonates with Ellul's (1973) contention that, to be effective, myths must resonate on a deep emotional and psychological level, which can be manipulated through the technique of propaganda to persuade and induce action. Like weapons of influence, propaganda works "because the myths draw on the fundamental modes of human cognition" (Karim, 2001, p. 130). Not, as many suggest because of ideologies. Recruitment videos (or call to action) are not propaganda or myth, nor are they a means to sell the ideology of a group per se. Although it is acknowledged that they, like advertisements, often sell a therapeutic ideology, one of transformation and growth (Richard, 1998). Nonetheless, recruitment and call-to-action videos are a tool used to action or trigger our automated responses in a manner to influence or persuade us to join, which has less to do with group's ideology or value and more to do with how the message resonates with the viewer on a deep psychological level (although acknowledging the potential role ideology may have on the latter). This helps to answer Mortensen's (2009) question about what these recruitment videos are, whether they are advertisements, popular culture, entertainment, or even war propaganda. There is no doubt that some of these videos *do* represent popular culture and are entertaining, for example, drill videos[17]. It is argued, therefore, that they can be all the above, and still be considered as advertisements.

This psychological element combined with automatic responses exemplifies why it is important to notice that the viewer can be manipulated in the right hands, without the perception of manipulation. In the context of advertising, or some might say propaganda, manipulation happens not solely through message, medium, or mode, but also through embedded cues within the visual. Propaganda is the way to express, reaffirm, and redefine attitudes through "the manipulation of significant symbols" (Lasswell, 1927, p. 627), among which visual images play a vital role. They present one source of vulnerability; a vulnerability Ellul (1973) suggests can be manipulated through the technique of propaganda. With respect to the VOs visual strategies and videos, they may be a source capable of manipulating automatic responses through the use of images, sound, and text, but also due to the interrelationship between them. Furthermore, Lasswell (1935) and Mirzoeff (2003) also both highlight the role modes beyond the visual (such as linguistics and the aural) can also play in this regard, all of which influence persuasion, as noted above.

Thirdly, Hogg, et al. (2008) claim that individuals are motivated to group membership as a means of reducing anxiety and stress in their lives. This is also pertinent with regard to propaganda and the visual. Bartlett (1940) posits that propaganda often uses symbols that stir sentiment and emotion, in a manner that heightens an atmosphere of stress, strain, or crisis. This is apt, given that research pertaining to military recruitment suggests that these strategies tap into individual stresses and life crises to recruit (Elder, Wang, Spence, Adkins, and Brown, 2010). Research shows, however, that group membership can also be viewed and presented as an opportunity to deal with stress and crisis and provide for better life satisfaction. A reason why this may help in relation to persuasion can be found in Brehm's (1966) writings. Brehm (1966) found that people are likely to react to feelings of diminishing social control. This is similar to Hogg, et al.'s (2008) observations that individuals are more attracted to groups with high levels of entitativity when they are self-uncertain. In relation to

[17] UK drill is a genre of rap music that has proliferated in London since the mid-to-late 2010s, which often has a relationship with crime and violence (Ilan, 2012). It is inspired by drill music from Chicago, a city associated with high rates of murder and gang activity (see Harkness 2013; Thapar, 2017).

recruitment, this is often achieved by expressing a sense of urgency, something often presented in videos, through faster camera movements, the aural, and the visual (Stoichita, 2020).

The fourth and final element described and discussed here is that of uncertainty and the ability to reduce it, a core area of convergence across the theories. Hogg (2007) identified that *uncertainty* may be a key factor in relation to creating a context conducive to group membership, as membership can be an effective way to resolve uncertainty in life (Hogg, 2007). Hogg, et al. (2008) uncertainty-identity theory aligns with Ferguson and McAuley (2020) who note that "being exposed to injustice, structural violence, or direct threats to your ingroup or self, and the uncertainty this creates, is central to pushing people towards extremist or entitative groups" (p. 226). Moskalenko (2010) examines how militaries use uncertainty during recruitment to encourage recruits to seek affiliation with each other. The visual technique of branding is a well-known method of reducing uncertainty (Yin Wong and Merrilees, 2007). Collectively, these theories highlight the significance of *uncertainty* in relation to group dynamics and propaganda. They are also pertinent in relation to persuasion and, importantly, in relation to the conditions conducive to persuasion. Cialdini (2006) postulates that individuals observe the actions of others to decide on what our behaviour should be, especially when we view those others as similar to ourselves, which is magnified in times of uncertainty. This combination offers an appropriate theoretical framework from which to approach this research. It does this by taking a neutral stance to propaganda (neither considering it as good or bad), rather as a technique, as opposed to an all too often starting point, which assumes a negative connotation. Applying this perspective across all four VOs also moves research that views such groups as unique entities forward by comparing them. By combining Hogg's theories on group membership more broadly, the lens shifts from the legality or illegality of the group and their use of violence to their similarities with respect to motivations for joining and from there to their visual recruitment strategies. This also allows the research to move beyond solely investigating the content of VOs videos, per se, to examining the cues embedded within it and how elements of group dynamics are visually influenced within the videos. Combining these three theoretical approaches recognises that meaning is not fixed yet appreciates that similar techniques are used to embed such cues and in so doing influence in similar ways.

Constraints of this theoretical framework

It is acknowledged that this approach comes with limitations. In the modern world of the Internet, Cialdini's (2006) principles might not be as effective as they are in face-to-face interactions. In fact, there is enough to suggest that the Internet may impact the power of influence and persuasion differently in comparison with that in the offline world, although it is acknowledged that this is still a very underdeveloped area of research (Van Der Heide and Schumaker, 2013), as is the factors that moderate persuasion effectiveness (Munnukka, Maity, Reinikainen, and Luoma-aho, 2019). Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge that the ability to persuade is not agnostic to the medium through which it is undertaken.

The majority of videos for this research were sourced from the internet, so in that vein, it is worth highlighting several factors which are likely to impact persuasion. First, the internet provides for greater anonymity (Guadagno and Cialdini, 2013). This has been linked with a decrease in focus on our internal standards of behaviour (Matheson and Zanna, 1989). In relation to anonymity and online activity, physical appearance is less important than in face-to-face communication, where physical distance is no longer a barrier and individuals have greater control over whom they interact with and when (McKenna and Bargh, 2000). These factors are all very pertinent with respect to influence and

persuasion as discussed by Cialdini (2006), and with respect to agency more broadly, given that they are likely also to challenge the weapons of influence, which work through the principles of authority, liking, and reciprocity. For example, unlike the power of face-to-face interaction, the internet user can control more of the communication, which is not the case in some face-to-face interactions (salespeople can doorstep someone if wanted). In many ways, the internet at least in this regard can empower the user in a way that may help mitigate the impact of our automated responses, a skill that we humans can learn (Cialdini, 2006). The medium, videos as hosted predominately on the internet, therefore, has a significant impact on the message and the power of that message concerning influence and persuasion, which this theoretical framework accounts for by examining how VOs ensure engagement with their content and embed it with cues that influence.

Understanding the role of video, but also embedded logos, flags, impacts, audios, will enable us to understand better not only their impact on the message but the power they hold in effecting change. In this way, this research will address, in a small way, Mannay's (2016) claim:

> There is a need to adopt a critical approach to reading visual images, one that thinks about the agency of the image, considers the social practices and effects of its viewing, and then reflects on the specificity of the viewing by different audiences (p. 81)

This raises another important aspect of this research, in that approaching from this theoretical framework allows one to examine the possibility that such content is designed for different audiences, which this research does. It inputs to the debate within visual research about the role of the creator and the viewer, and how both impact meaning. For many, meaning as interpreted by the viewer, became a more preferred approach, however, the notion "that meaningful interpretation is contingent on knowing its creator's intention is nonetheless problematic, not least because these are not always available to viewers" (Lomax, 2012, p. 228). This is enhanced in relation to online open-source content, as the creator cannot control who might view their content. As a result, such a clear distinction is not likely, as alluded to throughout this chapter. While it may be correct to suggest that it can be challenging to access the creator, and/or that a viewer can interpret something utterly different from that intended by the creator; for something to be influential, as in *effect change*, it must be interpreted at least in a manner that is consistent with the desired outcome of the creator. For example, in the context of advertisement, one must be able to control at least to some degree the response to the message, or so one would think (i.e., to create a lure to buy). One way noted by which VOs do this is to segment its audience into potential recruits, supporters, and opposition, something Jester (2019) refers to as widening the net.

Conclusion

This chapter presents this dissertation's theoretical framework, which builds on the position that no single theory can explain how and why people join terrorist groups (Borum, 2004; Hardy, 2018). Similarly, no single theory is likely to explain how (and why) VOs use the visual to recruit and call to action; thus, this chapter combines three theories and concepts to explain how VOs make their videos persuasive. After presenting each of the three and explaining their individual contribution to the framework, the chapter synthesis Hogg, et al.'s (2008) theories on group dynamics and belonging with Ellul's (1973) concept of myths, leveraged through the technique of propaganda, and semiotics and Mirzoeff's concept of intervisuality. In so doing, it derives four key areas of convergence across the theories, such as how an individual makes sense of the world, group affiliations and identity, reduction of anxiety and stress, and uncertainty. These were discussed to illustrate their utility in explaining what

visual strategies are used by VOs to recruit members to their group or call them to action; thus demonstrating the interconnectedness of these elements, which make VOs videos an especially effective mechanism of persuasion.

This interdisciplinary framework allows the researcher to explain the visual strategies used by VOs to recruit members to their group, moving research in this area beyond the 'informative' element to the impact element. This approach facilitates the exploration of how meaning is embedded in these videos, to ensure the content triggers or activates actions on behalf of the viewer to effect change. The framework is structured on the premise that it is not the content of videos per se that provides meaning, rather the interplay of embedded cues (which can take a host of different guises), which evoke an emotional response (Peols and Dewitte, 2019) which in turn triggers action. Through techniques of advertising and propaganda these cues are embedded in a manner that makes them persuasive, by capitalising on automatic responses within the viewer and the context in which they are viewed. This is achieved through visual and non-visual forms. Mirzoeff (2013) highlights this stating that “visual culture does not depend on pictures themselves, but the modern tendency to picture or visualize existence” (p. 5), suggesting that visualisation is now not optional, but compulsory. This links back to Cialdini’s (2016) belief in our automatic responses, which the visual has the power to trigger or activate. This approach, therefore, moves research in this area beyond examining the visual meaning, to better understand *the visual’s* capacity to influence and bring about change. The methodology used to operationalise this will be discussed further in the next chapter, while the five data chapters illustrate examples of how this theoretical framework supports the argument of this dissertation.

Chapter 3 Methodological Approach: Harnessing the power of the Visual

> There is more to visual communications therefore than simply making an image for the eyes to perceive, it has to accommodate the mind of the person being communicated to. That is to say you are not merely making something to be perceived when visually communicating, you are fundamentally making something to be thought about (Aldous Huxley, 1894 –1963)

Introduction

Visual analysis has been an under-utilised methodology in the research associated with VOs until late. More recently, however, there has been an increase in its use in research on extremist groups, militarisation, methods, and IR. That said, Cooper-Cunningham (2020) acknowledges that some areas are more commonly studied than others. For example, visuality as a *modality* and as a *practice*. This chapter sets out the methodological approach applied in this dissertation. It discusses the research design and method used and is broken down into four sections. The first section presents the overall approach of methodologies and design applied to this research, as exemplified in practice in Chapter Four through Eight. It discusses case studies as an appropriate choice and explains the case selection process used. The second examines visual methods before assessing video analysis in more detail. This is followed by an investigation into how the methodology is applied to this work, in respect of case selection, data collection and collation, and the operationalisation of key terms before moving to section four, data analysis. It also identifies and discusses several challenges encountered regarding analysis, and how they were overcome and mitigated.

Analytical Framework

The analytical framework that best supports this project is a comparative case study strategy. Yin (2014) defines case studies as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the 'case') in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident" (p. 16). For Yin, as for Gillham, real-world context is important. Furthermore, case studies are not bound by a single epistemological orientation, and therefore are consistent with the approach being taken (George and Bennet, 2004). In addition, comparative case studies are applicable in this regard, given that they allow one to examine “(a) a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context, especially when (b) the boundaries between phenomena and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 1981, p. 59), unlike experiments which separate a phenomenon from its context. Additionally, comparative case studies allow in-case and across-case analysis of the similarities and patterns (Rowley, 2012), which is important in this research, given existing levels of debate within some instances in-cases, and the lack of comparative analysis across-cases.

Case studies are also valuable given they can garner a deep understanding of a situation, one which is more interested in the process rather than the outcomes, as is the case in this research. The findings of which can influence both policy development and research (Merriam, 1998). This framework is evident to some degree in studies of radicalisation, terrorism, gangs, and a few cases in military research. Tankel (2016) notes that many scholars use single case studies to explore “the dynamics between an individual jihadist group or movement and the country where it is located” (p. 2). This is

also present in early gang research, for example, in studies conducted by Jansyn (1966) and Fishman (1995), as highlighted by Klein (2005). Nevertheless, the application of case studies in this regard is not at the level required; much of the research "lacks the synthesis of theory with relevant case studies" (Fink, 2014, p. 4). With regard to terrorism research, Decker and Pyrooz (2015) assert that it rarely moves outside of the realm of case studies, while Conway (2012) identifies that cross comparative research is needed with respect to online radicalisation research, stating that "If the Internet has a role in some violent jihadist radicalisation processes, then it follows that it should play a role in other violence" (p. 12); thus, this research expands the literature through the use of comparative case study analysis.

Building such a framework enables insights into both within-case and across case, which increases robustness, and at the same time ensures there is the flexibility to respond to what emerges from within and across the cases (Yin, 1981). The choice of method also allows the researcher to go beyond the exploratory to the cumulative: by pulling together information from four groups, it allows one to make generalisations to the collective. Additionally, this approach enables the researcher to challenge generalised assumptions held at the individual group level, for example, extremist groups, where generalisability is valid across different VOs.

Violence Organisation definition

One of the first steps in the research process was to define VOs. VOs are accordingly defined as "*an organised group of individuals who partake in certain behaviours with the intention to hurt, damage, or kill someone or something, to protect and defend, and/or to provide trade in professional services linked to conflict or warfare.*" [18] VOs are operationalised by four groups, gangs, political extremist groups, PMCs/Mercenaries, and the military. The WHO's definitions of collective violence[19] presented in the introduction might have been suitable for defining VOs. However, given that these groups are rarely viewed together from a policy or academic perspective and the likely differences in views as to the justification of violence by these organisations, whether those be held by those within the group and/or those outside it, the WHO definition, did not appear to be apt. It did not explicitly differentiate between those who use violence to harm and those who use it to defend. As a result, the use of such a definition may have raised concerns if applied to comparisons between the military and illegal groups. Applying the definition above also allows for differences in opinion, potentially between the researcher and members of the VOs chosen, as to the motivations behind such groups' use of violence. This is important when aiming to approach this topic from an objective stance.

Like the term 'violence' itself, there are no universally agreed-upon definitions for any of the four VOs selected. This negatively impacts comparative analysis across groups. Similar disputes exist within cases; for example, what constitutes a gang, or a mercenary group more broadly? Alleyne and Wood (2012) suggest that the lack of an agreed definition has had a negative impact on gaining a consensus on what constitutes a gang. Morselli (2009) illustrates this, purporting that an association of criminals is not the same as a criminal association and further suggests that most gangs represent the former, although not exclusively. Moreover, definitions often break down gangs into smaller groups, specific

[18] As outline presented in the introduction.

[19] The World Health Organisation (WHO) in their typology of violence define collective violence as: The instrumental use of violence by people who identify themselves as members of a group, whether this group is transitory or has a more permanent identity – against another group or set of individuals, in order to achieve political, economic, or social objectives (Krug, et al., 2002, p. 215).

to their make-up, geographical reach, nature of the crime, and so on, as is often the case with street gangs[20]. The National Alliance of Gang Investigator Association (NAGIA) defines a street gang:

> As a gang or association of three or more persons who may have a common identifying sign, symbol, or name and who individually or collectively engage in or have engaged in, criminal activity which creates an atmosphere of fear and intimidation. Criminal activity, including juvenile acts that, if committed by an adult, would be a crime (In Smith, Rush, and Burton, 2013, p. 2)

One apparent issue with this definition relates to 'an atmosphere of fear'; who must sense fear, and how does one prove it exists? Barker (2012) attempts a more straightforward definition, proposing that a gang is a "group of individuals who engage in crime for profit on a continuing basis" (Smith, Rush, and Burton, 2013, p. 2). Such a simplistic definition also raises questions: what constitutes a continuing basis, and how long do their activities have to exist, notwithstanding the reference to profit? The Euro-gang definition defines "a gang, or troublesome youth group, as any durable, street-oriented youth group whose involvement in illegal activity is part of their group identity" (Weerman, Maxson, Esbensen, Aldridge, Medina, and van Gemert, 2009, p. 20). This definition appears to only refer to youth; what is a group of adults called? How does such a description incorporate the findings of researchers on adult gangs? The absence of this vital element is likely to skew research findings given that Smith, Rush, and Burton (2013) find that the presence of adults had a direct impact on gangs. Older members may become the leaders and shot callers, which could be a very important dimension to understanding gangs, activities, and membership (Smith, Rush, and Burton, 2013). Despite many of the definitions exclusively referring to youths, the possibility of connections between youth gangs and adult criminal organisations has been a perennial issue in gang research (Howell and Decker, 1999; Klein and Maxson, 2006; Thrasher, 1927). That said, for the purpose of this research, the following definition is used. A gang is defined as a *street or area-oriented group which persists over time and for whom illegal activities constitute a part of group identity*. This definition draws on that provided by Decker and Pyrooz (2011), yet drops the idea of 'youth', given the known involvement of adults in such organisations. This simple definition ensures inclusion of a broader range of *gangs* in the dataset, which is desirable given the global nature of the sample selection process.

There is also no agreed definition of extremists. Neumann (2010) states that "extremism can be used to refer to political ideologies that oppose a society's core values and principles" (p. 12), noting that "in the context of liberal democracies…radicalisation can be applied to any ideology that advocates radical or religious supremacy and/or opposes the core principles of democracy and universal human rights" (p. 12). Neumann (2010) also notes that the term can be used to describe the methods through which "political actors attempt to realise their aims, that is, by using means that show disregard for the life, liberty, and human rights of others" (p. 12). However, can a country really outline its core values and principles? Are these themselves not ever-changing? If norms are not static, can a positive deviation be assessed against a negative one? Moreover, if one were to even argue that norms stay static, such definitions may hold for certain areas, but they are unlikely to hold globally. In this context, could it not be said that western nations wanting to impose democracy in Africa, or the Middle East, are *extreme* if violence is not a prerequisite? It also raises the question, "why are terrorist acts

[20] "Street oriented groups, whose membership is youthful, that exhibit persistence across time and for whom illegal activity constitutes a part of group identity" (Decker & Pyrooz, 2011, p. 156).

committed by states ignored, or framed, as actions other than terrorism?" (O'Loughlin, 2016, p. 280). Take, for example, self-recorded footage of military personnel in Iraq and/or Afghanistan against vulnerable individuals and communities, which strongly suggests otherwise (MacKenzie, 2020). The multitude of these definitional issues clearly shows the breadth of disagreement with what can and should be defined as extremism. This further hinders agreement on accepted definitions for associated terms such as radicalisation, terrorism, extremism, and violent extremism. The definition of extremists, therefore, chosen is selected from the RAN (2018), which defines violent extremism as "*acts of violence committed for ideological reasons*" (p. 3); extremists were duly defined as *a group who commit acts of violence for ideological reasons*. Once again, a simple broad-based definition was selected to ensure its relevance for a global representation of groups.

Like gangs and extremist groups, finding an agreed definition of the term Private Military Contractors and/or mercenaries also poses challenges. For some, both groups are different; for others, they are the same, or like Fullon (2013), PMCs are an evolution of mercenaries, stating that "PMCs have managed to transform the historically ubiquitous nature of ad hoc mercenaries into corporate military companies to provide military services to governments and non-state entities intricately linked to warfare" (p. 49). They "construct the 'good' citizen who supports the military including the material and ideational fabric required to maintain it" (Jackson, et al., 2020, p. 16). In contrast, the definition of mercenaries as outlined in Article 47 of the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 (Protocol I) states:

> 2. A mercenary is any person who:
> (a) is specially recruited locally or abroad in order to fight in an armed conflict;
> (b) does, in fact, take a direct part in the hostilities;
> (c) is motivated to take part in the hostilities essentially by the desire for private gain and, in fact, is promised, by or on behalf of a Party to the conflict, material compensation substantially in excess of that promised or paid to combatants of similar ranks and functions in the armed forces of that Party;
> (d) is neither a national of a Party to the conflict nor a resident of territory controlled by a Party to the conflict;
> (e) is not a member of the armed forces of a Party to the conflict; and
> (f) has not been sent by a State which is not a Party to the conflict on official duty as a member of its armed forces.

A problem with this definition, like many of its kind, is that it suggests that 'private gain' is a prerequisite of being a mercenary (Salzman, 2008; Singer, 2003), which is often interpreted as financial gain, or in the case of this definition, material compensation. This approach, while widely accepted, contrasts with the opinion of Fainaru (2008), who notes that camaraderie was a more influential driver for people joining PMCs in Iraq. Similar research to that of Fainaru is limited. Nonetheless, this is an important distinction with respect to this work, as the use of qualifiers, such as profit or ideology in the context of PMC/Mercenaries to frame definitions, restricts comparative analysis. This is highlighted in the Report of the Committee of Privy Counsellors, which was appointed to inquire into the recruitment of mercenaries: "Mercenaries, we think, can only be defined by reference to what they do, not by reference of why they do it" (Cmnd. 6569, 1976). Approaching from the perspective that PMCs, for the purpose of this research, are viewed as the same as mercenaries, they are defined

as *a group who trade in or provide services (whether for a fee or not) linked to conflict or warfare but are not declared or categorised as extremist groups or military.*

In contrast, the military is the only group that has a relatively uncomplicated definition. For the purpose of this work, it is defined using the Oxford English Dictionary definition, which describes it as "*the armed forces of a country*". While that may sound intuitive for most western countries, such a simple definition may not be as applicable when a country's leadership and/or government is in dispute between two or more competing parties. Nonetheless, for the purpose of this research, this straightforward understanding of the military was applied. It is influenced by the absence of specific definitions as to what constitutes a military or armed force and would be valid globally. Not only do definitions often differ across countries and regions, they also can differ nationally. For example, Moskos (1973) notes:

> [T]he American armed forces fluctuate between two poles. At one end are those who see the military as a reflection of dominant societal values and as entirely dependent upon the lead of civilian decision makers. Conversely, others stress how much military values differ from the larger society and see the military exerting an independent influence in civil society (p. 255)

Moreover, recent military research has focused not on definitions of military per se, rather on ones associated with military culture (Paskell, Gauntlett-Gilbert, and Wilkinson-Tough, 2018) and military leadership (Martinsen, Fosse, and Johansen, 2020); thus, this simplistic definition was chosen.

Despite these definitional issues and challenges, the dissertation combines these four groups to operationalise VOs. In so doing, it aims to bridge the respective literatures while addressing the conceptual gap by examining (and comparing) the visual recruitment strategies of VOs, with a particular focus on the influential power of such strategies; thus, providing a contribution to the literature.

Comparative Sample Selection

Viewing VOs as groups that use violence (despite potentially different justifications of such violence) allows the researcher to approach VOs from the perspective of similarities and differences across them as *groups*, rather than across their ideology, aims, and/or objectives, and in so doing, provides a more neutral angle of analysis. As previously mentioned, the nature of the violence used is not of specific interest to this research, nor is the justification. As such, while all four VOs may be different, for example, with respect to justifications of violence, they are suitable for comparative analysis due to their use of violence alone.

It is noted that research into groups, in and of itself, is not without its flaws. For example, there are many limitations, as highlighted by Wakefield, et al. (2016), such as small sample sizes, lack of control of potentially important covariates, and the lack of cultural diversity. Nonetheless, the literature reviewed provides insights worth exploring further in the context of this research. For one, such an approach demonstrates that individual motivations to join VOs are often more similar to those joining groups in general. Despite the lack of similar comparative studies, this research is driven by the consistency of findings across the available literature of all four VOs, and to group literature more broadly. For example, in the context of terrorism or extremism studies, where research focuses on motivations to membership, scholars primarily talk of similar factors to those mentioned by Cohen

(2004) above (e.g., such as a sense of meaning, purpose, and security). This research often does so in a manner that implies this is unique to terrorist or extremist groups, rather than in line with motivations to group membership more generally. This is a limitation, given that the lure of group membership should not be viewed as either totally positive or totally negative (Poepsel and Schroeder, 2013). People can easily decide to join a group to promote its goals or to exploit them for their own self-interest, something rarely discussed in the context of these VOs. In the area of extremism(s) and gangs, explanations for joining are often framed around disadvantage, marginalisation, and/or grievance. Joining is often presented like it is inherently wrong, rather than from the perspective that joining such groups may provide individual or collective benefits. In this context, Poepsel and Schroeder (2013) highlight another area worthy of further examination, relevant to this piece of work. They suggest that it is important for research to understand what specifically makes a group attractive to join. To do this, they indicate that there is a need for an "examination of both the structural characteristics of the group itself that may affect its attractiveness and the psychological processes involved in the decision-making processes of potential members" (Poepsel and Schroeder, 2013, p. 180). This is important in the context of this research, given that if VOs can better understand the characteristics of their own group that are important to potential members, they can appeal to these and their anticipated needs in their recruitment processes (Poepsel and Schroeder, 2013).

Case Selection

The initial approach to case selection was one of comparison between gangs and terrorist groups. The cases selected were based on a deep interest in both group classifications and a growing belief that both had more in common than they had differences (Forest, 2012). This interest was also influenced by the knowledge that both fields lacked enough comparative analysis and therefore warranted further research, and that there was a need for this type of research to challenge assumptions made in both fields, and to add more too. This was compounded by awareness, as Herriott and Firestone (1983) argue, that cross-comparisons between cases are more robust and findings more compelling than single case studies. Furthermore, this approach was designed to challenge assertions often made that these two cases are incompatible for comparative analysis.

During the design and analysis process, the researcher examined collective violence, and it is within this framework that it became evident that despite these cases both representing the important elements of collective violence well, they were not inclusive enough. As the study developed and examined group/collective behaviour in more depth, it became clear that any findings that emerged would only be relevant to organisations that use violence for illegal means, such as criminality and/or terrorism. As a result, and to mitigate this bias, it was decided that it would be more informative to compare these two groups, both prepared to use violence to achieve their objective, albeit illegal, with a group that uses violence for legal purposes to achieve their objectives, thereby introducing the *military* as a third case. The question emerged whether the decision to join groups that use violence for illegal means could be motivated by similar factors to joining the military. If this was the case, military research might provide useful insights into the motivations to join illegal VOs, given that the military is often an easier group to reach, unlike the other two areas. This is important given that researchers, such as Horgan (2008), note that in the field of terrorism, samples are often heavily skewed, relatively small, while some are inaccessible. In turn, this approach allows the research to explore what influences people to join such groups, rather than solely positioning this from the perspective of a great ideological belief or self-interest, which is often purported in relation to terrorist groups and gangs, respectively (Decker and Pyrooz, 2011). If similar persuasive and influence

techniques were found to motivate people to join such groups, both legal and illegal, it would have benefits for exemplifying the merits of de-exceptionalising terrorist and extremist groups in research.

The inclusion of the military came shortly before the decision was made to change the second group from terrorist to political extremist groups. This decision was largely based on three key factors. First, there has been a bias in post 9/11 terrorism literature towards Jihadists, which if left unaddressed in this work would negatively impact the findings. Second, in the absence of an agreed definition of terrorism, there is a need for an agreed categorisation of groups that would be included under the term 'terrorist'. While lists are available, such as the UN terrorism list or national proscribed organisation lists, these too are biased towards Jihadi groups. Many organisations are not on these lists, particularly far-right and left-wing ones, although some have been added recently to the UN list. To use these formal lists, therefore, might potentially bias the findings. As a result, it was decided to change the second case from terrorists to political extremists. Furthermore, this decision ensures the research does not follow similar patterns of previous research which often fails to acknowledge or consider that terrorism is "a label given to acts of political violence by outside observers, and that the designation of what constitutes terrorism has historically changed according to political context" (Jackson, Jarvis, Gunning, and Smyth, 2011, p. 15).

Despite this change in cases, it became clear that some groups remained outside the political extremist group set, namely mercenaries, another illustration of a labelling bias, rather than a research focused bias, per se. For example, paramilitary-style groups that support government regimes are often referred to as mercenaries. The Turkish Authorities refer to the PKK as a terrorist organisation, while many nations refer to them as mercenaries, and others to it as a rebel group. This distinction appears to be subjective but is one that could potentially impact the research if left unaddressed. This influenced the decision to include a fourth group, namely private military contractors (PMCs) and mercenaries, to reduce a further bias based on how certain groups are labelled, often referred to as case selection bias. The addition of this fourth category allows for further comparison for legal or quasi-legal use of collective violence, those often perceived to do it for financial gain.

In summary, the case selection is the outcome of an iterative process, one which continued throughout the research and methodology development. The outcome of this approach, i.e., the choice of four cases, ensures the data includes a mixture of most similar and most different cases in its design (Seawright and Gerring, 2008). Most similar/most different cases are similar to the diverse case method in that they must employ at least two cases. Diverse cases are used to present maximum variance along relevant dimensions. This method is exploratory and serves to both *hypothesis seek* and *hypothesis test*. Seawright and Gerring (2008) note that while it may only be feasible to use one selection method, researchers can also use a variety of strategies; thus, two separate cases of most similar are selected: two legal groups (one of which is quasi-legal) and two illegal groups. They are then analysed in comparison to each other, as most different.

Case selection in this context is complex and challenging, given the lack of agreed definitions in certain cases, the bias often found in this area of research and the lack of cross-field comparisons in the literature. This is made worse by the lack of scholarly attention on case selection in general. Much of the work in these areas is focused on case selection bias. As mentioned above, such bias would have been evident in this research if only registered terrorist groups were included. Furthermore, without including PMCs/mercenaries, certain organisations may have either been excluded from the research or been included in the extremist sample. This would have negatively impacted the validity of the

sample. Issues such as those highlighted above around case selection are not uncommon in case study research, however, this study has tried to mitigate their impact to the extent possible.

At the end of this process, four cases were finally decided on to operationalise VOs. All four are examples of organisations that use collective violence, which facilitates operationalisation of the term VOs. The four chosen appear to be the most relevant from the list of possible cases in this regard. They provide a dual perspective between groups that use violence for legal and illegal reasons. Secondly, they represent four groups that are often viewed in isolation and discussed as unique entities, despite that these cases are often more interrelated than we believe. For example, gang members in America are present in the military (Main, 2006; Turse, 2006), military members often join PMCs/mercenary groups, former military have also been known to be hired gunmen for gangs, gang members have been known to join extremist groups, extremists have been known to get involved in gangs, and more recently, several cases have emerged of former members of the military joining extremist groups (Brady, 2021, forthcoming). While this blurs the line between specific and unique cases, the overlap illustrates the merits in conducting this comparative analysis and serves to de-exceptionalise terrorists and extremists. Furthermore, a positive aspect of comparing these four cases is that it allows for a variance that may not be apparent if viewed in isolation, given the potential overlap between the groups. Thirdly, the choice of cases aims to ensure criticisms like bias toward Islamic extremism in terrorism research, the profit vs ideology argument, and labelling are mitigated in so far that is possible by using these VOs. Fourthly, the selection also allows for a comparative analysis using a mixture of most similar/most different cases, while also allowing for some interesting in-case analysis. Finally, all organisations use videos to recruit members or call them to action; thus allowing for consistency in the type of data analysed.

Visual Methodologies

Visual methodologies are a collection of methods used to understand and interpret images (Barbour, 2014; Glaw, Inder, Kable, and Hazelton, 2017). Thomas and Cook (2005) assert that visual analysis is “the science of analytical reasoning supported by interactive visual interfaces” (p.4). Contrary to what some believe, it is not a new research method, rather one that is derived from anthropology and sociology (Bailey and McAtee, 2003; Harper, 2002). That said, it is a methodology only newly applied to some disciplines, which is the case for the study of VOs. Its *turn* (in fields like ethnography (Kaley, Hatton, and Milligan, 2019); the history of education (Del Mar del Pozo and Braster, 2020); political communication (Lilleker, Veneti, and Jackson,2019); and military studies (MacKenzie, 2020)) have been made more accessible given high volumes of, and access to, visual data because of technological advancements. The lack of widespread adoption of it as a method, however, is not a reflection of its richness as a data source. Visual methods capture more detail and different data than verbal and written methods alone, through the additional layers of meaning it discovers (Glaw, et al., 2017) and its use adds validity, depth, and knowledge to a field or area of research. That said, it is not without its critics.

There has been significant scepticism amongst social scientists whether it is a valid methodology (Firth, Riley, Archer, and Gleeson, 2005). Harper (2002) described it as a 'waif on the margins.’ Much of this criticism relates to the validity of images and the subjective and multiplicity of interpretation (Rouse, 2003). Becker (1974) suggests that images are not unproblematic reflections of reality, rather, they reflect the producer’s perspective, biases, and knowledge, or potentially lack thereof, of the subject. As a result, images are much more than what they depict, however, they and their related

interpretation do not fit with traditional tenants of objectivity, replicability, and reliability. While this is one perspective, a shift in the social sciences towards exploring meaning-making and construction of multiple realities has provided visual methodologies with an environment conducive to a resurgence (Rouse, 2003). Firth, et al. (2005) highlight this need for such a shift, noting a recognition that visual methods could provide valuable and valid data within the social sciences. In the context of recruitment videos, their value as an excellent data source is increasingly being recognised, especially for understanding how groups signal or attract new members. Koslicki (2020) notes (in research about police recruitment videos) that "recruitment videos are an excellent source of capturing visible themes that may represent or signal the values of the recruiting organisation to potential recruits" (p. 4). Visual methods provide us with a mechanism to delve deeper into meaning and messaging, often unavailable when only analysing text, and that videos are an excellent data source from which to do this. Furthermore, it is particularly relevant for this work given the lens it offers directly into the activities of VOs, something especially pertinent in respect of extremist groups, as they are often difficult to investigate due to the lack of access and difficulties in getting ethics approval.

Forms of Visual Data

Visual data can be varied. For example, it can encompass images that emanate from “photography, film, video, painting, drawing, collage, sculpture, artwork, graffiti, advertising, and cartoons” (Glaw, et al., 2017, p. 2). It can include maps, diagrams, and matrices (Copeland and Agosto, 2012). Such images can be historical, modern, singular, or multiple. For this research, videos are used as the primary data source. These were chosen as they represent a tool by which VOs persuade and influence individuals to join or respond to a call-to-action. This is done through encoded and decoded messages developed around myths and the principles of persuasion. Videos act as a strategic communication tool for its members, future members, and, in some cases, adversaries. They serve as a valuable data source (because they were created and distributed by the groups themselves) to gain insights into the strategies used to recruit people to their organisation or call individuals to action.

Visual data can be divided into two; visual images produced by others and studied by the researcher or those generated by the researcher (Bailey and McAtee, 2003). One must understand who produces the image first, before investigating when it was produced. It is important to note if the data predated the research or was created for it, and/or were the producers aware of their possible inclusion in the research at the time of production. The context or era of production is also important. Some may be representations and therefore are subject to influences of society, culture, and history (Banks, 1995). Influences, which are often intractable. Understanding this is important given that these factors can influence how the data is produced, and also how it is received (which will be discussed shortly) and how the videos are analysed. In this research, and as mentioned above, all videos included were created and/or circulated by the organisations under review, or by a member of the group, and pre-existed the research. None of the VOs knew at the point of production that their video would form part of the dataset and do not even now.

Given the broad range of visual data types, approaches to analysis differ, but several elements are often consistent. For example, some researchers ask questions about the images production, the image itself, and the relationship between the image and the audience (Rose, 2001), while Bagnoli (2009) uses a narrative analysis probing into the story being told through the images and other mediums. An often-consistent element is the understanding that examining the process of production is a vital part of the analysis (Radley and Taylor, 2003). Firth, et al. (2005) assert that it is also important

to assess both what is present and absent to understand the construction of a particular reality. Alternatively, it is important to be at least aware of the possibility that groups encode elements into the videos that resonate with people of a similar persuasion, but not identifiable by others. These elements are important in the context of this work, especially if the data shows that all four VOs use the same strategies to recruit and call-to-action, as this may indicate that they also hide or encode elements or messages not visible to the general viewer.

Video Analysis

Knoblauch and Schnettler (2012) argue that video analysis has emerged as a powerful tool in qualitative research. They note that one of the key benefits is that it provides unprecedented access to the "minutiae of social interactions in real-time" (p. 335). Rose (2001) reiterates that film is a very powerful visual medium because film manipulates the visual, the spatial, and temporal. This is important here, as it suggests that it is in this space that persuasion and influence are most effective. This method of analysis is the chosen approach for the research, given that visual analysis of videos is a strategy designed to understand the simple question 'what is going on' within this medium; and to make sense of social phenomenon within them (Lynn and Lea, 2005). It is not just about reporting on an observation. Knoblauch and Schnettler (2012) purport that video analysis is a hermeneutical activity given that it is rooted in the interpretive tradition in the social sciences. They suggest that the actual act of recording is a social activity, so the interpretation is based on a common understanding of videos and interactions. This method, therefore, enables the spirit of interpretive social science, which accepts that actions and interactions are not just observable. They are influenced and guided by meaning, which an observer must account for (Schutz, 1962). This contrasts with some who have used an approach more akin to quantitative analysis, which starts with a theoretical assumption that is operationalised into observable categories. While this allows for higher degrees of reliability, it fails to provide sufficient opportunity for interpretation. Schutz (1962) argued that one must be able "to distinguish between the meanings actors' link with their actions and the ways how we, as observers, conceive of these meanings and conceptualise them scientifically" (p. 336), referring to this as the 'constructs of first-order' versus 'second-order constructs'. In simple terms, this means that everyday life is already interpreted (first-order) before observers interact with it (second order). This is a relevant assertion that was addressed in part by this research, through the theoretical framework applied.

Methodological Strategies in Video Analysis

Methodologies for visual analysis have largely developed for the field of study in which they are used. The field of visual analysis is seeing a rapid increase in this application. It is therefore receiving much more methodological attention in certain fields of late, one of which is in the social sciences. Nonetheless, Friis (2015) argues that IR had yet to solve methodological challenges associated with the analysis of the impact of visual imagery. Bleiker, in 2018, notes that "we still know far too little about the precise role visuality plays in the realm of politics and international relations. And we know even less about the concrete practical implications" (p. 1). The tide is turning, however, with works by Vuori and Saugmann (2019); Cooper-Cunningham (2019); and MacKenzie (2020). This research also contributes to this burgeoning scholarship. Nevertheless, issues continue in respect of methodological rigour. One problem identified is that in the current digital environment, images and videos are constantly removed, altered, and circulated, which may have an impact on future replication. This is especially relevant in this research, given the speed some videos are taken down off the internet. For example, in the immediate aftermath of the Christchurch mosque attack in March 2019, Facebook

reported that they removed 1.5 million videos of the event globally within the first 24 hours (France 24, 2019). Additionally, the methodological literature relating to video analysis is slightly different across disciplines. For the most part, an ethno-methodological tradition of conversation analysis influences such research (Knoblauch and Schnettler, 2012). In this context, analysis of video is highly influenced by the practice of sequential analysis (Heath, Hindmarsh, and Luff, 2010). This approach, unlike content analysis, considers the aspects documented in video, but also the context, which is often viewed as the main object of analysis. Knoblauch and Schnettler (2012) argue that sequential analysis is the most appropriate method to use when analysing video that has recorded interactions in real-time. This method aims to interpret data in a step-by-step manner to identify as many interpretations as possible.

In comparison with other research methods used in terrorism, video analysis was limited, but is becoming increasingly common. Similar to other fields, different video analytical approaches have been applied in the field of terrorism studies. For example, Friis (2015) applies two different approaches in the same study, combining the use of discourse analysis of political and media discourses in his research on ISIS in the UK and US, with analytical guidelines developed by Lene Hansen. In contrast, Salem, Reid, and Chen (2008) use content analysis to examine jihadi extremist groups' videos. This rise in use is not surprising within terrorism studies given the use of video by Islamic State, and increasingly by other groups. Specifically, Friis (2015) identifies the rise in research and writings on the analysis of visual images within the field of IR in his study on beheading videos and the visibility of violence in the war against ISIS. He argues that ISIS's beheading videos in the UK and US are a crucial demonstration of how visual imagery, and the violence within it, shapes what comes to be understood as the 'realities' and 'facts' of war, and in so doing shape the political responses. Friis (2015) asserts that videos are often described as a 'psychological weapon' or a 'strategic tool' for groups. PMCs act similarly, positioning their content so they present themselves as a legitimate voice in national security discourse (Jackson, et al., 2020). This perspective seems to be in line with Knoblauch and Schnettler (2012) who, as mentioned above, state that a video is a tool. Friis (2015) argues that much of the analysis in the field of terrorism studies explicitly focuses on the producer's strategic objectives, ignoring (for the most part) subtle political effects of the videos on the observer (other than those whom it may radicalise) and their responding action. Such effects are important, but continue to be under-researched, especially with regard to the less violent videos of groups like ISIS (except for a small number of researchers), and also concerning videos from other violent extremist groups, such as right-wing and left-wing groups. The use of visual analysis with respect to military, gangs, and PMCs/mercenaries is also still very limited; thus, this research fills an important gap.

Despite the absence of detailed visual analysis in research on gangs, gangs have also embraced videos and the internet in increasing numbers (Womer and Bunkerb, 2010). The process of using the internet to post fight videos, insult and threaten others, and to boast has been called *internet banging* (i.e., an online form of so-called 'gang banging') (Patton, et al., 2016). Until recently, the available research has been largely descriptive (Moule, Pyrooz, and Decker, 2014) and underexplored (Womer and Benkerb, 2010). Such research rarely took on a formal analytical approach. Furthermore, those that did move beyond this largely concentrate on the site of the image itself (Weisburd, 2009). This is changing of late, with Densley (2020) a suitable example, in this regard. With respect to military literature, there is limited analysis of videos, per se, but there is considerable research with respect to analysis of military games (Huntemann and Payne, 2010; Losh, 2005; Jarvis and Robinson, 2019).

Newman (2013) notes that this would most likely change, given the increasing use of military recruitment videos. Although any increase has yet to be substantive, notwithstanding works by Yuki, Kyu, Seulgi, Tetsuro, and Atsushi (2018) and Dinnen (2016). This same gap was also identified with respect to PMCs/mercenaries, where video analysis has been very limited. The absence of analysis in these four fields is a significant limitation with regard to understanding the interaction between first order and second-order constructs within video production and dissemination. As a result, this piece of research is somewhat unique, given that it will not only examine the first-order and second-order constructs (as outlined by Friis) within cases, but it will also examine whether these patterns are also evident across-cases, which will add significant value to the four fields; illustrating the power and messaging of the visual in relation to recruitment to violence more broadly.

It is acknowledged that some researchers argue that the heterogeneity of visual images renders them unsuitable for such analysis (Lynn and Lea, 2005). Lynn and Lea (2005) note that such opinions make the visual appear "resistant to classification in that it is messy and defies a single, consistent, model response" (p. 214), which has resulted in the visual not being given the prominent position in social science that some may think it deserves. Collier (2002) approaches this a little differently, however, articulating that there is a *fear* surrounding visual analysis in the social sciences. This fear is framed around the temptation of artistic approaches in visual anthropology rather than methodologically rigorous methods that connect findings to concrete visual evidence. Whether it is this fear or other issues that have stifled the progress of visual analysis, it is a serious limitation, one also evident in the world of IR. Weber (2008) highlights this resistance:

> Mainstream IR fails to understand how popular visual expression participate in these framings because it does not link the linguistic and the visual. It fails to link the linguistic to the visual because while the linguistic is understood as the medium through which 'real; politics is communicated, the visual is often dismissed as merely popular (Weber, 2008, p. 138)

She highlights this resistance to visual analysis as a significant limitation in IR, asserting that:

> failing to analyse popular visual language as integral to global communication, disciplinary IR risks misunderstanding contemporary subjectivity, spatiality, and temporality. By failing to grasp who we are, where we are, and when we are, IR cannot possibly comprehend what we say and do, much less what we hear, feel and see (Weber, 2008, p. 138).

