An Insider View of the Sleeper Cell Terrorist: A Face Validity Study

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ABSTRACT. Pipes (2003) has proposed a checklist for law enforcement to use in identifying possible members of sleeper cells. The purpose of this research was to evaluate Pipes' checklist through the judgment of Muslim "insiders." Thirty-three Muslim insiders responded to Pipes' checklist by indicating the degree of concern that they believed each item should trigger about a possible sleeper. The sample of Muslim insiders differed predictably concerning how serious they felt the sleeper threat was, and thus in the amount of concern each item raised. However, they were remarkably consistent in the *relative* amount of concern raised by any particular item. A single "terrorism concern" scale accounted for most of the variance in subjects' responses.

KEYWORDS. Sleeper, terrorist, extremist

Islamist extremism dramatically re-entered the world stage when militant Iranian students took American embassy employees hostage in 1979 and kept them prisoners for 444 days (Bowden, 2006). Encouraged by its ability to insult a Western power with impunity, Iran began to export its

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fundamentalist Islamic revolution on a broader regional basis. In subsequent years, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia funded madrassas worldwide, preaching a fundamentalist Wahhabism that often serves as the theological basis for global jihad (Phares, 2005). Overseas, American soldiers and sailors have been murdered in nightclubs, barracks bombings, and recreational facilities as well as aboard a naval vessel and commercial airliner. American embassies have been bombed in Beirut and most recently in Nairobi and Dar Es Salaam. Also, jihadist fatwas have been declared, authorizing the murder of Americans worldwide (Bar, 2006).[1]

Jihadist attacks against Americans have been perpetrated not only abroad but within the continental United States as well. Although the attacks of September 11, 2001, remain watershed events, U.S. targets have been struck or plotted against both before and after 9/11.

So-called "Lone Wolf" terrorists have attacked Americans in a sudden and violent fashion using firearms and vehicles as weapons. For example, a radical Pakistani with mujahideen connections gunned down two federal employees in Langley, Virginia, in 1993. Seven people were shot by a Palestinian militant on the observation platform of the Empire State Building in New York City in 1997. Travelers were shot to death in the airport terminal in Los Angeles; and in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, university students were run over in 2006 to avenge worldwide "mistreatment" of Muslims. Similar in nature to the amok attacks of earlier decades and centuries (Andriolo, 2002; Westermeyer, 1982), these outbursts of hatred directed at Americans show no signs of abatement and may, in fact, have been underreported for political reasons (Phares, 2005). Although the vast majority of Muslims worldwide would likely find such attacks abhorrent, their frequency and often fatal nature merit further study by law enforcement and homeland security officials.[2]

Of even greater concern, however, are those terrorist operations planned and executed by groups of individuals working in concert with each other. Group efforts often prove more deadly because multiple actors frequently select bigger targets and often are able to acquire the weaponry and operational capability necessary to engage in mass casualty terrorism. The World Trade Center bombing in 1993 and the subsequent attacks of September 11, 2001 remain infamous examples of the efficacy of group effort. Numerous other conspiracies to murder innocents have been discovered and disrupted before they were unleashed on unsuspecting innocents (Emerson, 2002; Kushner and Davis, 2004). A Jersey City terrorist group had planned on bombing at least five major targets in New York City but was brought down by an informant in June 1993. A plot by two Palestinians to bomb

the New York City subway system beneath the East River was foiled by the NYPD acting on a tip in July 1997 (Katz, 2005). Six Yemeni-Americans from Lackawanna, New York trained in an Al Qaeda camp in the spring of 2001 and eventually pleaded guilty to terrorism-related charges. Two U.S. citizens of South Asian origin were arrested in Georgia for planning terrorist attacks after traveling to Washington, D.C. in 2005 to take videos of the Capitol, the World Bank, the George Washington Masonic Memorial in Alexandria, and a fuel storage depot in Northern Virginia. Al Qaeda operatives plotted to release hydrogen cyanide gas in New York City subway cars and at other strategic locations in early 2003 but were told by higher ups to hold off on this operation for as-yet-unknown reasons (Suskind, 2006). In 2006, seven Florida men were arrested for plotting to blow up the Sears Tower in Chicago and FBI buildings in Miami. On May 8, 2007, six young men were arrested for conspiring to kill American soldiers stationed at Fort Dix, New Jersey.

While the aforementioned incidents by no means constitute the totality of foiled plans to attack the United States, they do illustrate the enormity and immediacy of current threats to homeland security. The major purpose of the Department of Homeland Security and other government agencies at all levels is to prevent, deter, neutralize, or mitigate the efforts of terrorists to destroy, incapacitate, or exploit the American critical infrastructure and key resources (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2006). To that end, it is urgent that both government and private sector leaders be provided with the tools necessary to detect terrorists currently operating within U.S. borders in order to incapacitate them before they can bring their plans to fruition (Ervin, 2006; Flynn, 2004; Hulnick, 2004).

PROFILING SLEEPER CELLS

In a recent poll sponsored by *Foreign Policy* magazine and the Center for American Progress, 117 foreign policy and terrorism experts were queried about anticipated future encounters with terrorism. Eighty-four percent of those surveyed believed an attack on the scale of the 2005 London bombings would occur in the United States within the next five years. A suicide bombing was rated the most likely method of attack by 67 percent of those surveyed.[3]

Attacks on the West often have been carried out through two different methods: the hit squad and the sleeper cell. Hit squads assemble and plan overseas, then enter a country on a specific mission timetable. A sleeper

cell maintains a longer term residency in the target country, attempts to have its members lead a normal, unremarkable lifestyle, and bides its time while awaiting attack orders or independently plotting an attack. The September 11 terrorists actually involved