Applied Methods

A sample of open-source, online recruitment videos were gathered from four groups. The use of such material to answer the research question was selected for several reasons. Firstly, as mentioned above, the use of video analysis (although growing) is limited in this area, so this approach ensures a relatively unique element to this work while illustrating the merits of it as a data source. Furthermore, it can be difficult to determine the exact objective of written propaganda of such groups. Recruitment videos have a clearer objective, consistent across all four groups; they are used to attract an audience. Nevertheless, the strategic approach of this medium is not truly understood and therefore requires greater examination. Notwithstanding that, this data source is not without its challenges. For one, what constitutes a recruitment video? While videos from the military are relatively easily identified--as they are largely published as 'recruitment videos'--this is not the case for the other groups. Nonetheless, militaries also produce other public relation (PR) outputs that have the same oblique recruitment messages as the other groups under review. As a result, a broader definition was used for

video selection across all groups. A recruitment video was initially defined as *any video that was labelled by the group as a recruitment video or any video that contained a specific 'call-to-action' to non-members of their respective organisations*. Based on this definition, a pilot database was compiled drawing on available open-source videos.

Many issues arose in this phase. Firstly, it was not possible to create a complete dataset of all publicly available recruitment videos ever uploaded by all four VOs. Such an approach would be costly and resource-intensive, if at all possible, given increased policing of the internet and a host of other factors. Some videos and other propaganda are 'taken down' within minutes of being uploaded and could not be included. Secondly, it is acknowledged that given the decision only to use open-source videos, videos available behind closed groups and password-protected sites could not be included. This has also made it impossible to select a random sample of videos for analysis. Despite understanding these challenges, it is not possible to fully assess the extent of their impacts on the research, while it is acknowledged they (the challenges) have greatly influenced the nature of the project itself.

Further limitations were also identified with this initial dataset, beyond these practical issues. This working definition did not allow inclusion of 'softer' videos, either produced by the organisations themselves, by members or circulated by either groups or individuals. As a result, inclusion criteria for the video were changed to *any video that was circulated by the group or its members, regardless of its content.* This approach was required to ensure a broader perspective, given the range of videos circulated. The logic of this wider inclusion criteria is also based on a lack of knowledge as to what specific strategies and activities are used by extremist groups and gangs to recruit online, as least through video. By including this broader definition, the research aims to demonstrate the dynamics between the producer's strategic objectives and the subtle political effects of the videos on observers (other than those whom it may radicalise) and their responding action. As highlighted by Friis (2015), they are not yet properly understood and even where the strategic intent of the producer may not be to 'recruit', per se, the effect on the observer and their responding action may be to join, or at least take steps to do so. If one only uses specifically referenced recruitment and/or call-to-action videos, one excludes the opportunity to see if there are two approaches to recruitment, the explicit form and a more subtle one. The inclusion of the less explicit videos may serve to demonstrate the use of the latter. If this is not present, this will be a noteworthy finding in itself. Furthermore, many of the non-explicit recruitment videos produced by all four groups appear to reinforce messages of recruitment or call-to-action videos, and as such can be understood to be part of the strategic approach to recruitment. As a result, the video search criteria were broadened.

Data Collection

Several methods to identify and locate videos were used. Initially, an online search was conducted using four key terms, gangs, political extremists, military, and PMCs/mercenaries, searching for names, and geographical presence. The results were analysed for names of groups, which were compiled into a list. This list was then used to search for and identify videos associated with such groups. These videos were saved and examined for screening before being entered into a database. The majority of videos were identified from open-source searches on Google, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and Vimeo, but other host sites were found. The researcher tried to identify the specific groups publishing the video and the host sites that they used, to try to determine the role of the host. This was done in part to increase the authenticity of the video to a specific group. They were then watched and examined in relation to the nature, structure, and objectives of each group to decide if

the group was suitable for inclusion. If deemed to fit these criteria, they were included in the database. The globe was broken down into four regions, Africa, Americas, Asia Pacific, and Europe. The organisations were distributed within these regions based on where in the world they came from. All were analysed by the author, which ruled out any 'inter-coder' reliability issue. This is a limitation of the study, nonetheless, which is discussed in the conclusion. This is important for ensuring all videos are observed in a consistent manner. What it does not do, however, is overcome the greatest methodological challenge to this type of research, which is that meaning is often abstract and dependent on an observer because symbols are often multivocal and multivalent, and therefore can have numerous and ambiguous interpretations (Pi-Sunyer, 1985). As a result, it is acknowledged that there is no way of guaranteeing the correctness of any interpretations made, as symbols are often multivocal and multivalent, and therefore can have numerous and ambiguous interpretations (Miller-Idriss, 2018). Not underestimating the methodological challenges this poses, however, significant learning that can be achieved through this research, and while not strictly generalisable, it is at least illustrative of VOs' visual vernacular used to persuade and influence. Proving cause and effect is likely to require a reception study.

Pilot Database Design

A pilot database was created which contained 24 videos, six relating to each of the four groups. Once designated to a particular group, each video was assessed as to whether it included one of the following five factors. Firstly, videos were included if they were advertised as recruitment videos. This is most prominent in those circulated by the military. Secondly, inclusion was allowed if they contained the presence of a direct or explicit 'call-to-action' in support of the group. This was largely present across all groups; however, not overly present in those relating to gangs. Thirdly, they were assessed as to whether they attempted to garner support for the group in a manner not as direct as a 'call-to-action'. This element was most apparent in the gang videos who appear to use them, as well as other social media sites, to attract people slightly differently than the others. This is in line with Patton, et al. (2016) who found in their analysis of social media communications of gang members the presence of three types of behaviour with regard to video use, namely in "(1) promoting one's gang affiliation; (2) reporting one's part in a video act; and (3) networking with gang members across the country" (p. 1001). These approaches were very evident in gang drill videos in this pilot dataset. Fourthly, videos were collected and included that were produced in a range of languages. They were not translated. They were watched by a person fluent in the respective language to confirm they met the inclusion criteria. With the exception of five cases, this was done by the researcher. The remaining five were viewed by academic colleagues in relation to four of the videos and one by a friend, who is a qualified translator. This latter case related to a video in Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian language. The other four videos involved the use of Japanese, Russian, Arabic and Spanish (South American) languages. Those not available in English or without English subtitles were analysed without assessing the message contained within from a verbal perspective. Finally, the timeframe under review was post-2001 to June 2020. Not only does this time period denote an exponential increase in terrorism research output (Silke, 2008) and an analytical shift towards religious extremism as a form of 'new terrorism' (Crenshaw, 2008), it also marks a period where internet speeds and capacity improved to make videos more readily circulated and consumed online (Morley, Widdicks, and Hazzaz, 2018).

The author accepts that there are several limitations with this pilot dataset. For one, the sample was 'selective', 'potentially unrepresentative' (Heider, 1976; Mead, 1995), and therefore unsystematic, however, it was a purposeful sample selected for this research. It is also difficult to determine the

validity or authenticity of all videos. Yet, every effort was made to assess authenticity by trying to link the videos back to official or recognised websites, Twitter pages, and Facebook pages of the particular group. All were assessed in this regard. Authenticating videos can be difficult. Creating fake videos of the quality necessary to fool the majority of people, although likely to be expensive in some cases, is not beyond the reach of many. This can be seen in the myriad of parody videos available in this space. That said, just because videos cannot be officially linked to a group, does not mean that the group has not approved them or that they have not influenced individuals to join or provide support. Another reason why videos circulated by the group or known members or supporters of the groups were also included in the dataset.

Data Collection

Once the issues raised in the pilot process were considered and actions taken to mitigate them, an additional collection process began. The videos used within the pilot process acted as the foundation material for the final dataset, enhanced with a further 93 videos to the data. The process of video collection began in October 2017 and ended in August 2020, with the majority of the additional videos gathered between September 2018 and August 2020. The procedure behind which the videos were collected, collated, and systematically analysed began with a proactive approach to finding suitable examples. Online searches were made using a range of different terms to identify suitable videos, such as the name of groups recorded in the aforementioned searches. Once located, all potential videos were watched. If deemed suitable, they were downloaded using the IT programme 'ClipGrab'[21]. This system makes it easy to download and save videos. A small number of videos (less than 5%) could not be downloaded with ClipGrab due to the technical restrictions of the system, so other software was used, namely All Video Downloader[22] and 4K Video Downloader[23]. Using the same software ensures all videos can be downloaded in the same format, making storage and analysis easier. A screenshot from each video was also recorded, to save information relating to the date of upload. Some videos were more difficult to find than others. To mitigate this, specific searches of groups' names were used on Facebook, Google, Vimeo, YouTube, and Twitter to find if the group had specific pages, accounts, blogs, which they used to host content. When found, these were examined for suitable examples. The location where these were found was recorded in the database. A second method was used to enhance this selection process and to try to mitigate against the high proportion of video takedown activities with respect to extremist groups and gang videos. These involved searches of media outlets. For example, the mainstream media regularly use portions of video footage produced by such groups to support their stories, especially either after an incident associated with the group or where criminal prosecution is ongoing, or a conviction is confirmed. These portions are often publicly available, even where the official video has been removed. This is very apparent in relation to gang videos. As a result, where issues arose with finding full videos, media versions were downloaded from the respective sites in which they were found and included. There is some unique difference to these videos. For the most part they are shorter, which makes it difficult to identify the full story arc within them. On some occasions it was difficult to hear the audio of the original footage. Nonetheless, the inclusion of the video is more important than their absence, given it helps mitigate the impact of video takedown.

[21] ClipGrab is a free downloader tool for YouTube and other sites available from https://clipgrab.org/

[22] All Video Downloader is a free downloader tool for online videos from https://download.cnet.com/All-Video-Downloader/3000-2071_4-75706858.html

[23] 4K Video Downloader is a free downloader tool for online videos from https://www.4kdownload.com/downloads

Despite a high volume of videos for some groups and areas of the world, there was a clear absence in others. To mitigate this, the researcher put a request out on social media to researchers in the field and asked them if they would share theirs. Three videos were received through this method. Two pertaining to groups in Africa, and one relating to a group based in the Americas. Nonetheless, there are some areas still with low numbers. In contrast, some videos were excluded from the dataset. These included parody videos, which were excluded given they are largely designed to imitate the group with exaggerated comic effect, often not to present the group positively or to gain support for the group. Secondly, videos were excluded if they were developed, albeit with the support of the group, as part of a documentary, because it is most likely that the documentary makers had editorial rights over the content, as opposed to the group themselves, which is likely to result in a different first-order construct than would have been present if produced by the group. Thirdly, videos were excluded from the dataset if despite identifying themselves as one of the four groups, they did not use violence to further their cause, because the use of violence is an important element of this work.

After processing all suitable videos, a compilation of 154 videos was achieved. Of these, 117 videos were selected for use. The final selection was based on the principle that only one video was selected for each organisation unless they were active in different regions. The inclusion of different videos of similar groups from different regions was to allow for the opportunity that different persuasion logics might be identifiable at the regional level. Where multiple videos from one group within a region were identified, inclusion was based on characteristics of the video such as the length of the video, inclusion of subtitles, viewing numbers, rather than content. The rationale for this decision was to explore the different types of persuasion logic used in different types of videos. For example, exploring whether longer videos used a different logic than shorter ones. Hand picking more diverse videos (for example, based on length) provided another opportunity to investigate this further. Where similarities existed across all the videos pertaining to one group, the first video found was used.

Data Characteristics

In relation to extremist videos, the length of videos ranged from 45 seconds to 25 minutes 41 seconds. The table below summarises the viewing numbers and length of videos across the four geographical areas examined.

Table 3.1 Viewing and length range for the Extremist videos

	Viewing Range	**Length Range**
Africa	13,907*	0:53 – 7:30
Americas	141 - 1,335,491	0:51 – 11:46
Asia Pacific	436 – 53,807*	1:51 – 25:41
Europe	252 – 792,084*	0:45 – 13:45
Combined	141 - 1,335,491	0:45 – 25:41

*Not all viewing figures were available.

The length of gang videos ranged from 15 seconds to 8 minutes 33 seconds. The table below summarises the viewing and length of videos across the four geographical areas examined.

Table 3.2 Viewing and length range for the Gang videos

	Viewing Range	**Length Range**
Americas	29,307 – 1,0571,713	1:01 – 3:32
Asia Pacific	50,949 – 10,855,293	00:15 – 8:33
Europe	48,214 – 2,283,438	00:49 – 7:24
Combined	29,307 - 10,855,293	00:15 – 8:33

The length of military videos ranged from 30 seconds to 11 minutes 39 seconds. The table below summarises the viewing and length of videos across the four geographical areas examined.

Table 3.3 Viewing and length range for the Military videos

	Viewing Range	**Length Range**
Africa	1207 – 652,781	1:02 – 5:10
Americas	103 – 2,720,900	00:30 – 9:27
Asia Pacific	549 – 1,334,777	1:00 – 11:39
Europe	67- - 778,601	00:35 – 1:04
Combined	232 - 2,720,900	00:30 – 11:39

Of all twenty-three PMCs/mercenary videos, the length of videos ranged from 36 seconds to 15 minutes 32 seconds. The table below summaries the viewing and length of videos across the four geographical areas examined.

Table 3.4 Viewing and length range for the PMC/Mercenary videos

	Viewing Range	**Length Range**
Americas	1,624 - 383,518	00:36 – 15:32
Asia Pacific	3,015 – 40,287	2:32 – 5:20
Europe	150 – 24,839	1:30 – 13:54
Combined	1,624 - 383,518	00:36 – 15:32

Data Collation

As noted by Touri and Koteyko (2014) “qualitative analyses of this type do not normally allow for an estimate of the frequency of occurrence of each frame” (p. 611), but it lets one estimate the prominence of frames and narratives contained within. Once the videos were discovered and assessed as suitable, they were entered into an Excel database. Initially, 45 variables were included in the database, which was constructed based on a literature review and the research question. The videos were then analysed against these variables, initially through thematic analysis, then using semiotic analysis. These methods were used to interrogate the videos to record the presence or absence of certain variables when watched. The 45 variables were broken down into four categories, namely (i) descriptive identifiers; (ii) production details; (iii) narratives framing; (iv) claims of legitimacy. Descriptive identifiers are operationalised through variables such as group name; group type; video link; date of uploading; site hosted; status (official, circulated). Production details were operationalised through variables such as the presence of branding, clothing, computer-generated graphics, and languages used. Narrative framing was initially operationalised through variables such as the presence of references to social factors, political factors, ideology, culture and identity, group

dynamics, trauma, and claims of legitimacy through variables such as a reference to justifications, territory, presence of flags, passports.

The database was built, therefore, around an iterative process of watching and re-watching with the aim to assess if strategic messaging and dramatisation strategies were present in each video. This resulted in the identification and collection of 117 videos (see appendix A for the list of all organisations from which the videos relate), spread across the four groups and geographies, as set out in Table 3.1.

Table 3.5 Distribution of Videos Across VOs and Geography

Distribution of Videos Across VOs and Geography				
	Extremist	Gang	Military	PMCs/Mercenary
Africa	6	0	8	0
Americas	7	10	10	10
Asia Pacific	8	5	10	6
Europe	10	10	10	7
	31	25	38	23

Once all videos were saved in the database, the process of reviewing took place. All videos were watched again, several times, in an iterative process to assess whether these preliminary variables were present and if so in what guise. Exceptions to the variables as annotated in the codebook were identified and then added. This increased the number of categories from 4 to 11 and the number of variables to 213. Observations made in relation to each variable were entered into the database, as per the codebook. These were framed similarly to the pilot study framework but were expanded to include data on descriptive identifiers; hosting information, characteristics relating to production, marketing, use of audio; imagery; narrative; the presence of text and spoken word; reference to legitimisation; call-to-action; myths; appropriation of symbols; gender; impressions, and miscellaneous anomalies. Impressions were used to record thoughts while watching the videos, with and without sound, the perceived audience, and the perceived message. With respect to gender, this was operationalised through the presence of women, reference to women, the positioning of women in relation to the role, and perceived audience. Finally, miscellaneous anomalies were used to record any observations that were found in each video. All videos previously viewed were re-watched to determine the presence of these additional variables. If these miscellaneous variables were then found to be present in other videos, a relevant recording was made.

Data Analysis

Once videos were selected, they were categorised according to group and geographical location, as discussed above. They were then re-watched within the sub-groups so the researcher could familiarise themselves with the content. Once familiar with the data, the videos were analysed via a four staged process, which also informed the development of the dataset and related variables. These stages were used to ensure an empirical approach, but also one that was underpinned by the applied theoretical framework, as recommended by Fink (2014). The first stage was one of observation. All videos were watched, and the researcher recorded certain variables of interest, such as observations relating to the videos and groups to which they related, whether they were perceived to be official or not, where they were downloaded from, to which geographical region they referred. This provided data in respect

of the initial variables within the dataset. These observations were made to ensure accurate categorisation of the group, geographical location, and suitability of video. Observations were also recorded in respect of direct or overt calls to action and or recruitment, and other pertinent messages contained within the video. These were recorded regardless of the mode through which they were observed. In short, this stage examined the overt messages contained within the videos and recorded such observations. This might best translate to what people might see with slightly more than a cursory watch of the videos. Observations made in this stage were recorded under the headings in Table 3.2.

Table 3.6 Variables Created during Stage 1

Variables Created during Stage 1	
Descriptive Identifiers	Video Number
	Group Name
	Video Link
	Region
	Status
	Group Type
	Site Hosted
	Who uploaded it?
	Date of Video Upload
	Date of Download
	Hash Tags on Site
	Uploaders Comments
	Viewers Numbers
	Note
Hosting Information	Hashtags Present on video
	Hashtags used
	Length
Initial Assessment	Type of Video
	If neither, please explain inclusion
	Professionalism
	Is it produced?
	Recruitment video - Describe
	Call-to-action video - Describe

The second stage involved more focused attention, identifying, and examining the modes used to communicate the observed message. Variables were included that related to modes such as music, spoken word, text, and image. When present, further details were recorded about the nature, style, and type of mode. Text and spoken word were recorded when presented in the English language. A note was taken about the observed meaning within the images, and the perceived message they were trying to communicate, focusing largely on the perceived dominant meaning of the message (as perceived by the researcher). This approach was taken given that meaning from video emanates from the interplay of multiple images; thus, constructing a "visual vernacular, or form of visual grammar that has the potential to convey meanings beyond the individual content of the image" (MacKenzie, 2020, p. 343). Observed messages relating specifically to recruitment and call-to-action were recorded

as were other messages that did not but were rather dominant or overt. These were recorded to later identify if they had a more nuanced influence on recruitment and call-to-action, than might be initially thought. Inclusion of variables was arrived at with respect to their relevance or potential relevance to the research question, whilst also leaving room for possible ideas and themes to emerge from the data itself. This stage might be best explained as a thorough examination of overt elements within the video, driven both by the mode of the message and the message itself. These two stages provided the foundation of the dataset. Observations made in this stage were recorded under the categories in Table 3.3.

Table 3.7 Variables Created during Stage 2

Variables Created during Stage 2	
Production	Presence of Branding
	How Displayed
	If so, which ones.
	If Image, type of Branding
	Clothing Style worn
	Consistency in Clothing Style
	Clothes Type
	Video Type
	Languages Used
	Secondary Language
	Subtitles Present
	Subtitles Language
Marketing	Colour Theme
	If a theme is present, top 3 colours
	Tone
	Is contrast used
	Explain the contrast
	Is depth or perspective used
	Style of Address
	If other, who
Audio	Music present
	Music rhythm
	Description
	Words present in music
	If yes, Style of Words
	Actual words in music
	Significant Change as Music Change
	How does the video change as music change
	Time of change
Text	Text present
	If yes, Time of Text
	Actual Text
	Google translate
	Text Colour

Spoken Word	Is a spoken word present
	Actual Spoken words
	Male or Female Voice
	Message Target
Initial Imagery	First image
	Scene
	Background images
	What does it change too
	First person - gender
	First person dressed
Activity	Activity - Initial
	Core Activities in video
	Combination of activities
	What combination
	Are weapons present
	If yes, what weapons
	If other, describe
	Time of weapons
	If yes, are the weapons being used (discharged)
	Do the videos include group activity
	If yes, what size
	Presence of Hand Gestures
	Description of Hand Gesture
Narrative	Message Method
	Combination of Messaging
	Is there a clear message?
	If yes, describe
	Specific quote time
	Is a subordinate message evident
	If yes, describe
Legitimisation	Presence of Flags
	Description of flag
	Time of image of flag
	Presence of Symbol
	Image Time
	Direct Reference to legitimacy
	If yes, How
	If yes, describe
	Indirect Reference to legitimacy
	if yes, how?
	If yes, describe
	Direct reference to territorial control
	If yes, how
	If yes, describe
	Indirect reference to territorial control
	If yes, how

	If yes, describe
Gender	Females Present
	Ratio to Men
	Role of females
	Males Present
	Role of males
Impressions	Thoughts when watched
	Aim of which
	When watched without sound
	How does it end?
	Type of Responses
	Anomalies/interesting element
	Symbol Appropriation
	What symbol

In stage three, the dataset was extended to incorporate learnings from the literature reviewed and theoretical framework utilised. The videos were re-watched for the presence of themes common to group literature, specifically, Hogg, et al.'s (2008) work on motivation to group membership, and to the four VOs literature, respectively. These included community, exclusivity, sense of belonging, difference, religion, and adventure. This stage focused on the images within the videos. Variables were created to record the presence or reference to such themes as presented in images, or collection of images. Additional variables were added to record details about how these were presented. During this stage, the videos were also viewed for the presence of conditions suitable for triggering or activating Cialdini's principles and/or the glorification of myths, as per Ellul. Once again from the visual perspective. Unlike the previous two stages, stage three marked a transition from observation to one that combined a mix of observation and interpretation. Interpretation is a necessary evil of this type of data, as there is no single meaning within images. While this has the potential for bias, the researcher viewed all videos so any of the biases that they may have brought to this process, based on factors such as culture, upbringing, geography, religion, gender, etc. will have applied to all observations. Furthermore, by drawing from the literature and theoretical framework, further attempts were made to try to structure the observations and interpretations recorded, to further reduce subjectivity. For example, in how myths, principles, and motivations were operationalised. While these do not reduce its impact, they serve to mitigate multiple interpretative schemes being applied. Nonetheless, it is recognised that any observations made about the findings are only illustrative, rather than strictly representative.

Myth

Myths and ideologies are different, myths drive someone to action (Ellul, 1973; Karim, 2001). This approach was also influenced by the similarities between Ellul's concept of myths and Cialdini's (2006) principles of persuasion, due in part to their high degree of universality or perceptions of such (unlike ideologies), making them more applicable for operationalisation. Ellul's second-order myths were selected for operationalisation; the myth of work; happiness; nation; youth; hero (Ellul, 1973). These were operationalised as set out in Table 3.4. Any visual reference to these were recorded. Extra variables were also added for each of the myths, with respect to modes. These were, 'if yes, how'; select if 'combination of more than one mode'; 'if image, what type' and then just a simple variable

to allow for discussion, 'discuss'. The same variables were also applied in relation to principles and motivations.

Table 3.8 Variables relating to myths

Variables relating to myths	
Myth	**Reference to concepts of**
Nation	Nation, state
Kinship	Family, brotherhood, unit
Work	Work or cause
Happiness	Happiness or future benefits
Youth	Adventure, thrill, danger
Hero	Historical figure or martyrs

Principles of Persuasion

Cialdini's (2006) six principles of influence were operationalised as set out in Table3.5. The videos were watched and examined for the presence of content conducive to activating these principles.

Table 3.9 Variables relating to Principles of Persuasion

Variables relating to Principles of Persuasion	
Principle	**Reference to**
Reciprocity	Repayment, pay-back, sharing, etc.
Scarcity	Alienation, lack of control
Authority	Authority, legitimisation, sense of duty
Consistency	Requests, ritual, or sacrifice
Liking	Positive association,
Consensus	Uncertainty, social proof

Group Motivations

Hogg, et al.'s (2008) three motivations to group membership were used to operationalise 'motivations'. These included visual reference to things that (i) increase pleasure and reduce pain; (ii) alleviate stress or anxiety associated with life and death; and (iii) the desire to reduce or resolve uncertainty in one's life. These were then combined with motivations drawn from the available literature with respect to VOs, to include reference to (iv) a sense of belonging through feelings of brotherhood and camaraderie; (v) increased life satisfaction; and (vi) validation of perceptions and opinion. In addition, the research draws on advertising in terms of operationalising motivations. For example, it draws on the therapeutic ideology often sold by advertisements, one of transformation and growth (Richard, 1998). This mirrors a common motivation noted in literature relating to VOs, often framed around a redemptive theme. As a result, a final theme of (vii) reference to redemption, was included.

Themes

Despite this comprehensive, multi-layered framework of analysis, a number of elements from the literature were still absent. An additional four, therefore, were added to this section to assess whether

they were present in the videos, given their reported relevance to joining in the respective literatures. These included reference to community, exclusivity, sense of belonging, and difference to others.

Stage four also combined observation and interpretation, as it focused on the application of visual analysis methods to the videos, semiotics, more precisely, visual semiotics. Within this phase, the videos were initially observed for the presence of overt signs, such as signs like flags, symbols, crests. Once identified, they were examined and recorded. It should be noted that the importance of these in relation to group membership as discussed in the literature informed the application of such a method. For example, the role of such signs as symbols of authenticity. Authenticity is also very relevant in respect of persuasion, as previously discussed. While some may have been tempted to jump straight to this phase, the application of this staged approach, allowed for a more structured means of considering the complexities of distinguishing between the role of content and persuasion. While the former may influence the latter, the latter requires much more than the former to be effective. If one went straight to this stage, one may be tempted to suggest that it is the content alone that influences, as in, the presence of signs and symbols. Through this staged approach, however, it became evident that content is but one element that loads videos with their persuasive powers.

As the videos were reviewed, a range of other signs relevant to recruitment and call-to-action became apparent, the role of hand gestures, environment, sound, framing. These were recorded and included as variables. When discovered, previously viewed videos were re-watched to examine if similar strategies were present but had gone unnoticed. This illustrates an example of the iterative process of watch-and-re-watch undertaken with the data. It was during this iterative process that the utility of applying another method emerged, and that is intervisuality. The videos are not stand-alone pieces of data rather are interconnected with other videos, those reviewed in this dataset, but also with videos more widely. Thereby presenting another reason why this data can only be viewed as illustrative. In the context of this methodology, analysis examining the presence of intervisuality was framed around methods often applied to intertextuality, more specifically about the appropriation of conventions and genres. For example, through the use of popular notions (often Hollywood inspired) of military, bravery, gang culture. Observations of this nature were recorded in the database.

During this process another key observation was made, not directly relating to recruitment, per se, but to provocation. This related to the videos being used as a means of communication between groups, often rival groups. Previous research has observed this within gang videos, but a similar pattern was observed here in videos pertaining to other VOs so this too was recorded. While this was only explicit in a small number of the videos, it was sufficiently relevant enough to review all the videos and include it in the variables. Through the application of these four stages, the researcher built a multi-layered structure or framework, with 200+ variables (as set out in Appendix B), which were used not only to record observed images but also to interpret meaning from them. By also examining the videos for factors conducive to activating Cialdini's principles of persuasion, the methodology applied not only allowed for analysis beyond mere observations but to identify and examine factors associated with persuasion and recruitment.

The iterative process used allowed the researcher not only code the data but also categorise variables according to related images. During this procedure, several overlapping myths, themes, and motivations became evident, based on shared images. These were highlighted within the database to ensure they were examined further, but not combined at this stage. The categorisation of these themes around certain images facilitated a deeper meaning to emerge from the data, especially as

overlapping patterns emerged. The decision not to combine for example, common images associated with principles of persuasion, myths, and themes from the literature, ensured patterns could emerge, but anomalies or outliers could present themselves too. Given that this was an empirical study aimed at identifying the prevalence of similarities in visual images used in VOs recruitment and call-to-action videos, the data gathered and analysed focused on visual similarities across myths, motivations, principles, and/or themes within-cases and across cases.

During the process, the role of modalities (music, silence, and spoken word) in reinforcing persuasive power of the visual emerged. As a result, related variables were also recorded. That is not to say that the research shifted to multi-modal analysis, per se, rather it examined these alternative modes, specifically as they relate to reinforcing the persuasive power of the visual. This approach is in line with other critical scholars, who have "moved to engage with the aural, the sounds that accompany (moving) images, and how this imbues meaning" (Cooper-Cunningham, 2020, p. 2). This four-stage process allowed for rich data to be gathered through observations and interpretation, which is necessary when using the visual as the primary data. Meaning is not static. This approach provided a structured framework from which to compare these videos, and in so doing, further demonstrates their suitability for comparative analysis.

Ethical Considerations

Despite it being envisaged that there were no major ethical risks or concerns associated with using open-source call-to-action videos, a full ethics application was made to Dublin City University's Research Ethics Committee, after which approval for the research was obtained. Moreover, careful consideration was given to the ethics of conducting research from the outset of the project across several factors; namely, impact on the researcher, the use of publicly available video data, impact on individuals within the videos who may not be there by their own volition; retention of data and related security, and obligations to law enforcement and criminal investigation. It is acknowledged that despite this attention and approach taken, other methodologies may have been used. There is nothing simple about these questions and dilemmas (Taylor and Horgan, 2021). It is argued that the approaches taken here are commensurate with the research design and data used, and that they balance the do no harm principle and the need for such public interest research.

The first element considered in relation to ethics and the study, related to researcher welfare. The researcher thought about this from the outset of her work given that violence is often associated with VOs videos. Using publicly accessible data helped to mitigate risks in this area, as the very content that stays up for long periods of time on the internet is likely to be of a less violent nature to that taken down quickly. As a result, the approach taken came from a perception that the majority of these videos would be relatively benign. This played out with most of the videos not including direct scenes of violence, making them seem rather innocuous at first glance. Nonetheless, the researcher knew that the nature of the research design would expose her to content that may be violent and uncomfortable to view. Having over 20 years in the field of security, both operationally as a police officer and as a security analyst and researcher and having a keen interest in the use of videos as a recruitment tool, the researcher foresaw the merits and benefits of viewing and analysing such videos to better understand the pre-production logic contained within would outweigh the risks. To mitigate any risks further, the researcher took active measures to viewing them where possible. For example, viewing a max of three new videos a day, where possible not viewing multiples videos from the same VO per day, exploring beyond the reference to violence and seeing it in the overall narrative, as opposed to

locking in on the visual, and to ultimately view the opportunity of this work to provide insight into an understudied yet important area, thus, making an important contribution to knowledge. In addition, the researcher did not widely publish her work nor her approach, so as not to attract unwanted attention from groups or individuals associated with the data (Winter, 2019). Furthermore, despite it being envisaged that there were no major ethical risks or concerns associated with using open-source call-to-action videos, a full ethics application was made to Dublin City University's Research Ethics Committee, after which approval for the research was obtained.

It is acknowledged, however, that while the videos did not largely include direct visual depictions of violence, many had overarching themes relating to violence, power, and weaponry, and/or have indirect scenes or references that may imply or insinuate violence, which in themselves could have a negative impact on the viewer. Despite the subtlety of some messages, they were often very persuasive and effective. This is a noteworthy observation in itself given that much of the emerging scholarship in this area relates to the negative psychological impact of researcher exposure to violent content (Baele, Lewis, Hoeffler, Sterck, and Slingeneyer (2018); Winter, 2019). Little if any is written about exposure to softer content, which may be a significant oversight given (as demonstrated in this research) that such videos express meaning in complex ways, thus, the perception or inference of violence may if framed correctly be as equally impacting on the viewer as direct reference to violence itself.

This reflection on the impact of implied violence is a post research deliberation, and one that relates to the possible negative impact softer videos can have on researchers, because of the multi-layered message and dialogues within them. It is difficult having watched so many of these videos not to see beyond the visual and aural to deeper and often more sinister messaging. Due to the deep, analytical consideration and time given to these videos, observations are made in pieces, frames, and across layers–the visual, aural, emotional, etc.--which often allowed the researcher to feel removed from the content. A simple analogy to describe this is like working with pieces of a jigsaw rather than viewing the finished image; an image is distorted and not visible until the end, thus the impact seems less significant. At the end of the project, however, when the findings emerged as to the complexity of production logic within them, it became difficult not to view these videos as complex works of communication. In this vein, the researcher postulates that even softer videos may have serious psychological consequences for researchers, especially where in-depth analysis is made of them. This research, therefore, may have significant insights for ethical considerations in the study of what initially appears to be relatively innocuous content. The persuasion logic used within these VOs videos (across all four) may have a negative impact on researchers, thus, despite the logic of using softer videos to mitigate any risk of exposure to violent content, the complex nature of these videos may make them equally impactful on researchers–an observation, it is acknowledged had not been considered at the outset of the research. Despite the potentially controversial inclusion of military videos within this observation, it would appear disingenuous to argue a similar approach to persuasion is used across VOs through this research, yet imply the psychological impact is entirely different, although some arguments in support of the latter could be given. The mere potential for a negative psychological impact, should not be only associated with extremist content, nor as argued by Morrision, Silke and Bont (2021) should it be reason enough to reject an ethics proposal.

Using publicly available videos was a considered decision on behalf of the researcher not only to reduce exposure to direct violence but also because this type of content is so easily accessible on

commonly used platforms, and therefore has the potential to reach a mass audience, which was of key interest in terms of recruitment. It also helped overcome, at least at a high level, the issue of privacy. If individuals and or groups hosted their material publicly online, they cannot then claim a right of privacy to their content, as it can be considered public behaviour (Herring, 1996). Thus, raising the question whether consent is needed to analyse such data (Holtz, Kronberger, and Wagner, 2012). This question is important in this study, because using online video content can make it difficult (and beyond the parameters of this study) to seek informed consent from every person in the videos. While this is hugely important in relation to ethics, Conway (2021) offers a pertinent observation in regard to occasions where a researcher may not have to seek consent, whilst acknowledging like many areas of ethics, is not without issues:

> It is regularly argued that content posted in wholly open online settings, such as non-passworded discussion forums or unlocked Twitter accounts, is in the public domain and thus comparable to, say, a letter in a newspaper. This is because a letter in a newspaper is viewed as text and not thereby subject to the same ethical considerations as human subjects' research. Using such content by researchers poses minimal risk for the posters, on this view, because—like the newspaper letter writer—they are assumed to have an awareness that their content is public, which is underlined by users' ability to conceal their identities online to varying extents via the employment of pseudonymous screen and/or user names, which many do, and in the case of Twitter, the option to easily make their tweets private, which most do not (p. 371).

This is the approach taken here. The videos are publicly available and thus, consent is not required. This decision was also influenced by the feasibility of actually getting consent. A second consideration was also made, however, just because most individuals within these videos may have consented to the material being online, one cannot assume all have (King, 1996). For example, videos that contained images of children and victims where violence is or has been perpetrated by and/or against them. It was difficult to find a balance in this regard, at least for the most part. A decision was made to blur all images of children to protect them, however the researcher made the decision not to blur any images of adult, albeit acknowledging that some may not have consented to their image being used. The decision to leave them unblurred was made assessing that further risks associated with inclusion in this research versus their image being available on the internet are limited. Moreover, because these videos are often viewed as being subtle and soft, blurring images within them was likely to have negatively impacted the results, as it would have been more difficult to demonstrate the strategic approach taken within many of them. Often, the very selection of specific images or individuals solidifies the persuasion logic used. The complexity of these videos is in the interaction between the visual, aural, emotional, etc. without clearly depicting this in the research, this may not have been demonstratable. The researcher, thus, asked themselves the question, whether this was important beyond a PhD. They made the assessment that this research is likely to have significant impact in both the literature and in policy making in relation to how such videos are viewed from the perspective of persuasion and recruitment, hence the public interest in this case tipped the balance in favour of the approach taken here of not blurring any adult images.

Careful consideration was also given to the use of unblurred photos of victims (who we know were later killed). For example, Fig. 6.5 displays images of victims in positions of vulnerability, images commonly presented in the media. It was recognised that the use of such images in this research (and

similar academic use), in the videos, and the media must be a constant reminder for the family and friends of the victims involved. Once again, although acknowledged and considered that inclusion of such images could serve to further traumatise these individuals, the likely impact of this research at both and policy level, balanced the inclusion of such images towards their inclusion on the premise that this is public interest research and in better understanding how VOs recruit, the information may be used to mitigate opportunities for such violence in the future.

In publicly available data, it might appear appropriate to download the videos and take no further action in respect to data security. An approach like this, however, did not seem sufficient for the researcher. The videos are public but collected together they comprise a dataset of VOs videos, the majority of which relate to groups (or related activities) that are deemed illegal in some jurisdictions. The researcher therefore took steps to secure the data by downloading it to the cloud, storing it under password protection, and encrypting it. This decision was primarily influence by the understanding that having extremist content on one's electronic devices is an offence in some jurisdictions and although academic research can be a defence, it is not always absolute. All analyses of this content were also password protected, and the devices on which it was performed encrypted. Careful consideration has been given to the length of time the data will be kept. Initially, it was envisaged that General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) may require destruction of the data within a specific timeframe, however, on subsequent examination, it was interpreted that the data can be retained for academic and public interest research purposes, thus, it will be kept by the reviewer for future work and for historical record.

Finally, despite the right to conduct public interest research, and to use publicly available data, and to retain it for future research, it is acknowledged that this should not be viewed as an explicit right and therefore, the researcher has no authority nor explicit legal protection over the data. Should a request be made under GDPR for example, this will need to be complied with. Moreover, from the outset, the researcher conducted the work knowing that it may be demanded by law enforcement. Because this is publicly available data, the researcher takes the position that all this material is equally available to law enforcement to gather and obtain and has no problem directing them to it. For videos which are no longer publicly available but held by the researcher however, it is envisaged that these will be passed to law enforcement only on foot of a formal request, and if necessary, in response to a court order.

There are multiple ethical questions asked and dilemmas encountered with this research, and it is acknowledged that there are no easy answers to any of them, rather it is a balancing game of many moving parts, interests, merits, and risks. There is no single approach that can be applied this or to every context, but it is argued that careful and considered attention was given to the ethical implications of the research and its methodology, to the researcher, the data and people included within it, the families of the victims, to data protection and security. The result is an acceptable, although imperfect, balance which serves do as little harm as possible, while at the same time adding significant insights to a very understudied area.

Conclusion

This chapter set out the methodological approach available for studies of this nature, discussed their appropriateness for this work, before setting out the methodological decisions made throughout the research with respect to the methods used. It then discussed these in respect of data identification, collection, and structuring in the form of a database, and the approach taken to operationalise the

theoretical framework discussed in the last chapter. It provided detail as to how the data was analysed. Throughout the chapter, the challenges and limitations of this approach were highlighted, and it was explained how these issues were addressed and mitigated. An important element of the approach taken was the iterative process of data testing and method design, which resulted in a more comprehensive data rich dataset, as will be demonstrated in the following five chapters.

Chapter 4 De-cluttering the competitive landscape: Branding a means to engage and persuade

> For an organization to recruit effectively, its brand needs to be known and understood (Lawler III and Worley, 2006, p. 170)

Like many others, VOs face a difficulty in getting people to open, watch, and respond to their online messaging. They compete for attention, not only with other VOs, but with other groups (violent and non-violent) vying for notice online. This does not differ from the advertising world, which is becoming more and more cluttered (Rosengren, 2008; Taylor and Carlson, 2021). A cluttered media environment reduces the effectiveness of each individual advertisement; content needs to stand out. Advertising techniques help explain how one can increase the chances that content gets noticed and engaged with. Video works well as a mechanism to do this because the interaction of viewers and video content facilitates exposure, attention, and ad processing (Chatterjee, Hoffman, and Novak, 2003). Online videos are an excellent means used to communicate and engage with audiences, communicating complex scientific ideas in an accessible format (Luzon, 2019). "Video is the most attractive way to convey certain stories, because you can describe some things in words, but you just see the video and, right away, you get the point" (Erviti and Stengler, 2016, p. 7).

Viewership, however, cannot be taken for granted; thus, the logic of VOs using advertising techniques in creating their videos is rational. They, like media organisations, need to attract an audience which they can then turn into potential recruits or supporters. To do this, their content needs to generate interest, create an emotional response, to encourage action (i.e., persuade). This is similar in advertising to 'buying' and as noted by Richard (1998), for advertisements to be effective they must include a lure or cue to 'buy', which is often best achieved when aligned to a shared identity. Understanding why cues are used to attract the viewer may explain why the military and PMCs use production houses and advertising agencies to help create their videos. In contemporary military recruitment, this is a multi-million-pound industry (Rech, 2020). One can also observe the practice of using professional production services by some extremist, mercenary, and gang videos, with drill videos an appropriate example. This may show an awareness of a well-known and understood element of effective advertising; it serves "as a major tool in creating product awareness in the mind of a potential consumer to take [an] eventual purchase decision" (Ui-Abideen and Saleem, 2011, p. 55). The decisions VOs make regarding the medium they choose to communicate through, where they host this, and how they engage their audience, therefore, are as important to the cues and content embedded within. If a communication method, in this case video, does not engage with an audience it will render even the most persuasive content ineffective. This has influenced debate in advertising as to what strategies are the most efficient in relation to engagement (Frazer and Sheehan, 2002). Despite this, Rosengren (2008) notes that attention is often taken for granted. A similar observation has been made in relation to VOs, where high viewership is often assumed within related studies (Archetti, 2018).

This chapter draws from Hogg, et al.'s (2008) theories of group dynamics and semiotics to demonstrate viewership is not something taken for granted by VOs, examining how they seek to ensure their videos engage their audience, and in so doing create an environment conducive to

persuasion. It empirically shows this through one specific advertising technique, branding, chosen because of its dual role in the process of engagement and persuasion. Branding also plays a role in reducing customer uncertainty (Yin Wong and Merrilees, 2007). This is pertinent here, as uncertainty reduction is a known attraction to entitative groups (Hogg, et al., 2008) and increases the effectiveness of persuasion (Cialdini, 2006). Moskalenko (2010) also highlights the role of uncertainty in military recruitment. Four specific types of branding are examined: logos and symbols, flags, hand gestures, and dress, which are used to target the desired audience; target recruitment; advertisement placement; to sell the after effect; to reflect a company (in this case, group); build a rapport through establishing trust, legitimacy, and authority in the eyes of the viewer, and for personalisation. The four subsets (logos and symbols, flags, hand gestures, and dress) were selected based on their prominence within the videos analysed, and their known role in advertising. Mehran, Al Bayati, Mottet, and Lemieux, (2021) and Luzon's (2019) work also influenced these choices. They note symbolism and gestures, amongst other things, act as and interact with multimodal texts, and serve to add a level of novelty and newsworthiness to content. This is also achieved through the personalisation of advertising (Dodoo and Wu, 2019); thus, demonstrating an interrelatedness between modalities, belonging, and identity, facilitated through branding. The chapter contributes to the core argument, by empirically displaying that cues associated with branding are used to engage an audience, and from there, to persuade.

Before continuing, it is worth acknowledging that advertising and propaganda are similar, with no definitive boundaries of what might differentiate one from the other (Tandoc, Wei Lim, and Ling, 2017); both share elements, such as the use of the same multimedia formats to spread a message. The approach taken here, however, is to differentiate the two; viewing advertising from the perspective of encouraging a desire for certain things, services, or ideas to influence buying, and the technique of propaganda as a means used to change attitudes towards things, services, or ideas, and influence behaviour change. Although a subtle difference, it is recognised (Bolt, 2012; Richard, 1998; Waisbord, 2019). That said, it is acknowledged that, like the literature, blurring between both understandings is present within the videos reviewed (Bolt, 2012). Despite this, the chapter predominantly examines the videos through an advertising lens, exemplified through the technique of branding.

Standing out in a cluttered media environment

Prior to delving into examples of branding, it is important to note why the use of it as a technique to engage (prior to persuasion, per se) is pertinent to this study in a little more detail. Gaining attention within the cluttered online ecosystem requires content that draws attention, keeps it, and engages with the viewer, and branding within such videos helps in that regard (Mehran, et al., 2021). Branding (as a technique of advertising) works because the more attention viewers pay to content helps them encode and store its messages (Goodrich, 2011; Pieters, Warlop, and Wedel, 2002). VOs are operating in this space, using similar mechanisms and techniques to reach their members, supporters, and potential recruits; thus, drawing techniques from advertising is an appropriate lens through which to explain how VOs ensure their content gets noticed and engaged with. One means of breaking through the clutter is to ensure content stands out, however there are no universally applicable approaches identified to do this; standing out to gain attention needs to be done by tailoring advertisements to the appropriate context (Teixeira, 2015). This is key because "an identical ad may have different

effects on consumers' evaluations of the ad, depending on the media contexts in which that ad is placed" (Kim, Youn, and Yoon, 2019, p. 207).

The concept of attention is notoriously difficult to define, but it can be understood as "the general distribution of mental activity being assigned to a stimulus and can refer to both that which receives mental activity (i.e., the direction or focus of attention) and the duration of that activity" (Rosengren, 2008, p. 28). The first part of this process is interest, and the latter includes processing the information (MacInnis and Jaworski, 1989). It is the processing element, which moves the interaction with content beyond merely seeing to actively looking and listening. This process also includes contemplation and consideration of the messages contained within (Rosengren, 2008; MacInnis and Jaworski, 1989). Attention, therefore, is an important initial response to communication methods, if they are to be effective (Rossiter and Percy, 1997). One common example of how advertisers gain attention is through branding, "carefully crafted to attract attention, reduce noise, and enhance clarity" (Rosengren, 2008, p. 29). This process is important given the ferociously competitive media environment in which advertisers and VOs operate (Taylor and Carlson, 2021).

Working to gain this attention is important; not only in relation to getting their message out there but also engaged with, because engagement online (regarding news brands, at least) builds trust and loyalty (Chung and Nah, 2009) and helps grow viewership (Mersey, Malthouse, and Calder, 2010). Many VOs appear to understand the value of the visual as a medium to do this, employing visual strategies from advertising (even where professional services are not used) to engage with viewers. Two recent studies of interest relating to how such groups develop a branding strategy include Laaksonen and Titley (2020) and Manchon and Guerrero-Sole (2019). Laaksonen and Titley (2020) identified three central strategies of video activism when examining networks of anti-immigration activities in Finland. One strategy they identified was the use of personal branding. They note that "platforms push activists to produce more personalized connections and content. They invite them to work with dynamics of temporality, visibility, and virality that produce moments of collectivity" (Laaksonen and Titley, 2020, p. 188). Manchone and Guerrero-Sole's (2019) study examined how political brands are using Twitter intensively during campaigns. Specifically, they analyse how political brands use hashtags to build a brand strategy. Despite these recent studies, however, there is a dearth of audience-focused approaches to extremists' communication attempts. This is despite branding having a long tradition in media studies (Aly, 2012). Bastug, Douai, and Akca (2020) reaffirm this, noting "more research is required to understand how individuals decide to engage with online material that includes radical content, interacting with like-minded people, becoming radicalized, and getting involved in violent acts" (p. 622). Although this is not a reception study, this study presents empirical examples of techniques used by VOs to persuade their audience to respond to recruitment and call to action. This chapter will discuss branding as a pertinent example of how they do this, building on the work of Laaksonen and Titley (2020) and Manchon and Guerrero-Sole (2019), by demonstrating that VOs use branding to *engage* their audience in a manner that helps create an environment conducive to persuasion.

Branding—An advertising technique used to engage and influence

If getting noticed and attention is the first step on the road to persuasion, it is important to understand how VOs ensure they achieve this, and advertising allows us to do just that. Branding is a well-known technique in the advertising world (Efrat and Asseraf, 2019). Barney (2014) describes it as "a promise

made by a firm to its customers…. and thus, has the potential to be a source of sustained competitive advantage" (p. 24). Despite its importance, however, research on branding as it relates to how and why branding strategies impact the success of the organisations to which they refer is incomplete (Zander, McDougall-Covin, and Rose, 2015). The dearth of research notwithstanding, Roth (1995) determined that decisions around brand image should consider customers' exposure. Iyer, Davari, Zolfagharian, and Paswan (2018) more recently built on this, indicating quality positioning and brand-image positioning positively affects a firms' performance. Efrat and Asseraf (2019) found "emotional branding represents a major asset, especially for technology-oriented BGs [Born-global firms], and bears a crucial impact on their internationalization", and further note, emotional branding "offers a significant complementary positive impact on BG performance by means of differentiation" (p. 8). This implies emotional branding is more effective than functional branding alone.

Branding not only allows one to identify a group, service, or thing more easily. Global firms have learned it reduces customer uncertainty, while enhancing customer satisfaction and confidence (Yin Wong and Merrilees, 2007); thus establishing legitimacy, which leads to more rapid market expansion and enhanced performance (Bangara, Freeman, and Schroder, 2012). Extant literature on state branding posits that states use such brands for a range of different purposes, one of which is to enhance legitimacy:

> In political marketing, manipulating the images of one's own country against those of enemy countries has long been a powerful weapon in propaganda, from the evil Soviet Empire in the Cold War to the recent labelling of three countries as the 'axis of evil.' A name could also be coined to brand a region: for example, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, and Singapore were widely referred to as the Four Dragons in the 1980s (Fan, 2006, p. 7)

A wider example of state or organisational branding is the 6-month advertising/propaganda campaign used to promote the United Nations in September 1947. The campaign slogan was 'Peace begins with the United Nations—the United Nations begins with you' (Kunczik, 2003). O'Shaughnessy (2009) also argues, Nazism functioned as a brand, alleging this contributed to the success of the regime in galvanising German public opinion, contending "Nazis understood and manipulated the power of the brand, creating what amounts to a parallel universe of imagery and symbolism" (p. 1). This is pertinent in this study because branding, either when labelled as advertising or propaganda, is often used knowing visual brands serve multiple purposes and are often more powerful than the verbal when making arguments without evidence (Hall Jamieson, 1988). Like other organisations, therefore, VOs use branding not only to stand out but also to provide insights into elements of the group, such as structure, culture, and attitudes. They link the brand to the values, goals, identity, ideologies, and actions of the group. This makes an organisation more memorable, without most times providing evidence or fact to substantiate claims made.

Although research on how branding is deployed to engage new members to extremist groups is limited, it is widely known that such groups use branding as part of their overall strategy (Beifuss and Bellini, 2013). For example, their actions or attacks are a means by which they brand their group, what it stands for, and what its capabilities are, but as Beifuss and Bellini (2013) state, they use other forms of branding too:

> Every organization that tries to put a message across, to influence an audience and to stand out in a highly competitive sector, even to mark a claimed territory – as in the contested

> regions of Palestine and Northern Ireland – needs a well-defined visual identity. The use of symbols, colours and typography codes a well-designed logo of a terrorist group: brands the organization, signals the ideas that lie behind the group's creation and its aims; and communicates a certain spirit in a way that speaks to the audience (p. 11)

Many VOs reviewed appear to echo this understanding and to recognise the importance of branding. This was not just clear in the videos that were professionally produced, but also in many of the more rudimentary ones. This rationale is further influenced by the omnipresent examples of branding within most videos in the dataset, to get noticed and attention.

VOs' use of Branding to gain attention and reinforce identity

Most videos examined contain branding. Twenty-eight of the extremists' videos incorporated it as flags, symbols, and hand gestures. Sixteen of the gang videos contained similar forms, whilst also using the name of the gang in raps. The majority, thirty-five of the military videos, contained obvious examples of branding relating both to the nation and the armed forces, or part thereof. Examples took the form of the national flag, a national crest or symbol, and/or unit crests or symbols. Twenty of the PMC/mercenaries used group symbols, logos, and flags. Two obvious examples of branding used by the VOs are described below to epitomise these assertions, the use of signs and symbols as logos and flags. Two more subtle examples will also be discussed, the use of hand gestures and uniformity of dress. These were selected based on the known role things like name, motto, dress codes, and logos have on the visual manifestations of a group's identity (Beifuss and Bellini, 2013). It is the contention here that VOs, through these forms of branding, not only work to get an organisation noticed but also to portray a sense of identity, belonging, legitimacy, and authority; thus, building on the work of Mehran, et al. (2021) and Luzon (2019), while asserting that they do so to create an environment conducive to persuasion (Cialdini, 2006).

Logos and Symbols

Logos are a well-known tool for branding and brand building (Oswal, Mistry, and Deshmukh, 2013; Hetherington and Harvard, 2014). They are a visual or graphic mechanism by which one can identify an organisation (Belanche, Flavián, and Pérez-Rueda, 2019). Their use by VOs is no different. Logos of terrorist groups act as a central element of their visual persuasion strategies (Dauber, 2014) echoing brand design management techniques:

> [The] reputation a corporation or brand enjoys—its "image" and "positioning" in communication jargon—is more than a matter of visual impression. A positive image and distinctive position is created over time by providing desirable products or services and communicating consistently and effectively. While a logo is just one component of that image, it is the one that identifies the others, operating like a flag. Logic tells us that a flag should invoke respect by virtue of the entity it represents, not by its coloration or pattern. Yet, despite logic, we are all swayed—irrationally, perhaps, but most assuredly—by appearances (Schechter, 1993, p. 33)

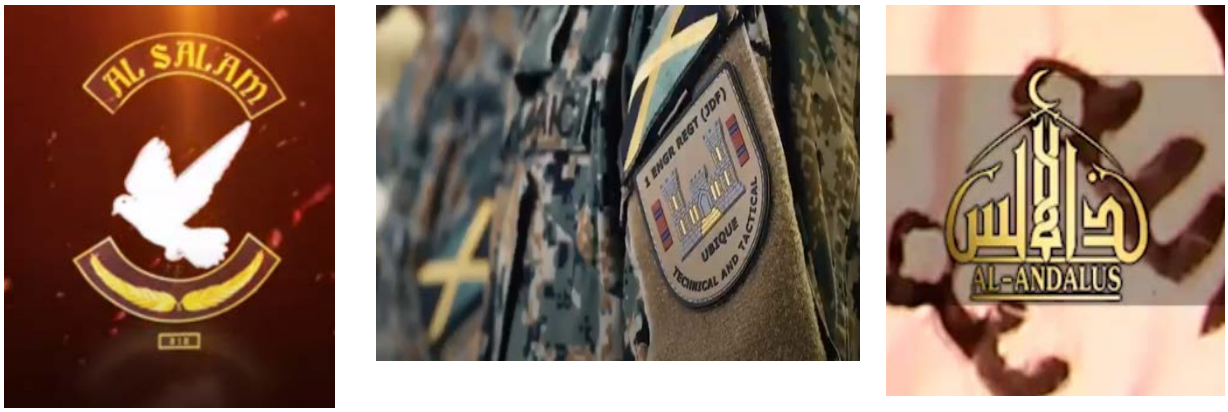
In the context of PMCs, the use of logos provides the possibility to:

> (1) camouflage themselves in the broader business landscape by hiding the true nature of the services provided; (2) shift the blame arising from their own or their competitors' misbehaviour by signalling their willingness to only provide tightly regulated, defensive services; and (3) mirror a shifting customer base to gain prospective clients' acceptance and

> trust. [Private Military and Security Companies] PMSCs' logos, however, cannot be merely understood as strategies for signalling to an external audience. Visual artefacts like corporate symbols also play an important role in identity-formation processes (Cusumano, 2021, p. 139)

Fig. 4.1 depicts a range of examples from the four VOs. Figure 4-1 contains five logos which represent the following organisations, Al Salam 313[24], the Jamaican military, Al Qaeda in the Land of the Islamic Maghreb Sahara Region[25], the Moroccan armed forces, the Jalisco New Generation Cartel[26]. The examples illustrate a common formula often applied to logos; a symbol placed in the middle, underneath and/or above text, which usually states the name of the group and sometimes their country of origin. These similarities should not be surprising; if resources are unavailable to an organisation to create a new brand, the appropriation of signs and symbols that are familiar is a useful tactic. Symbols act as "a physical manifestation of ideas", used to assist in manipulating "otherwise abstract concepts like those of kinship, manhood, womanhood, self-sacrifice, and so on" (Davies, 1988, p. 33). Von der Goltz (2009) work notes that "familiar codes and culturally established visual language appeal to consumers' emotional fears and desires" (p. 115). This implies that the visual appeals both to rational choice, but also on an emotional level, at the connotative level. PMCs have been found to appropriate identities of military, non-governmental, and business organisations to mirror their customers (Joachim and Schneiker, 2012, 2014; Cusumano, 2021). Cusumano (2021) finds that:

> As PMSCs became increasingly imbued with corporate cultures, amateurish logos displaying battlefield paraphernalia started to be seen as inappropriate not only by stakeholders and prospective customers but also by firms' own executives and employees. Hence, such representa-mens [sic] were replaced by logos seen as more coherent with corporate visual identities, consisting of logotypes characterized by minimalist elegance and nuanced colours. These semiotic codes better convey the interpretants that are most typically signalled by commercial entities, like professionalism, trustworthiness, composure and discretion (p. 150)



[24] Al Salam 313 is a gang based in Germany suspected of involvement in illegal weapons trading, people smuggling, passport forgery, and drug distribution. It is also alleged to also be involved in politically and religiously motivated crimes (DW, 2019).
[25] Al-Qaeda in the Land of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has roots in the Algerian civil war of the early 1990s. Since then it evolved to have a more international Islamist agenda, that now reaches across the Sahel region (BBC, 2013).
[26] The Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) is a criminal gang that evolved from killings, captures and rifts in older cartels. It is well known in Mexico for its public relation campaigns and violent killings (InSight Crime, 2021a).

Figure 4-1 A sample of symbols gathered from the videos analysed

Even these rather simple logos say more about the organisation than one might first observe. For example, the Bandidos[27] Logo in Fig. 4.2 relates to the Bandidos Gang, a biker gang, which started in Texas but now has global reach. The symbol is simple; the name of the group and the chapter country, with a character in the middle (Mexican Bandido), holding a gun and a machete. Many observers might deduce the 'MC' means Motorcycle Club, especially if observed in a scene similar to the second image in Fig. 4.2. This is a screenshot from a Bandidos video, much of which comprises similar scenes (i.e., men gathered around or riding bikes) with the logo vividly displayed. The logo is used to depict sameness, reinforced through a physical semblance of many of the members (Lickel, et al., 2000).

Figure 4-2 Screenshot of the Bandidos logo and related clothing

It is intimated that the 1% on the logo means that while 99% of motorcyclists are law abiding, those with this brand (1%) are not; the (1%) are the type parents told you to stay away from, or at least this is what the group claim (Bosmia, Quinn, Peterson, Griessenaur, and Tubbs, 2014). This suggests an elite-ness to the group, whilst also intimating, they are part of a wider network by naming the chapter in the logo. Using the 1% draws parallels with the III%[28] (3% group) with both groups insinuating through their logo/name that they represent a specific percentage of the population. In relation to

[27] The Bandidos is a motorcycle gang, said to have evolved from free-wheeling counterculture clubs into ruthless organised crime syndicates (Miller, 2015).

[28] The III% or three percenters are reportedly a far-right, anti-government militia movement in the USA. It is a movement made up of dedicated "patriots" protecting Americans from government tyranny (ADL, 2021a).

the III% group, it is a disputed claim that the name comes from the three percent of American colonists who took up arms against the Kingdom of Great Britain during the American Revolution.

This use of logos by the VOs in the videos analysed aligns with the work of Coombe (1998) who notes shared identities are constructed around names, trademarks, and logos. Bosmia, et al. (2014) echo this in relation to motorcycle gangs. The observation made in the data relating to the use of logos and symbols is also in line with the extant literature pertaining to propaganda use in extremist groups. This literature refers to the use of iconography and subliminal propaganda to brand the user (or the group they relate to) to promote a sense of belonging to and commonalities with said group (Higham, 2013; Bolt, 2012; Coombe, 1998). Albrecht, Fielitz, and Thurston (2019) attempt to explain why this may be the case, noting these symbols connect individuals with "specific collective histories" (p. 17). Tuters (2019) in exemplifying the Kekistanti flag's rise to emblematic status for Alt-Rights trolling tactics highlights, however, that "even the most taboo symbols can be disconnected from their fixed historical meaning and made to function as floating signifiers for those who understand the rules of memes" (p. 42). Branding, therefore, can evoke a sense of belonging and shared identity, which resonates with the use of the 1% message and the chapter name (with the Bandidos), as these imply members are part of a wider community, something bigger than the self. This is important in VOs recruitment and group dynamics (Hogg, et al., 2008). It is worth highlighting, however as per Tuters (2019), the choice of logo can also be a means of triggering the opposition.

If symbols act as a source of meaning, then the specific choice of symbol is important. VOs seem to use images drawn from history and legend in this regard. To explain why, one might also draw from Miller-Idriss's (2018) observations, she notes "the fantasy of Nordic heritage–and all the positive traits associated to be a part of that heritage -including loyalty, purity, beauty, integrity, and honesty–appeal to youth as a strategy for handling the uncertainty of the postmodern era" (p. 20). The reference to uncertainty is pertinent here, given its broader and understood role in-group dynamics (Hogg, et al., 2008), persuasion (Cialdini, 2006), and military recruitment (Moskalenko, 2010). Fig. 4.3 provides examples of four groups that use a similar approach in the images they have associated their group with. The first screenshot is the Sons of Odin[29] logo, which draws from Nordic heritage. Even without the word 'Canada', the observant can see the image of a maple leaf in the man's beard illustrating an implied association between the character and Canada. The second screenshot was taken from an Egyptian military video, which draws from legends about the Pharaohs. This type of image (coupled with others in the video) implies a connection between the Pharaohs and the military, potentially presenting both as rulers and protectors of the nation. The third screenshot is taken from the III% group and depicts an image of a warrior. It is reinforced in the colour and style of the US flag, which may seek to imply the warrior was serving the nation, like the group. Finally, the last example is taken from an ISIS video, which also refers to the time of the crusaders to legitimise its cause today. Linking the present with the past is a common trait within the videos.

[29] The Sons of Odin is a far-right extremist group which was founded in Finland, but now has chapters across the world. It established a chapter in Canada in 2016 (Archambault and Veilleux-Lepage, 2019).

Figure 4-3 Screenshots of historical symbols taken from VOs

Fig. 4.4 echoes this. It is a screenshot taken from a pro-Russian mercenary group[30] video from Ukraine. This image draws on symbols to give it meaning. First, the depiction of these men as soldiers is clear based on their dress and weapons. Second, these 'soldiers' are likely to be pro-Russian given the wearing of the Ribbon of Saint George, which is associated as a patriotic symbol of Russia. The creators reinforce this patriotism through a less prominent image, the watermark. It depicts eagle wings, an image also synonymous with Russia (and also with many other countries, for example, Ghana, Poland, Romania, Mexico, and Nigeria) (Barton, 2007). Its origin dates back to medieval times. Using symbology as watermarks is also present in some of the extremist videos. It is worth mentioning in this context, their use (watermarks) by extremists is often (amongst other things) an attempt to outsmart social media company's detection systems to avoid take down protocols (Conway, Scrivens, and Macnair, 2019). In this image, however, it additionally acts as a visual cue to identity and belonging and as a mechanism to stand out.

Figure 4-4 A screenshot from a Pro-Russian PMC/Mercenary group

[30] The Donetsk Republic Army is an armed group in Ukraine affiliated to the pro-Russian breakaway Donetsk People's Republic.

Flags

Flags were another dominant form of branding used within the videos to stand out. Like logos, flags influence a distinct identity in a group or organisation (Anholt, 2010; Biddiscombe, 2020). They also, even national flags, can and have other affects. They can be designed to:

> Perform a persuasive or communicative function, both internally and externally, which is entirely analogous to the functions of a brand identity in the commercial marketplace: flags are usually loaded with national symbolism that sends a message of purpose or identity or aspiration both inwards, to the population, and outwards, to friends and enemies alike (Anholt, 2010, p. 6)

With the exception of gangs, most other VOs had their own flags for their respective group. Fig. 4.5 shows some examples, contended here as a means of portraying both identity and belonging. The first image is from a Chilian military video. The flag is used here to frame the image of a well turned out, ordered troop. The second image is from a French military video, linking the nations flag to defence, through the image of the weapon. The final screenshot (the man with the gun) is from the Donetsk Republic Army video may simply illustrate an older man sitting in front of a battered tent, but the flags behind (containing the two-headed eagle) and the wearing of the Ribbon of Saint George help portray the notion of strength and authority, because of the implied association with Russia.

Figure 4-5 Screenshots depicting the use of flags by certain VOs

Gangs were less inclined to use their own unique flags regarding group identity, per se. They use other groups or national flags, to link themselves to other groups and particular countries. This is significant as it signifies a spatial or geographical reference to belonging.

Figure 4-6 A screenshot taken from a French gang video with Paris St Germain flags

Fig. 4.6 illustrates the use of flags as a mechanism of linking the group to other organisations and states. The image is a screenshot taken from a French gang's video (Melum 77[31]), in which the Paris St Germain flag (football club) is used to demonstrate a link to a territory/area, and legitimacy by association to the club. This observation is made within the context of this and other footage within the video, which appears to proudly depict Paris through images of the group's activities within the city, per Fig. 4.7. The depiction of location is pertinent in relation to branding, as place marketing has existed for centuries (Ashworth and Voogd, 1990). Over the last ten to fifteen years, this has shifted into place branding (Kalandidies, 2012). Like the use of branding by a group or organisation to control an image of said group, place branding "is the strategic scheme to improve a place's image i.e., that it refers to and intends to alter the ways places are perceived in people's minds" (Kalandidies, 2012, p. 5). In these videos, place branding influences the identity of a location; thus, acts to align a gang's identity with a place. This may be because "an integral part of the place branding process, landscape can generate impressions that will inform images and thus become implanted in all the sub-processes of the place identity conversation" (Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2013, p. 80). This is apt, in relation to gangs, given the area from which they emerge is often significant to the group, their identity, and their activities; "physical spaces, like the corner (e.g., Miller 1958; Papachristos, Hureau, and Braga 2013; Thrasher 1927; Whyte 1955), have historically been the primary arenas for gang life" (Storrod and Densley, 2017, p. 678). The street corner has often been viewed as a "staging area" for gang violence (Anderson, 1999, p. 76). The role of the internet on gang's activities has changed this. The internet has provided a virtual environment where gang members can interact and foster collective identity (Densley, 2020). Nonetheless, the visual display of *place* remains an integral part of their videos, as observed within the videos analysed.

Continued notoriety of place within these videos may be because of the performance aspect to place for many such groups. For example, Forman (2002) highlights the deep connections between urban *space* and the early days of hip hop culture, stating "space is a dominant concern, occupying a central role in the definition of value, meaning and practice" (Forman, 2002, p. 3):

> Hip-hop's [c]onnections to local contexts, social environments and sites of significance are also entwined in local systems that form a foundation for its cultural production. These include street corners, basketball courts, schools and neighbourhood nightclubs and dance halls… These are often the sites unseen… They are, by and large, anonymous spaces… of little interest or relevance to the broader society and to much of the consuming public. Hip-hop, however,

[31] Melum 77 is a criminal gang based in the Melum area of Paris, France.

> stands out for the urgency with which its creators address the urban environment around them, describing in often painstaking detail the activities that occur there or mapping the cultural byways that delineate their localities and give space meaning (Forman, 2002, p. 67)

This is evident in the same French gang video, not only in the name Melum 77, which is associated with the area in which the gang operate (similar to other gangs reviewed, but also as set out in Fig. 4.7 through different images of place, both at the close up and distant level. Place as a location of performance is not merely to entertain. As noted by Forman (2002) place and its significance are entwined with local culture and groups. Henderson (2020) reiterates this, identifying (in activist fandom in sporting communities) that the performance of place is of key importance to ongoing fan activist political movements, as it allows them to "solidify webs of support, maneuver through the cracks in the edifice of the dominant culture, and challenge those that seek to destroy them" (p. 66).

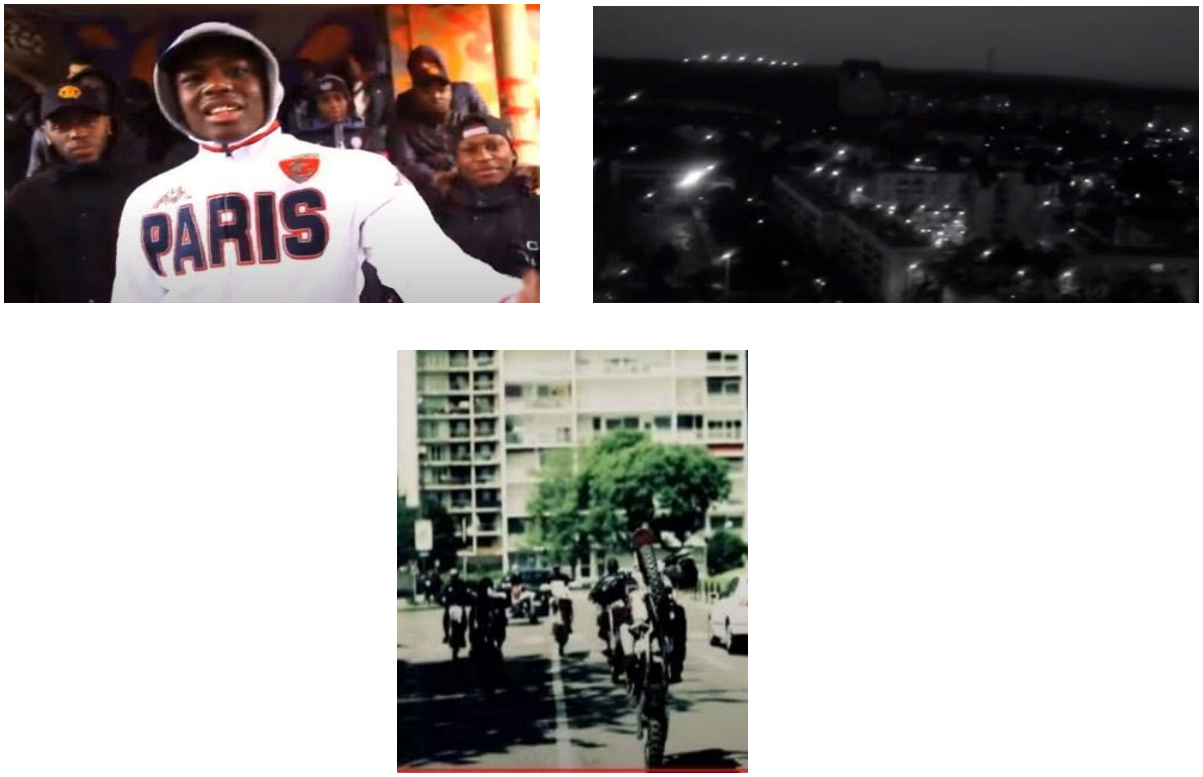


Figure 4-7 Screenshots that depict the groups' relationship with Paris

The findings in relation to the presence of place branding are also pertinent, as *place* is a core element of criminology (Sampson, 2013). Gang research has examined how spatial boundaries have influenced such groups, as far back as the Chicago School (McLean, Deuchar, Harding, and Densley, 2019). Studies have investigated how gangs physically defend space (Tita, Cohen, and Engberg, 2005) and note that related violence can be highest at the boundaries of a group's territory (Brantingham, Tita, Short, and Reid, 2012; Papachristos, et al. 2013). These territories have symbolic values in terms of collective experience and memory (Vigil, 1988; Garot, 2007), as illustrated in these videos. UK and Australian gangs use place branding to communicate a connection to territory (as exemplified in Fig. 4.8, in images of maps, streets signs, and building names).

Figure 4-8 Screenshots from several gang videos depicting territory

Australian gangs used flags to imply a geographical and ethnic connection. For example, a Tonga and Samoa flag (as illustrated in Fig. 4.9 - 21 District Gang[32]) are most likely used to link the group and members back to their countries of ethnic origin, but also through their name to their current locations; thus illustrating they are part of a wider network, but also once again, linking the group to a location, reinforcing the significance of *place* in their identity.

Figure 4-9 Screenshots taken from Australian gangs who present the flags of Tonga and Samoa

These depictions, be they flag, maps, or streets signs, act as a visual spatial reference to belonging, both to a group and territory. Other VOs use a similar method, often using images of national monuments or scenes of natural beauty. These associations are as important as flags, in that they act to connect the group spatially and collectively demonstrating membership of a group larger than merely their own and grounding a connection between the group to a *place*, not only as a location but also to its history and culture. The portrayal of place in this context also helps act to depict a *sense of ownership* of territory, or *territorial control*, which generates respect and recognition (Kintrea, et al., 2008). While this is not so explicit in the other VO's videos, it is subtly present, through images from 'the field', such as maps and flags (Per Fig. 4.10). The first image comes from a PMC/Mercenary group,

[32] The 21 District Gang is a criminal gang based on the Inner West suburbs of Sydney – the 21 coming from the postcode of the area in which the gang originates (Sydney Youth Gang Fandom, 2021).

Novorossia[33], the second is from a Qatar military video, and the third is from an Islamic State affiliated group in Africa[34] video. All images are used to illustrate territorial control and presence.

Figure 4-10 Screenshots from VOs videos, depicting cues associated with geography

Regarding flags, it is not their presence alone within the videos that is noteworthy, flag positioning is also communicative. Mostly, flags are positioned first, in a manner they are clear to see, and second, people are positioned around the flag which helps make it more prominent. Sometimes individuals even wear them on their clothing. Flags are positioned so they draw our attention to them, and act as cues to convey belonging, identity, legitimacy, and authority, but also to reinforce sameness and to engage. The decisions, therefore, where these flags (and other cues) are placed is more than mere taste. Rather it relates to where they are understood to have an impact, especially if viewed from the perspective of advertising and brand or product placement, which is defined as 'the purposeful incorporation of brands into editorial content' (Van Reijmersdal, Neijens, and Smit 2009, p. 429). Product placement is another well-known technique to break through the clutter viewers are exposed to (van der Westhuizen and Mulder, 2019). This technique is used not only to persuade and influence the audience but also to engage (D'Astrous and Chartier, 2000). The technique is not unique to VOs, rather a common technique in advertising "branded products or brand identifiers are deliberately embedded within entertaining content such as movies or television shows" (Spielvogel, Naderer, and Matthes, 2021, p. 5). Its use also segues with Mirzoeff's notion of intervisuality, where cues are placed in other visual mediums (in this case video) to gain attention.

[33] Novorossia is a self-proclaimed pro-Russian movement or armed group.

[34] Islamic State also known as ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), is a Sunni jihadist group with a particularly violent ideology that calls itself a caliphate and claims religious authority over all Muslims. It has affiliated groups in Africa (RAND, 2021).

The rationale behind product placement is that by integrating advertising into content people want to consume, one can help deter viewers from switching off or shifting to other content (Boerman, Tessitire, and Muller, 2021). Such content helps reduce critical processing by hiding the persuasive intent (Balasubramanian, Karrh, and Patwardhan, 2006; Cain, 2011). One specific way to achieve this is to control the physical position certain cues have on the screen. Humans have a:

> [T]endency to fixate on the center of a screen [which] makes product depictions that face inward (vs. outward) easier to process, leading to more favorable evaluations. Likewise, horizontally (vs. vertically) arranged product assortments are easier for the human eye to process, which also affects choice (Brylla and Walsh, 2020, p. 498)

Understanding and implementing this within video content, therefore, should help in more positive and persuasive outcomes in those who watch. Brylla and Walsh (2020) also find placing products (or in this case branding) in front of spatial backgrounds are more aesthetically pleasing and more persuasive than those without, which may explain the use of brand cues positioned within scenes as opposed to solely in watermarks or images imposed on the screen, within the videos reviewed.

Hand gestures

Hand gestures are another component of branding and represent an individual mode of communication. Gang videos contained the use of hand gestures. Fig. 4.11 illustrates a selection of these, which are used to signify the group. This example represents gestures from the Latin Kings[35] (Chicago), M16 Gang[36] (Manchester), and Mara 18[37] (South America).

Figure 4-11 Screenshots from gang videos depicting hand gestures

A noteworthy element of hand gestures is that while they may be clear and hold absolute meaning to groups in one area (for example in Chicago, or LA), this is not always the case. The gesture in the M16

[35] The Latin Kings are a well-known gang in Chicago and east coast of the USA. They are a centralised, authoritarian, violent formal organization and have a written constitution and by-laws (Knox and McCurrie, 1996).
[36] The M16 Gang is a Manchester based gang in the Moss Side area of the city. Once again, the name comes from the postcode in which the gang operate.
[37] Mara 18, also known as the 18th Street Gang or Barrio 18, is a gang active in Honduras and El Salvador. It is also reported to have cells in Canada and the USA (InSight Crime, 2021b).

video (the centre image in Fig. 4.11) looks like an 'M' and may refer to Manchester, but it is also the sign used by the Westside gang in the US, when held upwards or sideways. While this might be a coincidence, it illustrates an interrelationship between such groups, whether unintended or by design. It shows no one group has a monopoly on a gesture's meaning, therefore, context is key to understanding them (Kim, Youn, and Yoon, 2019; Teixeira, 2015). The use of hand gestures, nonetheless, serves to communicate visually. They "afford joint attention to concepts and negotiation of meaning in the group (e.g., through manual manipulation, imitation, and correction of gestures" (Singer, Radinsky, and Goldman, 2012, p. 365), whilst also illustrating in-group/out-group dynamics using hand gestures is not unique to groups per se, but which have specific understanding based on in-group knowledge. Sweeney and Kubit (2020) highlight this in-group/out-group behaviour in relation to ISIS, noting they sell violence by deflecting blame to other groups, "whereby they seek to use an 'us versus them' mentality, identifying the 'other,' who are significantly different from the in-group" (p. 176). This is pertinent here, because through the construction and maintenance of identity one can construct an 'other,' by defining difference and by creating distinction (Benhabib, 2014), which is reinforced through hand gestures and other forms of branding.

While most common in gang videos, Fig. 4.12 illustrates hand gestures from extremists and the military. The first is a gesture used by ISIS, raising the index finger, and the second is a gesture used in a video of Chinese soldiers, which is like a hand gesture that is used by an Antifa group. The third screenshot is of males displaying a gesture synonymous with Nazism and Hitler and taken from a Sons of Odin video. It is worth noting this screenshot taken from this video appears to be an attempt to create an inter visual link between these groups (possible Hezbollah) and Nazi Germany; as the Sons of Odin do between Nazi Germany and Islamist extremism later in the video. This might illustrate a similar tactic to that identified by Tuters (2019); who asserts the Kekistani flag "was 'iconically' modelled on the Nazi Reichskriegsflagge, an echo that was intended to 'trigger' [social justice warriors] SJWs into accusing their opponents of being Nazis" (p. 42).

Figure 4-12 A screenshot from other VOs depicting the use of hand gestures to communicate

Dress

Another common visual brand used by the VOs relates to dress adopted to garner attention. Two styles can describe the prominent application of this branding technique in the videos, militaristic and subculture. In the former, the use of militaristic style dress also serves to give the impression of authority and legitimacy. Despite their differences, they both share uniformity. Fig. 4.13 presents screenshots from three of the four VOs to illustrate their wearing of militaristic style dress. The first comes from a video from Boko Haram, a Northern Nigerian and Lake Chad-based group, the second from a Philippine [38]military video, and the third from the International Revolutionary People's Guerrilla Forces[39] (IRPGF) from Rojava, Syria.

Figure 4-13 Images taken from VOs to depict similarities in dress

[38] Boko Haram is a Nigeria and Lake Chad based Islamist group.

[39] The International Revolutionary People's Guerrilla Forces (IRPGF) was created in 2017 to defend the Revolution of Rojava. Turkish media has described them as a terrorist organisation (OWLAPPS, 2021).

Wearing of military style uniform helps convey the perception of legitimacy and authority within the group wearing it:

> Central to the allure of the RAF was the distinctive Air Force blue uniform. In both wars, military uniform marked out the wearer as a member of one of the armed forces participating actively in the war effort and signified the successful enactment of what R. W. Connell calls 'hegemonic masculinity', that which is culturally exalted albeit never numerically dominant. To be manly in wartime was, then, to be a combatant (Pattinson, 2016, p. 709)

Another noteworthy element relating to dress (at least in the context of militaristic style) links to positioning. Not only do groups (in this case, other than the military, which would be understandable) wear this style of dress, they also mimic other elements of military style scenes, such as positioning, formation, and rank, with the main speaker usually placed in the centre of the image (consistent with product placement). The impact of these images is further reinforced with symbols, flags, weapons, and other members; thus, giving the illusion of conformity, order, and authority. It is worth mentioning by mimicking images synonymous with the military, VOs concerned attempt to influence their image. This tactic serves as an attempt to achieve legitimacy by depicting compliance with prevailing norms (March and Olsen, 1989). Positioning people dressed like soldiers is likely to be used to evoke feelings of conformity, trust, comradeship, courage, heroism, loyalty, and belonging in the viewer, given the findings of Cowen and Siciliano (2011) who note the use of images associated with soldiers, whether they be in today's or historical contexts, illustrate a model social citizen. This approach, therefore, is pertinent here; non-military VO use such visuals to create an environment conducive to activating the principles of persuasion (Cialdini, 2006), through cues associated with authority reinforced through cues around legitimacy.

This style of dress and positioning is less common in the videos from gangs. Nevertheless, they too appear to have a clothing schema, with styles often influenced by the subculture in which the group is positioned. This is also present in some of the extremist group's videos. Miller-Idriss (2018) notes the far-right until recently were synonymous with its uniform of skinhead style of shaved or close-cut hair, camouflage fatigues, black bomber jackets, and high black combat boots. A similar sub-culturally inspired dress code was evident in the videos associated with a 'biker style', as depicted in Fig. 4.14.

Figure 4-14 Screenshots of similar biker style jackets

These screenshots in Fig. 4.14 show two gangs, Black Jackets[40] and Al Salam 313, wearing this style, differentiated by the logos and symbols on the clothing. No group, however, has a monopoly on dress (as is the case with symbols), highlighted by the appropriation of a far-left clothing style by the Autonomous Nationalist movement (a far-right movement) who "embraced the aesthetics, symbols, and protest strategies of the far-left wing in a deliberate attempt to confuse authorities and counter-protesters at right-wing actions and demonstrations" (Miller-Idriss, 2018, p. 51). A similar style was noted between the National Action[41] video, per Fig. 4.15, and the Animal Liberation Front group, which both dress in clothing similar to that worn by gangs (M16, Moscow 17[42], and Melum 77); black jackets, hoodies (often pulled down tight around their faces), and sometimes, black masks (per Fig. 4.16). While this may be a strategic decision (to confuse), appropriation may merely show an adoption of such styles into the mainstream.

Figure 4-15 Screenshot from a national action video, depicting uniformity of dress

Figure 4-16 Screenshots from gang videos, depicting uniformity of dress

[40] Black Jackets is a gang based in Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands, made up predominately of immigrants from different countries to Europe, such as Turkey and the former Yugoslavia.

[41] National Action is a UK based group, now a banned neo-Nazi organisation, founded in 2013. It was proscribed under the Terrorism Act 2000 in 2016.

[42] Moscow 17 is drill band based in London but also viewed as one of London's most prolific gangs, based around Peckham and Brixton areas of the city (Bracchi, 2018).

Using branding, therefore, as exemplified by these four forms, serves not only to make a group memorable and stand out, but it is also used to evoke a sense of belonging and identity. These findings are pertinent, for example, in the context of conclusions of Callahan and Ledgerwood (2016) who note identity symbols can increase the perceived entitativity of in-groups and out-groups, making groups appear more rewarding to belong to. Lickel, et al. (2000) claim physical sameness amongst members can make a group entitative by an outsider looking in. VOs use multiple methods of branding (logo, symbol, flags, hand gestures, and dress) to act as cues to make their group and content memorable, for it to standout, and to de-clutter the online space. They also use them to provide insight into the identity, ideology, attitudes, and beliefs of the group. In their videos, VOs do this to gain attention, get notice, and to make their content unforgettable. They also use them to convince the viewer the group exists, is credible, can be trusted, has an identity, is entitative, and highlights itself as a group that provides people with something they can belong to, a community of like-minded individuals. Building trust is another commonly used element within advertising and recruitment strategies (Kim, Kim, and Lee, 2019). To attract people to an organisation, they must trust it. Attempts to develop trust between the viewer and the group is clear in the VOs' videos. They do this through the frequent use of images to depict the group's authority and legitimacy. Branding is also used to assist (Goodson, 2012) in linking their organisation with other reputable groups and causes to try to further influence the viewer's perception about the group (legitimacy by association). By developing a relationship of trust between the viewer and the messenger, the viewer can focus on the message. This is very apt in the context of Hogg, et al. (2008), who have shown these elements are significant in helping to create a group dynamic. Moreover, and pertinent in relation to influencing change, the use of branding to engage the viewer helps create an environment conducive to persuasion (Cialdini, 2006), by creating a sense of authority, consensus, and social proof, which are three of Cialdini's principles of persuasion.

Conclusion

This chapter explores an advertising technique, branding. It elucidates how VOs use it to declutter the ferociously competitive media environment of online video to increase the likelihood of having their videos opened, watched, and engaged with. Drawing from the field of advertising, it is shown this is not an approach unique to VOs; rather, a well-known and effective technique adopted by many organisations to get their content noticed. It explains the rational for doing this, highlighting how (like media organisations) VOs need to attract an audience to their videos, which the group can then turn into potential recruits or supporters, yet this is something they cannot nor should take for granted. To empirically show this, it presents four examples of branding used by the VOs; logos and symbols, flags, hand gestures, and dress. These all serve (individually and collectively) not only to attract attention but also to depict a shared identity. It illustrates VOs use of branding, for several key reasons, chief amongst them, to target their desired audience; target recruitment; advertisement placement; to sell the after effect; reflect their company (in this case, group); build a rapport through establishing trust, legitimacy, and authority in the eyes of the viewer, and for personalisation; thus demonstrating that VOs embed cues through the technique of branding to attract and engage their audience, thereby creating an environment conducive to persuasion. Its key contribution is it demonstrates that VOs make a concerted effort to engage their audience prior to and during the persuasion element of their videos through embedded cues associated with branding.

Branding as an advertising technique adopted to garner attention and create a unique identity and sense of belonging, however, does not sufficiently explain recruitment or the complexity of VOs visual recruitment strategies, especially as they pertain to videos and persuasion. Notwithstanding the

contribution branding makes to recruitment strategies (as part of a broad communication strategy), organisations use more targeted techniques to recruit and call to action. The next chapter will examine this, exploring aspects of military recruitment strategies as evident in the military videos. It will also interrogate whether other VOs, despite lacking formal public recruitment strategies, adopt similar approaches. It does this by specifically drawing from Ellul's (1973) ideas around myths, explicating how embedded cues designed around myths engage with an audience in a manner that seeks to influence and persuade.

Chapter 5 The Uniqueness of Recruitment Advertising: A mythical campaign of nation and hero

> But why, really, do young men and women join the military? Do young people join the military out of patriotism and a desire to serve the country? As a personal challenge, a chance to mature and toughen themselves? Or is it for the money and benefits?… The answer to this question is of critical importance, because a misunderstanding of enlistee motivation means that the "product" (military service) might be portrayed in the wrong way in advertising, or advertising campaigns might be directed at the wrong people. In today's tough recruiting environment, the military cannot afford to make such mistakes (Baker, 2006, p. 15)

Introduction

Branding is a part of an organisation's communication strategy, which if used correctly can be a very effective asset in drawing attention and maintaining the interest of viewers but branding alone is unlikely to significantly impact recruitment. More targeted recruitment strategies are required to attract people to an organisation and to translate this attention into joining. A specific form of advertising is adopted to do this, with scholars distinguishing recruitment advertising from other forms. Asprey (2011) notes, "recruitment advertising is about persuading someone to apply for a particular job and, thus, offering something that appears unique and special" (p. 269–270). It forms the basis of military recruitment campaigns (Jefkins, 2000), where it is commonly viewed as a mechanism to "advertise military opportunities and persuade prospective recruits to join a branch of the military" (Fransen, 2019, p. 179). Given the comparative nature of this study, it is appropriate to examine whether similar techniques are being used by other VOs to attract viewers to their respective groups (Baker, 2006). The chapter draws from the process of military recruitment advertising to examine whether other VOs use similar advertising techniques to attract potential recruits. This is not to say that the other VOs do not have recruitment strategies. Post, Sprinzak, and Denny (2003) found 15% of secular and 30% of religious extremist groups reported a formal recruitment process. Rather, the literature pertaining to the military is more robust. It does this by briefly examining how VOs use intrinsic and extrinsic lures within embedded cues to transform viewers into potential recruits. Lures or cues associated with intrinsic values in recruitment to VOs are often framed around psychological rewards people get from joining, such as a sense of duty, patriotism, adventure, and concept of service (Baker, 2006; Woodruff, Kelty, and Segal, 2006), while extrinsic values often relate to the tangible or visible rewards offered, such as education[43], and monetary benefits (Eighmey 2006; Feng, Fu, and Qin, 2016).

This chapter explores the use of myths in reinforcing such values by examining how VOs use associated cues embedded within the videos to recruit and call to action. Examining the role of myths in relation to recruitment draws from the work of Ellul (1973) and is further influenced by the work of Rech (2014) who writes about the role of focused deployment of nationalisms, domestic histories, mythologies of warfare and senses of anxiety and threat, asserting military "recruitment is also a process through which people are persuaded to act upon such imaginaries" (p. 257). In this context, recruitment is "a process through which individual and social identity-work meets an apparatus of persuasion, and

[43] In the USA, the lure to the military is often driven by the educational opportunities that stem from it, but this has less influence in Europe, for example.

inflects through nationalisms, domestic myths of warfare and the warrior, and geographical imaginaries" (Rech, 2014, p. 257). This chapter builds on this and on the previous chapter by moving beyond examining embedded cues solely from the perspective of their relationship with branding and engagement. It explores how VOs embed equally powerful cues to persuade and influence their audience in a manner that increases the propensity and likelihood that viewing such content will influence them to join (Sackett, 2004). It shows that VOs use myths (exemplified through those associated with hero and nation) to create the promise or perception of an alternative existence, one that creates an association with ideals of the past and provides the illusion of being part of something bigger. It further illustrates how by doing so, VOs provide an environment conducive to persuasion, in part by providing a mechanism for viewers to control the chaos of the world around them; thus, targeting their cues more around intrinsic values, but not exclusively.

Military Recruitment

Military recruitment has largely shifted from using coercion and conscription to enlistment, via persuasion, to fill positions within the forces (Bailey, 2009). The term enlistment segues with the work of Sageman (2014) who also draws on the concept to explain recruitment to violent extremist groups. Like the military, extremist groups need to stand out, appear distinct, to recruit effectively (Brown, 2012); thus, their need to use recruitment advertising to influence young peoples' attitudes to the group (Sackett and Mavor, 2003). This need is also likely to be shared by the other VOs. The extant research regarding the military shows military advertising uses a mixture of extrinsic (material) and intrinsic (psychological) hooks to be most effective (Fransen, 2019). This literature has parallels with the work of Wickham, Capezza, and Stephenson (2020) who in the context of female terrorists drew on Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory to explain what might motivate females to join extremist groups:

> Women may choose to fight when they perceive that they are capable of exacting their political or religious gains (expectancy), they expect to succeed in achieving them (instrumentality), and those gains are something they personally desire and value (valence). Thus, female terrorists may choose the act of joining a terrorist group over other available behaviors to achieve their desired outcome (Wickham, Capezza, and Stephenson, 2020, p. 959)

These academic examples (not from the perspective of gender, per se) reverberate deeply with the data reviewed not only regarding military videos but also in relation to the other VOs, which sell the emotional as well as material benefits of joining.

Even before conscription, military recruitment advertising and targeted campaigns were common. The posters included in this text's Introduction illustrate this as does the work of Ryan (2012), who identifies them as a "potent" military recruitment tool in both the first and second world war (Ryan, 2012). Of late, videos have been added to the gambit of methods used to recruit:

> As the UK's Ministry of Defence has begun to outsource much of its communications and promotional work, state-contracted advertising agencies have begun to push military recruiting beyond 'traditional' formats (print, cinema, TV and radio), such that multiplatform campaigns are now targeted across traditional and digital media, at events and in a variety of public spaces (Rech, 2020, p. 1076)

An early example of the use of video as a method of military advertising is the U.S. military's 'Army Strong' campaign, which was launched in 2006. The video portrayed links between the war in Iraq, the strength of the army, and emphasised the image of a soldier as strong: "there is nothing on this green earth that is stronger than the U.S. Army because there is nothing on this green earth that is stronger than a U.S. Army soldier" (Bailey, 2009, p. 252). Like branding, recruitment advertising attempts to engage personally with the viewer, as they understand these approaches are more effective than content heavy advertisement. In advertising, personal engagement has been found to trigger customers' impulse buying (Dawson and Kim, 2010). Social media is perfect for capitalising on this, as is the medium of video. They both make it easy to generate highly personalised messages (Dodoo and Wu, 2019).

Personalised messages stand out. As a technique, it was evident in a lot of the VO videos reviewed, especially to exemplify the characteristics of the viewer and link them to military service. For example, Fig. 5.1 presents screenshots from a Brazilian military video to exemplify this, designing their campaign to target fit, active, and adventurous young people. The screenshots show a young man skateboarding and rock climbing. When he performs certain actions, they project his shadow onto the wall, depicting a soldier in positions of action. This subtly implies the youth has already been training for the military and has the skills required of a recruit. It echoes a similar sentiment in a Canadian military video, which contains the slogan "*you were born for this*".

Figure 5-1 Screenshots taken from a Brazilian military video

Some PMCs also use targeted recruitment campaigns, albeit this is less clear in organisations that are more mercenary-style. These PMC campaigns commonly targeted (current and) former military personnel. Fig. 5.2 comes at the end of the video, clearly showing the targeting of former military.

Figure 5-2 Screenshot from the end of the DynCorp video

Fig. 5.3 illustrates this, reinforced in the first three screenshots from a PMC video "DynCorp International[44]) and depicts scenes from the military. A soundtrack accompanies the footage, which includes a male speaker who says he is a former marine. He explains his reasons for joining the Marines (largely influenced by the events of Sept. 11, 2001). He talks about personal loss during his service, which he acknowledges resulted in him being discharged. The speaker then asserts that on recovery he joined Dyncorp. The visual cues relating to military within this reinforce his words to offer intrinsic reasons for joining, framed around a sense of duty and service (Baker, 2006). This approach gives the impression Dyncorp provides him and others with the opportunity to continue to use their military acquired skills, as opposed to highlighting the extrinsic value of having such employees within their company.

Figure 5-3 Screenshots taken from a PMC/Mercenary video

[44] DynCorp International LLC provides defence and technical services, and government outsourced solutions. The Company provides contingency operations, aviation, intelligence, logistics, operations, and training services.

Some videos were more explicit with regard to the extrinsic benefits of joining, particularly the military videos and more specifically the one emanating from the USA and Canada. For example, Fig. 5.4 illustrates screenshots from a Canadian military video, which attempts, through this image and the words of the narrator to give the impression joining the military will provide the opportunity to achieve personal extrinsic goals, for example, educational support. The video also used a high level of personal engagement with the viewer. The power of these visual cues within the images allows viewers to put themselves in the shoes of the people in the video, and as a result, feel the message is directed at them. These observations align with the work of Kleykamp (2006) who found education goals may influence people to join the military. It also reflects similar thoughts on previous U.S. military recruitment campaigns (Moore, 2009; Rowland, 2009). One such advert used as a part of a U.S. Army recruitment campaign included (in print) the text "Learn how you can earn money for college and get enlistment bonuses by visiting us at goarmy.com/z930" (Fransen, 2019, p. 183). The message of this statement is clear; there are extrinsic benefits to joining the military.

Figure 5-4 Screenshot taken from a Canadian military video

As noted by Wickham, Capezza, and Stephenson (2020) in the context of female terrorists, extremist groups often lure recruits via a combination of extrinsic and intrinsic values, as evident in their videos. An observation worth noting in this respect, in these jihadi videos, was a clear contempt for extrinsic values that resonated with the 'West', such as money, fame, position within society and material trappings. In contrast, these (jihadi) videos depicted a simpler life, one which put intrinsic values at the heart of their actions, motives, and rewards for joining. This segues with the work of Cunningham (2009) who proposes terrorists often point to their community's survival as justification for their violence activities. Wickham, Capezza, and Stephenson (2020) observe "female terrorists who fight for this reason place intrinsic value on their community, which increases their perceived value in fighting for that outcome" (p. 962). This has similarities with the videos reviewed here, not specifically relating to gender, but regarding the prioritisation of intrinsic values.

The rationale of using techniques from advertising to portray extrinsic and intrinsic values is credible, as it provides the ability to content creators to ensure VOs videos reach and engage with their target audience at a very personal, psychological level. Not that such approaches are exclusive to VOs, rather, like their use of branding, the adoption in this case indicates another example of an appropriation of widely used advertising techniques by these groups. The logic of such an approach stems, in part, from motivation theory, which signifies timeliness, localisation, and personalisation of advertisement

messages are precursors of extrinsic motivation and consumer innovativeness and perceived enjoyment are forebearers of intrinsic motivation (Feng, Fu, and Qin, 2016). This suggests techniques associated with advertising can affect perceptions of extrinsic and intrinsic values in parallel with the message.

It is obvious how these techniques are adopted in relation to the military and PMCs, but it is less so regarding how they are used by other VOs. It is contended, however, that the other VOs similar to the military not only have to compete for attention online but also for talent, an assertion echoed by Carriere and Blackman (2016), which insinuates their approach to this might be similar too. This has consistencies with the work of Kinney, Davis, and Zhang (2018) who asserts extremist groups face competition not only from other rival terror organisations but also, from actors within the global community "in the form of military force and diplomatic sanctions" (p. 36). Sharing or using similar approaches to recruitment advertising is, therefore, logical. Using similar practices and techniques between military recruitment and other VOs is also noteworthy for an additional reason. All four VOs require potential recruits to step away somewhat from the norms of society when joining these groups, resulting in a shared need. Comparative analysis across groups, therefore, is logical, reinforced in part by the consistent use of cues which are embedded in material relating to the glorification of myths, used to reinforce intrinsic values such as sense of duty, patriotism, adventure, and concept of service (Baker, 2006; Woodruff, et al., 2006). The consistency of such use across all four VOs is significant, and therefore worthy of further examination as to its role in recruitment.

All four groups used myths within their videos. The most common across the videos were myths relating to the myth of kinship, work, happiness, youth, hero, and nation. Table 5.1 provides numerical insights into these observations. It is worth noting that where myths were used in a video, a single myth was rarely used, rather multiple were common. This table illustrates that despite a consistency in the use of myths across all four groups, there is variation in the type of myths preferred.

Table 5.1 Observations relating to the use of myths within the videos

Myths	Kinship	Work	Happiness	Youth	Hero	Nation
Extremists	5	1	3	6	9	20
Gangs	3	1	2	10	6	3
Military	10	28	7	15	23	35
PMC/Mercenaries	2	20	4	1	13	9

Myths as a mechanism of recruitment

The notion of myth is a highly contested topic across many disciplines (philosophy, linguistics, music, and psychology). It may go some way, however, in explaining why certain images are more influencing than others, given that according to Armstrong (1982), "[a] most significant effect of the myth recital is to arouse an intense awareness among the group members of their "common fate"... stressing individuals' solidarity against an alien force, by enhancing the salience of boundary perceptions" (p. 9). That said, how and why certain myths may appeal to people is still an under-explored area, especially in relation to radicalisation, as highlighted by Miller-Idriss (2018) in relation to youth radicalisation, but also in military recruitment (Serres and Latour, 1990/1995). This is a significant limitation to our understanding of visual content as a means of influence and persuasion; nonetheless, myths may help to shed some light in this area. Glazzard (2017) highlights their potential merit (if one

appreciates their role as meaning-making through grand narratives) specifically regarding their role in understanding the persistence and adaptability of extremist groups; thus, allows for a better understanding of violent extremist groups.

Brown, Toros, and Parashar (2020) postulate "myths do not gain authority based on the accuracy of their claims to truth, but because they are perceived as credible, as natural, almost obvious" (p. 32), which reaffirms the work of Ellul (1973) and Barthes (1972). Myths are used to create a sense of urgency to preserve the status quo, that a particular way of life is slipping away, and action is needed. The role of the communicator in myth presentation, therefore, is also likely to play a significant role in the resulting meaning of the myth (Smith, 2015). Drawing from the work of scholars such as, Ellul (1973), Campbell (1968), Szanto (1978), Barthes (1992), Karim (2001), (Zubrzycki, 2011), and Brown, Toros, and Parashar (2020) it is understandable why VOs might be inclined to embed cues within their content that glorify myths. Myths provide meaning, which helps us make sense of our worlds. Like video content, myths work together with other information to make ideas and images appear natural and universal and induce or trigger action (Brown, Toros, and Parashar, 2020; Campbell, 1968). As Ellul (1973) discerns, myths connect at an intellectual level by being emotional, part affective response, and part sacred feeling. They garner powerful forces of activation, which is highly pertinent in this study with regard to creating an environment conducive to persuasion.

There are also similarities between myths and advertisement, given they both "resolve social contradictions, provide models of identity, and celebrate the existing social order" (Goldie, 2014, p. 417). In addition, the rationale of viewing myths as a means of persuasion in the context of advertising draws from the work of Szanto (1987) who found military recruitment advertising uses myths (the glorification of military service and hero, especially around the myth of youth) in a manner that influences recruitment. This and other related literature, coupled with the observations made within the videos shows the value and merits of exploring their potential significance within the dataset, especially given Barthes' (1972) assertions that myths help us both to understand, but also impose understanding on us. This is achieved because the power of myths emanates not from them being fact, but from the *perception* they are natural, universal, and uncontested (Brown, Toros, and Parashar, 2020; Zubrzycki, 2011).

Robust consistency has yet to be achieved about how effective certain myths are when used in recruitment advertising to enlist soldiers. This is not surprising given Serres and Latour's (1995) contention "there is no pure myth except the idea of a science that is pure of all myth" (p. 162). This allows content creators to intertwine fact with fiction "in an attempt to purify one myth while excluding another" (Hillon, Smith, and Isaacs, 2005, p. 21). This is best described by Barthes' concept of myths:

> Myth does not deny things, on the contrary, its function is to talk about them; simply, it purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification, it gives them a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact (p. 143).

Two specific myths were identified (nation and hero) within the military videos reviewed, which also compare with those used in the other VOs videos and will be further explored here. They were selected not only because of their consistent use across VOs but also because of their position in the extant literature, as having an influence on recruitment – to the military at least (Eighmey, 2006; Elder, et al., 2010). The first relates to the role of myths associated with nation, often portrayed "as an

imagined community and to provide a basis for strengthening national citizenship" (Bocanegra, 2010, p. 35), providing the illusion of being part of something bigger. This portrayal is like that submitted by Anderson (2006) in his seminal work *Imagined Communities*. A consistency pertaining to the myth of nation, in both the videos and the literature, is an often common depiction and glorification of myths communicated through images relating to the World Wars. The second frequently used myth identified is that of hero, which was also often depicted in historical settings. Using historical reference in respect of myths associated with the hero is not surprising, given the very notion of hero "can be traced to the prototype hero's quest presented in Homer's Iliad and Odyssey" (Hillon, et al., 2005, p.16). A pertinent observation regarding these two myths (nation and hero) relates to their individual and combined ability to create and evoke a sense of patriotism, service, and sense of duty (intrinsic values).

Myth of Nation

Militaries commonly use images drawn from the World Wars to glorify the myth of nation, not only in this research but also in the related literature. Post 9/11, Western militaries' advertisement shifted focus to patriotic narratives, a crucial component of which was "a comparison of the current generation to the World War 2 generation" (Fransen, 2019, p. 183). The symbolic use of both wars is not surprising given WW1 is often viewed as the holy war and WW2 as a fight between good and evil (Linenthal, 1980). This is consistent within the videos from the other VOs and the military videos, as there were many examples of groups within all VOs drawing on images from WW1 and WW2, particularly, to embed cues around patriotism and nation. A Norwegian military video within the dataset used images from WW2 to portray a sense of duty and patriotism in the viewer. Their message reiterated one used in a former U.S. military recruitment campaign that claimed "Each generation has its heroes. This one is no different" (Saucier, 2010). The Norwegian military video, for example, insinuates those who fought in WW2 gave up their lives to protect rights, freedoms, opportunity, and nation for those who live today, and asks the viewer (the cue is within the images) whether these things are worth defending now, attempting to evoke a sense of duty and patriotism.

While the glorification of myths associated with the nation to evoke such values may be understandable for militaries and PMCs, similar approaches have been found across other VOs. For example, Fig. 5.6 depicts screenshots from a National Action UK video, which glorifies the myth of nation through images from WW1. They use these images with scenes from modern times and recent events to evoke an emotional connection between the past heroes and today's threats. This attempt to link the present with the past echoes available literature and many of the videos. This video's message gives the impression that what was fought for before is being attacked today, and like those who have gone before and fought, people now need to rise up and do the same. It serves to evoke emotions, such as fear and terror, to trigger or influence action. Attempts to evoke an emotional reaction in a viewer is not solely the purview of VOs and their videos, it is a well-known technique in relation to advertising. More specifically, certain emotional reactions can help explain why people share content (Berger, 2021). Contrary to what one may believe, sharing is not simply an illustration of good versus bad emotional responses, nor does it imply a like or dislike for such content. Berger (2021) notes that while negative emotions such as sadness reduce incidents of sharing, content that evokes emotions of disgust, anger, and/or anxiety increases it; thus, emotional responses may be better viewed from the perspective of how activating or arousing they are. Drawing both from advertising and persuasion, this suggests that to evoke action within the viewer (be that buying or joining) content creators need to fire up their viewers, by creating content that excites, awes, inspires,

and thrills the viewer in order to be persuasive. This is likely to also be apt in the context of VOs. Understanding how exactly VOs (or even advertisers) do this, however, is difficult because over stimulation can be counterproductive too.

The use of scenes to evoke emotion is unsurprising for extremist groups, given for many their goal is to cause terror, but instead (in this case) they use fear and terror to frighten the viewer and to motivate them to stand up and act; using fear as a motivation for recruitment, as opposed to frighten opposition. This is evident in Fig. 5.5, assisted by depicting scenes of suffering, fighting, fires, portraying a sense of 'us versus them' and a sense they are under attack. The video is also accompanied by an audio track of a male reciting the following words, which were also provided in subtitles in the video: *"*We were not present during our nation's darkest hour. Nor did we choose to be where we find ourselves again at this very moment. Facing down a new coming storm. We are here because it is necessary. We are here because no men of conscience may turn a blind eye. The battle has come to us….". The mix of the visual and audio act, in these examples, as cues to evoke emotion such as suffering, danger, fear, and hurt in order to arouse a moral duty.

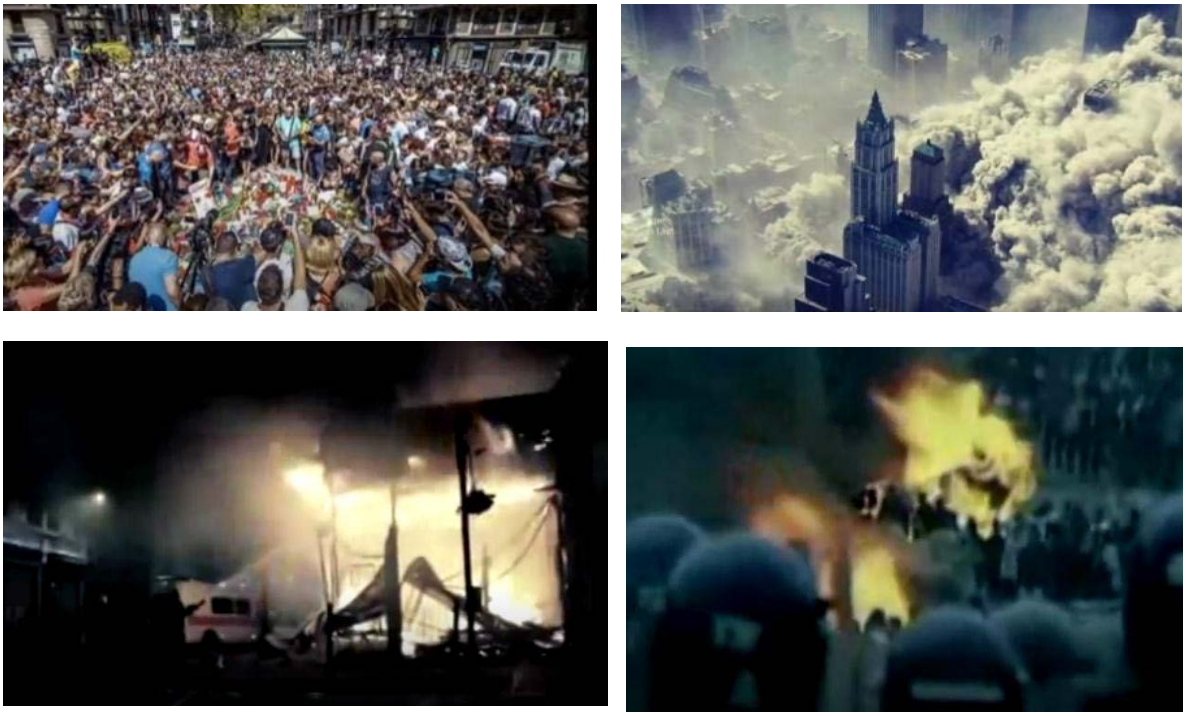


Figure 5-5 Screenshots from a National Action video, glorifying historical heroes

Similar to the Norwegian military video, the nature of images used within the National Action video also evokes a feeling of shame within the viewer, reinforced by an accompanied audio track:

> A dark cloud looms over this land and we must now fight so that the generations who proceed us do not wake up one day as the despised and persecuted minority on the very land which is their birth right and is soaked with the blood of their ancestors… the time has come, where mere words have to give way to action and you the individual must take up this struggle or else risk being condemned to history, a traitor to your nation, your race and your children! (National Action video, 2014)

It is recognised, however, having shamed the viewer, they make a slight gesture to offer the opportunity to feel pride to be part of something bigger:

> I assure you comrades our children will speak about how their parents stopped them all. Their parents said no and went out to inspire our people to action. When everyone else was far too occupied with whatever crap was on the TV, whatever football team made up from overpaid Africans, was playing, their parent was busy marching like today…. We will finally win our country back and win back our continent, and our race will forever be free. Hail Victory, Hail victory. We can't do it alone (National Action video, 2014)

Despite iconic images from the world wars of soldiers in the trenches being used in the National Action and the Norwegian military videos, they are seeking to evoke different emotional responses, albeit both serve a similar intent, to get people to respond and possibly join their groups. In the Norwegian video, the WW1 images evoke emotions associated with pride and sacrifice. Although not in complete contrast, similar images used in the National Action video (second image in Fig. 5.6) evoke a sense of urgency and fear and create a sense of uncertainty and outrage, by aligning the image to current day threats, as if to suggest similar reasons to why people fought then are happening now. Despite these differences, these emotional cues are pertinent because they help activate the principles of persuasion. They create an impression for the viewer of uncertainty and crisis, which is also understood to help activate persuasion (Cialdini, 2006) and influence group membership (Hogg, et al., 2008).

Figure 5-6 Screenshots from the Norwegian military and National Action video

An ISIS video (Fig. 5.7) also used images from the world wars within their content, using them to frame a history of Islam in the Western Balkans. Although it is acknowledged that the Western Balkan countries are not a single nation, the video gave the impression Muslims within this region were a collective. Within this context, an audio track of a male narrator sets the scene of Muslims in the region as victims, stating "the Muslims of the Balkans were shaken, by a worldwide major offensive of kaffir nations against Islam", evoking a sense of victimhood. The narrator explains how Yugoslavia was formed and then declares, "an air of humiliation now engulfed the Muslims of the Balkans" (reinforced with an image of a destroyed mosque). He then states, "a lifeless air that lingers to this day and will only be swept by the coming winds of Jihad". Like the National Action and Norwegian military videos, this one attempts to link these past events to the present day; thus, evoking a feeling of opportunity and hope, whilst also portraying a feeling of responsibility and a sense of duty to act.

Figure 5-7 Screenshot taken from an ISIS video, which also uses images of conflict

The Columbian military video uses a similar approach, albeit not to the world wars, but to prior conflicts (per Fig. 5.8). This video projects the message that despite the changes over time, one thing has not changed; the need for good, honourable, and loyal soldiers, to serve the '*homeland*'. Not only does this show another example of creative links between today and the past, but it also confirms somewhat the work of Rech (2014), who discerns that while the cultures of militarism may change geographically, they are primarily influenced by "nationalism, political, geographical and historical imaginaries" (p. 245). Once again, the example illustrates the link between myths associated with past conflicts, with the myth of nation and today, which all help portray soldiers as the hero.

Figure 5-8 Screenshots from a Columbian military video

Historical references to wars are not the only mention of conflicts however, images within the military videos commonly incorporated scenes from recent military operations, portraying images from Iraq, Afghanistan, and the likes. This technique was also depicted in PMC/Mercenary videos. Using images

of this nature has parallels with the work of Fransen (2019) who notes, in recruitment, the U.S. military "drew connections to the war in Iraq and emphasised the possibility of serving in a combat unit if one chooses to enlist" (p. 183). It is asserted, therefore, that the use of historical and current (or recent) conflicts serve to reinforce myths around a sense of duty and patriotism.

It is important to highlight that these types of images are often used to portray not an accurate reflection of reality itself, but a fictional one consisting, largely, of a blurred account of reality and story. In this context, myths act to portray an idealised version of patriotism and nation (Barthes, 1992; Brown, Toros, and Parashar, 2020; Zubrzycki, 2011). Miller-Idriss (2018) found "the deployment of symbols evoking national myths help to crystallise a kind of magical thinking' and evoke fantasy expression of a nation that never existed but is nonetheless aspired to" (p. 82), noting also that collective myths are often used to portray the impression that what is promised provides the opportunity to be part of something bigger and better than oneself. This reverberates with many of the findings here that VOs glorify myths around nation and introduce them as cues to evoke positive feelings about belonging, identity, legitimacy, and authority. Using flags, symbols and logos, hand gestures, and dress illustrates this. The visual glorification of myths around, however, nation goes beyond mere reference to the nation (in name or visual references); they are made powerful because they commonly draw from a host of different historical and legendary accounts, heroes, stories, and events, which are used as embedded cues within the content.

Barthes (1972) states "this repetition of the concept through different forms is precious to the mythologist, it allows him to decipher the myth: it is the insistence of a kind of behaviour which reveals its intention" (p. 120). Fig. 5.9 serves to illustrate this, an Egyptian military recruitment video draws on images that connect back with historical accounts, people, events, and legends to create and reinforce the impressions of longevity, authority, dominance, and legitimacy specifically to influence potential recruits. It is worth mentioning, however, their selection of images highlights a clear message regarding who should not apply; thus, communicating with more than potential recruits. This is asserted because depictions of pre-Muslim Egypt are very much hated by jihadis, hence the choice of images by the Egyptian military provide significant cues to who it is not targeting, as much as who it is.

Figure 5-9 Screenshots from an Egyptian military video

Similar to the Egyptian military video, a Dutch military video, per Fig. 5.10, uses humour to illustrate directly who should not apply. The video starts with images of a young man having lunch with his parents and sister. He then pretends to shoot them using the banana as a gun. The word 'ongeschikt' is displayed on the screen, which means 'unsuitable' in Dutch, as if to insinuate he was not the ideal soldier, nor future hero.

Figure 5-10 Screenshot from a Dutch military video depicting humour

Myth of Hero

The reference to the glorification of the myth of hero was identified within many of the videos examined. This observation affirms the work of Wegner (2020) who observes in rebranding the Canadian military (from peacekeeper) the campaign signalled "to the Canadian public that the military still served to help others, abroad and at home. This was achieved by casting Canadian soldiers as helpful heroes in nationally broadcast recruitment campaigns" (p. 70). This portrayal of soldiers as helpful heroes was very evident, not only in the Canadian military video but also in respect of other militaries. Their videos often contained reference to cues that associated the notion of soldier with the myth of hero as a helper. For example, Fig. 5.11 shows an example of how this is achieved in military videos, particularly through actions framed around peace building, caring, and changing hearts and minds used also to imply legitimacy, which was a similar framing to the other VOs. They garnered this through direct or indirect reference to threats, which are reinforced through the visual and through histories, fallen comrades, and battles.

For potential recruits, these types of images give the impression of soldiers as heroes who serve the greater good and help the oppressed, which gives the impression to potential recruits that by joining, they can be that *hero*. These types of images help give the impression militaries are good and ensure consistency in applying a collective fairness across the world. Through the United Nations (UN) blue beret, for example, which is synonymous (for most) with legitimacy and is symbolic of international oversight in civil wars. It should not be forgotten, however, that others may view the UN (and images related) as symbolic of onlookers, not permitted to respond, hamstrung by terms in the UN Charter (Pearn, 2005), or worse still as uninvited actors in another countries war, a narrative that will be discussed later in the context of the True Blue Crew.

Figure 5-11 Screenshots from an Irish and Italian military video

PMCs/Mercenary also present a comparable theme (Fig. 5.12). They use images to associate their actions with national militaries, evoking the notion of legitimacy by association. This finding is consistent with research that claims PMCs also make a concerted effort to disassociate with the stigma attached to mercenaries (Joachim and Schneiker, 2012), attempt to change or positively influence the international legal discourses surrounding for-profit providers of armed services (Krahmann, 2012) and security discourses at large (Leander, 2006), and use logos not only as marketing tools but also symbolic acts "that shed light upon the shifting identities and legitimization strategies of the international private security industry" (Cusumano, 2021, p. 135). PMCs depict themselves as heroes too, given their implied involvement with legitimate activities and groups, which further serve to differentiate themselves (PMC/mercenaries) from extremist or other armed illegal groups and to reinforce their authority. They embed cues which hint that similar to the military their role is about bringing peace, protecting the weak against oppressors and oppressive regimes, and in supporting (their perception of good) state militaries and governments. This helps portray their role as legitimate in the national and international security discourse (Jackson, et al., 2020). For potential recruits, especially former military, this type of message is likely to provide a justification for joining, as it presents an opportunity to continue to serve. This is evident in Fig. 5.12 which presents images from videos from Northrop Grumman[45], DynCorp International, and Sons of Liberty International[46]. They all present the activities of their organisation within operational military settings.

[45] Northrop Grumman "solves the toughest problems in space, aeronautics, defence and cyberspace to meet the ever evolving needs of our customers worldwide" (Northrop Grumman, 2021, np)

[46] Sons of Liberty International "is the first security contracting firm to operate on a non-profit business model. SOLI provides free security consulting and training services to vulnerable populations to enable them to defend themselves against terrorist and insurgent groups" (Sons of Liberty International, 2021, np).

Figure 5-12 Screenshots from PMC/mercenary videos

Consistent across all VOs is a glorification of the myth of hero within the context of the myth of nation, which is commonly used to evoke a sense of duty to either. A pertinent observation, therefore, about the role of hero in the state's service, was observed not only in the military videos but also in those created by PMCs/Mercenaries and sometimes extremist groups. In contrast, however, gangs were observed as glorifying the myth of hero more in line with service to the community (e.g., Robin Hood). Gangs do this by drawing from popular culture more commonly than past histories. Most times, both in service of the state and of the community, one consistency is noted and relates to the portrayal of the *martyr.* Militaries, PMCs/Mercenaries, and extremist groups used images of previous conflicts and historical icons associated with iconic members or fallen members of their units or organisations, while gangs used images of current day fallen members, with both giving hero status to their fallen comrades. The glorification of heroes as martyrs within the videos repeats the findings of Ryan (2007) regarding extremists, who often make a historical reference to past battles, or to individuals who have been martyred. Many of the videos include images from past battles. The portrayal of martyrs and the fallen is clear in Fig. 5.13, which includes screenshots taken from three videos. The first two are taken from a Sons of Liberty International (SOLI) video and show images of two journalists who were killed by ISIS. The third image is a screenshot from a PMC/mercenary video (Academi[47]), which pays homage to those killed in war. The fourth image is from an ISIS video, which implies to die in battle is to return to Allah.

[47] Academi provides military and law enforcement security and training services.

Figure 5-13 Screenshots from PMC/mercenaries and extremists which depict fallen comrades

Gang videos also use the image of the hero to glorify members in death, as depicted in Fig. 5.14. These screenshots show the gangs paying honour to their fallen comrades, through pictures and clothing. This was also observed within these videos' audio tracks, not only in respect of those who have lost their lives but also those who have lost their freedom. The rhetoric is framed around a call to free such individuals, usually given in a list: 'free X, free Y, free Z!' In fact, one video mentioned 'free the Oxford three', which resonates with now historical Irish Republican claims to free the Birmingham Six and Guildford Four.

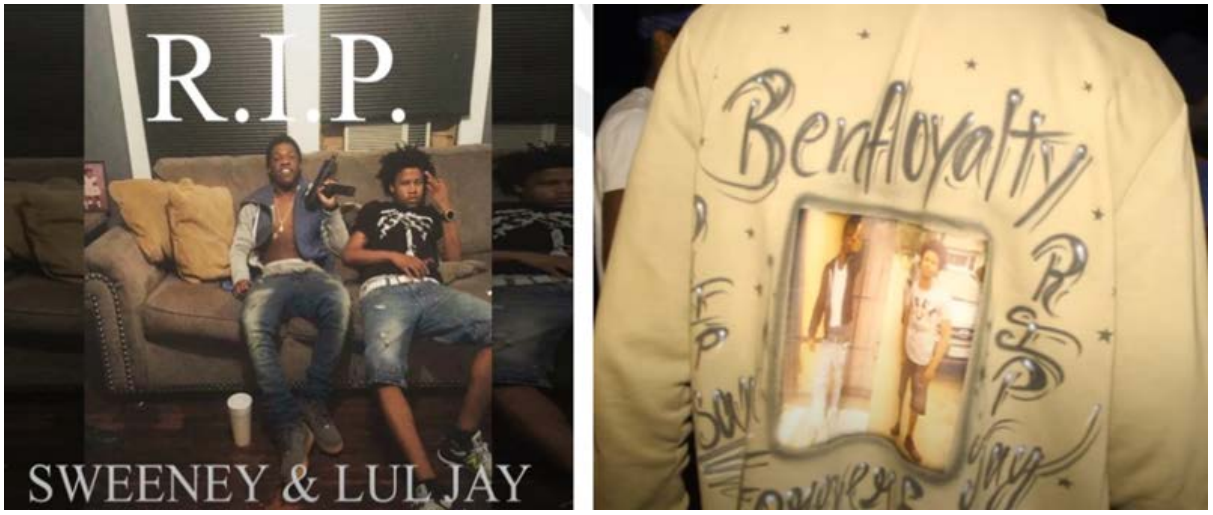


Figure 5-14 Screenshots taken from gang videos

Challenges to the myth of nation and hero

Despite the relative consistency of glorification of myths of nation and hero across the four VOs, it is pertinent to highlight a contrasting approach identified in many of the VO videos, especially those produced by some extremist and PMC/Mercenary groups. In these cases, there was a practice of glorifying myths of nation and hero in a manner which might be better described as anti-nation and anti-hero. This is not surprising, at least in the context of the anti-hero, given that "the dialectic form requires thesis and antithesis, hero and anti-hero" (Hillon, et al., 2005, p. 20). Hillon, et al.'s (2005) notion of anti-hero resonates here "the anti-heroic narrative finds life and voice in the trait of will to power rather than a will to serve" (p. 20). This is apt in the study's context of VOs, which (at least in relation to illegal or quasi-illegal groups) have a will to power that commonly runs counter to the legal authorities (Hillon, et al., 2005). Often, the anti-hero is self-serving (individually or for the group), rather than in service. These observations also have relevance to anti-nation, where the notion takes a similar guise to that of the anti-hero.

Through the lens of anti-nation and anti-hero the VOs show certain people, countries, or organisations (the opposition) as working against *their* (the VOs) nation or organisation. The extremists and PMC/Mercenaries appear to challenge the illusion of legitimacy of certain nations and those commonly presented as heroes (e.g., states, militaries, presidents) and imply these are critics of their (VOs) causes, rather than genuine heroes. They use what can be best described as a reverse persuasion method for potential recruits. An example of this is evident in Fig. 5.15, and depicts screenshots taken from a Sons of Odin video, which show a host of presidents or heads of state (Trudeau, Obama, Hitler) as the opposite of legitimate, reinforced by the implied association between Trudeau and Obama, with Hitler. These findings segue with the work of Basra and Neumann (2016) who found jihadists and gangs over-portray a sense of anti-establishment within their content.

Figure 5-15 Screenshots from a Sons of Odin video depicting heads of state

PMCs/Mercenaries used a similar approach to glorifying myths of the anti-hero. They did this through a combination of images and spoken word (in an audio track overlaid on the videos) which presented the idea that extremist groups are emerging because the state is, or states are, not doing enough, failing their people, implying that viewers (future members) need to step up and defend the rights of the oppressed. Such a tactic helps give the impression of legitimacy to the group and their activities (Jackson, et al.'s, 2020). This is clear from the SOLI video but also from their website, which states that the reason SOLI was created:

> In recognition of the failure of the international community and governments to adequately protect the defenseless and support those struggling for freedom around the world. There needed to be an organization capable of on-the-ground action to help those whom the international system had failed. SOLI was created to enable those abandoned by the international community to take action in defense of themselves and their people, and to combat those forces that seek to harm and oppress them (SOLI Website, 2021)

Extremists do not always glorify the nation in the traditional sense either, but glorify the perception of an idealised nation with respect to their ideology or belief system. This may be exemplified through the use of past examples, a new nation, or at least a better version of the current one (Brown, Toros, and Parashar, 2020; Zubrzycki, 2011). This is evident in the video produced by members of ISIS from the Western Balkans. They use images in their videos of times in the region's history when the Islamic Community was prosperous and contrast it with times in which they were not (The first image of Fig. 5.16 the former, and the second the latter). They give the impression Muslims in the Balkans are vulnerable and targets, a pattern reflected in history that now needs to end, to evoke a sense of duty in Muslim viewers to rise.

Figure 5-16 Screenshots from an ISIS video about the Western Balkans

This was also evident in a True Blue Crew video (Fig. 5.17). Here, the True Blue Crew alludes through the visual display of logos and symbols (similar to an approach taken in the Atomwaffen Division video reviewed) that Marxism, the UN, and Black Lives Matter, for example, represent groups with agendas that if allowed to take hold will negatively affect the fabric of Australia. The video continues to reinforce this with a host of images that insinuate the fabric of Australian society is being attacked and destroyed. The content is framed in such a way that implies links between these organisations and campaigns to those they claim are responsible for Australia's destruction.

Figure 5-17 Screenshot from a True Blue video linking the UN to Marxism, and Black Lives Matter

In short, it is clear from these empirical examples that VOs communicate with their audience through embedded cues that glorify myths, with a consistency in the use of myths across all four VOs; those associated with nation, hero, anti-nation, and anti-hero. Although it is acknowledged that there is a variation in relation to the range of myths used. VOs use myths to create a promise or perception of an alternative existence, one that is attractive not only as a means of opportunity to be part of something bigger than themselves, but also to control (to a degree) the chaos of the world around them. This observation highlights the importance of the theories within the theoretical framework used, as Ellul (1973) and Hogg, et al. (2008) speak of uncertainty and the search for mechanisms to

control it in life, which groups offer. Collectively, therefore, myths create an environment conducive to persuasion and influence, given their impact on persuasion principles, such as authority, consensus, and social proof (Cialdini, 2006). They create an environment that acts to evoke specific emotions within the viewer and seek to capitalise on it. This is a pertinent observation given Ellul (1973) highlights the emotional and activation elements of myths, which when coupled with Cialdini's (2006) principles of persuasion (who suggests deep-rooted psychological responses trigger action) proposes people can be manipulated through the technique of propaganda to persuade and induce action. This also has parallels in advertising, given that recruitment videos are a tool used to influence people to join.

The rationale for embedding cues that evoke emotion (that can work in tandem with myths) not only aligns with the literature pertaining to myths, but it also resonates with arousal and performance literature (which is pertinent in advertising). This proposes that arousal induces an attention-narrowing process (Eysenck, 1982). It asserts people, when aroused, are more likely to be selective in what cues they process, rather than as many previously thought inhibited by arousal. Tuan Pham (1996) mentions under such conditions people focus on processing cues that have high information value at the expense of cues that have little information value. Furthermore, arousal "may dilute the influence of cues that are capacity demanding" (p.385), and as a result, reduce the influence and the strength of claims made. This may explain why the creators of the content within these videos embed them with a mixture of elements, depicting high anxiety around the current situation the viewer finds themselves (multi-stimuli) vis-à-vis clean, unambiguous messaging and cues around the group, its values, and attitude, in this way, reducing the stimuli and demand on the viewer around whether they should respond. If this is the case, it would further support the work of Ellul and Cialdini, who both assert people seek mechanisms to reduce stimuli.

Conclusion

This chapter, in seeking to draw from military recruitment advertising to examine whether other VOs use similar advertising techniques to attract potential recruits to their group, empirically demonstrates a consistency in the use of myths across all four VOs, albeit highlighting a variation in the range of myths used. To do this, it briefly examines the inclusion of cues that target intrinsic and extrinsic lures to transform viewers into potential recruits. It then explores specifically the use of myths, predominantly focusing on myths associated with hero and nation (and anti-hero and anti-nation) to reinforce intrinsic values around sense of duty, patriotism, the concept of service, legitimacy, and the likes. The chapter explicates lessons from the work of Ellul (1973), Barthes (1972/1992) and others in relation to myths to demonstrate how myths are used to persuade and influence; achieved through activating principles of authority, for example.

It shows myths (exemplified through those associated with hero and nation) are used to create the promise or perception of an alternative existence (myths help construct a group's worldview), one that connects with ideals (but not necessarily fact) of old. This helps develop the belief in something bigger than the individual. This is done, it is argued, to help create an environment conducive to persuasion, achieved as shown in this chapter by reducing the amount of uncertainty in a viewer's life and by presenting a means of controlling the chaos in which one might find oneself. Myths are effective in these efforts because they endure over time, even in the face of contradictions. They act to frame a coherent narrative, linking groups to a past, place, and people (Brown, Toros, and Parashar,

2020). Moreover, they provide justification, explanations, and often origins of causes, conflicts, and actions.

The chapter provides significant support for the argument that VO's embed cues within their videos to persuade and influence their viewers, which are similar across all VOs. Persuasion, however, is not achieved through cues associated with myth (or branding) alone. This chapter has shown this occurs through a layered interplay of cues and content that interact with the viewer on multiple levels; thus, asserting like Hall (1993), different viewers take different meanings from what they see, a response not left to chance but controlled as much as possible by the creator, observed within many of these videos at least. The chapter also showed through the Egyptian and Dutch military videos, for example, an interesting element that was not sufficiently elaborated, yet is worth exploring further: that much of the content within these videos does not appear to be solely targeted at potential recruits (or even supporters, as would be understandable) but also towards the opposition (not merely to frighten and cause terror), thereby demonstrating another layer of cues within the content. This resembles the findings of Tuters (2019), who asserts that branding choices are often as much about provoking the opposition as they are about gaining support. In addition, the work of Cusumano (2021) also highlights that "logos are symbolic acts with three different audiences: prospective customers; stakeholders, media and the broader general public; and firms' own employees and shareholders" (p. 151). The next chapter, therefore, investigates this by examining it in the context of how inter-visuality is used to communicate with potential recruits and with other segments of the audience, both to influence and persuade, and also to increase reach.

Chapter 6 Audience Segmentation: Exemplified through Intervisuality

The principles of true art is not to portray, but to evoke (Kosinski, 1991)

Introduction

World War Two (WW2) was fought on land, air, and sea, but more subtly, it was a war fought in the mind. For example, actors on all sides created content (i.e., posters, comics, and movies) to influence belief systems about the *enemy,* while at the same time influencing ideas about the nation and patriotism. In so doing, they fought a psychological war to further their cause while attempting to tarnish their opponents. Fig. 6.1 presents two examples of this. The first, a US poster from the period that makes fun of the Japanese and a similar, albeit more sinister, technique used by the Germans in respect of Jewish communities to degrade and humiliate.

Figure 6-1 Poster A from WW2 and Poster B from the same period, is an Anti-Jewish poster

These images had a dual target regarding audience (supporters and opposition), using embedded cues to dehumanise opponents while at the same time desensitising supporters, by making the enemy seem brutal, stupid, or inhuman thereby raising the morale of their followers at the expense of their opponents (Keen, 1986). Dehumanisation of an enemy is an effective means of facilitating moral disengagement, which makes it easier to inflict pain, suffering, and death on them (McAlister, Bandura, and Owens, 2006). While these posters act as standalone pieces of communication, they are also part of a wider influence or persuasion campaign. This exemplifies the two core arguments of this chapter. First, VOs recruitment content can and reaches a more diverse audience than potential recruits, best described as a segmented audience, using embedded cues to resonate differently with different segmentations. Audience, in the context of this chapter, refers to that constructed by the content creators, not consumers, as this is not a reception study. Secondly, these videos should be viewed not solely from the perspective of an independent piece of communication, rather as part of a broader eco-system of online content. The extant literature and parallel findings of the video analysis have influenced the position taken within this chapter that VOs videos should not be viewed solely as

standalone pieces of data, but also as part of a collective which communicate independently of each other whilst also with each other whether by design or by the nature of them being publicly available and accessible. While viewing VOs videos as independent pieces, or as part of a portfolio of communication from a single group, has merit expanding their perspective is also beneficial, as is demonstrated in this chapter. Combined, these two arguments are pertinent as they suggest VOs' videos are not solely recruitment videos, rather more accurately recruitment and call to action videos, used to persuade and influence potential recruits and opposition.

The chapter draws on examples which illustrate Mirzoeff's approach to intervisuality to exemplify its argument. It begins with a brief examination of why the application of this concept is relevant, supported by a number of examples of its use as a means to engage an audience. Intervisuality used within these videos represents a conscious strategy, which makes them memorable and attractive by keeping the viewer in an active stage of interpretative activity (Panigrahi, 2013). The presence of intervisual cues in the examples illustrates how VOs use video as a means of direct communication with and between multiple segmented audiences (potential recruits, supporters, and the opposition), as identified in the data. The chapter then moves to empirically demonstrate how VO content creators use the technique (through embedded cues) to target these three distinct groups. It explores how VOs use intervisual techniques to embed cues that communicate with potential recruits, giving the impression of belonging and shared identity, by using cues to evoke a sense of community and social proof. Secondly, it reveals how VOs use intervisual cues that position content within a broader context of online material to target like-minded individuals, which reinforces social proof and consensus. Thirdly, the chapter establishes how they use additional cues to target the opposition, attempting to provoke, whilst also demonising the enemy; thus, giving the impression of being legitimate and having authority. The reason for all three approaches is to create an environment conducive to persuasion, which social proof, consensus, and authority allow (Cialdini, 2006). Persuasion in this context not only relates to potential recruits but also in a manner which influences like-minded individuals and the opposition. The final element of the chapter briefly examines the absence of a key audience segment, doing so to elucidate how VOs consciously select their content to include but equally to exclude segments of the population. This builds on the observations made in the Egyptian and Dutch military videos, exploring (in this case) how VOs exclude females from their audience. It is within the context of their audience segmentation strategy (Jensen, 2019) that this chapter makes its contribution to the dissertation, given the relevance of audience to recruitment.

It is worth noting at the outset of this chapter that audience segmentation was assessed independent of the codebook, rather emanating from the cumulative observations made during the analysis process. The codebook was initially designed within the context of recruitment, i.e., as having a clear function and target audience. In identifying the nature and type of cues embedded within the videos, however, it was observed that some served dual or multiple purposes, for example, to engage and to incite. Exploring this further in the context of Mirzoeff's work in intervisuality, specific examples emerged that warranted further investigation as to the use of intervisuality as a strategy not only to engage and persuade, but also with regard to reach. The approach was also influenced by the acquired understanding developed through the analysis phase that many of the groups actively design their content in a manner which does not take viewership for granted, and therefore, appear to attempt to maximise the different viewers that might engage with it, thereby extending their reach. In this way, this research builds on the work of Keen (1986), Jensen (2019), McAlister, Bandura, and Owens (2006), Patton, et al (2016) and others in this area.

Mirzoeff's application of intervisuality to illustrate audience segmentation

The contention that these videos are not solely targeted towards potential recruits has parallels with the work of Patton, et al. (2016) which finds gang's social media engagement is as much about connecting with the opposition, as it is about engaging with their own members, reiterated by Pinkey and Robinson-Edwards (2018). More recent research demonstrates the merits of viewing VOs' communication strategies as having more than one segment. Cusumano (2021) highlights this in the context of PMCs and Tuters (2019) in relation to extremists. Additionally, Ebner (2019) suggests far-right groups have "learnt to segment their audiences, using micro-targeting tactics and tailoring their language to the different sub-cultures they want to reach" (p. 171). This approach is understandable in the context of advertising, given an increased potential customer base is closely aligned with increased awareness and reach. The same content will not appeal to everyone and may result in less convincing material, if attempts are made to do so (Godin, 2018). This is also likely to negatively impact its persuasive impact. Audience segmentation allows content to be more tailored, thereby increasing its personalisation and focus. Moreover, its use helps build a relationship, trust, and loyalty, which in turn increases the conversion rate from viewer to the engaged (Godin, 2018), which is important in the context of recruitment. The videos analysed incorporated a comparable approach, with at least three segmentations identified: potential recruits, supporters, and opposition. These findings highlight that VOs embed cues to do so, to communicate (equally, but differently) with all three, whilst at the same time excluding others.

Examining visual content as a mechanism to reach beyond potential recruits is apt because research (at least in the context of radicalisation) commonly explores how content might have impacted those who viewed the material and later joined or got involved with the group, but it does not widely explain its impact on those who watch this type of content but do not react (Friis, 2015) or who react in opposition to the group. It is relevant, therefore, to understand those who do watch but do not react and equally to those who are emboldened by the content to take action against the group, analogous to a form of reciprocal radicalisation (Lee and Knott, 2020). Understanding this is important given that when using social media, it is difficult (if at all possible) to ensure only potential recruits will watch the videos. Mirzoeff's (2000) application of intervisuality is relevant here, as it appreciates meaning is derived not exclusively from the image (in this case, video content), but also through the visual cross-referencing of various media and influences. This is an important element of the study in the context of recruitment because it indicates the persuasive power of these videos may not come solely from the individual videos themselves, but also from other online videos more generally. This broadens the potential remit of the study significantly as videos outside the definition of those produced by VOs are also likely to be interrelated, for example, Hollywood movies. This perspective resembles Karim's (2001) assertion that movies can in themselves be a form of pre-propaganda. It also has similarities to the work of Daddis (2010), for example, who in the context of the military, contends notions of brotherhood owe as much to Hollywood and popular history as they do to the real life of the military, suggesting "the band of brothers was not a place soldiers wanted to be but a place they had to be to fulfil some very basic needs" (p. 116).

Mirzoeff's (2000) concept is also pertinent in the context of recruitment advertising and branding, but equally in respect of the application of intervisuality to persuasion; thus, is a suitable lens from which to examine these videos. The persuasive power garnered through video (which are highly visual), as intervisuality suggests, does not only stem from what one sees when they are watched, rather as much from what one knows, who they are, and the context in which they watch. In a pre-COVID context, for

example, Fig. 6.2 might resonate with the viewer as an image of two gang members seeking to hide their identities, but in a post-COVID context it could simply be an image of two young men complying with health regulations, by wearing masks; thus, context is important in relation to meaning. This video was made pre-Covid, so it is an example of the former. This is not to say it could not be used post-covid to imply the latter.

Figure 6-2 Screenshot from a gang video depicting the wearing of masks

The meaning associated with certain images is not fixed, it may differ across jurisdictions or functionality. Despite their potential differences, however, using comparable visuals can serve to create a relationship between two subjects using a related meaning to reinforce or support another. Visuals work well in this regard because of their power to evoke; thus, visuals can simultaneously serve to create an intervisual relationship between content and in so doing, between the videos. For example, Atomwaffen Division uses a symbol relating to radiation hazard within their logo, as per Fig. 6.3. Viewers who know and understand the meaning of this are likely to use their knowledge about the symbol if asked to describe what the Atomwaffen Division[48] flag might stand for if they had no other information. The description is likely to be different if someone did not know the meaning or symbolism of the radiation symbol or if they are told the name but do not speak German (Atomwaffen translates from German to 'nuclear weapons' in English). This suggests by using the radiation symbol on the flag of the group, there is an implied visual relationship between them, but exactly what this is, is hard to determine. These examples illustrate that knowledge and context matter, as much as the visual, when deriving meaning from an image, as suggested by Mirzoeff (2000).

Figure 6-3 Atomwaffen Division flag and a radiation hazard symbol

[48] Atomwaffen Division is a neo-Nazi group that emerged in 2016, created by members of Iron March, a now-defunct white supremacist discussion forum. ADL (2021b) note that "Atomwaffen distinguishes itself by its extreme rhetoric, influenced by the writings of a neo-Nazi of an earlier generation, James Mason, who admired Charles Manson and supported the idea of lone wolf violence".

Another example of how VOs use intervisuality is evident within the videos through their explicit use of images from Sept. 11 (per Fig. 6.4) and beheadings (Fig. 6.5) to convey different messages with the same or similar images. They do so by using well-known images, so they resonate with many viewers.

Figure 6-4 Screenshots of the Twin Towers after the attack on Sept. 11

While the aim of the images may be to evoke a response, the emotional response differs largely depending on the context in which the image is found. While this might not appear surprising, as many may see two dominant responses to these scenes as depicted in Fig. 6.4 (anger or jubilation), but these images are used to evoke emotions in a more complex way than that within the videos. For example, a PMC video uses the images to support a story where a former marine spoke with *pride* about how events of the day influenced his joining, not pride in what happened, but rather that he answered the call to serve. The Sons of Odin used equivalent images to evoke more traditional emotions with the image. They present the image of the twin towers burning both to evoke and legitimise emotions such as anger, fear, and distress; emotions Berger (2021) notes increase content sharing. Both images were used to evoke different emotional responses, yet the objective was the same, to evoke action, in a manner that triggers a sense of duty, which in turn is known to activate the principle of authority (Cialdini, 2006). In this way, the images and cues within them become persuasive. Another style of image also commonly used is presented in Fig. 6.5, which is synonymous with ISIS (people on their knees in the desert dressed in orange boiler suits). The use of analogous images demonstrates a visual consistency between the videos. Males dressed in orange boiler suits kneeling in front of masked men in a desert. The power of the orange bowler suits also serves to link these images, and their related meaning, with other images of beheadings and executions in the media, thereby creating a broader intervisual connectivity.

Figure 6-5 Screenshot taken from a Sons of Odin video

These images were used in the Sons of Odin video to evoke vengeance, anger, and to demonise the *enemy,* while in contrast a PMC used a comparable image to justify joining and taking action. The second image was used to show dominance, evoke fear, and pride (depending on who watched it). Despite the exact same image being used in the first two cases, their framing differed. The PMC used it to demonise the same enemy, but it was also used to demonise the legitimate authority of the military, implying PMC/mercenaries were needed because of the magnitude of the threat ISIS poses. An ISIS affiliated group used a similar image in one of their videos to portray a sense of power and authority. These differing applications reinforce the idea that meaning is not fixed, or embedded in specific images, rather is influenced by the context in which it is presented and who is watching. In fact, the creators appear actually less concerned per se with the specific emotion evoked in the viewer, once the outcome achieves their desired goal. They do not seek, therefore, to evoke on a positive negative spectrum, rather from a collection of emotional responses (positive and negative). In the case of recruitment, this might mean triggering a response including joining, responding to a call to action (or take steps to either), or it might simply mean, dehumanising the *other* in the eyes of the viewer. This small step to dehumanise the other may be akin to how the principle of consistency is best activated, where starting with small requests leverages power more effectively than starting with bigger ones (Freedman and Fraser, 1966).

Although not completely the same, it is noteworthy that an image with some resemblance to the above image was used in a gang video. A man was placed on his knees in front of the camera before he was shot in the head (Fig. 6.6). While this is not an uncommon method of assassination in gang killings, its depiction here reverberates in current day content visual parlance with ISIS videos, having a shared implication of power and dominance, if nothing else.

Figure 6-6 Screenshot of an assassination in a South American gang video

Through intervisual cues, therefore, visuals draw their meaning not only from the image and related context but also from the wider eco-system of online video content, and while the emotional responses may differ their goal is the same, to evoke a physical response (namely action) (Kosinski, 1991). It was observed in the videos that VO use this approach not only to reinforce the persuasive impact of the videos as stand-alone pieces, but also to increase reach. This latter element is achieved through a conscious targeting of at least three distinct audience segments (potential recruits, supporters, and the opposition). Drawing not only from their own content to do so, but they also create an intervisual link with that of others, by embedding cues that give an implied link between both, through the use of intervisual techniques.

Attracting potential recruits through intervisual techniques

Identity symbols can increase the perceived entitativity of in-groups as well as out-groups, making organisations appear more rewarding to belong to, an attractive factor for recruits. This is a well-researched area across the majority of the VOs (Callahan and Ledgerwood, 2016). Basra and Neumann (2016) note jihadist groups offer altruistic experiences of power, violence, and adventure, and provide strong identity, a sense of rebellion, and are anti-establishment. While in the context of gangs, Aumair and Warren (1994) note they often provide a supportive environment where people can foster "pride, brotherhood, solidarity, challenge, and success" through illegitimate means, for example, violence, property crime, and substance abuse (p. 6); thus, they provide a sense of safety and security (Decker and Van Winkle, 1996). This is like Fink's (2014) research in respect of extremist groups, which found that they provide an opportunity for a cohesive community to form, with each individual likely to be interacting in the interest of achieving a shared goal. The idea of community, brotherhood, and comradery are visually evident across all four VOs, illustrating intervisuality between VOs' videos.

Figure 6-7 Screenshots from a military, PMC/Mercenary, extremist, and gang video

There was a consistency across all VOs in relation to cues about belonging, with slight divergence in frequency and method. Extremists and gangs used such cues in over 80% of their videos, with cues embedded in image and spoken word. Gangs also had cues embedded significantly in their music. PMC/Mercenaries and the military used similar cues to extremists, doing so in over 95% of their videos. In respect of the visual, apart from shared branding, all VOs used similar dress codes, with over 75% of all videos of each VO using uniformity of dress as a means of branding.

Fig. 6.7 illustrates this, depicting screenshots of images that embody cues about belonging. For example, the first is a screenshot from a Mexican military video and gives the impression of being part of a team, a collective. Wearing the same clothing gives the impression of a shared identity and builds that sense of community. The second screenshot, showing the children and lady in a pink jacket, is from a PMC/mercenary video. This type of footage is used to serve as evidence of the community that the PMC/mercenaries are assisting. The third screen shot is taken from a gang video and depicts a

scene of gang members 'hanging out,' which is a common activity in many gang videos; thus visually exemplifying the works of Rosen and Kassab's (2019); "the gang not only provided these individuals with a sense of belonging but also friendship. Gang members can 'hang out' with other gang colleagues. MS-13 also gave its members a sense of protection" (p. 97).

The fourth screenshot (i.e., men in army fatigues, black berets, and sunglasses) illustrates at least two groups in comparable uniformity of dress, those in military fatigues and a second in green t-shirts and green berets. This illustrates a shared community, but also one that belongs to a wider group, in that it includes a crowd of onlookers all gathered around a flag. The partial image of the flag also illustrates how a limited visual can evoke in the right context. For example, a little knowledge is likely to signify that it is the flag of Ireland and that these groups want to be seen as Irish patriots. Miller-Idriss (2018) postulates even "partial images, or suggestions that are evoked and alluded to indirectly in phases, symbols, or text" serve to influence (p. 12), "whether used explicitly or implicitly, through coded referenced or over representation, symbols, icons, images, and material elements help connect visual and sensory experiences with emotional attachments" (p. 87). The use of partial images, consistency in colouring, shape, etc. tend to work equally well in this vein. This is probably best exemplified within the data in the III% video and flag, as depicted in Fig. 6.8. Similar colours, layout, and symbols used are here in the American Flag, with only small changes, which may go unnoticed by many viewers, but serve as an intervisual example to convey an impression that the group has a legitimate association with the country, whilst also indicating for those who understand, significant differences.

Figure 6-8 Screenshots from a III% video

In the context of belonging and PMC/mercenaries, the results are akin to those of Varin (2012), which suggest camaraderie, lifestyle, idealism, and patriotism are what attracts people to PMC/mercenaries, rather than financial motivations, as often presented; the strongest of these being idealism and patriotism. PMC/mercenary videos appear to try to evoke feelings of anger and frustration and to challenge feelings of ambivalence within their viewers. They do this through the sharing of personal stories of individuals who joined, providing the social proof to others of equivalent dispositions and background that they are the right people to answer the call. The videos include both visuals and language around comrades who together have the capacity to help the vulnerable and downtrodden, giving the impression it is groups like their own who stand up and be counted when others don't.

The draw to belong and to identify with a group is not something unique to VOs, and therefore, it is the argument that the cues embedded give off the impression that joining would provide access to a group to which the viewer could belong, is no different to what one would likely find if one viewed

videos from sporting organisations, businesses, or any club or group for that matter, which try to recruit. That said, one might suggest attracting someone to a group who use violence could require a slightly different approach, which may or may not be true, but it is the contention here violence is rarely directly sold in these videos as a means of attracting new members, rather is presented more subtly. This may reflect advertising literature, which claims that violence, or sex (for that matter), sell products (Bushman, 2005). Bushman (2005) conducted a meta-analysis of 16 studies involving 2,474 participants and found memory for advertised brands was 27% lower if ads were embedded in a violent video than if the same ads were embedded in a non-violent one (Bushman, 2003; Bushman and Phillips, 2001; Robert and Bushman, 2015). Moreover, this analysis found brands advertised in violent media content were remembered less often, evaluated less favourably, and less likely to be purchased than brands advertised in non-violent, non-sexual media. Where violence is sold directly in the videos, it is for the attention of the opposition, which resembles the work of Sweeny and Kubit (2020) who state "[t]errorists sell violence by deflecting blame onto some other group or person, without admitting their deficiencies" (p. 176). This echoes a common technique identified in the videos reviewed, of *othering*. That said, the lack of violence within the videos could simply be to avoid take down policies on their host sites.

Intervisual cues to supporters and like-minded groups

In producing messages that attract potential recruits, it might not appear novel to suggest these messages also appeal to existing supporters or like-minded members of similar groups, but what is being contended here is more explicit than what might be called a positive unintended benefit. The argument is that VOs design their videos so they will resonate equally but differently with like-minded individuals, groups, and supporters, which is empirically supported. Three specific examples that draw on the technique of intervisuality to communicate to supporters or like-minded individuals are presented. The first exemplifies shared use of symbols, colours, and logos which are used to illustrate a shared identity, belonging, and community. The second shows a combined approach of overt disassociation, coupled with subtle signs and symbols embedded for the more thorough viewer. In contrast, the third example illustrates a more direct form of communication between potential supporting groups.

Fig. 6.9 depicts symbols used by different far-right groups, many of which were used with consistency across far-right and ultra-rightist organisations in the database. These serve as a cue to the viewer or recruit that the groups are of similar ideology; thus, implying a legitimacy in the messages within them. Moving from left to right, the screenshots come from Combat 18[49], Atomwaffen for the next two, Defend UK, National Action, and Identitarian Block.[50] While all these groups share some consistencies, they are different. Nonetheless, the shared use of symbols and colours helps them portray the impression they are part of a wider group of like-minded people; thus, providing social proof amongst supporters of these groups. Ebner (2019) posits, in the context of the far-right, these hyper-targeted

[49] Combat 18 "is a neo-Nazi group that seeks to create white-only countries through violence. The group was established in the United Kingdom and is now present in at least 18 countries worldwide" (Counterextremism, 2021, np).

[50] Identarian Block or Movement represents a pan-European Nationalist, far-right political ideology, with some fractions prepared to use violence. This flag is also used by other national groups in France and Slovenia.

campaigns “appeal to different online communities along the far-right ideological spectrum and eventually ‘unite the right’ on the basis of their lowest common denominators” (p. 171).

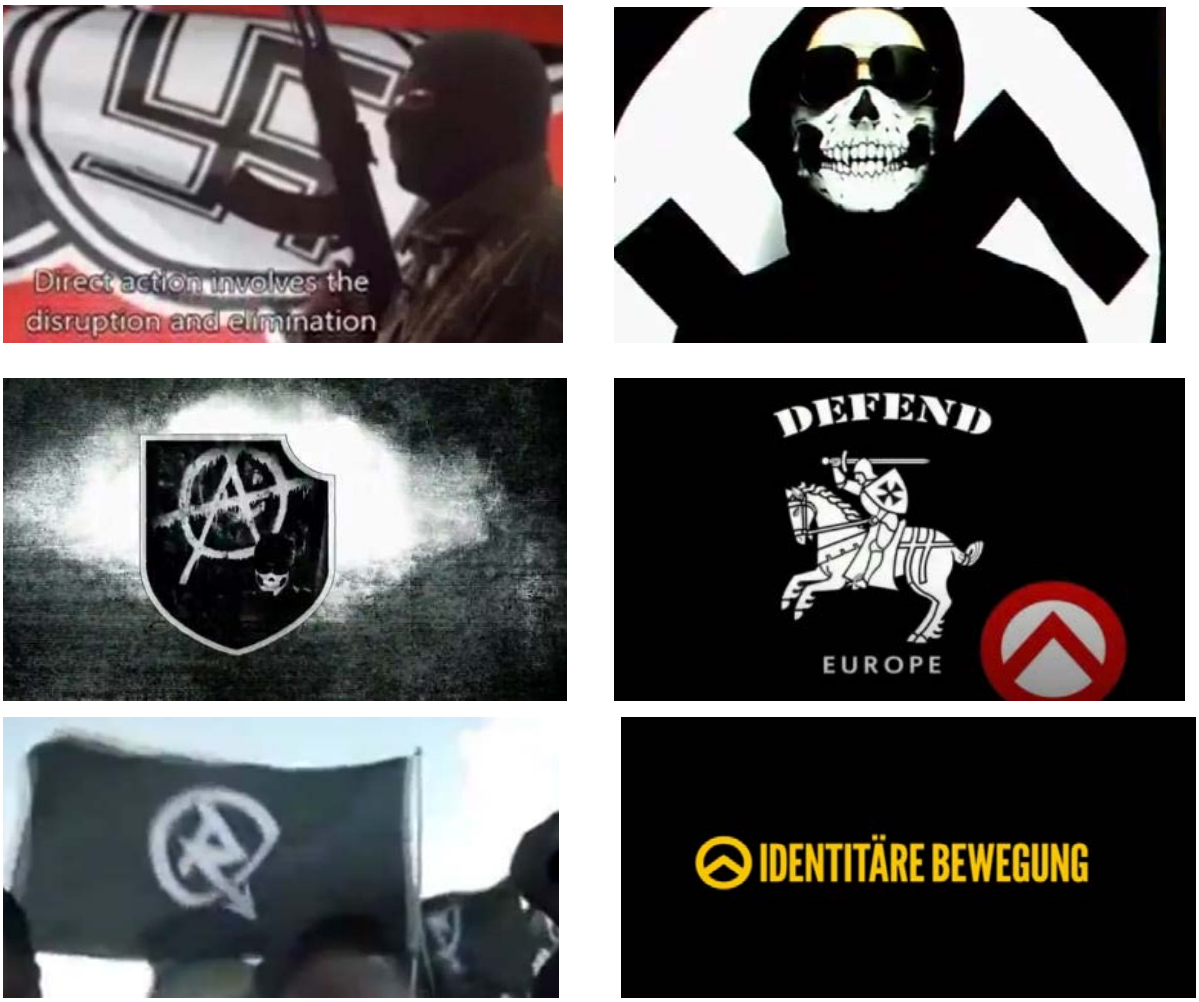


Figure 6-9 Screenshots of similar signs and symbols used across different extremist videos

Three screenshots, per Fig. 6.10, demonstrate this further. The first screenshot originates from a video circulated by the International Revolutionary People's Guerrilla Forces (IRPGF) containing five flags, the flag of the group which is displayed on the front of the table, the International Freedom Battalion[51] flag (the green flag), two anarchist flags (black with white A in circle and the black and red flag), and an Antifa[52] flag. The presence of the Antifa flag gives the impression of an association with other Antifa groups, for example, the second and third screenshots from an Antifa group from Boston and an anti-fascist group in Australia. While it is unlikely that these groups have any real connection at an operational level, at a deeper psychological level the shared use of symbols serves as evidence of an implied association, which is likely to appeal to other supporters of like-minded groups (Callahan and Ledgerwood, 2016).

[51] The International Freedom Battalion “is a foreign militia harkening back to the internationalist brigades in the Spanish Civil War. Members of the IFB come from many nations, including the UK, the US, Germany, Greece, and France. Subunits include communist, anti-fascist, and anarchist Western elements as well as Turkish communist parties of varying ideologies” (Carter Centre, 2017, p. 2).

[52] Antifa is a decentralised, leaderless movement composed of loose collections of groups, networks and individuals. It to vigorously opposes fascism (ADL, 2021c).

Figure 6-10 Screenshot from VOs videos to depict similar use of symbols

In contrast, some groups seem to try to strategically disassociate with groups often presented as like-minded through the images they choose to display in their video[53]. The Sons of Odin video exemplified this. The Sons of Odin is known as an anti-immigrant and white supremacist group, founded in Finland, which now has chapters across the world. While it often denies it is a neo-Nazi group, it is alleged the group was originally set up by a person with links to organisations of this nature. Attempts to disassociate with Nazism are evident within their videos, as illustrated in Fig. 6.11, implying the threat from Muslims[54] is of similar magnitude to what happened due to Nazism. The video attempts to connect not with extreme far-right, but more with those who care about their nation and do not want to be complicit, as so many were in Germany. They attempt to evoke emotions associated with patriotism, sense of duty, and activism and in disassociating with an extreme group (Nazis), the Sons of Odin give the impression of being legitimate and measured.

Figure 6-11 Screenshots from a Sons of Odin video used to disassociate with Nazis

[53] This may also be to avoid detection or take down by social media sites.

[54] This is the word used within the video, not an interpretation of the researcher.

While this disassociation may serve to convince a naïve viewer, the Sons of Odin video contains subtle cues for the more observant and informed that indicate a potential association with Nazi groups, as well as other far-right groups. Fig. 6.12 depicts a screenshot of two flags from right-wing groups with the Sons of Odin flag in the middle. They illustrate a shared use of laurel or olive (the shape looks alike). The first, the Atomwaffen Division flag, in which a laurel wreath circles the shield. In contrast, the Sons of Odin use two pieces of laurel, like the Aryan First symbols[55]. The use of laurel was commonly used by the Nazis; thus, its use could be implied as demonstrating an association to far-right ideologies. For the even more discerning viewer, there is also a blurred wreath framing the clear image of the wreath and words. The use of laurel itself is not racist, per se, but it is a symbol commonly used by these groups. In the context of extremist groups, however, it is not exclusively used by the far-right. Beifuss and Bellini (2013), in their analysis of 65 insurgent and terrorist groups, note that at least six used a symbol akin to the laurel or olive in their logos: Al Aqsa Foundation, Eela Padai (a unit or branch of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam - LTTE), Mujahideen-E-Khalq Organisation (MEK), the National Liberation Wing of the MEK, People's Liberation Army (PLA), Ulster Freedom Fighters. This serves to illustrate the diverse groups who use similar symbols, despite significantly different ideologies and/or beliefs.

Laurel also represents an example of an appropriated symbol in mainstream clothing:

> The brand Fred Perry, for example has a long history of being used by far right youth because of its logo – a wreath of laurel branches – evokes military insignia used by the [National Socialist German Workers' Party] NSDAP. On some Fred Perry polo shirts, moreover, the collar has black, red, and white stripes – colors that, as detailed above, are popular with far right youth for their historical significance with national movements and regimes in Germany, including the Nazis (Miller-Idriss, 2018, p. 65)

It is also now a prominent symbol of the Proud Boys (Parisi, 2020). It is acknowledged the laurel/olive is also used by the UN; thus, it could be the Sons of Odin use it as a cue to evoke a positive emotional response associated with the UN, to further legitimise their cause. The use of the word 'united' may also imply this. If so, this may reflect an attempt to communicate with less hardened supporters or the public. Or more likely, its use may serve as a strategy to connect with various audience segments, through these potentially different readings.

[55] The Aryan Fist symbol is a twist on the fist representing the Black power movement and the battle against racial oppression.

Figure 6-12 Screenshots from extremist videos depicting a shared use of laurel

The screenshot in Fig. 6.13 gives another clue to a far-right perspective within the Sons of Odin video, evident at least for the informed or knowledgeable. In the top left-hand corner of the image, there is a circle with a pattern inside it. This symbol is often called the Black Sun or Sun Wheel[56] (sonnenrad).

Figure 6-13 Screenshot from a Sons of Odin video, depicting the Black Sun or Sun Wheel

The sonnenrad is one of "a number of ancient European symbols appropriated by the Nazis in their attempt to invent an idealized "Aryan/Norse" heritage" (Goodrick-Clarke, 2003; ADL, 2020, n.p.). Variations reportedly include the swastika and certain versions of the Celtic Cross.

Figure 6-14 Image of an Odal rune, which is in the centre of the Black Sun or Sun Wheel in image

[56] Given its history and ancient origin all symbols similar to this should not be viewed as associated with the Far-Right, careful analysis is advised, as for all symbols.

The symbol in the centre of the sun or wheel appears to be the Elder Futhark Odal rune[57] (per Fig. 6.14). This symbol is widely used by right-wing nationalist youth groups in Germany and was banned there in 1994. These examples of contradiction or conflict within the Sons of Odin video resembles the recent work of Mehran, et al., (2021) who "encountered instances where sonic, text, and visual forms appeared to be competing with each other for prominence" (p. 4). While this may be true, it might also be a mechanism used to widen the net of interested viewers. If this is the case, it might indicate consistencies with the research of Strand (2019) and Carriere and Blackman (2016), who note the military in relation to recruitment must compete with the commercial markets, a strategy Jester (2019) refers to as "widening the net."

Some PMC/mercenaries also attempt to communicate directly with other groups within their videos, as opposed to solely communicating with the potential recruit. This is exemplified in Fig. 6.15. The flag in the foreground of the screenshot resembles that in Fig. 6.10, albeit the background is red in the former and green in the latter. This latter flag is from the International Freedom Battalion (IFB). The IRPGF display this flag to visually demonstrate they are part of the IFB.

Figure 6-15 Screenshots from the IFB depicting similarities to a flag used by the IRPGF

The IRPGF also reinforce this verbally, through a speech made by one of its members in the video;

> The IRPGF are an armed, self-organized, and horizontal militant group, working to defend different social revolutions around the world, directly attacking Capital and the State, advancing the cause of anarchism. We are committed to anti-fascists, anti-capitalists, anti-imperialists, against all forms of patriarchy and hierarchies. We also announce our affiliation with the International Freedom Battalion and declare our support and alliance with the YPJ, YPG, PKK, Antifascist International Tabur (AIT) and with members of the International Freedom Battalion (IRPGF video).

Announcing affiliation to the IFB is significant, as the IFB state in their video their aim is "to unite in struggle our cultural differences", whilst noting that the collective group will "become a powerful weapon against the totalitarian slaughter waged by ISIS" (IFB video); thus, the IFB benefit from a statement like this as it shows they are growing, thereby legitimising their claims. The IRPGF also gains from the association.

[57] It was originally used by ethnic Germans (Volksdeutsche) from the Yugoslavia SS-regiment (The 7. SS Freiwillingen-Gebirgs - Division Prinz Eugen) operating during World War II in the Nazi Germany sponsored State of Croatia.

The affiliation does not have to be reciprocal, nor for that matter do the embedded cues have to be exclusively different, between segmented groups. The SOLI exemplify an association commonly made between PMC/mercenaries and the military, which is often not directly acknowledged by military. In a video produced by the SOLI, they overlay an audio of members speaking. The audio track includes insight about the four males speaking within the video, three of whom are former members of the US military. The first male states, "[m]y name is Tom; I am from Michigan. I was in the army for ten years. I have been in Iraq with the Sons of Liberty for about 5 months". The second male states, "my name is Neil, and I am from Alaska. I spent 6 years in the US army and I have been with SOLI for 3 months". The third, "[m]y name is David Acres, I am from Washington State and I have been with SOLI for about 5 months. I served 6 years in the Marine Corps and I came here to do the right thing". Through their introductions, the SOLI implies a direct relationship with the US forces, whether the US forces want it or not. This is reiterated in a recruitment video from DynCorp, who uses an analogous narrative. Associated cues, whether desired or not by the military, are included to affiliate PMCs to the US military as a legitimate destination for ex-military. This echoes Jackson, et al.'s (2020) findings that PMCs attempt to position themselves as legitimate voices in the discourse on national security.

This type of communication between two organisations within the videos, while dominant in the PMC/mercenary videos, is also present in other VOs video. An example of this is presented in Fig. 6.16, with a screenshot of clothing worn in a True Blue Crew[58] video. The logo on the jumper refers to InfoWars, an American far-right conspiracy theory and fake news website, owned by Alex Jones. Wearing this in Australia serves in its simplest form to illustrate a connection between the far-right in both countries. The wearer shows solidarity with Jones and to his website, potentially communicating within the video directly to Jones and his ilk. It is acknowledged, however, these cues communicating between groups might also work for potential recruits too. As the image also serves to legitimise the website in the minds of the recruits and the True Blue Crew of Australia, potentially directing these people to the website as a source worthy of examination. It provides not only the social proof but also the written proof of what the True Blue Crew have been saying.

Figure 6-16 Screenshot from a True Blue sweatshirt worn at a rally

[58] The True Blue Crew is an active patriotic pro-Australian group, who have reportedly been involved in right-wing violence.

Communicating with other groups helps build social proof around perceptions of group legitimacy, which supports influence and persuasion. The motivation for doing it, however, may not be entirely altruistic in the sense of the cause. Linking themselves to other groups may assist in increasing recruitment by increasing exposure. The benefits of this are similar to the idea in advertising that content sharing is part of the marketing story, as it helps make content seem natural and credible, given the role of the third party in sharing. Teixeira (2015) proposes increasing audience reach, or as often stated a video has gone *viral*, can be engineered in a manner akin to snowballing, "by reaching out to influencers, well-connected bloggers, internet personalities and opinion leaders to have them be the initial distributor to their online audiences" (n.p.). One specific technique some groups use to do this is to associate a certain brand with an activity, for example, Duracell and mountain climbing. This allows Duracell to engage with mountain climbers and other outdoor enthusiasts, using them as trusted sources of support; thus, benefiting from an implied association between the two, thereby increasing credibility (Teixeira, 2015).

Intervisuality targeted at communication towards opposition

Like cues being embedded to communicate with like-minded groups, the videos reviewed also contain embedded cues that are targeted at the opposition. They are used in a similar vein to communicate with oppositional viewers to evoke action against the VO itself, or its ilk, which in turn acts in the interest of the creators as it justifies their claims. It serves to demonise the enemy. This is observed in several ways, which can be categorised as subtle, implied, and direct. All of which are used in an attempt to control the oppositional reading that is potentially gleaned from the videos. The subtle approach to communication is most commonly evident in military videos. Many countries, while employing professionals to create recruitment videos, appear to use the videos to also communicate with other nations. They do this by embedding intervisual cues that present the creating military as strong, equipped, highly trained, and ready at all times (a show of force/arms), evident in military videos from nations, including China, Russia, India, and the US, as per Fig. 6.17.

Figure 6-17 Screenshots from military videos in a show of arms

This approach is deemed as subtle, as there is rarely direct reference to other nations, war, or confrontation, rather indirect reference to having committed and trained units who are patriotic and ready to fight for their nations. If the opposition view videos of this nature, they are provided with cues that try to evoke emotions such as fear, concern, and envy at what other another military have. These videos also communicate subtly with other VOs (consciously or sub-consciously), given the ideological position of anti-nation many VOs have. Certain cues within these videos communicate with this type of VOs in a manner that is likely to evoke emotions, including anger, irritation, and provocation. Subtlety is important for all VOs at times. Some might want to avoid directly being seen to antagonise others, to implicate themselves in criminality, be glorifying illegal behaviour, or to merely draw too much attention to themselves.

Others favoured a more implied technique, as exemplified by the True Blue crew. One of the analysed videos used a montage format, accompanied by hard rock music and written text overlaid on the video. The images appear to be taken from a confrontational protest between the True Blue Crew and a far-left group. The video opens with text: “In May 2016 a line in the sand was drawn; when we went to the socialists and Islamic heartland of Coburg to counter the socialists”. A number of images of the group (True Blue Crew) are presented in the video, one of which is depicted in Fig. 6.18.

Figure 6-18 Screenshot from a True Blue crew video which depicts members of the group

The following text is presented on the screen “’left wing’ thugs walked over a KM to break police lines and once again attack peaceful patriots”, after which the image in Fig. 6.19 is presented.

Figure 6-19 Screenshot from a True Blue crew video depicting the opposition, or traitors

Pictures are then shown of a conflict or fight between the two groups. The following text is presented on the screen “Lead by the True Blue Crew, patriots defended themselves for the first time and fought back. And with the True Blue Crew now there to protect patriots, the Marxist and anarchist traitors were defeated”. This clearly demonstrates an example of an ‘us’ and ‘them’ narrative, with words like ‘patriot’ and ‘traitor’. During the montage, a song is also played and as these former words are placed on the screen, the words “this is the end” are sung, and the image in Fig. 6.20 is presented.

Figure 6-20 Screenshot from a True Blue Crew video a symbolic beheading

In combining these modes, the image in Fig. 6.20 evokes the notion of a symbolic beheading, given the mask is synonymous with the far-left, but was also worn by at least two of the *opposition* in Fig. 6.19. Cues evoking this symbolic beheading avoid the need for a violent image to depict their message to the opposition; the True Blue Crew are a group to be afraid of and avoided. While at the time employing a visual consistency with ISIS beheading videos. Once again, the cues within are not exclusive to the opposition, for example, the image in Fig. 6.20 is followed by the words “The True Blue Crew took this stand, so you would feel safe to rally, safe to express your opinion. Without being attacked by the far-left, patriots tried to rally peacefully, but the far-left would not let that happen, True Blue Crew fought back so you wouldn’t have to”, which is directed at supporters and potential recruits to evoke principles of consensus and authority (Cialdini, 2006).

The Atomwaffen Division takes a much more direct approach, embedding cues that seek to communicate through their videos to oppositional groups and nations. They do this by including a flag burning event. Flags from Israel, the UN, America, Black Lives Matter, amongst others are burned in front of the Atomwaffen flag. A yellow flag with the words; ‘Don’t tread on me’ is also burned (Fig. 6.21).

Figure 6-21 Screenshot from an Atomwaffen video

This flag is often categorised as belonging to Anarcho-Capitalists/Market Anarchist groups and has a long and complex history:

> The flag originated well before the American Revolution, and in recent years it has been used by the tea party movement and, at times, members of the militia movement. But it has also been used to represent the U.S. Marine Corps, the U.S. Navy, the U.S. men's national soccer team and a Major League Soccer franchise (Bruski, 2021, n.p.)

This symbolic diversity of one flag illustrates clearly how its use in a video could have many meanings and communicate differently to those who understand its significance in different contexts. In relation to the videos reviewed in this study, it was also used within a III% group's video (as illustrated in Fig. 6.22).

Figure 6-22 Screenshot from a III% video

Akin to other images within the III% video is (if one looks closely at Fig. 6.22), a background image of what looks like the American flag is visible. The burning of the flags demonstrates an attempt at dialogue (and potential provocation) on the part of Atomwaffen Division, with the III% group. A communication technique also used with the other countries and organisations whose flags are burned. By burning a range of flags together Atomwaffen Division portray these entities as a collective, embedding the cue that to support any is to side with the enemy.

All three approaches (subtle, impartial, and direct) serve to evoke an emotional response in their opposition (fear, anger, provocation, incitement), while also building themselves up, thereby evoking the opposite emotional response in supporters, of pride and patriotism. They, and the other examples throughout the chapter, demonstrate that meaning is not conveyed explicitly through the visual, but also implicitly through the visual and non-visual, and not to a single unique audience, but to multiple segments. Communicating with three groups, namely recruits, supporters, and the opposition, through contrasting cues also serves to evoke the in-group out-group narrative, delegitimising some groups to legitimise others (Sweeney and Kubit, 2020). This is like the technique used in WW2, presenting images of the opposition in positions of weakness, thereby heightening their own group's authority and image (like the posters in WW2). In this way, and similar to the more subtle military approach, all these examples illustrate a show of arms and, in some cases, intent.

Segmentation as a means of audience exclusion

Prior to concluding this chapter, it is important to briefly highlight that although it is crucial to view these videos from the perspective of the audience segmentations targeted. As postulated by Firth, et al. (2005), it is equally important to identify who is not being targeted within this context and to consider how the absence of something can be an equally strong statement, in terms of recruitment. This is exemplified here through the absence of females, but the lack of people with disabilities could equally be noted, for example. There was a clear lack of an audience segmentation targeted at females within the videos observed. While many females were present in the videos, they were largely used as a cue to men rather than to target a female audience. Females were present in 40% of extremist and PMC/Mercenary videos, 53% of military videos, but less than 20% of gang videos. Three of the military videos included a female as the first image, but no other VO video did. Moreover, the videos that did include females largely lacked a credible messenger designed to target them. Two military videos had a female's voice, while four used male and females' voices; two PMC/Mercenary videos had a female voice and two had a mixture of male and females' voices. In contrast, only one gang video had a female voice included alongside male voices (and she was a child rapper), while none of the extremist videos included a female voice. This observed absence is pertinent, given that Silverman, Stewart, Birdwell, and Amanullah (2016) highlight that one requires a credible messenger to communicate with specific segments, who can tailor their content, so it connects. Some exceptions were evident. The Irish military video included in the dataset was targeted specifically at females as was an element of a mercenary video, which depicted a female only unit (Fig. 6.23). Despite these images, however, the lack of a credible messenger to illustrate the message was sincere, which results in these videos resembling more of a nod to political correctness than a committed effort to recruit females.

Figure 6-23 Screenshot of a female unit within a mercenary organisation

The absence of a female segment is pertinent within the context of recruitment to VOs, as it challenges the known role females have (and have had) in these groups (Bloom, Gill, and Horgan, 2012; Dissanayake, 2017; Jacques and Taylor, 2010; and Windsor, 2020). There is risk, however, that because of the absence of females in these videos, female recruitment to VOs becomes invisible in the eyes of policy makers (UNDP, 2019); when in fact, the absence may indicate recruitment of females to VOs is different to males. Assertions like this are not without grounding. Pearson and Winterbotham (2017) challenge the narrative that young men's and women's patterns of recruitment to ISIS are identical. The absence of females as a key audience in these videos, therefore, should not be viewed as evidence of a lack of recruitment of females to VOs, however, rather an area which

requires further examination of the different recruitment strategies used between females and males to VOs. This differing approach to males and females is not surprising in the context of recruitment. In targeting one gender a good recruitment campaign should tailor their brand appeal and content to that group (O'Brien, 2019). This might signify merit in comparing females focused recruitment videos with those targeting males to fully explain their differences.

Conclusion

This chapter focuses on the audience, illustrating how VOs use their video to target and engage not only with potential recruits but aligned with the extant and emerging research, they use audience segmentation (a technique from advertising) to divide their audience into at least three distinct segments (potential recruits, supporters, and the opposition). Based on this finding, the chapter addresses two key arguments that VOs recruitment content can and is designed to reach a more diverse audience than potential recruits. As a result, these videos should be viewed not solely from the perspective of an independent piece of communication, rather as part of a broader eco-system of online content. To illustrate the audience segmentation and the cross communication within this eco-system, the chapter presents empirical examples of VOs applying Mirzoeff's application of intervisuality (through visual cues) to communicate with different segmentations. These findings imply that VOs use audience segmentations as part of a deliberate communication strategy, not an unintended consequence; thus, the videos produced and circulated by VOs are best called '*recruitment* and *call to action*'. In examining the intervisual cues, the chapter also highlights an audience segment not targeted by the content creators exemplified here in the lack of females.

The application of audience segmentation does not challenge assertions from the field of advertising that for advertisement campaigns to be effective, they favour one specific target audience. This would suggest that these three groups represent different audiences, and this is not what is being said here. In contrast the chapter postulates that these three segments are part of one audience, representing the three positions that viewers can take when decoding meaning from images: the dominant-hegemonic, a negotiated, or an oppositional reading (Hall, 1993); thus suggesting VOs create content and embed cues that attempt *to control* the response of all three readings (recruits, supporters, and the opposition). It is within the context of their audience segmentation strategy that this chapter makes its contribution, building on the extant literature in this area, whilst better understanding how the visual is used to do this in a manner that potentially influences a differing persuasive impact for different segmentations. A core element of the dissertation's argument, however, has not been sufficiently grounded. The previous chapters predominately focus on the visual which (although important) only represents one modal aspect of video. Other modes (speech, music, text), which have only been alluded to, play a significant role in conveying meaning, and therefore serve also to influence and persuade. The next chapter will do just that, exploring how multimodalities are used to reinforce the visual to achieve a persuasive impact.

Chapter 7 Multimodal Communication: Persuasive production values

> Propaganda in the broadest sense is the technique of influencing human action by the manipulation of representations. These representations may take spoken, written, pictorial or musical form (Lasswell, 1937)

Introduction

Video as a medium, while sharing elements with pictures and art, is distinct because it is one of few that can incorporate different modes (i.e., image, sound, and text) into a composite whole. This makes video engaging and compelling, highly persuasive, and influential. Similar to intervisuality, content creators do this by tapping into pre-existing attitudes and knowledge of the viewer, in a manner that increases the salience of the message (Domke, Perlmutter, and Spratt, 2002; Valentino, Hutchings, and White, 2002). Raja, Anand, and Allan (2019) note this in relation to advertising, "music as an atmospheric stimulus may help a consumer for ad recall, ad message/brand information recall, brand recall, brand identification and brand recognition" (p. 872), which all establish credibility and authority, the latter an aspect of persuasion (Cialdini, 2006). Multimodalities also evoke certain emotions and responses:

> Sound and visual images function together to form a screen sense that creates a 'co-extensive world' (Cook, 2015, p. 136) that expands the virtual experience of the viewer. They mutually interact and inform one another as distinct signifiers of emotion and communicators of codified cultural associations (Winkler and Pieslak, 2018, p. 347)

It would be remiss, therefore, when employing videos as the primary data source not to explore how other modes influence the visual, and related meaning derived from it, as this chapter does, drawing both from advertising and communications. It explicates lessons from these areas of study to delve deeper into how multimodal content persuades and influences, from the perspective of how Cialdini's (2006) principles of persuasion are activated. The chapter reaffirms the contention of Zelizer (2004) and Griffin (2004) that multimodal components serve as hooks on which to frame narratives and cues, respectively. It does this by examining multi-modalities as a means of influence, before specifically exploring the use of music and spoken word as mechanisms of this. It then demonstrates how such modes are used to activate the principles of persuasion.

Multimodalities as a means of persuasion

According to anthropologist Ruth Finnegan, communication is "a multiplex and versatile process", one that distinguishes human communication from other forms. Finnegan (2002) states this difference is in how:

> Their powers of eye and ear and movement, their embodied interactions in and with the external environment, their capacities to interconnect along auditory, visual, tactile and perhaps olfactory modalities, and their ability to create and manipulate objects in the world (p. 243)

The power of how certain modes capitalise on this is described here:

> images, written text, music, and so on each respectively impart certain kinds of meanings more easily and naturally than others. We believe that this idea is the most crucial conceptual

> tool that one must bring to bear in understanding the workings and meanings of multimodal texts (Hull and Nelson, 2005, p. 229)

Multimodality should not be considered solely as an aggregation of 'methods of communication', rather it is the *interaction* between modes that is of interest, as this produces a different meaning that is more than the sum of the parts (Bazalgette and Buckingham, 2013); thus, meaning is not fixed. An image, for example, gains meaning not only through other visual works but also according to the modes associated with it. Once it is removed from this context (which now has been made easier by powerful editing technology) and placed within another, it can have a multiplicity of possible new meanings (Wignell, Tan, and O'Halloran, 2017). As a result, meaning should not be viewed as static, instead fluid depending on context. This represents one strength of multimodal communication but creates a challenge for related research; as "there are no simple, universal explanations for responses to or the effects of persuasive communication" (Jackob, et al., 2011, p. 265), which adds to the complexity of studying this area. Nonetheless, there are merits to such attempts.

Bazalgette and Buckingham (2013) describe multimodalities through the statement, "McLuhan's famous dictum 'the medium is the message' might be translated into multimodality theory as "the mode is the message" (p. 98). That said, multimodality is not a theory per se, rather it is an interdisciplinary approach to which academics bring their own theories and orientations (Mehran, et al., 2021). As a result, there are "distinct theoretical concepts and frameworks emerging from the study of multimodality as a field" (O'Halloran and Smith, 2012). Multimodal analysis purports that representation, communication, and interaction are more than language, and extend the investigation of social interpretation beyond language alone, to include meaning that is presented through the visual, audio, and other semiotic resources, and their interaction with each other (Wignell, Tan, and O'Halloran, 2017). O'Halloran, Tan, Wignell, Bateman, Pham, Grossman, and Moere (2016) posit that "multimodal choices form recognisable clusters or configurations of meanings, constituting domains of cultural activity, including social influence that encourages or reinforces violent extremist ideology and action" (p. 2-3). In that way, "the critical contribution of a multimodal approach is that it yields insights into how higher-order concepts and ideas are manifested in online violent extremist materials through combinations of linguistic and visual choices (and other choices, for example, in videos) and the various reactions to such propaganda" (Wignell, et al., 2017, p. 431). By understanding the interactions of such modes, one can better understand their persuasive ability within video.

Scholars of multimodality have concentrated and surveyed a variety of interactive data, such as images, (Machin, 2007; Machin and Mayr, 2012), monuments (Abousnnouga and Machin, 2010), sound and music (Van Leeuwen, 1999; Machin, 2010), colour (Machin, 2007), literacy (Kress, 2003; 2010), and film (Baldry and Thibault, 2006; Bateman and Schmidt, 2011; Wildfeuer, 2014). One can also derive meaning from modes such as text, speech, and so on. While some may be similar, modes have differing modal resources. For example, text and speech. Punctuation in text, like intonation in speech, can cause two very different meanings from comparable words (Luzon, 2019). Meaning is, therefore, constructed directly and indirectly via the selection, combination, and interaction of such systems. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) call this consolidation of modes "communicational ensembles". These ensembles gain meaning through the combination as selected by the creator and act as "sign makers to do different work in relation to their interests and their rhetorical intentions for designs of meaning, which, in modal ensembles, best meet the rhetor's interest and sense of the needs of the audience" (Bezemer and Kress, 2008, p. 171).

This chapter primarily focuses on the *interaction* of audio and visuals within the videos. The extant literature has largely examined elements like "images, symbolism, gesture, gaze, proxemics, sounds, and their interaction in multimodal texts" (Mehran, et al., 2021, p. 4). It therefore builds on and augments this and smaller studies that examine multimodal interactions in extremist videos (Winkler and Pieslak, 2018; Al-Rawi and Jiwani, 2017; Chouliaraki and Kissas, 2018; Kraidy, 2018; O'Halloran, et al., 2016; Salazar, 2017; Wignell, et al., 2017; Winkler, El Damanhoury, Dicker, and Lemieux, 2018). Phillips and Ghalwash (2019) contend that it is the interplay between these modalities that make video a powerful system of meaning, providing "networks of options from which choices are made" (Wignell, et al., 2017, p. 460). Kress's (2011) makes comparable assertions that "meaning is shared among all modes–intensity, framing, foregrounding, highlighting, coherence and cohesion, even though they will differ from mode to mode" (p. 47). These are chosen because where a message is reinforced over two or more modes, viewers are more likely to pay attention to it, retain it, learn from it, and believe it (Mehran, et al., 2021).

The use of multimodalities was very apparent in the videos reviewed for this dissertation; thus, this chapter will focus on two examples of audio, music, and spoken word. They are selected because of their prominence within the videos, but also because of the growing understanding of their role in extremism videos (Pieslak, et al., 2018; Phillips and Ghalwash, 2019), drill videos (Harkness 2013; Ilan, 2020; Pinkey and Robinson-Edwards, 2018; Thapar, 2017), military video (Dinnen, 2016; Newman, 2019) and advertising (Deaville, 2007; Huron, 1989), as mechanisms of persuasion (Bloodworth, 1975; Carter, 1980; Denisoff, 1983; Kosokoff and Carmichael, 1970; Denisoff, 1983; Knupp, 1981; Sellnow and Sellnow, 1993; Sellnow, 1999; Stewart, Smith, and Denton, 1989; Thomas, 1974). In the context of the overall dissertation, the chapter demonstrates how VOs use multimodalities to augment and enhance their visual cues in order to create an environment of persuasion.

Music

Music is an important and persuasive mode. Its impact in both advertising and propaganda to evoke is well known, because viewers often prefer audio to visual stimuli (Collignon, Girard, Gosselin, Roy, Saint-Amour, Lassonde, and Lepore 2008). The power of music to influence is significantly researched regarding extremist groups and gangs. Al Bayati (2020) asserts that music "can directly express its participation in the scene's tone, rhythm, and phrasing, which in turn can invoke emotions, such as sadness, happiness, and movement" (p. 6). This is akin to Chion (2019) whose research postulates that sound can intensify emotions in a "steady, undaunted, and ineluctable manner" (p. 8). Phillips and Ghalwash (2019) note that music in ISIS videos influences the mind to think of "images of spilt blood and perfumed flowers, the hope of forgiveness and resurrection" (p. 7). This is a pertinent observation that has parallels with many of the videos reviewed, the ability to suggest two contrasting images and/or emotions simultaneously. It is also noteworthy, when viewed in the context of Drew and Grimes (1987) and Posner, Nissen, and Klein's (1976) work, which posits "viewers are likely to attend to and recall more visual than textual information when the information presented in the two modal tracks contradict one another" (Winkler and Pieslak, 2018, p. 346; Mehran, et al. 2021).

Numerous videos examined here show attempts to evoke both positive and negative emotions in the viewer at the same time; for example, evoking positive feelings about the group, but negative feelings about what is happening in the world. Combined, they influence the same outcome, which is one of action. This observation is worth noting, especially given the work of Braniecka, Trzebinska, Dowgiert,

and Wytykowska (2014), not only in respect of higher adoption of the visual but with respect to the desired response, action:

> Mixed emotional experience seems to be particularly beneficial in stressful situations because in such a circumstance, it is impossible to avoid the negative affect associated with aversive events, while a bit of positive affect may help to ameliorate the negativity experienced (p. 1)

This resonates with the work of Hogg, et al. (2008) around uncertainty theory and the role of group identity and membership in times of crisis (Jetten, Haslam, Iyer, and Haslam, 2010). It also has comparisons with Larsen, Hemenover, Norris, and Cacioppo's (2003) work. Jetten, Haslam, Iyer, and Haslam (2010) note that taking the good with the bad may help people confront adversity in hard times. While very pertinent for this dissertation, unfortunately, research into how mixed emotional cues simultaneously impact persuasion is limited. Nonetheless, there is some indication that it may have a positive impact (albeit requiring further analysis). Braniecka, et al. (2014) find:

> Secondary mixed emotions predominate over sequential and simultaneous mixed emotional experiences in promoting adaptive coping through fostering the motivational and informative functions of emotions; this is done by providing solution-oriented actions rather than avoidance, faster decisions regarding coping strategies, easier access to self-knowledge, and better narrative organization. Furthermore, individuals characterized as being prone to feeling secondary mixed emotions were more resilient to stress caused by transitions than those who were characterized as being prone to feeling opposing emotions separately. Taken together, the preliminary results indicate that the pattern of secondary mixed emotion provides individuals with a higher capacity to handle adversity than the other two patterns of mixed emotional experience (p. 1)

Pieslak, et al. (2018) make similar assertions as Phillips and Ghalwash (2019) noting that extremist groups understand the importance of music in their strategic communication campaigns. Pieslak, et al. (2018) note that a group like Da'esh, for instance:

> Wants to look and sound different from other groups; they create their own unique propaganda within the jihadi underground, such unique propaganda production that they view quantity and quality of audio and video media as vital to maintaining and projecting their strength and image (p. 10)

This suggests a connection with the concept of entitativity, as groups see the need to be different from others, reinforced through language about *uncertainty*.

The influence of Islamic Nashid is observed in the ISIS and related videos examined, which is an analogous finding to Mehran, et al. (2021). For example, a video from the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan appears to serve as an offering to Allah, and a request to Allah for forgiveness, but it additionally targets 'brothers' and makes a request that they rise up. The following words are presented as subtitles of the Nashid:

> Forgive the sins we have accumulated in the course of our life! We have found this Path of truth only by his Decree and his Leave. This Path is the path of Jihad, Jihad to fight against disbeliever. O brother Rise up to fight the disbelievers! We must re-establish the Deen [sic] of Allah and the way of the Prophet. Hasten to do good until death reaches you. The Gates of

> Paradise are still open and it is not too late. O brother! Rise up to fight the disbelievers!… (Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, 2013)

A male with a very melodic voice sings the Nashid and despite calling his brothers to rise, maintains a calm but passioned air. The fact the Nashid is sung by a male is not surprising but is relevant in respect of the meaning and messaging within the video. In Islam, it is not permitted (haram) for men to listen to the female voice when in a "melodious and musical tone, even if it is by reciting Quran" (Fiqh, 2021). The choice of a Nashid, therefore, within these videos influences the meaning through words and through the gender of the messenger, and in so doing is likely to affect how the message is received, which is important regarding engagement and persuasion. Otterbeck and Skjello (2020) work is consistent (whilst additionally referring to the importance of entitativity), noting in relation to the munshid (singer) that "the most appreciated skill is the ability to instil energy and a sense of uniqueness in every live performance through improvisation" (p. 3). Al Bayati (2020) echoes this asserting that the munshid "has to possess specific skills that stimulate the emotions of listeners" (p. 9) and suggests this is achieved through the use of "analogy, repetition, a contrast in meanings, and especially rhymed prose in which the combination produces a musical output, even though the nashid is not accompanied by musical instruments" (Lahoud, 2017, p.44). The repetitive element in the nashid also has resonance with the work of Gråtrud (2016). Repetition in the lyrics is evident in both jihadi and right-wing videos reviewed, which further draw resemblances with Drew and Grimes's (1987) research, who find that these techniques are used to garner a higher understanding and auditory recall of the content. Using repetition equally has parallels with Barthes (1972) claims that repetition helps decipher myths.

The specific words within the Nashid in the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan[59] and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan[60] video provide further insights in relation to the message and meaning. It portrays a sense of redemption; asks for forgiveness, shows enlightenment, calls for others to join, while also speaking as a collective, and appeals to an alternative way for the future (that is better than the existing one). They reinforce this by the image of three people sitting under a tree, looking relaxed, per Fig. 7.1. Through this simple scene, several emotional triggers or cues are embedded, such as those around pity, shame, hope, and commitment. This is not achieved through image alone, but through a combination of multimodalities all interacting in unison to influence the viewers to respond and 'rise'. The music acts in concert with the images in which it is situated, also reinforcing the message and, therefore, the meaning (Kress, 2011). This combination provides insights through the visual about the meaning. Despite the calm framing of the scene within the video, weapons are in proximity suggesting the men are ready for what might come. The framing (the visual display of weapons) is noteworthy when viewed in parallel to Meiches (2013) who notes a poignant relationship between weapons and desire; thus, the weapons and framing link the words and message of the Nashid to emotional desires evoked in the viewer. This is also a comparable framing to other videos reviewed, associated with ISIS and similar organisations, which serves as an intervisual mechanism of linking the videos as well and, by association, the groups. Creating an association with other videos is worth highlighting, because if one was not aware of what was being sung or what group the video came from, these visual consistencies along with watermarks make it clear to those in the know, as to the groups represented;

[59] Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan is the largest militant organisation in Pakistan, and is said to represent the umbrella group of the Pakistani Taliban.

[60] The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan is a Salafi-jihadist militant organisation operating in Central Asia.

moreover, these mechanisms are also used to reinforce legitimacy and authority. VOs commonly utilised this in their videos.

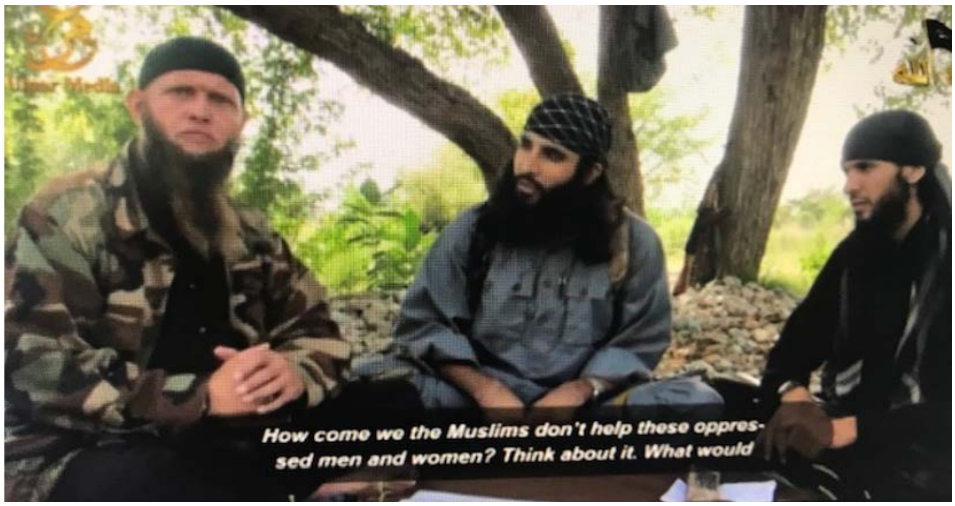


Figure 7-1 Screenshot taken from an extremist video of a male singing a Nashid

The next example was referenced in the previous chapter, but it is noteworthy in the context of multimodalities, too. Sons of Odin use an approach that resembles that of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan video exploiting the words of a song to evoke. In the Sons of Odin case, they use Sounds of Silence (Simon and Garfunkel, 1965) as a soundtrack to their video. It is very poignant, using both the words and the tempo of the song to evoke emotions of fear, anger, disbelief, outrage, and sorrow, to name a few. These findings echo the growing research on music emotion recognition, which finds that "music not only conveys emotion, but can also modulate a listener's mood" (Song, Dixon, and Pearce, 2012, p. 523). In the case of the Sons of Odin video, the adoption of the technique of montage, rather than straightforward continuous footage, enhances this. Montage is more than a simple combination of image and music. It is a technique used to combine several images, which together influence a meaning that is greater than the sum of the images (Eisenstein, 1988; Bazalgette and Buckingham, 2013). Adding the aural (in this case music) welds the meaning derived from the combination of images to the music, resulting in an interconnectedness between both. Eisenstein (1988) refers to this as *overtonal montage*. This approach advances a story quickly and effectively, conveys a lot of information at once, heightens tension, compares, and contrasts, reveals character, and combines multiple storylines. It creates a powerful and emotive combination (Vernallis, 2004). This is present in the video, for example, as the words of the song "and the people bowed and prayed to the neon god they made" are sang, the images per Fig. 7.2 are presented, suggesting that the public have brought this on themselves.

Figure 7-2 Screenshots from a Sons of Odin video

As the line “the sign flashed out its warning in that word that it was forming” is sung, the images per Fig. 7.3 are presented, implying that there have been plenty of signs, but people have ignored them.

Figure 7-3 Screenshots from a Sons of Odin video

This series of images with the music tries to evoke a sense of awareness, urgency, and shock in the viewer, and encourage them to act and not to be complacent. Similarly, when the song ends with the words “and whispered in the sound of silence”, the music note is held, and then a melodic tune is played as the pictures (per Fig. 7.4) of fallen Canadian soldiers are shown. The tempo then builds back up again, as a list of events which the Sons of Odin attribute to a Muslim perpetrator is presented on the screen. The text ‘Islam is a religion of peace’ is written beside the list, as if written sarcastically, given that Muslims were the alleged perpetrators in these events; thus, written as if to provoke.

Figure 7-4 Screenshots taken from the end of the Sons of Odin video

A related observation is made in the images of the fallen soldiers presented at the end of the video. One image seems to be of a mercenary rather than a Canadian Soldier: a subtle means of demonstrating the role of mercenaries as akin to that of soldiers. In that way, illustrating their authority in the fight against the enemy. It is worth noting that during the writing up phase, a Canadian military video was found (not in the dataset), which was accompanied by the same song (Sounds of Silence). Similar to intervisual associations, the significance of its dual use (by extremists and the military) may indicate a purposefully employed mechanism to link the two, both in terms of association (authority and credibility) but also in respect of achieving a comparable emotional

response when viewing the two. To confirm either or both would require further investigation but serve as an interesting example of how easy it can be to link two or more videos, with or without the consent (or even knowledge) of the original creator.

The importance of music was highlighted by Newman (2019) in US and Canadian military recruitment videos, "music helps to invoke these feelings by embodying, 'driving, excited anticipation', infusing a sense of the 'hopeful and heroic' as well as the 'triumphant', and 'patriotic'" (p. 2). Equivalent observations were made in the military videos reviewed. The most pertinent example is from an Indian military video, which serves to glorify the myth of nation and evoke the principle of authority, emotions of patriotism, and a sense of duty. A male soldier acting as the narrator in an audio track accompanying the images states "I am the son to two mothers, one bore me, but the other, my country she made me, and every time she calls I shall and I should heed...". This was reinforced at this point through music; a female singer in a melodic voice gives the impression that she is the voice of his nation. It is also supported by images that suggest the young man has heard the call to join and is now in training (Fig. 7.5). This combination of spoken word and music is powerful and is much more potent than just speech (i.e., absent music), echoing Zander's (2006) observations in this regard.

Figure 7-5 Screenshots taken from an Indian military video

In another example, the Irish military uses montage and music to evoke suspense. A drumbeat accompanies a quick succession of images of a female who is involved in sport and implies that the military is exactly what she has been training for. Similar to the Brazilian and Canadian military videos, this (the Irish military video) exemplifies the use of quick cuts (multiple images presented in quick succession) and music within an audio track to create the impression that time passes quickly, and the story advances, but without leaving the audience behind. The tempo of the music reinforces this. The beat gets faster as the scenes progress, with the crescendo marking the change from civilian life to military life, marked additionally with the words (presented in white on a black screen), "YOU'VE BEEN TRAINING ALL YOUR LIFE FOR THIS JOB". Images accompany this musical pattern, like those depicted in Fig. 7.6. This video and montage attempt to evoke the principle of consensus or social proof, through images of the female with a sports team, and suggests the military offers the same opportunity.

Figure 7-6 Screenshots from an Irish military video with cues about belonging and identity

Another example of the tempo of the music being adopted in concert to reinforce words and images comes from an Animal Liberation Front[61] video (Fig. 7.7). An audio track accompanies the images, in this case a song, which includes the words:

> They love the taste of blood. Now I don't know what that means, but I know that I mean it. Maybe they're as evil as they seem. Or maybe I only look out the window when it's scenic. Atmosphere finally made a good record. Yeah right, that shit almost sounds convincing. The last time I felt as sick and contradictive as this Was the last time we played a show in Cinnci' "Get real" they tell me. If only they knew how real this life really gets".

Figure 7-7 Screenshots from an Animal Liberation video depicting images of suffering animals

This ensemble serves to portray an emotional conflict in the viewer; the pain and suffering of animals versus the lethargy of people to act, as if to suggest only few can see this suffering; evoking thought in the viewer as to which one they are; thus, creating uncertainty.

The role of music in gang videos is widely researched, especially in drill videos, given their perceived relationship with crime and violence. Ilan (2020) notes that many of the gangs rap about their role in

[61] Animal Liberation Front is a loose global network of animal rights extremists who are often described as ecoterrorists.

criminality within these videos. While this may be true, as evident in a Moscow 17 (Fig. 7.8) gang video in the words “Them boys they’re tramps, attack and I splash, kran got changed, opp boy get cheffed, blade in and out but them man sang”, the possibility that these videos equally serve as a direct means of communication between gangs should not be dismissed. For example, in a video from the Black Disciple Killers gang, they state “this is not a dis song, this is just the message”. As noted, however, these videos are also likely to have other meanings and motivations (Forrest, 2020). A lot is being said in the Moscow 17 statement above, for example, they refer to a member of an opposition group getting stabbed and informing to the police. This is reflected in the rest of the song lyrics:

> Them man they’re know for the rapping, the other side them known for the dashing, Moscow’s we’re known for the stabbings, they older G’s them known for the clapping, broad day niggas know we’re active, free rampz in the can he’s spazzing, screw lose my bro he’ll whack him, we got that nigga down on a mad thing, 50 guys in the can soon landing, JB went cause he splashed him, niggas know I’m up front like Rashford, on a pitch man I move like a Hazard. Zone 2 what where they’re actors, 17 we’re down for the action… [62].

Figure 7-8 Screenshots from a Moscow 17 Drill video depicting scenes during the rap

The Moscow 17 rap not only provides insights about violence but also on the gang itself, the gang environment in that neighbourhood, opposition groups, and differences between youth and older gangs. It portrays a sense of belonging to a group, and to a wider gang culture, made up of many other different yet equivalent groups. These observations resemble the work of Smith, Rush, and Burton (2013) who differentiate between youth and adult gangs, as is done here: “Moscow’s we’re known for the stabbings, they older G’s them known for the clapping”, highlighting a distinct weapon of choice between the two. It also has parallels with Jacky (2014) who notes that Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) hip hop culture helps consolidate their identity and sense of belonging within community:

> Mara Salvatrucha hip hop reflects violence, yes, but it also articulates the poverty and hardship that this marginalized community experiences, while also asserting the notion that banding together as a group provides the only real protection from these many societal ills that threaten to wipe them out (Jacky, 2014, p. 4)

[62] Drill dictionary: Active – dependable associate – involved in gang activities; Can – prison; Cheffed (up) – stabbed, killed; Clap – attack, shoot; Dipped – stabbed; Landing – prison, cell; OJ – ‘on job’, productive and successful in street activities; Opps – enemies; Opp-block – enemy territory; Splash, splash up, splash down – stab; Trap – neighbourhood, ‘ghetto’, area where drugs are sold, temporary location for dealing drugs; Trapping – hanging out, selling drugs or waiting for buyers to contact (Thorne, 2018).

Lauger and Densley (2018) contend that a good rap video can act as a message to (fiercely) warn off competitors and, in so doing, help create 'brand' recognition for the gang. Densely (2020) suggests:

> Videos primarily offer a means of enhancing personal reputations and pursuing expressive goals such as identity, friendship, and (in the case of "diss tracks") revenge that are separate from instrumental concerns (Storrod and Densley, 2017). But the right video at the right time can further the material interests of the gang, both in terms of enhancing its collective reputation and, in rare cases where they go viral and attract subscribers, through ad views (p. 9)

As a result, the findings here in relation to what gangs use their videos for have parallels with those of Patton, et al. (2016). While drill videos are likely to reflect the members' backgrounds (the reality of marginalised youth), their creative expression is also likely to include a mix of fantasy and reality, given that myth-making is recognised in gang culture (Howell, 2007; Lauger, 2012; Van Hellemont and Densley, 2019). This might suggest that drill videos (akin to myths) create the illusion of reality rather than reality itself (Barthes 1972; Zubrzycki, 2011), potentially explaining why a similar trend is observed across all the drill videos analysed. This pattern is also evident in respect of the jihadi videos reviewed. The findings in relation to gangs in the literature, and those made here, also have analogies with those of Pieslak (2017), who finds that Anashid are a means of "enticing recruits, retaining members, and motivating members to action by eliciting emotion," (p. 63); thus, have the potential to increase the amount of aggressive thoughts and feelings (Al Bayati, 2020). They, like drill videos however, are unlikely to be responsible for increased violence and related behaviours in all instances (Lemieux and Nill, 2011). In conclusion, music, therefore, is found to be a mechanism used to support and augment the visual, in a way that enhances feelings of belonging, identity, authority, and legitimacy, which contributes to the creation of an environment conducive to activating the principles of persuasion, whilst giving the illusion of being part of something bigger and unique (entitativity), as well. Although individual cases of groups using music are discussed above, there was a consistent use of music across all four groups. PMC/Mercenary videos were the least likely to include music in their videos, at 60%, while extremist groups used music in nearly 70% of their videos, gangs 80% and military 90%.

Spoken word

The other method of audio widely observed within the videos was spoken word (not in the poetic sense, rather the words spoken). Spoken word was found in 45% of gang videos, 65% of extremist and military videos, while it was present in 87% of PMC videos. Two key styles were predominately used, that of a narrator telling a story throughout the video, in which they spoke and informed the viewer, in contrast to a more personal style where the speaker spoke directly to the viewer. The former is exemplified in a US Marine video, depicted in Fig. 7.9. It uses a narrator speaking about the unit, not directly to the viewer. The narrator states, "It is not just the ships, the armour or the aircraft, it's something more, it's the will to fight, and determination to win, found inside each and every marine, that answers a nation's call." The video gives off the impression this is a unit that does not need to ask people to join, because those that join and answer the nations call are driven by something within them, not by a call for an individual or a group, or because of technology, weapons, and a desire to fight. They do so out of an inner sense of duty to their country. This might suggest an awareness of Cialdini's principles, which highlight a sense of duty as an excellent trigger of persuasion. The approach taken in the Marine video also has parallels with the work of MacKenzie (2020) who notes that "the

band of brothers myth [is] an established and symbolic story that presents male military units as elite, exceptional, and essential" (p. 341), often "typically associated with positive characteristics of loyalty, camaraderie, courage under fire and indescribable bonds" (MacKenzie, 2020, p. 353). In this manner, the video plays on principles of consensus and scarcity (Cialdini, 2006), and emotions associated with patriotism to evoke action.

Figure 7-9 Screenshots from a US Marine video with cues to evoke a sense of patriotism and duty

A matching approach was observed in the PMC videos. For example, in an International Revolutionary People's Guerrilla Forces (IRPGF) video, the narrator framed their speech about the current threat to the region of Rojava, linking it to *historically* significant events to illustrate the magnitude of the current threat. While they do not directly ask for support or call for action, nor engage openly with the viewer, they declare their own struggle, whilst also linking it to a range of other groups. This is done to give the impression of legitimacy by association, reinforced through flags, symbols, etc. (Fig. 6.10 and 6.15).

> The International Revolutionary People's Guerrilla Forces (IRPGF) are an armed, self-organized and horizontal militant group, working to defend different social revolutions around the world, directly attacking Capital and the State, advancing the cause of anarchism. We are committed to anti-fascists, anti-capitalists, anti-imperialists, against all forms of patriarchy and hierarchies. We also announce our affiliation with the International Freedom Battalion and declare our support and alliance with the YPJ, YPG, PKK, Antifascist International Tabur (AIT) and with members of the International Freedom Battalion…

Figure 7-10 Screenshot of a scene in an ISIS video, where the speaker is addressing the viewer

In contrast, a video from ISIS (per Fig. 7.10) gives a pertinent insight into the use of spoken word to influence and persuade. Individuals speak directly to the viewer. After some words of Arabic at the opening, a male starts with the words "Oh you who believe answer the call of Allah and his messenger when he calls you, to what gives you life". Straight away a request is made of the viewer, singling them out as 'true believers' (Hoffer, 1951). Within the video, however, the speaker tests this, indirectly, in saying:

> It was said that when it comes to jihad there are two types of people, those who will find every single excuse to come to jihad, and those who will find every single excuse not to come to jihad. For those who want to come to jihad and Hijra, there are many, many excuses, there are many reasons to come to jihad, in the Sham especially. If you are fighting to make Allah's word the highest, if you are fighting to establish a Khalifah, then here in the Sham there is a state already doing that, there is a state.

This statement, while subtle, provides the viewer with a cue to question which one of the two types of people they are, an approach that has likeness to that used by the Animal Liberation Front. The speaker then makes it personal again and offers the viewer an opportunity to mitigate this uncertainty through verbal cues:

> Look around you as you are watching this video and ask yourself if this is what I have selected, what I have chosen instead of Jannah, when you know your brothers are on the front lines, facing the bullets, the bombs and everything is the enemy of Allah, while you are sitting in comfort, while you are sleeping, while you are going shopping, they are giving their blood, they are sleeping on the floor, sleeping in the back of trucks, know that if you fear death, know that death will reach you anyway (ISIS video)

The speaker additionally gives the viewer the sense that he can be part of something bigger than himself, reinforced by the words:

> We just want to meet our lord. We just want to give our blood and us our bodies as a bridge to the Khalifa. The Khalifa is close, so ask yourself either you can be here in these golden days, you can be here in these golden times, or you can be on the outside commentating, it is your choice (ISIS video)

Talking in this manner, directed at the viewer, seeks to create a sense of legitimacy in the words of the speaker. He does not raise his voice, and sits peacefully as he speaks, giving the audience cues to think without force or inducement, rather evoking emotions personal to the viewer with the ultimate aim being to trigger him to join. This is a consistent framing to that used in the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan

and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan video. The speaker does this by attempting to activate the principles of reciprocity, authority, and consensus, and evokes a sense of duty (Cialdini, 2006). The focus here is on the words and the dialogue between the viewer and the speaker. Words presented on the screen support the verbal, like subtitles. Similar to that proposed by Mehran, et al. (2021) the combination of the words of the narrator and the text appearing on the screen seem to be equally important. This may indicate an awareness that "less than 20 percent of what gets communicated in our society is verbal" (Reynolds and Whitlark, 1995, p. 16). It might also reflect a growing shift in using on-screen text and subtitles, a trend present in many of the videos. This is not surprising given claims that up to 85% of Facebook videos, for example, are watched without sound; thus, making subtitles important (Davis, 2019). The literature reinforces these claims, reporting that people are now watching subtitled content more than ever before (Szarkowska, 2018). The words on the screen, therefore, are not just placed within the videos for those who have hearing impairments, but on-screen text is viewed as an important way of enhancing entertainment and also a means of making content reach a broader audience. On-screen text is informative, helpful, understandable, dynamic, and a good communication mode, and when combined with other modes, serves to reinforce both message and meaning.

With this ISIS video, the content creator appears confident that the information is in the words (spoken and the visual), hence applying a very simple consistent background image (a small group of men, dressed similarly). This approach is common across all VOs, but when used in gang videos it was where a gang or gang member was directing a threat to an individual or gang. The framing of these videos, the spoken word aimed directly at the viewer, and the attempts to activate Cialdini's (2006) principles of persuasion resonate with the work of Crone (2020), who found:

> The ISIS videos interact with their audience in a very explicit manner, in which the male protagonist solicits and interpellates the spectator directly, looking into the camera and summoning the 'dear brothers' or 'families' to leave their comfortable, materialistic lives behind and join ISIS. A young ISIS sympathizer may, of course, be rationally and emotionally affected by the rhetorical harangue, be persuaded by the arguments and feel guilty for sitting at home doing nothing. Yet the aesthetic sense perception of the videos will not only stir processes of cognition and emotion, but also enable gendered forms of imagination, dream, desire and identification (p. 589).

The Norwegian military video uses a related approach to evoke a sense of duty (Cialdini, 2006), depicted in Fig. 7.11. They lead the viewer into the video and then embed visual and verbal cues to bring the viewer into the moment, this time through a narrator:

> You are facing a moment like this now, a moment that defines you as a person, you know that a lot of people before you have given a lot, and someone has given everything so that you can live as a safe person in a free country…. So, take a moment and think about what you think is worth defending. Is it the family, friends, nature? Or is it the freedom to think, believe and love who you want. Yes, we have a lot of nice things in this country that are worth defending (Norwegian military video, 2019).

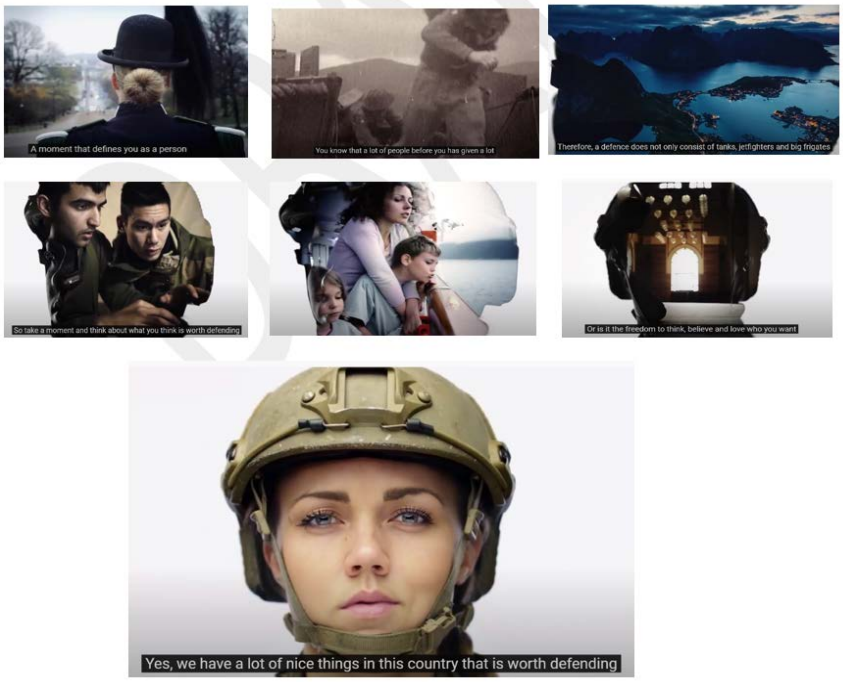


Figure 7-11 Screenshots from a Norwegian military videos evoking a sense of duty and pride

Similar to the importance of the munshid in respect of a Nashid, the selection of the *narrator* is important, because "the narrator has the function of establishing a representational framework within which the narrated events may be understood as truly reported rather than as fiction or invention" (Cappa, Pinelli, Maiolini, and Leone, 2020, p. 6). Given that in many cases, the narrative being portrayed within the video is one that intertwines fiction and reality (once again akin to gang drill videos), the credibility of the message depends significantly on the identity of the narrator. Using the narrators for voice-overs, whether they be in words or song, are not surprising given that their use is a known technique to create "a more natural feel to the video production, narrating the product or service that is in the video for the audience to properly understand what it is. With the appropriate execution voice-over narrators can be highly successful in how it creates an added feature to the video that describes it in a different tone and brings the story to life" (Ciccarelli, 2013, n.p.). The use of a narrator itself, therefore, acts as another means of influencing meaning and message.

Unlike the first two videos examined here (the US Marine and IRPGF video), the Norwegian military video and the ISIS videos use (predominantly) a second person narrator style. This is noteworthy in the context of the literature. Vosmeer, Roth, and Koenitz (2017) observe that this technique provides an effective means of involving and engaging the viewer in the narrative that is being portrayed:

> With the second person perspective, however, a majority of the respondents experienced a strong sense of presence. They indicated that in this version, the visual perspective that was provided by the surround video content seemed to relate closely to the perspective that was given by the voice-over narration. This version also triggered them to look around and actively engage with the surround video content (Vosmeer, Roth and Koenitz, 2017, p. 226)

Combat 18[63] use a very similar style but in their case, they use music instead of spoken word. The approach by them is a lot more confrontational and forceful, however, consistent with the ISIS videos

[63] This is the only video that provided clear instructions like this and was taken down about 9 months after it was found.

reviewed, Combat 18 use a simple visual; a static image of the Swastika, with rolling text (Fig. 6.9). At the same time, a male sings in a manner resembling heavy metal music. The rolling text and the song seem somewhat in conflict for the attention of the viewer. The song's words state:

> What's the point of hatred in front of your TV, what's the point in showing anger when no one else can see? What's the point in complaining when no one can hear? There are many like you. The end of our race is near…. what do you do, when you write words about the revolution, people like you are the problem, not the solution? We need action, action, action, action not words. Only direct action can save our races future. Do whatever it takes to secure the *fourteen words*[64]…

The singer is provocative towards the viewer. He suggests that inaction or apathy is part of the problem (similar to the Animal Liberation Front and ISIS video) as if to evoke feelings of guilt within the viewer to induce action. In case it works, the rolling text provides justification and advice for the viewer. This is less confrontational and starts with information on what Direct Action is and then offers advice to anyone contemplating action:

> The level of precaution to be taken by anyone contemplating any form of direct action can not be over-estimated. The enemy will do everything in its power to prevent it. Anyone contemplating direct action must bear this in mind and take steps possible to minimise their vulnerability to the enemy's forces. The most effective way to do this is to operate alone and speak to no one about your plans - 'the lone wolf' tactic. The 'lone wolf tactic is by far the most secure approach…… The only alternative to the 'lone wolf' tactic is to form an active cell of comrades in which information and responsibilities are shared…

Conflict between the music and the rolling text might demonstrate an attempt to portray two contrasting messages simultaneously, matching the emotional technique predominantly discussed. If Drew and Grimes (1987) and Posner, Nissen and Klein's (1976) assertions hold (viewers recall more visual than textual information when the information is presented in two or more modes), it may show that Combat 18 actively stimulate the audience in a manner to focus on one instead of the other. It is difficult to decipher which may be the dominant in this case, given that the research that is available focuses on visual and textual information (Winkler and Pieslak, 2018; Mehran, et al. 2021), rather than what is being used here (visual text and audio); thus, more research in this area may be worthwhile.

It is asserted, nonetheless, through the illustration of the examples above that the spoken word acts as both a direct and indirect cue to the viewer to evoke an emotional response, often reinforced through the visual. It is the position taken here that it is the explicit, implicit, and partial visual cues, coupled with non-visual cues (delivered through multimodalities) that result in a vernacular in which VOs can evoke emotions, and as noted by Song, Dixon, and Pearce (2012), the listener's mood. The vivid and powerful modes act as stimuli which are easier to remember and have a greater influence on decisions made (Nisbett and Ross 1980; Taylor and Fiske, 1978). This shares resemblances with the work of Appiah (2006) and Kelley (1989) who note that:

> Vivid stimuli contain two properties that make them more persuasive: 1) attentional cues (e.g., audio, pictures, motion) which direct the processor's attention; and 2) elaborative cues

[64] "14 Words" is a reference to the most popular white supremacist slogan in the world: "We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children."

> that facilitate cognitive elaboration such that the vivid stimuli are more available for making decisions (Appiah, 2006, p. 75)

These rich cues are relevant in any judgment made about the message or product being mentioned (in this case, recruitment, and call to action) (Kisielius and Sternthal, 1986). The judgement is easier because the different modes are likely to heighten the impact of the embedded cues. This is "because of the greater richness in cues in audio-visual messages than in messages from other presentation formats" (Appiah, 2006, p. 75).

Conclusion

This chapter draws from advertising and communications to examine how multimodalities are used to reinforce the visual and to increase their persuasive impact. It explores two audio examples, music and the spoken word, to exemplify this. There is consistency with regard to the use of music and spoken word across all four VOs, with some level of divergence amongst VOs in terms of frequency. For example, gangs use music at a frequency similar to extremists and military but use spoken word less than any of the four VOs. In contrast, PMC/Mercenaries use music less frequently than any other group but use spoken word at a similar frequency to extremists and military. The chapter's findings echo those of Zelizer's (2004) and Griffin (2004), who contend that multimodal components serve as hooks on which to frame narratives and cues. It empirically demonstrates that the message within VOs videos benefits from a multimodal format (visual and audio), in a manner that is similar to techniques used by advertisers (Appiah, 2006). This has comparisons to the work of Belch and Belch (2001) who note that videos (because of their multimodal abilities) are an effective means to "convey a mood or image for a brand as well as to develop emotional or entertaining appeals that help make a dull product appear more interesting" (p. 354). Examining multimodalities from this dynamic perspective reveals how VOs ensure their content reinforces group identity, belonging, authority, and legitimacy. What it does not sufficiently do, however, is adequately discuss how narratives and specific themes are used to frame this content, which Chapter Eight will do. It employs the example of masculinity (specifically as depicted through music and geography) to show how VOs structure and frame their content to make it appealing (primarily, to males) and in so doing build on Zelizer's (2004) and Griffin (2004) assertions that modal components serve as hooks on which to frame narratives; thus, drawing together the last element of the argument of this dissertation.

Chapter 8 Masculinities in Messaging and Meaning

We still don't know how to talk about masculinities (Kimmel, 2010, p.2)

Introduction

In data littered with images of males, grouped together, standing close, touching, and hugging each other, depicting male brotherhood, and comradeship, an assertion that VOs use themes of masculinity to call viewers to action is not ground-breaking, novel, or innovative. In fact, it is well-known masculinities play a significant role in VOs and their activities. Cowen and Siciliano (2011) note "military markets itself through radicalised hyper-masculinities" (p. 1529), seeking to recruit the very people that police pursue, active, aggressive, and powerful radicalised individuals. Similar findings have been made in relation to gangs and extremist, Aumair and Warren (1994) regarding gangs, Kinnvall (2015) to far-right, and Pearson (2018) to ISIS. This is not disputed, so is not being argued here per se. Rather, given learning from advertising, it is contended that the *content* used by all four VOs within their videos is primarily masculine, illustrated through the choice of modes used within, exemplified here through music and geography: thus, once again showing the complex dynamics behind content creation and modality decision making. It is argued these elements (amongst others) are used to socially construct a reality for the viewer, not one that reflects reality as it is, but one that evokes a response. Like the use of myths, Awan, Hoskins, and O'Loughlin (2011) highlight this in the context of the internet and its role in the construction of a hyper-reality, in which the phenomenon of radicalisation appears to be more real than reality itself. It is the contention of this chapter that VOs use masculinity to further this *reality,* and in so doing create an environment conducive to persuasion.

It is posited, however, the audience targeted through the VOs' videos is not, as suggested by Cowen and Siciliano (2011), solely hyper-masculinised males (although that is a portion) rather their target audience is that of all males. To illustrate this, the chapter provides a more in-depth analysis of issues raised in the theory chapter and the four previous chapters, demonstrating how VOs use masculinity as a theme in which they frame both message and meaning. It draws from advertising and communications to show that certain modes are effective not only to communicate and engage but also to provide hooks for targeting a particular group, males. Given this is not a reception study, it does not suggest how this theme is received, but it proposes plausible reasons it is used. For example, VOs perceive masculinity (amongst other things, such as nation and hero) as a useful cue to portray dominance and entitativity within their videos; demonstrated through an interrelationship between all three (nation, hero, and masculinity). It does this, whilst drawing briefly on elements from the previous chapters (branding, myths, the audience, and modalities) to illustrate how masculinity is depicted, augmented, intertwined, or enhanced, within these videos; thus asserting that it is a theme that transcends nearly all elements of VOs' visual strategies.

Like audience segmentation, the role of masculinities in messaging and meaning was assessed independent of the codebook. As noted, it was well expected that these videos would contain a higher rate of males than females, which did emerge in the videos. The most frequent presence of females was evident in military videos, and that was only in 53%. It was not envisaged, however, that the actual location in which the videos were filmed, the angles, framing, and music for example, would serve so significantly as cues influencing both message and meaning. All of which having an impact on depicting an air of masculinity in the content.

Techniques of masculinities in advertising and the videos

To view these videos solely from what one sees when you look at them is to miss the message of this research. It derives meaning as much from within the embedded cues and multimodalities, as it does from the visuals. It is worth exploring this element further, and masculinities serve as a useful concept to do this. This chapter largely considers masculinity from the viewpoint of advertising, given that research shows, to a strong degree, that "gender is probably the social resource that is used most by advertisers" (Jhally 1990, p. 135). Promoting the theme of masculinity is important in this context (advertising), not because it represents an unmediated reflection of our social reality (mediation is clear within these videos and content creation), but because "they have the power and scope to foreground culturally accepted social relations, define sexual norms and provide 'commonsense' understandings about male identity for a contemporary audience" (Feasey, 2009, p. 358). The converse is also true, however, advertising plays a role in creating masculinities, for example, in creating hyper-masculinities (Kilbourne, 1999; Lukas, 2002).

Mosher and Tomkins (1988) introduced the concept of hyper-masculinities. It comprises three elements, callous sexual attitudes towards women, the belief violence is manly, and the experience of danger as exciting. It often portrays an extreme or overt form of the masculine gender, habitually depicted through factors like toughness, violence, dangerousness, and a harsh attitude toward women and sex (Zaitchik and Mosher, 1993). To be a hyper-masculine male, one needs to inhibit or at least hide his emotions, or expression of fear, distress, and shame (Mosher and Sirkin 1984; Zaitchik and Mosher, 1993). This culminates to present the image of a man who is powerful and dominant, not only in his interactions with men and women but also with the surrounding environment (Mosher and Tomkins, 1988). An example of this in relation to extremism is clear in the words of Björn Höcke, the chairperson of the Alternative for Germany-Thuringia (AfD) who stated at a demonstration, "We must rediscover our masculinity. Because only if we rediscover our masculinity do we become manly. And only if we become manly do we become fortified, and we must become fortified, dear friends!" (Berg, 2019, p. 81).

Unsurprisingly, many of the videos depict images of hyper-masculine males, displayed stereotypically as strong, tough males, capable of using violence. Several examples are used to illuminate this in Fig. 8.1, which presents screenshots taken from each VO: all of masked men. The first image is from an extremist video, in which a male gives a statement about the organisation, the second is from a PMC/mercenary, third another extremist group, the fourth, a gang, and finally, the military. The style was chosen as it is consistent across all VOs, using images of men wearing balaclavas or masks to hide their face, and sometimes even hands. Weapons were prevalent in many of the images, as were consistencies in uniform (or at least uniformity), linking identity and belonging to the hyper-masculine group. Using uniform and masks allows individuals to move as one anonymous unit; however, as noted by Cassidy and Stevenson (2008) these masks and poses personify a hyper-masculinity, but the hyper-masculinity may (like a mask) hide the realities of these people and their emotions.

Figure 8-1 Screenshots taken from all VOs to depict hyper-masculinised content

There are problems with these types of images as mechanisms of recruitment and call to action. Chief amongst them is it implies such traits and behaviours are acceptable and the norm (Vokey, Tefft, and Tysiaczny, 2013). This type of acceptability ignores the reality behind the images, or masks, as noted by Cassidy and Stevenson (2008). That said, it is problematic to assume it is solely advertising that is driving these hyper-masculine ideas, especially given few if any studies have shown cause and effect (Vokey, et al., 2013). Given male dominance in the advertising market for years (as both buyers and sellers), they may be driving such depictions? Further to the uncertainty in this area, advertisements depicting men in this way are disturbing, because such portrayals do more than sell products (Vokey, et al., 2013). They perpetuate stereotypes and present behavioural norms (Allan and Coltrane, 1996; Das, 2010; Furnham and Mak, 1999; Paek, Nelson, and Vilela, 2010). This is clear in the videos, with many of them conforming to stereotype. A common example of it in far-right videos is the portrayal of migrants as problematic, ruining society, and changing the idea of what it means to be a nation. Fig. 8.2 illustrates this from a True Blue Crew video, in which Muslims and migrants are demonised, and it is alluded to that they cause all the problems Australia faces. Through this process, the content creators emasculate immigrants and minority communities through their portrayal of such groups as different, as responsible for the ruination of society, and as bodies with limited control and power, in order to legitimise themselves and their cause. They do this by using images of might and strength when talking about true Australians (their perception of), and images that imply the *other* is weak. In

so doing, they (like the Egyptian military video) also communicate clearly who they are reaching out to in relation to recruitment and who they are not.

Figure 8-2 Screenshots taken from a True Blue Crew video, which demonise foreigners

Advertising does not solely provide a portrayal of hyper masculinised ideals, rather it also includes a representation of the hegemonic male, which again unsurprisingly is present in the videos. The term hegemonic masculinity was coined by Connell (1995), and it is used to depict:

> The configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women (Connell, 1995, p. 77)

Kimmel (2004) simplified this definition to 'a man in power, a man with power, and a man of power' (p. 184). Here, masculinity is less about gender and more about who has the power and who gets to dominate it over whom (Spillar, 2013). This display of masculinity illustrates that the authority and ability to get things done, without interference from others, signifying "with or without conscious awareness (...) that one possesses the capacities to make things happen and to resist being dominated by others" (Schröck and Schwalbe, 2009, p. 280). In the Third Reich, as in many militarised societies, the soldier was tough, aggressive, and in control of his body, mind, and psyche (Kühne, 2018), which exemplified the hegemonic or ideal man. Portrayals of hegemonic males were observed within the videos, in contrast to an absence of women. Where females were present, they were depicted in positions of subservience. This serves to show that the seat of power is in the hands of males. An example of this is illustrated in Fig. 8.3, through screenshots taken from a military video. A male leaves home to join, leaving behind him his mother, wife, and child. All are depicted in emotionally charged scenes, while the male soldier holds his emotions in check.

Figure 8-3 Screenshots from a Chinese military video used to depict hegemonic masculinity

Of late, greater attention has been given to military masculinities, especially relating to hegemonic military masculinity, depicted in the "emotionally constrained, physically fit combat soldier" (Chisholm and Tidy, 2017, p. 101). This type of masculinity was also present in the videos. Fig. 8.4 is a screenshot from a Vietnamese military video, showing a young male soldier getting ready to climb and cross barbed wire. The scene serves to elicit the image of a brave, tough soldier, who controls both his body and mind, and will suffer pain to show commitment.

Figure 8-4 Screenshot from a Vietnamese military video presenting a hegemonic young soldier

These two forms of masculinity resonate within many of the videos, and while they may only represent a very small number of men in society, 'this does not ... lessen its credibility as a standard of masculinity to which men are supposed to aspire' (MacKinnon, 2003, p. 115); therefore, examples of both serve as a reminder to its potency as a concept, in VOs membership and recruitment. On analysis

of the videos, however, it is observed that these two portrayals do not depict the extent of masculinity within those analysed, an analogous observation to Jester's (2019). Some videos also portray masculinities in a manner similar to the theory of hybrid masculinities; "the selective incorporation of elements of identity typically associated with various marginalized and subordinated masculinities and—at times–femininities into privileged men's gender performances and identities" (Bridges and Pascoe, 2014, p. 246).

Three key elements are incorporated in the term hybrid masculinities:

> (i) symbolically distance men from hegemonic masculinity; (ii) situate the masculinities available to young, White, heterosexual men as somehow less meaningful than the masculinities associated with various marginalized and subordinated Others; and (iii) fortify existing social and symbolic boundaries in ways that often work to conceal systems of power and inequality in historically new ways (Bridges and Pascoe, 2014, p. 246)

The presence of hybrid masculinities is most clear in military videos, illustrated through two examples. First, presented through women seeking to mask former gendered inequalities within the military. Second, through the portrayal of soldiers as sensitive, caring, and emotionally charged. In the former, they often portray women in roles of power to show a polite nod (though not meaningful) to including women in the military. Where included, they routinely distance these females from being portrayed from the perspective of hyper and hegemonic forms of masculinity. This observation resembles the work of Ryan (2012), who found that during WW2 military recruitment posters aimed to present women in the military favourably, so it appealed to females while reassuring their families that it was an honourable role. This is present in the videos, and while those that do (primarily military and PMC/mercenaries) do not shy away from positioning women in uniform, there are few images of women in battle or conflict. Females are largely portrayed in training, medical, or engineering roles. For example, Fig. 8.5 is from a Canadian military video, which depicts a female soldier as a medic. Despite challenging gender roles by having a female in military uniform, the content creators play it safe in relation to the roles given, emasculating the role of a military medic to a carer role.

Figure 8-5 Screenshots from a Canadian military video, challenging hyper-masculinised identities

A challenge to images of females in military uniform came in a far-right video (Fig. 8.6), which depicted a high-ranking female in uniform. Instead of this image being used to challenge the traditional perception of the military, it challenged the correctness of a Muslim woman holding this role; thus, not only questioning gender, but likewise ethnicity and religion. The image came alongside the question, 'is this what we want to see?'. For many the answer would be yes, but in this video the cues

were positioned to elicit a negative response. Again, demonstrating power and legitimacy by delegitimising females and minority groups.

Figure 8-6 A screenshot of a female Navy Officer

Challenging hyper or hegemonic masculinity within VOs, was not only present in relation to females, however. In many other cases this was a strategic approach, one which was part of a competing narrative, not a complete replacement. Examples of this were present in all the VOs videos, except for gangs. The frequency of use was largely consistent across the three VOs, with extremists and the military using such scenes in about 15% of their videos, and PMC/Mercenaries in 14%. Fig. 8.7 illustrates this with screenshots from the military and extremist videos. The first is from an ISIS video of a father lifting his son, presenting him as a carer and family man, rather than as often portrayed (both by them and the west) as a hyper-masculine man. The second is from a Rwandan military video, which serves to reveal the caring nature of male soldiers. Others sought to include visual representations of teamwork, of women in powerful positions, and diverse recruits all used to challenge the idea of a hegemonic masculine male, especially militaristic males.

Figure 8-7 Screenshots challenge the traditional or stereotypical image of masculinity

Many videos illustrate scenes of hyper and hegemonic masculinity through portrayals of aggressive weapons, gunfire, and military operations, coupled with a predominately male character set. Crone (2020) in relation to stereotyped jihadi masculinity notes that masculinity is not located solely:

> In the physical body but produced through the interaction with varied forms of body ornamentation and a series of obligatory gadgets or 'actants'—things that are not mere objects but endowed with agency: military attire, AK-47s, tactical or bulletproof vests, ostentatious watches, cartridge belts and walkie-talkies (p. 583) suggesting this gives them a sense of virility.

Comparable gadgets were evident in the videos, apparent in many of the screenshots presented thus far. In military and PMC/Mercenary videos, they coupled these with air, sea, and land resources, with soldiers/mercenaries jumping from aircraft, patrolling in tanks, and working with precision weapons; as described by Higate (2003) as "boy's toys" (p. 3); thus, portraying VOs as a site for adventure (Platow, et al., 2007 (groups); Basra and Neumann, 2016 (extremists); Pedersen, 2017 (gangs).

Fig. 8.8 refers to screenshots taken from gangs, military, and PMC/mercenary videos, which depict and celebrate 'boy's toys', portrayed by images of cars, planes, and tanks, most frequently framed around masculine scenes. For example, the first screenshot comes from a gang video, in which a group of men pose in front of cars, and motorcycles, chests out, beards, biker style clothing, and sunglasses, personifying maleness, strength, and power. The second screenshot comes from a video from another gang, an Albanian gang in the UK, which starts with a host of images of large, expensive cars, implying gang life provides these 'toys'. The third represents a scene common in military videos, not only of tanks but weapons in live fire, depicting action and battle, to evoke emotions of excitement, fun, and adventure. The fourth is from a PMC/mercenary video, which presents itself as having similar capabilities to the military. The fifth is of a military fighter jet, images of which were common in military videos (in flight, battle, and on the ground).

Figure 8-8 Screenshots used to illustrate 'boy's toys'

Other common pictures used to portray adventure, especially those in the military (but again in the PMC/mercenaries), include images of male soldiers abseiling, jumping from helicopters, as depicted in Fig. 8.9.

Figure 8-9 Screenshots used to depict adventure

These images, with the speed of the camera moving, serve also to provide a heightened feeling of uncertainty and risk, an observation that echoes the work of Pramaggiore and Wallis (2005). Some reinforced risk and uncertainty in scenes of live fire and battle, buttressed with audio to heighten the effect. These observations have parallels with Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005) work, as they note the very depiction of weapons is a symbolic or shorthand reference to hegemonic masculinity. Fig. 8.10 presents screenshots that serve as an example. The first comes from a military video. It presents a male in the back of a helicopter, flying over a desert, with a high calibre weapon. This entire scene personifies masculinity because it typifies images of a masculine military male. The second is from an extremist video and depicts a scene of an armoured personnel carrier (APC) being driven on a road with men dressed in military fatigues on the top waving weapons, all smiling and shouting. The scene

helps to depict displays of traditional masculine military activities, comradeship, and collective, which in turn provides a feeling of belonging (Hogg, et al., 2008) and social proof (Cialdini, 2006).

Figure 8-10 Screenshots from videos of weapons as markers of masculinity

In these examples, and the few contrasting examples, discussed above, it might be easy to dismiss the necessity for mentioning hybrid masculinities, but this is important, because despite, for example, the commonly portrayed hyper and hegemonic masculinity of VOs, many of those involved are "likely to also be embedded in competing, subordinated, marginalized, or oppositional masculinities within the broader social contexts of their lives–such as school, work, home, and broader peer group" (Miller-Idriss, 2018, p. 163). Although this comment was made regarding the far-right, it is likely to apply to all four VOs. Moreover, given the demand for *recruits,* VOs need to be open to attracting a range of personalities. This assertion is like that of Jester (2019) who suggests that there has been a shift from the traditional hegemonic military style the military facilitates, because of the recruitment crisis, which requires them to move beyond the young, white male. This was very clear in the videos, but once again, in a manner which provides contrast and sometimes conflicting signs of masculinity. In no cases, however, did the presence of hybrid masculine scenes completely replace hyper or hegemonic styles.

Traditionally, videos (as many of those analysed did) would have focused on portraying the notion of emotional strength, but some sought to challenge this, contesting the notion of masculinity yet again. A number of the military and ISIS videos referred to mental health and emotions; with the latter claiming that answering their call would be a useful mechanism for coping. Fig. 8.11 presents this in two screenshots. The first is a screenshot from the Italian military video, which depicts a male soldier sitting on the ground with his hands to his face. The words "I have cried, pained, and hoped" are presented on the screen. Here, the Italian military appear to challenge the traditional portrayal of soldiers, by depicting a soldier as emotive. This theme runs throughout this video, albeit alongside some more traditional scenes of hyper and hegemonic masculinity. The second is from a UK military video, and it presents a direct challenge to what society tells you about being a male, versus what the military will show you (both, very masculine). One example of how this is presented is through a contrasting image of a well-built muscle man in a small vest beside a man dressed in military fatigues. The screen is framed in what looks like a desert.

Figure 8-11 Depicts examples of the military challenging what it means to be a soldier

Mental health was also referenced in one of the ISIS videos, through the verbal rather than the visual. In referencing depression, it gave the sense by joining ISIS one could cure it:

> Oh my goodness, living in the west, I know how you feel, I used to live there, in the heart you feel depressed… the cure of depression is in jihad, you feel like you have no honour… the honour of ummah is jihad, all my brothers come to jihad and feel the honour we are feeling, feel the happiness we are feeling (ISIS video)

A claim that group membership is a mechanism to prevent or recover from depression is not as surprising as it may seem. Although recovery is multi-factorial, Richardson and Barkham (2020) find it is often associated with higher levels of perceived social support and group membership. This is like the strategy applied in the UK military video; the military provides the support to overcome life's challenges. As discussed shortly, the link between VOs and their ability to help with depression is also referred to in literature on music (Buesnel, 2020).

It is argued here that these videos contain multiple masculinities within them, which when viewed appear to both compliment and contrast, often in the same video. That said, certain cues, while conflicting with others, are likely to resonate differently with different audience segments. Viewing these four VOs from the perspective of masculinity and their cues relating to them is significant to understanding the visual strategies used, especially given they are targeting the same audience (widening the net). In the context of masculinity, similar claims have been muted before. Cowen and Siciliano (2011) investigated how prisons serve as "surplus populations in security industries, and the

resurgence of public masculinities that seek to both valourize and discipline subjects and populations" (p. 1519). A comparable commentary, framed within the notion of masculinity, was offered by UK Labour MP David Lammy that masculinity, gang culture, and violent extremism were all linked (whatever ideology):

> There is no escaping the fact that terrorist attacks have almost exclusively been led and executed by young men. Males isolated from the rest of society, fixated by a binary world view where there is only faith and infidelity… In one community, the English Defence League has radicalised the anger of disillusioned young white men and channelled it towards immigrant communities they believe are destroying their way of life. In another, a culture that idolises guns, knives and nihilism has drawn predominantly young black men into the world of street gangs… Here, the very notion of masculinity has been bastardised to the extent that in their code, power and respect can only be achieved through intimidation and fear (Pearson, 2018, p. 31)

This framing is important, but masculinity is reinforced not by the group's activities and characteristics alone, but in addition to their use of advertising techniques to engage around. Masculinities are bolstered as much by the content, cues, and modalities used to communicate, as they are in the activities of the VOs. This is an important contribution, as it considers the role of techniques of advertising in depicting themes of belonging, identity, and authority, through an overarching narrative of masculinity. Exploring this is also noteworthy given Pearson's (2018) observation (which is contended here to apply to all four VOs):

> Understanding masculinity in extremism should not just consist of understanding extreme men as isolated from the rest of society, as Lammy suggests. Isolation does not mean norms are not shared. Analysis should consider how extremists share societal norms, as well as deviate from them (p. 14)

Viewing VOs as totally isolated from society renders it difficult to assess the role structural factors may play in this regard. By expanding beyond this, therefore, to consider how VOs draw from other influences (music and geography) to promote masculinity makes a significant scholarly contribution in that respect. These are known not only to influence the VOs examined but also on a broader scale, to society at large. This reaffirms Feasey's (2009) work, which highlights the need to consider *masculinities (*plural) "because this term allows for an examination of the myriad and multiple ways in which maleness can manifest itself" (p. 358). Masculinities here, it is argued, not only refer to hyper, hegemonic, and hybrid but additionally to masculinities as portrayed through sources like music and geography.

Sources of Masculinities

Masculinity in Music

Music is "a resource—it provides affordances—for world building" (Denora, 2003, p. 44) and is known for its capacity to act as a transformative force, something which changes the individual, as often researched in relation to subcultures (Cohen 1972a; Cohen 1972b). This echoes the growing research on music emotion recognition, which finds "music not only conveys emotion, but can also modulate a listener's mood" (Song, Dixon, and Pearce, 2012). It has also been found to be a mnemonic device that helps in learning and memory (Moore, Peterson, O'Shea, McIntosh, and Thaut, 2008). Its role in our lives has been omnipresent for centuries, acting as Krueger (2015) suggests as an emotional

scaffolding because of its ability as "a persistent environmental resource supporting the development of various experiences and embodied practices" (p. 44); thus contributing a cultural value to us and to society, intertwined with notions of male sexuality, control, authority, consumption, and production. Music also plays a role in reproducing unequal distributions of power (Frith and McRobbie, 1978; Lawrence and Joyner, 1991; Arnett, 2002; Leonard, 2007). This has parallels with Connell's (1995) notion of hegemonic masculinity, given that, similar to advertising, males dominate the contemporary market for music, both in terms of production and consumption (de Bois, 2012). McFarland (2003) in a study of 470 Chicano rap lyrics and 527 songs by black artists identified misogyny and hypermasculine machismo as key constructions of the music. Avery, Ward, Moss, and Uskup (2016) found similar noting the portrayals of black men as hypermasculine in such music. Both researchers went on to explain the impact of such lyrics on black men in the context of hegemonic masculinity and social cognitive theory.

Music represents a billion-dollar industry, one which "evokes a range of different attitudes and behaviours, emphasising the relational nature of beliefs, practices and therefore gender" (de Bois, 2012, p. 99). Like in the advertising industry, the music industry aesthetic experience is often shaped by the male image. This was evident in drill videos, with only a small percentage including females, and only one including a female rapper. She was a child (Fig. 8.12). The second image in Fig. 8.12 serves to exemplify the placement of women in these videos and echoes the work of Fitts (2008) who notes rap and/or drill videos are often used to shape masculine identities, by including images associated with females, often referred to as 'booty videos', which were present but only in a tiny number of drill videos.

Figure 8-12 Screenshot of females in drill videos

"Booty videos" and other forms of masculine imagery within these videos, "is predicated on the performance of a hyper-masculine cool pose that includes the figurative objectification of women in music video" (Fitts, 2008). Objectification is not only sourced in images of females, however. Crone (2020) makes a consistent observation, noting (in relation to ISIS videos) that the male viewer:

> Can feel pleasure from identifying with the hyper-masculine foreign fighters and imagine himself inhabiting the 'erotic' world of male bonding and transgressive violence. He can dream of and feel pleasure at the idea of belonging to an all-male, all-race gang, catapulted into positions of power and dominance vis-à-vis enemies and women (p. 589)

Majors and Billson (1992) noted similar, associating the term cool pose in rap videos with a black male identity, defining it as a "ritualized form of masculinity that entails behaviors, scripts, physical posturing, impression management, and carefully crafted performances that deliver a single, critical message: pride, strength, and control" (p. 4). Often depicted in exaggerated displays of physical strength, social power, threats of violence and aggression, coupled with an emphasis on heterosexual sexual activity and control over women (Boakye, 2017); thus, implying rap and drill videos act as a rite of passage for young men's manhood, often portrayed as a means to become part of "social networks that command attention and respect by virtue of their hyper-masculine façade" (Fitts, 2008, p. 232). Once again showing the opportunity to be part of something bigger. An example of this is presented in Fig. 8.13, which depicts a stereotypical scene from a drill video of black male youth, with guns.

Figure 8-13 A stereotypical image of how black male gang members are often presented

Even though many of these videos seem to perpetuate stereotypes of gang members (but particularly black members) as aggressive, violent, and dangerous, the role of video as a medium of self-expression (rather than of violent intent) should not be overlooked. Given this is one of few areas (the other, sport) where young black men can dominate and control (Howell, 2007; Lauger, 2012; Van Hellemont and Densley, 2019). Hart (2019) suggests the benefits of seeing rap as a "barometer for society's ideas about masculinity, with its hyper-masculine themes simply exaggerating aspects of masculinity which are expected in the wider world, such as strength, power and self-sufficiency" (p. 8), rather than as a true image of the society as it is (like myths). While this may be a useful approach, given the diversity within the videos watched, it is only likely to provide an insight into one portion of society.

Another form of music in which masculinity plays a significant influence, and which was present in some videos, is heavy metal/black metal, commonly known for its hedonistic tendencies around 'sex, drugs, and rock n roll' and links to the far-right. Buesnel (2020) notes a community has been developed around this music which is "a self-contained culture that takes pride in its exclusivity and its role as a refuge for the socially disenchanted" (p. 1), one that contrary to opinion explores themes such as social alienation, suicide, and depression. Black Metal, therefore, has fostered a culture in which issues of race and nation are raised, often illustrated or reinforced through the use of myths (Dyer, 1997), making it attractive to far-right groups, as a place where nationalism and masculinity become mutually reinforcing.

Certain elements are similar between Black Metal and far-right ideologies. For example, Norse mythology is very common to both, a characteristic of far-right symbology and manhood (Goodrick-Clare, 2003; Miller-Idriss, 2018). Like far-right symbology more broadly, this type of music has been

used to extol the heroic virtues and acts of their ancestors. It often portrays a preservation and protection narrative, one in which "the warrior who fights for his culture and nation is to be admired for his selfless willingness to defend against an enemy who represents cultural subversion and negation" (Buesnel, 2020, p. 9). Another pertinent element of this music and to the research more broadly is the reference to martyrdom. Buesnel (2020) notes how Möbus's (a founding member of the black metal band Absurd[65]) "position in the extreme-right musical landscape has become one of quasi-martyrdom" (p. 11). The notion of martyrdom and masculinity was also noted in the video, ranging from death to victimhood.

The Sons of Odin used a pertinent visual example to make the Canadian military appear as martyrs, linking the loss of life to Muslims. While that is significant, however, more is evident in the context of masculinity. The first image in Fig. 8.14 depicts four soldiers in uniform acting as coffin bearers for a fallen soldier, with the Canadian flag draped over the coffin, a sign of respect. More relevant though is that the image does not portray a purely hyper or hegemonic masculine scene, rather one that allows soldiers to be visibly upset, whilst also depicted as being strong, honourable, and robust in their ability to control their grief to provide their comrade with the respect deserved. In contrast, the second screenshot from the same video shows a female soldier in grief, saluting. This is comparable to an earlier image in the video of a civilian man grieving. This juxtaposition of death seems to reinforce the traditional image of the male soldier, while emasculating the others.

Figure 8-14 Screenshots depicting scenes of grief from a Sons of Odin video

Despite the different framing (not via music, but visual), a common thread was martyrdom as a glorification of a masculinised culture; with battle providing the opportunity for proving one's manhood (Pearson, 2018). Fig. 8.15 visually depicts scenes used within the videos to do this. A common approach used was mixing machinery and tanks with men dressed in military fatigues, as presented here. The first screenshot is from a military video and the second a PMC/Mercenary.

[65] The black metal band Absurd emerged in 1992 in Thuringia, Germany, and is an example of National Socialist ideology within extreme metal.


Figure 8-15 Screenshots from a military and PMC/mercenary depicting battle

White power music was also found within the videos, which is known for its role in building and reinforcing collective identity for some right-wing extremists, including those relating to masculinity; "white power concerts and music were a way to further explore [right-wing extremist] RWE views and feel like being a part of the brotherhood" (Berube, Scrivens, Venkatesh, and Gaudette, 2019, p. 78) and provided the sense of belonging, often describing them as a second family (Berube, et al., 2019). This shows a link between music, masculinity, and belonging, which resonates with similar findings in the gang videos reviewed, where organisations regularly spoke about (more frequently in the spoken word, than music) other gang members as family; thus, it, like Black Metal, contributes to the ideological acceptance process of such groups. This was also present in an ISIS video, who stated, "We have brothers from Bangladesh, from Iraq, from Cambodia, Australia; Nothing has gathered us except to make Allah's word the highest, that is all we came for… All my brothers in Australia Allah has brought me here to this country" (ISIS Video). That said, the speaker differentiates between his brothers of the cause and his wife (in the context of family). Yet central to both is the link to Allah "Know that if it is your family, your wife, these people that you claim to love, then if you really loved them, martyrdom is what you would really do for them" (ISIS Video).

Combat 18 also framed a call for action around family "Germany has reached a point where every citizen is forced to protect himself and his family. The citizens' trust in politics, justice and the media has been completely destroyed" (Combat 18 video). What both VOs do here is they create a situation of *uncertainty* for the viewer (which helps persuasion) and asks them to do what is best for their family. Traditionally we have been thought to put family and their needs first, so by framing the approaches this way, they tap into the principle of consensus, and by linking this to the VOs more broadly, they provide the social proof others are doing it too. Linking family to the cause also helps position its legitimacy. While this was not evident significantly in the music, similarities between the music styles referred to above, drill, metal, and, as discussed shortly, Anashid (plural for Nashid), were all common across the videos.

An interesting and noteworthy study in relation to music, masculinity, and VOs is authored by Stoichita (2020), *Affordance to Kill: Sound Agency and Auditory Experiences of a Norwegian Terrorist and American Soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan.* It explores the role of music in motivating violence. Stoichita (2020) refers to the use of "battle playlists" by American soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan to motivate them before going on a mission and the use of music by Anders Breivik[66] during preparation

[66] Anders Brevik killed 77 people on July 22, 2011, in a bomb attack in Oslo and a mass shooting at a summer camp for children, in Utøya.

of his attacks in 2011. Brevik reportedly claimed specific music helped him to sustain his motivation. The soldiers note that "music helped them to project an ideal kind of confrontation which, in effect, hardly ever took place" (Stoichita, 2020, p. 3). It was also noted that music:

> Helped them to relax, to sleep, to think of home, to alleviate feelings of sadness, to party and bond together, to think of their beloved, to escape a hyper-masculine environment, to live through their frustrations with the hierarchy… and to motivate them before their mission (Stoichita, 2020, p. 8)

This suggests that, like myths, music helps as a means of coping with multiple stimuli (Ellul, 1973; Cialdini, 2006). This has resonances with Daddis's (2010) assertions that "the band of brothers was not a place soldiers wanted to be but a place they had to be to fulfil some very basic needs" (p. 116). Although Stoichita's research relates to how people used music to influence and motivate themselves, it might explain the significance of using medium to high tempo music within VOs videos. This type of music, coupled with fast moving camera shots, was commonly used in a way to evoke a feeling of intensity, uncertainty, adventure, and risk. Another reason for the choice of music may be that fast or up-tempo music distracts from key messages and acts as a method to influence reception of certain visual cues.

This raises a pertinent observation (one noted by Grisham), music could lead one beyond one's "humanity", nearly against one's will. Pieslak (2009) echoes this postulating that:

> Metal and rap can create a deep listening experience for some soldiers in which they adopt attitudes about violence and dehumanization not typically associated with their autobiographical self. Music in this circumstance induces an aggressive mindset and operates as a pretext for the possibility of violent action (p. 165)

If this is the case for soldiers, why would it not be the same for the other VOs, as alluded to with Brevik. This may resonate with Ellul (1973) and Cialdini's (2006) and their ideas about certain forces feeling natural and universal. Music may do the same, especially in respect of influence and persuasion.

Anashid have been used by jihadi groups nearly as long as they (the organisations) have existed, using them to propagate their message and engender a culture of militancy. These pieces of music are not solely about promoting militancy, but additionally about framing such actions within Islam (Lahoud and Pieslak, 2018). Given the relationship between the actions and religion, similar to the other styles of music mentioned above, Anashid act to evoke a masculine theme. They reflect the religious teachings of such groups. In other ways, however, they challenge hyper and hegemonic masculinities by referring to the softer side of life in the Islamic State (Gratrud, 2016). These were commonly used in the jihadi videos reviewed, used to convey a verbal message, and/or to reinforce a speech(s). This is analogous to the findings of Gratrud (2016) who found that factors likely to make jihadi Anashid effective messaging tools are that (also used in the videos reviewed):

> They focus on a limited number of themes that appeal to listeners' emotions; some of these themes are aggressive; they have engaging rhythms and are repetitive; they apply a strategy of binary opposition; and they make use of symbolism that is culturally relevant (p. 1053)

Denisoff (1983) notes such groups often use music to recruit new members by pointing to "some problem or discontent in the society" (p. 3). For example, in the context of Anashid, there is a consistent portrayal of jihad as the solution to the problems facing the ummah (Gratrud, 2016). Many

other VOs used a similar approach, most notably in other extremist and gang videos. They largely reiterate society is failing them and their people, as if to incite a feeling of outrage and promote the perception that the public need to rise up.

Despite the ability of music to help reinforce the ideology of a movement, promote cohesion, and maintain high morale among members, it is observed within the videos analysed that it also influences the *other,* by provoking emotions of fear, anger, and sometimes, incite retaliation, much of which is framed within the context of masculinity or by emasculation. These observations are like those of Sellnow (1999), who argues music can persuade outside a particular in-group or movement. This has been found to work where a message (within a song) has been allowed to develop incrementally, helping listeners accept an argument as legitimate. Irvine and Kirkpatrick (1972) note consistent findings that music "plays a key role in the development and maintenance of attitudes and values held by various groups within the general population" (p. 272). This may explain why similar music is used by some of VOs in the videos analysed, which while often focused directly as conveying a message, acts also to evoke an emotion. It highlights certain cues, while others fade. For example, the Sons of Odin's use of the song *Sounds of Silence*. The message is in the emotion it evokes when played alongside a montage of images, rather than solely in the words. It seems to elicit perspective, enlightenment, especially through the words:

> I turned my collar to the cold and damp
> When my eyes were stabbed by the flash of a neon light
> That split the night
> And touched the sound of silence
> And in the naked light I saw
> Ten thousand people, maybe more
> People talking without speaking
> People hearing without listening
> People writing songs that voices never share
> No one dared
> Disturb the sound of silence.

The words of the music alongside the images appeared to suggest good people were remaining silent to certain atrocities. In this silence, the atrocities continue, and it is time, more people were made aware, and not let untruths develop in the silence of inaction.

Drawing together the literature examined here on music and its role in portraying a sense of masculinity, the role of music in the lives of VOs is often indulgent, hedonistic, and sometimes misogynistic, nonetheless influential. It is a means of coping with both personal and environmental conditions, as a means of self-expression, and as a form of reinforcing masculine themes, especially about nation and hero. The use of music by VOs is not simply a mode selected to reinforce the visual, rather one that creates (alone or in combination with others) its own meaning and message.

Masculinity in geography

Mosher and Tomkins's (1988) as mentioned above, assert masculinity is not derived solely from men and women, but also from the surrounding environment. Varg Vikerness (Norwegian Black metal musician who has expressed anti-Jewish sentiment) illustrates this in his music, using words and

phrases about the natural environment, to evoke emotions around nation and power in his songs. While this is not directly evident in any of the videos analysed, it is noteworthy in the context of the role geography plays in these videos. In that respect, the data is much stronger, which has influenced the second source of masculinity; geography. Research into the relationship between place and masculinity stems in a large degree from feminism literature, with Gillian Rose's (1993) work, Feminism and Geography, an influential example. In this Rose (1993) states "to think geography - to think within the parameters of the discipline in order to create geographical knowledge acceptable to the discipline - is to occupy a masculine subject position" (p. 4). From this perspective, Rose (1993) postulates that, like other disciplines, geography is underpinned by a masculine position yet makes claims of universality. She (Rose) notes that masculinity defines geography. This, amongst other works by researchers, such as Jackson (1991), further enhance and inspire a growth of literature in this area.

Monuments, statues, and memorials are symbols chosen largely to celebrate a country's history, and act as physical embodiments of the past (Weidenmuller, Wiliamson, Leistensnider, and Finn, 2015). Landscapes are not neutral either rather are mediated by those with power to etch their mark on them. This is exemplified in an old definition of landscape, "an area carved out by axe and plough, which belongs to the people who have carved it out. It carries a suggestion of being an area of cultural identity based, however loosely, on tribal and/or blood ties" (Olwig 1993, p. 311). It resonates with many of the videos reviewed, not only in respect of territorial control as previously discussed, but VOs also appear to strategically use monuments, the landscape, and buildings as familiar backdrops to their videos. For example, a common trend in military videos is the portrayal of military landscapes, which allow the viewer to locate, place, and situate militaries and their activities (Rech, Bos, Jenkings, Williams, and Woodward, 2015); thus, even landscapes have served as objective masculinised images (Assmann and Czaplicka, 1995).

This was very common in both military, extremist, and PMC Videos, but likewise in gang videos, which regularly presented images of their neighbourhood and environs. Fig. 8.16 presents screenshots to illustrate how nature, the landscape, and neighbourhoods are presented within the videos to emphasise the VOs area of operations. These images derive the perception of masculinity in the poses taken within such environments. For example, the first two are taken from a military video, and depict soldiers on patrol in a mountain terrain, while the second two are taken from a gang video. They depict a scene at a flat complex, with graffiti on the walls, and the second, the gang driving through the complex on motor bikes. These serve not only to display masculinity but also territorial control and dominance, both aspects of masculinity.

Figure 8-16 Screenshots of military and gangs in their area of operation depicting masculinity

Another example of VOs challenging traditional notions of masculinity was evident in the military videos, but more frequent in those of PMC/mercenaries, which resonates with both Jackson, et al. (2020) in respect of portraying themselves as part of national security discourse, and Jester's (2019) findings that the US army have used images from space exploration to suggest a shift from scenes of masculine, militaristic style activities, to a greater number relating to technology. Fig. 8.17 shows how PMC/mercenaries frequently used images relating to technology and space. The first screenshot is used to depict the organisation's contributions and efforts in relation to security and space, and the second depicts behind the room scenes of control, oversight, and data. This shifts the focus from on the ground battles to technology, from force to capability, and from violence to intellect. Such cues, however, are not used in isolation from cues related to masculinity, rather are used in combination. These scenes challenge the traditional masculinised view of PMC/mercenaries yet do little to suggest such roles are available to anyone but males, albeit a token female or two are often included.

Figure 8-17 Screenshots from a PMC/Mercenary video depicting a shift to technology

What may surprise some is many of the videos do not directly imply aggression or power, which in some ways challenges traditional perceptions of hyper-masculinity. For example, only 25% of gang videos where weapons were present, were they discharged, 35% of extremist groups, 50% of military videos, and 53% of PMC/Mercenary videos. Nonetheless, there is little dispute they are very masculine in content, but more commonly framed around adventure and fun. VOs often depict membership as a source of opportunity, for adventure, exercise (per Fig. 8.18), some even sold it as a means of conquering fears (Fig. 8.19), all of which still have a masculine feel. For example, Fig. 8.18 depicts soldiers in the snow, and while they are armed, they framed the images more about exercise and training in the video. The weapons are less about violence, and more about dominance and manliness. This has parallels with the findings of Jester (2019) who studied military videos and found some sell

adventure over violence, a method also adopted to illustrate military personnel personify physical strength (once again not directly in a hegemonic masculine way, rather in a more subtle manner of physical prowess, but no less masculine in design). This is also depicted in the PMC/mercenary and extremist videos, which echoes the findings of Mehran, et al. (2021).

Figure 8-18 Screenshot of soldiers, with weapons, training in the snow

In contrast Fig. 8.19 illustrates a man conquering his fears, to become a soldier. The first pictures the man looking pensive as he decides whether to jump. The camera then presents a close up of his hands clenched tight, which he opens and closes before crossing his arms high on his chest and taking the plunge. After a few seconds, where he is submerged, he resurfaces, as in image four. The colour changes, the music tempo increases and the man is now dressed as a soldier with a weapon, in a typical image of the hyper-masculine military member. These visual and aural changes create suspense. The landscape reinforces this sense of masculinity from scenes of calm in a tropical forest to scenes in an open sea, reinforced by the tempo of the music. The sequencing and framing of the video projects the perspective of the man as a citizen in the first set of images, displaying emotions, of nervousness and doubt, but when he joins the military he is re-birthed into a 'real man'; thus, influencing viewers to think they are not yet good enough, whilst evoking the sense that in joining one can overcome these insecurities.

Figure 8-19 Screenshots depicting a man conquering his fears to become a soldier

These images illustrate the numerous cues used to depict what these groups offer, which in one way is played out by challenging traditional hyper and hegemonic masculinities, resulting in conflicting and contrasting cues. These conflicts are evident very much in the geography of the videos, as previously shown. This invokes parallels with the work of Mitchell (2000) who notes cultural struggles take physical form in the landscape (2000, p 98), "culture wars are often about how meaning is made manifest in the very stones, bricks, wood, and asphalt of the places in which we live" (Mitchell 2000, p 98). So why is the view of critical geographers pertinent to this study? It is relevant because the cultural landscape reflects more than just cultural struggles, or as mentioned above, an area of operations, it forms a:

> Recorded history [that] affects the present and future by shaping our understanding of our past, and shaping our discourse about history and thus our social reality, the landscape is effectively a "materialized discourse" that frames, shapes, and indeed affects the social worlds that are co-constructive of those landscapes in the first place (p. 437)

In this context, as Monk (1992) argues that given "gender is a central element of human experience, it would therefore be surprising if the landscape did not reflect the ideologies that support distinct gender roles and the inequalities of power that they embody" (p. 123). The feminist geographer Jane Darke reiterates the idea that places reflect the norms (and gendered inequalities) of the societies that built them, "Our cities are patriarchy written in stone, brick, glass and concrete" (p. 88), and it is this aspect that is of interest here; the role geography has on selling masculinity within VOs videos. Several similarities exist in this geographical literature as extant in the literature relating to groups and persuasion. For example, Del Casino and Hanna (2000) posit a link between monuments and identity:

> The production of representations contributes not only to the production of space, but also to the production of identities, in the case of statues representing people, the gendered nature of these statues becomes part of a broader representational practice that both reflects and reproduces gender inequality throughout society (Weidenmuller, et al., 2015, p. 438)

Akin to Ellul (1973), Weidenmuller, et al. (2015) highlight the portrayal of myths (heroic and historical) within the context of buildings. Foote (1997) echoes this stating:

> America's white majority has had two centuries to develop and mark its myth of origins in the landscape. Its point of view has been etched into almost all historical memorials and markers at the local, state, regional and national levels (p. 322)

This longevity highlights another important and consistent element regarding statues, monuments, and building, which relates to the notion of finality. Structures are often constructed of materials made from concrete or metal, built to last and to resist the elements (Weidenmuller, et al., 2015). Such constructions (like myths) serve as a means to keep the past in the present (in the memory), help build and maintain an identity and to deeply embed past histories into our everyday lives.

This is exemplified across the world, where geographies are used to reinforce an era, a power, and a history often illustrated in buildings, landscape, memorials, and/or statutes, keeping the past in our present. The portrayal of masculinity and myths to memorialise rulers and legends within construction dates back centuries. Constructions in Egypt, Rome, and Greece are powerful examples. These geographies generate their power and influence from their size, their positioning, the era in which they were constructed, etc., but with the introduction of the internet, and online videos, they gain

further power and authority to influence. They link their original association with masculinity to the present day. VOs use visuals of these geographies to act as cues that align their historical significance to the group to which they refer. As per Fig. 8.20, VOs use such scenes, many of which are highly masculine (either in design or meaning). The True Blue Crew use images of the Colosseum in Rome, a scene from Australia day, and an image of Sydney harbour bridge, linking its white origins to 'a civilised' race, to the hands that built Australia, and to what it means to be Australian, with images from the beach.

Figure 8-20 Screenshots from a True Blue video, which depicts what it means to be Australian

The choice of the images not only seeks to impose a definition of what it means to be Australian, but to link this identity to masculinity, through cues relating to strength, power, authority, and legitimacy. This is done through the buildings chosen (Colosseum and violence), their construction materials (Sydney Bridge and steel), and the portrayal of perfect (Beach and happy family). In this sequence, this latter image is more than a family photo. It is a cue to illustrate what a 'pure' Australia might look like, exemplified with the male at the centre (bare chested) with all the children and females looking on. Anderson (2020) suggests these types of images are largely a mechanism to extend power, project over time, and space in a manner that expressed "the clichés of hyper-masculinity—muscular figures bestriding the earth as their dominion—often referring to actual leaders, however exaggerated their physiognomy" (n.p.). A corresponding trend was evident in some videos, which use drones to get footage over the domain to which they were referring, as if to exert dominance. Others used a spinning

globe at the start of the video to place their nation or group in context. This reflects the findings of Beifuss and Bellini (2013) who identify a number of extremist organisations that use a globe in their logo.

Content creators also used more explicit links to history and mythology through which to express masculinity within geography. Similar to the traditional gender roles during the construction of statues and cases of males in Egypt, Rome, and Greece, their presence in the videos (as then) was to signify their role as defender/protector, depicting concepts of truth and honour. Some VOs used images of tanks, ships, and planes, or in gangs, large cars, in the same vein, to portray masculinity, defence, and protection. The Egyptian military video drew on mythical scenes (often from film) from such times to emphasise the power of their force, as defenders and protectors. Fig. 8.21 presents a few examples. The first image is of historical battle and the second of pyramids.

Figure 8-21 Screenshots from an Egyptian military video draw from past myths and heroes

The physical memorialisation of the myth of the hero is nothing new. The burial of the Unknown Warrior in Westminster Abbey in 1920 is an example of how such memorials ensure the 'soldier hero' myth is kept alive (Pattinson, 2016). This is evident in the videos, with some using shots of certain memorials as a cue to the past, to create uncertainty, fear, or even pride. The power of structure, however, to depict masculinity is not derived solely from statues and memorials. Places like coal mines, railways, garages, metal works, and docks were all considered masculine spaces during the war, because a culture of masculinity had been predicated on hard, dangerous work (Pattinson, 2016). A building can adopt its masculinity, therefore, from what happens within it. A Qatari military video uses a military training academy in this regard. It is first presented as a large stone building, empty of inhabitants (Fig. 8.22). It neither portrays an air of masculinity nor femininity, but as the video continues the building is entered and it is full of male soldiers, training, playing sport, and having fun all framed around a band of brothers; thus, turning a neutral building into an icon or beacon of masculinity.

Figure 8-22 Screenshots of military training camp in Qatar

While presenting images of monuments, buildings, and statues may signify certain forms of masculinity, visual or verbal accounts of destroying them also serves a similar message, even if only to evoke mental images in the minds of both supporters and opponents (Günther, 2020). They do more than that, they emasculate those who draw their identity, power, and strength from them:

> Islamic State's attacks on these properties are embedded in an all-encompassing strategy of spatial, material, ideational, and intellectual purification of the socioreligious landscape. By destroying these monuments, Islamic State targets integral elements of social identities of local and transnational communities and their individual members to build a new social framework on their ruins (Kraidy and Krikorian, 2020, p. 3)

Scenes to this affect are presented in several videos, especially military, extremists, and PMC/Mercenaries. They act as a symbolic currency to show power over an opposition, something often also reflected in the audio of the videos. Fig. 8.23 provides a visual example of this taken from an ISIS video, using three screenshots in the order they appear. The first is an image of a military APC on a road. The second is of the APC exploding and the third is of a man, giving the single finger gesture commonly used by jihadis, and smiling, as if to be celebrating success. What makes it a little more iconic is the appearance of blood on his face, yet still rejoicing; thus, presenting the perception of a hegemonic male, able to control his own pain for the goals of the organisation. This sequence of images also serves to emasculate oppositional viewers.

Figure 8-23 Screenshots from an ISIS video depicting scenes of destruction

Using visuals of destruction can, therefore, be as powerful as using images of the constructions themselves. Both can elicit or evoke the potency of the message that was created when these constructions were built. As important, however, like monuments of times gone by:

> The new monuments to terrorism are images of the events themselves, rather than simply physical memorials built for remembrance, and that these new monuments to terrorism circulating within the virtual landscapes of the internet, become the new sites of collective memorialisation enacted through repeated viewing (Price, 2020, p. 2)

These images are powerful and have the potential to be inscribed in collective visual memory across the world. The ability to edit and repeatedly show the same image, in a myriad of different contexts, provides VOs with a power previously held by states. Cases provided in previous chapters relating to Sept. 11 and to ISIS beheadings serve as vivid visual examples[67] (vividness not solely in the context of the videos, but also in the mind of readers of this piece) (per Fig. 8.24).

[67] These images are repeated here because of their specific relevance.

Figure 8-24 Screenshots depicting destruction, deaths, dominance, and control

Previously, states "could orchestrate the ritualised remembrance of past conflict and offer 'cognitive control', the new digital images and their public participation form a semi-autonomous entity which is far harder to control" (Price, 2020, p. 5). This might explain the intervisual relationship between military videos and extremist videos, given states are now required to create their own symbolic counter-images to events. Our 'collective text', which may in the past have been structured by geography, statues, and monuments, can now be constructed from pixels and binary codes (Price, 2020):

> Cast in pixels and stored online, they can be revisited instantly by anyone, recirculated during anniversaries, or used to provide visual context during similar kinds of events. These images retain the dynamism of the events they capture, while holding the potential for manipulation by all sides of the narrative. Participation through the interaction with images, helps blur the boundaries so that our sense of reality becomes increasingly open to manipulation and coercion (Price, 2020, p. 12)

This provides VOs, especially those without state support, the visual currency to memorialise events in their own carefully constructed manner. This acts as a symbolic attack against the visual hegemony held by the dominant. Examples provided through this, and the last chapters, exemplify this.

Building on this notion of collective text being constructed on pixels and binary codes, Anderson's (2020) observation has significant relevance given the link between logos and statues, but also in relation to the masculinity of signs and symbols:

> We appear to have moved beyond raising monuments to tyrants and are presently more likely to pull them down (see the removal of Confederate symbols or opposition to Franco's Valley of the Fallen). Yet this optimism may be misplaced. Power in the West has accumulated not in megalomaniac despots but in corporations and bureaucracies, and their leading shareholders and functionaries, with little transparency or accountability. We should be more wary of logos than statues (n.p.)

This implies signs and symbols serve not only to brand but also to influence and persuade around themes of masculinity. This also holds true for objects like flags and place names, and might even extend to gestures (for example, the Fascist salute) that govern interactions in public space (Allert, 2008; Azaryahu, 1986). Sufficed to say, without repeating the contents of the last few chapters, masculinity runs through everything from the intervisual relationship between the videos, the

engagement techniques used, the multimodalities chosen, to the branding techniques deployed. This is unlikely to be a surprise given males dominate advertising (Vokey, et al., 2013), the contemporary market for music (de Bois, 2012), and much of the construction across the globe (Foote, 1997); who would be shocked to hear they dominate across VOs?

Conclusion

VOs encode their videos with cues they believe will resonate with viewers, in a manner that allows them influence and persuade both attitudes and behaviours. Masculinities play a significant role in recruitment and call to action, when examined from the perspective of advertising. Through examples of music and geography, the chapter demonstrates that these sources reinforce themes of belonging, identity, and shared beliefs embedded within the videos, and are enhanced and augmented through masculine references (both direct and indirect). They influence and persuade through their apparent normalcy. But within this context, another important insight emerges; the relationship between masculinity and elements discussed in Chapter Four, Five, Six, and Seven. Masculinity was clear in branding, in the signs and symbols used, myths depicted, in the people pictured, visual cues embedded in the videos to communicate with different audiences, and in the choice of multimodalities used across VOs; thus, this chapter reinforces the contention that VOs are more similar than they are different when it comes to their visual communication strategies. These similarities exist with respect to hosting, production, engagement, and content, which reflect a consistency with advertising practices more broadly. Given the cues to which VOs widely use to persuade and influence are common to groups, this research serves to further the case for those who believe that extremists do not significantly differ from the public.

In drawing this data together, an obvious observation came to the fore, and that was one of masculinity. Few might have questioned viewing such videos as examples of hyper or hegemonic masculinities, however, to suggest this is the extent of its portrayal would once again miss the point of the research. Much more complex, and often contradictory sources of masculinity are present within the videos. The findings show that related cues working through the visual, and in combination with music, spoken word, and text for example, render these videos multivalent and multivocal, where meaning is not fixed, where contradictions are evident, and consistencies clear. This highlights the use of a range of masculinities, not as often assumed depicted purely through images of men, but through sources such as music and geography, enhancing and augmenting images of manliness, power, control, and authority, elements conducive to persuasion.

Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter summarises the key findings of the research, which sought to answer the core question, 'what visual strategies are used by violence organisations to recruit members to their group or call them to action?' and to also examine the factors that influence these strategies and assess whether they are similar or different across VOs. In so doing, it answers three questions:

1. What visual strategies are used by VOs to recruit members to their group or call them to action?
2. How are these presented within their videos?
3. What are the similarities and differences across VOs?

The chapter then sets out the implications of this work, the contribution the dissertation makes to knowledge and to the disciplines applied in this analysis, whilst identifying four areas that would benefit from future exploration.

Key Findings

All four VOs use a similar visual strategy to influence and persuade new recruits (and to call them and others to action), embedding their videos with cues that influence the response viewers have to them. These cues are associated with enhancing feelings of belonging, identity, authority, and legitimacy, glorified through myths, such as nation and hero. Several important observations were made. The first relates to engagement. VOs were not found to take viewership for granted, using the technique of branding to declutter the online video landscape to ensure engagement with their audience. Second, the findings clarify what these videos are; responding to the question whether they are recruitment or call to action videos; with this study deciding on a combination of both. Moreover, the research found that it is not the videos themselves, but cues embedded within them that make them persuasive. These cues are not directed merely at recruitment, but equally to gain support from others (implied or actual), and to incite the opposition. They are more accurately 'recruitment and call to action' videos as viewers not only represent potential recruits, but the cues used are designed, in so far as is possible, to control the three possible readings viewers could take from the videos: the dominant-hegemonic, negotiated, or oppositional (Hall, 1993); thus, targeting at least three distinct segments of the same audience; recruits, supporters, and opposition. As a result, these findings called for a need to expand the original argument proposed at the outset, to reflect the more complex audience: that VOs create content and embed cues, which attempt to control the response of at least three distinct segments of the same audience, and in so doing, communicate (equally, but differently) with all three. While this was expected in relation to gangs, given Patton, et al.'s (2016) findings about gang activity online, it was not expected at the outset (at least to the same degree) to exhibit across the other VOs. These findings, however, affirm emerging scholarship in relation to PMCs (Cusumano, 2021) and extremists (Tuters, 2019) and their use of their communication material to engage with more than just likeminded individuals or potential recruits. This also helps answer Mortensen's (2009) question about what these recruitment videos are, whether they are advertisements, popular culture, entertainment, or even war propaganda. They are all the above, and more. They are a strategic communication tool used by VOs not solely with potential recruits, but to all viewers even if only to desensitise them to such content. These types of videos should not be viewed solely as standalone messages, rather part of a broader ecosystem of online videos, for example, Hollywood and the likes.

This may signify parallels to literature pertaining to propaganda, which suggests being effective requires a broader strategy (Karim, 2001).

It is a significant finding that the visual (similarly to violence itself) acts to influence and communicate, from both the inter and intra-group perspective (Murer, 2014). Multimodalities have a significant role in influencing content to activate principles of persuasion; thus, affecting change within viewers. Viewing multimodalities through the lens of advertising also explores how related choices ensure engagement and audience. A novel outcome of the analysis was the role masculinity plays in influencing content. In examining the videos, it became clear that masculinity was a common theme across all VOs, used to enhance and augment influence. This became apparent, not by exploring the masculinity of the groups, their activities, and characteristics (as this is a well-known trait), but by investigating how choices around mode and visual content provide sources such as music and geography (in relation to masculinity) to influence content creation and cues used.

The findings, therefore, support literature in the area, for example, there is no single or absolute meaning to these videos (Mannay, 2016); they all use common themes from extant group membership literature to attract viewers (Hogg, et al., 2008); and they acquire influence and their persuasive power from embedding a host of various visual and non-visual cues that resonate differently with all viewers, but similarly in the sense of how they activate the principles of persuasion (Cialdini, 2006). In short, the meaning one derives from these videos may differ from the next but their ability to influence may not. Not everyone will be persuaded by them, nor will those that are be impacted in the same way. These factors are likely to depend on agency, resilience, and a host of other things, which to better understand would require a reception study, which this is not. Nonetheless, it is argued that all VOs do so, employing a range of well-known advertising techniques to achieve their goal. Measuring the prowess of their attempts is an area for future work.

The findings also support the emerging work regarding the role of the visual in extremism (Frischlich, et al., 2018; Yoder, et al., 2020; Mehran, et al.'s, 2021). Building on this, the research showed that VOs apply similar techniques of encoding historical and contemporary cues to influence and persuade. This content plays on emotional impulses that appeal to men who desire comradeship and belonging, such as images and reference to male soldiers and warriors, to emphasise feelings of conformity, trust, comradeship, courage, heroism, loyalty, and belonging. These topics are often framed within a theme of masculinity; thus, it builds on the work of Callahan and Ledgerwood (2016), Geertz (1973), and Mach (1993) who suggests that group symbols may stand in for actual characteristics of a collection of people who desire a group image. This is evidenced in this analysis, not only in using overt signs and symbols but similarly in the wearing of uniforms, or dressing uniformly, similar haircuts, positioning, etc. This further supports Miller-Idriss's (2017) assertions that "clothing and subcultural style have the potential not only to reflect but also to create, cultivate, and strengthen identities, including masculinity and femininity and their intersections with nationalism" (p. 212). Additionally, the findings align with the research of Lickel, et al. (2000) who suggests the physical characteristics of group members influence the perceived homogeneity of the group, and such actions are perceived to show a sense of cohesion (Lickel, et al., 2000). They also claim that members who look similar or share a common past or goal tend to be viewed as more entitative by an outsider looking in.

The findings additionally build on those of Ryan (2007); Anderson (2004); Post, Sprinzak, and Denny (2003) who profess that extremists often draw on past histories and identities and shared culture, for

example, heroes and events, to influence such groups. In terrorism research, Ryan (2007) examines factors that influence culture and identity within such organisations. Similar patterns are noted with respect to gangs (Decker, et al., 2001) and the military (Rech, 2014). The findings support these studies further and, in building on this work, have observed that such organisations use past histories, whether it be people or events, combined with things such as geography and music to glorify myths of nation and hero to persuade and influence. They do this, similar to that asserted by Jackson, et al. (2020) and Cusumano (2021) in the context of PMCs, to build a perception or illusion of authority and legitimacy, to create the impression of being part of something bigger than themselves, and to create conditions conducive to persuasion.

The findings additionally build on Rech's (2012) work which notes successful recruitment requires intricate economies of advocacy, not only from the state and militaries but also from a range of corporate advertising, creative, and market research agencies. Such findings are echoed in the work of Jackson, et al. (2020) on PMCs, who assert "the corporation all use their corporate promotional materials to 'sell' national security as military security in ways that normalised (state-sanctioned) militarized political violence, whether by promoting the necessity of preparedness via producing war material" (P. 15). The findings illustrate this, in that they demonstrate that military, PMCs/mercenaries, gangs, and extremists use advertising techniques to recruit, and in so doing, advances such research. Despite showing a consistency in use by all four groups, it is worth noting that there is a discernible difference in the frequency of use across VOs, especially with regard to gangs. Gang videos display a slightly different pattern of cue usage than the other VOs, for example, using cues associated with branding and myths of hero and nation, and images of females and weapons, and spoken word less frequently than the other three VOs. In contrast, there was marked similarities in the frequency and use of cues and images between extremist and military videos. This raises two important contributions to the research in this area; one it challenges the merits and/or appropriateness of comparing extremists with gangs, while providing significant support that there may be more value in comparing extremists with the military, at least with respect to recruitment and call to action. While this is likely to be a controversial finding, the analysis contained within supports the argument that military and extremists' visual recruitment strategies may be effective as comparative groups.

These findings, therefore, have significant implications for scholarship in this area; the videos cannot be watched as one directional, but rather are interrelated to the broader ecosystem of online videos, and therefore can equally be viewed with respect to their functionality in relation to recruitment, as antagonistic to oppositional viewers, a means of expression, or as may be the case, solely as a source of entertainment.

Implications of findings

The visual, while not a new medium, is increasingly being used in videos by VOs not merely to entertain, but as a medium of communication and persuasion; thus, there are significant implications to the findings of this research. In the interest of succinctness at this stage of the dissertation, three key implications will be discussed. First, the military should be mindful of the role their recruitment videos play in this ecosystem. While attracting potential recruits, they also have the capability to be influencing others (oppositional readings). For example, the videos may be a call to action, but read as a show of force. Similar to the finding of Jackson, et al., (2020) and Cusumano (2021) (in relation to PMCs and their strategies to legitimise their role as actors and authorities in national security dialogue)

politicians, researchers, and policymakers should be conscious that other VOs may use military visual content to legitimise their own role, whilst potentially delegitimising the role of the government, the military, and their operations. In the context of mercenaries, extremist, or gangs, this might be evident in content that suggests the authorities have failed and their group have emerged (as a legitimate alternative) in response. These possibilities are not without foundation given they draw parallels to the work of Basra and Neumann (2016); Gill (2016); Nix, et al. (2016); and Sweeney and Kubit (2020).

Second, given the level of intertextuality and intervisuality observed within the videos, the findings have a direct impact on takedown policies and counter narratives. The discoveries suggest these types of videos should not be viewed independently, because of the interrelationship between the viewer and wider internet video content more broadly. The impact of take down, therefore, is likely to be more complex than often portrayed, given the interrelatedness of the videos and the segmented audience. The techniques used (intervisuality and multimodalities) also expose something deeper; these videos have multiple meanings. This suggests taking down violent videos associated with one VO may empower others, and leaving up softer (non-violent) content may have a negative impact, as it could still be influencing potential recruits and supporters, whilst antagonising opposition. This observation may be further reinforced by the growing area of study into reciprocal radicalisation, "recent empirical work has suggested that reciprocal radicalisation is a good deal more subtle than is often assumed, and is nuanced by organisational, social and political context" (Lee and Knott, 2020, p. 98). Moreover, if all content produced by a group, for example ISIS, is taken down (if it were even possible) it is unlikely to totally reduce the influence of the group online given that they are prone to gain attention via other online content as well. This might be expected to occur from videos of all four VOs, but likewise from Hollywood and other media productions, such as documentaries and news (Daddis, 2010). The creation of counter narratives may even be influential in motivating someone to join a group to which the counter narrative is condemning. While these implications require further examination, they are pertinent and timely given the use of take down and counter narratives as a matter of course. On a more positive note, however, there may be merit in further exploring the role of resilience from the perspective of advertising and persuasion. Friestad and Wright's (1994) work on the persuasion knowledge model (and more recent work by Minto (2019) in this area) might be considered here. It shows people can learn about tactics of persuasion and that knowledge about how, when, and why marketers try to influence them can help them to adaptively respond to these persuasive attempts and build a resilience to it. Given the range of advertising and persuasion techniques used across all four VOs, this might offer some fruitful direction for further inquiry.

Third, regarding research more generally of these VOs, the findings have significant implications, most noticeably in relation to hard-to-reach groups, bias, and language barriers. For example, where hard to reach groups are involved the application of visual analysis may help contribute to increasing the level of (reliable and robust) empirical insights. Furthermore, given the similarities across the four VOs research on easier to reach organisations, for example, the military, may help provide insights (at least in some areas) that could apply to other VOs. Using comparative sampling as applied here has implications for research more generally, as it applies a mechanism which reduces bias in sample selection. This is very apt when examining VOs given scholarship often assumes because of the violence that any motivation to join or support such a group, despite as this dissertation has shown, is different across VOs. Moreover, and although likely to be somewhat controversial; given the visual is a powerful method to persuade and influence, could and should illegal VOs not be encouraged to

use it, as opposed to turning to violence to communicate? The researcher is not the first to suggest this:

> If terrorists want to send a message, they should be offered the opportunity to do so without them having to bomb and kill. Words are cheaper than lives. The public will not be instilled with terror if they see a terrorist speak: they are afraid if they see his victims and not himself… If the terrorists believe that they have a case, they will be eager to present it to the public. Democratic societies should not be afraid of this (Schmid and De Graaf, 1982, p. 170)

That said, beheading videos and the likes serve as a sharp reminder that many of these group's messages are not mere threats; to suggest they are, is to negate that many of these VOs are equipped and willing to inflict and incite serious harm. But what is being suggested here refers to the many videos that do not represent a risk of this nature, which is likely to be the majority at least regarding what remains open source. There may be another way to respond to those and even to some threats of violence. This call echoes that of Ilan (2020) who in the context of drill videos notes:

> The use of videos and lyrics as evidence within the criminal justice system is a troubling practice that risks elevating internet boosts to the status of truth. It denies the marginalized the dignity of their own expressivity. As for censorship, in banning drill, there is more to be lost in public relations than there is to be gained in disrupting criminality. It is important that authorities avoid the mistakes of the 'wet yutes' and 'keyboard gangsters' taking internet discussions of violence too seriously. Whilst the role of social media in catalysing some street conflicts and the involvement of some drill artists and rappers in some violent crimes no doubt raises the stakes and creates political pressure to 'do something', it should not be forgotten that it is possible to do more harm than good (p. 1008-1009)

Finally, this study has implications for researching content where language barriers exist. Using the visual as a data source can mitigate (in part) the lack of translation skills. Not that knowing the language, the cultural context and other factors will not enhance meaning and understanding, however, in today's day and age when content is freely available on the internet, it is important to see verbal language as only one vernacular. This is noteworthy as it makes videos different from manifestos, letters, etc. where language skills are required. The visual, therefore, serves to offer a powerful data source not yet fully utilised.

Contribution to knowledge

This dissertation extends and broadens current knowledge by demonstrating VOs are not incompatible with such analysis, of which there is little comparative analysis. Second, through its application of a theoretical framework that combines a number of theories (group membership and identity; myths and the technique of propaganda; intervisuality and semiotics) it took a more neutral approach to content (neither good nor bad), in contrast to what often has an overtly negative perspective applied to propaganda created and distributed by extremists; thus, demonstrating the utility in exploring beyond theories commonly associated with VOs to de-exceptionalise them. Third, it also demonstrates the utility of drawing from a broad range of theories from psychology, sociology, communication, geography, and advertising to assess the visual strategies used by VOs to recruit, because of the broader similarities to the literature in these areas. Fourth, it contributes to showing the merits of moving beyond examining VOs solely as hyper-masculinised groups to a more comprehensive concept of masculinity, including, for example, that present in modes (music) and the

choice of visual images (geography). These contributions and related findings are important, as they add significant insights to our understanding of how VOs persuade people to join, but additionally to the pre-production logic they use to attempt to control the meanings people read from such content, which might provide some pertinent insight into why people exposed to similar conditions make different choices in response.

Limitations of the research

There are a number of limitations with this research, but the dataset and subsequent analysis is sufficient to support the findings being made. Nonetheless, they are presented and acknowledged here for openness and transparency. First, a significant challenge is that the meaning derived from videos highly depends on the viewer themselves, the broader sociocultural environment they live in and have been exposed to, and their own life experiences. As a result, there is no way of guaranteeing the *correctness* of any interpretations of meaning made, as symbols are often multivocal and multivalent (due to the often ephemeral characteristic of the content), and consequently can have numerous and ambiguous interpretations (Pi-Sunyer, 1985). Therein lies the greatest methodological challenge to this type of research, "when symbols *evoke* a sense of something, they elicit meaning in ways that often are abstract and dependent on an observer's own autobiography" (Miller-Idriss, 2018, p. 12, emphasis in original). This is very relevant to this dissertation and the contention that the VOs' videos aim to communicate with one key audience, albeit segmented. It is not a reception study, however, which would be required to measure interpretive meaning. Nonetheless, this inquiry provides significant lessons, and while not strictly generalisable, it is illustrative of a comparative visual vernacular used by VOs to persuade and influence, in terms of technique used as opposed to meaning derived. Furthermore, this emphasises concerns around coder reliability and replicability. If meaning derived from videos is by its very nature not fixed, then other researchers could interpret these findings differently, which highlights concerns around replicability. Although this limitation cannot be totally mitigated, by using the images the researcher has tried to visually detail the interpretations made, to help others trying to replicate the study.

Second, videos from across the globe were selected for inclusion within this dataset. As a result, a broad range of languages was present. The decision to include a wide dataset was to reduce the bias in selecting only English-speaking content, and only selecting certain geographical regions of the world; two criticisms often made in the study of extremism. Due to the lack of appropriate language skills or resources to translate the verbal and written messages in many of the videos, these data points were excluded from the dataset. While this would be a significant limitation if the methodology involved content analysis, for example, the use of visual methods in this case mitigates many of the issues that a different methodology may present. Given that the focus here is on the visual, the lack of language comprehension is less problematic. That said, it is not disputed that videos which were available in English or had subtitles in English are likely to have impacted reception of them differently than those in other languages.

Third, while a diverse dataset has been arrived at by dividing the world into four regions and maximum ten representative groups selected in each region (for each VOs), the organisations chosen are not random. The groups chosen represent a selection of organisations that had a video publicly circulating and found during the data-gathering phase. Two significant implications that this has raised for the research are, that to be included in the dataset the organisation had to be known to the researcher,

who although conducted an extensive search of suitable groups is unlikely to be aware of all those appropriate who may have had videos online. The absence of groups from Africa may have been (in part) the result of this, which is a geographical weakness of the dataset. Though not all regions are covered equally, the research still expands the current examination of VOs and groupings within one study and their geographical reach. This is important given the common tendency to consider specific regions of interest. Additionally, many videos of the nature examined have increasingly been responded to on social media with takedown policies. As a result, only videos publicly available at the time of data collection could be included. This is a significant limitation as it is likely that elements of those which are taken down may not be consistent with those that remain up. For example, they may include more explicit scenes or references to violence. This possible limitation was understood at the outset of the research, which in part influenced the focus on non-violence videos. Nonetheless, the potential that there may be differences in the content of videos left online, and those taken down is acknowledged.

Fourth, the decision to add PMCs/mercenaries to the range of VOs was important, but this did not come without its own issues. Combining organisations that market themselves as highly corporatised entities with groups such as mercenaries is likely to be a source of contestation, especially given the literature has identified active examples by PMCs of trying to escape the stigma of mercenaries (Spearin, 2008). While the merits of including them are not disputed, it is acknowledged that there are other valid options for case selection and categorisation. They could have been treated as two distinct VOs to differentiate between the legal and illegal nature of groups within this category, for example.

Finally, only one video from each organisation was reviewed; hence, they are not representative of an individual organisation's style of content, which perhaps renders the findings too general. While this is not an unjust criticism, by including only one video ensures the dataset represents a data rich source from a range and broad spectrum of VOs; thus, providing pertinent illustrative insights into such groups and their visual recruitment strategies, which is important. Between these systematic barriers and financial and resource restrictions on the side of the researcher, an alternative option was not available. These limitations, however, do not negatively affect the assertions made in relation to the findings, as they are all based on the data analysed and do not contend to be generalisable in the strictest sense; consequently, only assertions that can be sufficiently supported by the dataset and subsequent analysis were made within. Nonetheless, the findings have implications for the way we view this topic, hence the results matter.

Future Research

In combining the findings, contributions, and limitations this dissertation challenges some commonly held assumptions; thus, makes the call for further research in this area. For example, it challenges the binary profit vs ideology explanation often offered to dismiss the relevance of comparing gangs and extremists, and PMCs/mercenaries and the military. It supports, therefore, long-standing calls for more comparative analysis between VOs. Given images play such a vital role in our lives, they must also be seen as a central element of social science research. That is not to say, as Mannay (2016) so eloquently states, that "the social sciences become a discipline of pictures. The visual has to be embedded in the narrative of its inception, reception, interpretation and impact" (p. 1). A greater prioritisation of the visual is warranted as it is likely to provide pertinent and new insights for our

understanding of certain topics and disciplines, chief amongst them VOs communication strategies. While several areas for future investigation have emerged throughout this analysis, this section will focus on four key areas that apply to all VOs. These relate to reception, algorithms, takedown, and the intervisual relationships between videos.

This dissertation set out to identify the visual strategies used by VOs to recruit; thus, the natural next step of this research would be to assess the effectiveness of the strategies, for example, through a reception study to examine how these strategies are received. As noted throughout, for persuasion to be affective it must achieve change; hence, designing a study to measure this element would be insightful. It could be used (i) to assess effectiveness of the cues; (ii) to assess whether responses are consistent across all four VOs; (iii) to identify what emotional responses are triggered by what images and modes, and the impacts if combined, with other methods of communication (manifestos, posters, etc.); (iv) it could provide insights whether medium and message are equally important in relation to reception and persuasion. A design of this nature would benefit from an approach to reception that also considers how such messages are received not only by those who radicalise but likewise by those who do not (Friis, 2015), another understudied area. This would help provide intuitions as to why some people respond to such messages and join, while others do not. Researching this in the military, for example, might provide interesting insights that may perhaps hold through for other VOs, which are harder to reach.

As noted above, controlling the audience's response to these visual strategies in line with that desired by the producer is the key to influencing change. This is a key element of advertising. It relates to positioning, getting the advertisement in front of the target audience. This is a lot more difficult than one might think but has of late been made easier through the use of algorithms. These are designed, tested, and refined in commercial marketing to increase the accuracy of target reach. The role of algorithms is to ease the burden on the potential buyer having to find the content. It draws on buyer behaviour to better identify who might like such material. One might expect, therefore, that algorithms developed regarding commercial marketing might also influence recruitment advertising. Facebook's own inquiry may support this assertion. They noted in 2016 that 64% of people who joined an extremist group on Facebook did so because the company's algorithm recommended it to them (Statt, 2020). Perhaps, algorithms are technological comparisons to myths; they work behind the scenes subtly to reduce stimuli and content overload, to make decision making easier, while presenting the process as natural (at least perceived as such). Future research in this area, enquiring into the role of algorithms in supplying VOs content to viewers would be interesting and pertinent; who and what type of people receive and respond to such content, and who do not? Differentiating between role of tech and content creators in algorithm design might also be useful. Moreover, as noted by Ali, Sapiezynski, Korolova, Mislove, and Rieke (2019) political campaigners are turning to digital advertising to reach voters, using algorithms, why would VOs not do the same if effective? Enhanced insights in this area would help in our understanding if, how, and why this works? This is also important because of increasing research that is highlighting the problematic role of algorithms in counter messaging and prevention campaigns (Schmitt, Rieger, Rutkowski, and Ernst, 2018). As a result, more remains to be done.

In conclusion, the assumption that simply because these videos exist, people will consume them and join the groups to which the videos originate is found to be false. This assumption ignores the many who consume this content but do not join and also those who react in opposition to the message

contained within. These videos do not influence in isolation—they fit into a broader eco-system of online video content, thus illustrating the merits of responding to calls for a visual turn in violent extremism. The research contributes to this debate by zoning in on the visual recruitment strategies of violence organisations across a number of contexts. In the process, exemplifying the merits of de-exceptionalising terrorist and extremist groups as comparative categories for analysis. Expanding this approach into the future will help bridge the gap in overcoming the longstanding criticism that terrorism-related research still lacks sufficient comparative studies. As shown in this dissertation, a primary focus on the visual is a fine place to start.

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Appendix A – Organisations to which videos relate

Military	Regions
South African Defence Forces	Africa
Egyptian Army	Africa
Moroccan Army	Africa
Uganda People's defence force	Africa
Namibian Defence Forces	Africa
Seychelles Military	Africa
Tunisian Special Forces	Africa
Rwanda Defence Forces	Africa
Brazilian Military	Americas
Canadian Defence Forces	Americas
US Marines	Americas
Argentine Armed Forces	Americas
Mexico Military	Americas
Columbian Military	Americas
Peruvian Military	Americas
Ecuadorian Military Recruitment	Americas
Jamaica Defence Force Recruit	Americas
Chilean Military	Americas
Chinese Military	Asia Pacific
Indian Military	Asia Pacific
Japanese Military	Asia Pacific
Israeli Military	Asia Pacific
South Korea Military	Asia Pacific
Singapore Military	Asia Pacific
Bangladesh Army	Asia Pacific
New Zealand Military	Asia Pacific
Philippine Military	Asia Pacific
Vietnam Military	Asia Pacific
Irish Military	Europe
Ukraine Military	Europe
Romanian Military	Europe

British Army	Europe
Norwegian Military	Europe
French Military	Europe
Russian Military	Europe
Serbian Military	Europe
Italian Military	Europe
Dutch Military	Europe

Extremist Groups	Regions
Boko Haram	Africa
Khalifah Imesimama	Africa
Cabo Delgado	Africa
Al Shabab	Africa
Al Qaeda in the Maghreb Sahara Region	Africa
Islamic State Affiliate Group	Africa
Soldiers of Odin	Americas
Antifa	Americas
Atomwaffen Division	Americas
ELN - National Liberation Army	Americas
Shining Path Repels	Americas
FARC	Americas
111% Movement	Americas
Animal Liberation Front Australia	Asia Pacific
Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham	Asia Pacific
Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan	Asia Pacific
Caucasus Emirate	Asia Pacific
Tehrik -i- Taliban Pakistan	Asia Pacific
United Liberation Front of Asom	Asia Pacific
United Patriots Front	Asia Pacific
True Blue Crew	Asia Pacific
Combat 18	Europe
Atomwaffen	Europe
Identity Generation Flag	Europe

Saoradh	Europe
Britain First	Europe
National Action	Europe
Combat 18 _Germany	Europe
Defend Europe	Europe
Animal Liberation Front Australia	Europe
Islamic State - Balkan Members	Europe

Gangs	Regions
Bonde Dos Cria	Americas
Latin Kings	Americas
Ben Frank Gang (BFG)	Americas
MS-13	Americas
Youth gang member	Americas
Black Disciple Killers	Americas
Narcotraficante Chismoso	Americas
Mara 18	Americas
HNIC Gang	Americas
Youth gang member	Americas
One four	Asia Pacific
21 District - They Reply	Asia Pacific
Mongrel Mob	Asia Pacific
Heisei Anime Yamaguchi Formation	Asia Pacific
Bandidos - Australia	Asia Pacific
M16 Manchester - Moss Side	Europe
Moscow17	Europe
Gang from Cork	Europe
1011	Europe
Melun 77	Europe

PMC/Mercenaries	Regions
Sons of Liberty International	Americas
DynCorp	Americas
Globe Risk	Americas
Northrop Grumman	Americas
Blackwater	Americas
Academi Training Center	Americas
Raytheon Company	Americas
Constellis Careers	Americas
Allied Universal	Americas
Jalisco New Generation Cartel	Americas
International Freedom Battalion	Asia Pacific
YPG	Asia Pacific
Peshmerga	Asia Pacific
IRPGF	Asia Pacific
The lions of Rojava	Asia Pacific
Defend AFRIN	Asia Pacific
Donetsk Republic Army	Europe
The Ghost Brigade	Europe
Novorossia	Europe
European Security Academy	Europe
The Aegis Academy Training Experience	Europe
Prosegur Security	Europe
G4S	Europe

Appendix B – Codebook

VIDEO DATABASE CODEBOOK		
Descriptive Identifiers	**Video Number**	Text
	Video Link	Link
	Group Name	Text of Name
	Status	(a) Official
		(b) Circulated
		(c) Unknown
	Group Type	(a) Extremist Group
		(b) Gangs
		(c) Military
		(d) PMC/Mercenaries
	Site Hosted	
	Who uploaded it	Text of Name
	Date of Video Upload	Date
	Date of Download	Date
	Hash Tags on Site	Text List
	Uploaders Comments	Text
	Viewers Numbers	Text
Hosting Information	**Hashtags Present**	(a) Yes
		(b) No
	Hashtags used	Text
	Length	Time
Initial Assessment	**Type of Video**	(a) Recruitment
		(b) Call to Action
		(c) Both, recruitment & call to action
		(d) Neither
	If neither, please explain inclusion	Text
	Is it a professional photo	(a) Yes
		(b) Semi
	Recruitment video - Describe	Text
	Call to Action video - Describe	Text
Production	**Presence of Branding**	(a) Yes
		(b) No
	How Displayed	(a) Text
		(b) Image
		(c) Music
		(d) More than one
	If so, which ones.	Text
	If Image, type of Branding	(a) Logo

		(b) Symbol
		(c) Flag
		(d) Hand Gesture
		(e) Other
		(f) More than one
	If so, which ones.	Text
	Consistency in Clothing Style	(a) Yes
		(b) No
	Clothing Style worn	(a) Everyday clothes
		(b) Military like/Uniform
		(c) Other
		More than one
	If so, which combination.	Text
	Video Type	(a) Live Footage
		(b) Images - Presentation
		(c) Images - Of footage
		(d) Computer Generated Graphics
		More than one
	Languages Used	List of languages
	Secondary Language	Text
	Subtitles Present	(a) Yes
		(b) No
	Subtitles Language	List of languages
Marketing	**Colour Theme**	(a) Black & White
		(b) Colour
	If a theme is present, top 3 colours	Text
	Tone	(a) Light
		(b) Dark
	Is contrast used	(a) Yes
		(b) No
	If yes, how	Text
	Is depth or perspective used	(a) Yes
	If so, how	(b) No
		Text
	Style of Address	(a) Direct to viewer
		(b) Direct to the world
		(c) Other
	If other, who	Text
Audio	**Music present**	(a) Yes
		(b) No
	Music tempo	(a) Slow
		(b) Med
		(c) Fast
	Description	Text
	Words present in music	(a) Yes

		(b) No
	If yes, Style of Words	(a) Spoken
		(b) Rap
		(c) Sang
		(d) Other
	Actual wording	Text
	Significant Change as Music Change	(a) Yes
		(b) No
	How does the video change as music change	Text
Text	**Text present**	(a) Yes
		(b) No
	If yes, Time of Text	Text
	Actual Text	Text
	Text Colour	List of colours
Spoken Word	**Is a spoken word present**	(a) Yes
		(b) No
	Actual Spoken words	Text
	Male or Female Voice	(a) Male
		(b) Female
		(c) Unknown
	Message Target	(a) Supporter
		(b) Opposition
		(c) Not discernible
Imagery	**First image**	Text Description
	Scene	(a) Indoor
		(b) Outdoor
		(c) Unknown
	Does this change?	(a) Yes
		(b) No
	If so, to what	Text
	Background images	Text
	Type of Image	(a) Logo
		(b) Symbol
		(c) Flag
		(d) Hand Gesture
		(e) Other
		(f) More than one
	Does this change?	(a) Yes
		(b) No
	What does it change to?	Text
	First person - Gender	(a)Male
		(b)Female
	First Person - Clothing	(a) Uniform
		(b) Sports Clothing

		(c) Casual Clothing
		(d) Formal Clothing
		(e) Other
Activity	**Activity - Initial**	Text
	Core Activities in the Video	(a) Militarisation Style
		(b) Direct Combat
		(c) Domestic
		(d) Sports
		(e) Preaching
		(f) Combination of Above
	What combination	Text
	Are weapons present	(a) Yes
		(b) No
	If yes, what weapons	(a) Knives
		(b) Guns
		(c) Explosives
		(d) Rockets
		(e) Other
	If other, what ones	Text
	If yes, are the weapons being used	(a) Yes
		(b) No
	Are groups present in the videos	(a) Yes
		(b) No
	If so, what size	(a) Small
		(b) Medium
		(c) Large
	Presence of Hand Gestures	(a) Yes
		(b) No
	Description of Hand Gesture	Text
Narrative	**Message Method**	(a) Text
		(b) Spoken word
		(c) Music
		(d) Image
		(e) Combination of Above
	Combination of Messaging	Text
	Is there a clear message	(a) Yes
		(b) No
	If yes, describe	Text
	Is a subordinate message evident	(a) Yes
		(b) No
	If yes, describe	Text
Legitimisation	**Presence of Flags**	(a) Yes
		(b) No
	Description of flag	Text
	Presence of Symbol	(a) Yes

		(b) No
	Description of Symbol	Text
	Direct Reference to legitimacy	(a) Yes
		(b) No
	If yes, How	(a) Text
		(b) Spoken word
		(c) Music
		(d) Image
		(e) Combination of Above
	Combination of above	Text
	Indirect Reference to legitimacy	(a) Yes
		(b) No
	If yes, How	(a) Text
		(b) Spoken word
		(c) Music
		(d) Image
		(e) Combination of Above
	Describe	Text
	Direct Reference to Territorial Control	(a) Yes
		(b) No
	If yes, How	(a) Text
		(b) Spoken word
		(c) Music
		(d) Image
		(e) Combination of Above
	Describe	Text
	Indirect Reference to Territorial Control	(a) Yes
		(b) No
	If yes, How	(a) Text
		(b) Spoken word
		(c) Music
		(d) Image
		(e) Combination of Above
	Describe	Text
Gender	**Females Present**	(a) Yes
		(b) No
	Ratio to Men	Text
	Role of females	Text
	Males Present	(a) Yes
		(b) No
	Role of males	Text
Impressions	**Thoughts when watched**	Text

	Aims of which	Text
	When watched without sound	Text
	How does it end	Text
	Anomalies? Interesting points	Text
Myths	**Reference to concepts of nation**	(a) Yes
		(b) No
	If yes, How	(a) Text
		(b) Spoken word
		(c) Music
		(d) Image
		(e) Combination of Above
	Combination of above	Text
	If image, what type	(a) Logo
		(b) Symbol
		(c) Flag
		(d) Hand Gesture
		(e) Other
		(f) More than one
	Discuss	Text
	Myth of Kinship - Reference to concepts of family, brotherhood, unit	(a) Yes
		(b) No
	If yes, How	(a) Text
		(b) Spoken word
		(c) Music
		(d) Image
		(e) Combination of Above
	Combination of above	Text
	If image, what type	(a) Logo
		(b) Symbol
		(c) Flag
		(d) Hand Gesture
		(e) Other
		(f) More than one
	Discuss	Text
	Myth of work - Reference to work or cause	(a) Yes
		(b) No
	If yes, How	(a) Text
		(b) Spoken word
		(c) Music
		(d) Image
		(e) Combination of Above
	Combination of above	Text
	If image, what type	(a) Logo
		(b) Symbol
		(c) Flag
		(d) Hand Gesture

		(e) Other
		(f) More than one
	Discuss	Text
	Myth of happiness Reference to happiness or future benefits	(a) Yes
		(b) No
	If yes, How	(a) Text
		(b) Spoken word
		(c) Music
		(d) Image
		(e) Combination of Above
	Combination of above	Text
	If image, what type	(a) Logo
		(b) Symbol
		(c) Flag
		(d) Hand Gesture
		(e) Other
		(f) More than one
	Discuss	Text
	Myth of youth	(a) Yes
		(b) No
	If yes, How	(a) Text
		(b) Spoken word
		(c) Music
		(d) Image
		(e) Combination of Above
	Combination of above	Text
	If image, what type	(a) Logo
		(b) Symbol
		(c) Flag
		(d) Hand Gesture
		(e) Other
		(f) More than one
	Discuss	Text
	Myth of hero - Reference to historical figure or martyrs	(a) Yes
		(b) No
	If yes, How	(a) Text
		(b) Spoken word
		(c) Music
		(d) Image
		(e) Combination of Above
	Combination of above	Text
	If image, what type	(a) Logo
		(b) Symbol
		(c) Flag
		(d) Hand Gesture
		(e) Other

		(f) More than one
	Discuss	Text
Themes	**Reference to community**	(a) Yes
		(b) No
	If yes, How	(a) Text
		(b) Spoken word
		(c) Music
		(d) Image
		(e) Combination of Above
	Combination of above	Text
	If image, what type	(a) Logo
		(b) Symbol
		(c) Flag
		(d) Hand Gesture
		(e) Other
		(f) More than one
	Discuss	Text
	Reference to exclusivity	(a) Yes
		(b) No
	If yes, How	(a) Text
		(b) Spoken word
		(c) Music
		(d) Image
		(e) Combination of Above
	Combination of above	Text
	If image, what type	(a) Logo
		(b) Symbol
		(c) Flag
		(d) Hand Gesture
		(e) Other
		(f) More than one
	Discuss	Text
	Reference to a sense of belonging	(a) Yes
		(b) No
	If yes, How	(a) Text
		(b) Spoken word
		(c) Music
		(d) Image
		(e) Combination of Above
	Combination of above	Text
	If image, what type	(a) Logo
		(b) Symbol
		(c) Flag
		(d) Hand Gesture
		(e) Other
		(f) More than one

	Discuss	Text
	Reference to difference to others	(a) Yes
		(b) No
	If yes, How	(a) Text
		(b) Spoken word
		(c) Music
		(d) Image
		(e) Combination of Above
	Combination of above	Text
	If image, what type	(a) Logo
		(b) Symbol
		(c) Flag
		(d) Hand Gesture
		(e) Other
		(f) More than one
	Discuss	Text
Principles of Persuasion	**Reciprocity -Reference to repayment, pay-back, sharing, etc.**	(a) Yes
		(b) No
	If yes, How	(a) Text
		(b) Spoken word
		(c) Music
		(d) Image
		(e) Combination of Above
	Combination of above	Text
	If image, what type	(a) Logo
		(b) Symbol
		(c) Flag
		(d) Hand Gesture
		(e) Other
		(f) More than one
	Discuss	Text
	Scarcity - References to alienation, lack of control	(a) Yes
		(b) No
	If yes, How	(a) Text
		(b) Spoken word
		(c) Music
		(d) Image
		(e) Combination of Above
	Combination of above	Text
	If image, what type	(a) Logo
		(b) Symbol
		(c) Flag
		(d) Hand Gesture
		(e) Other
		(f) More than one
	Discuss	Text

	Authority - Reference to authority, legitimisation, sense of duty	(a) Yes
		(b) No
	If yes, How	(a) Text
		(b) Spoken word
		(c) Music
		(d) Image
		(e) Combination of Above
	Combination of above	Text
	If image, what type	(a) Logo
		(b) Symbol
		(c) Flag
		(d) Hand Gesture
		(e) Other
		(f) More than one
	Discuss	Text
	Consistency - Reference to requests, ritual, or sacrifice	(a) Yes
		(b) No
	If yes, How	(a) Text
		(b) Spoken word
		(c) Music
		(d) Image
		(e) Combination of Above
	Combination of above	Text
	If image, what type	(a) Logo
		(b) Symbol
		(c) Flag
		(d) Hand Gesture
		(e) Other
		(f) More than one
	Discuss	Text
	Liking - Reference to positive association,	(a) Yes
		(b) No
	If yes, How	(a) Text
		(b) Spoken word
		(c) Music
		(d) Image
		(e) Combination of Above
	Combination of above	Text
	If image, what type	(a) Logo
		(b) Symbol
		(c) Flag
		(d) Hand Gesture
		(e) Other
		(f) More than one
	Discuss	Text
	Consensus - Reference to uncertainty, social proof	(a) Yes

		(b) No
	If yes, How	(a) Text
		(b) Spoken word
		(c) Music
		(d) Image
		(e) Combination of Above
	Combination of above	Text
	If image, what type	(a) Logo
		(b) Symbol
		(c) Flag
		(d) Hand Gesture
		(e) Other
		(f) More than one
	Discuss	Text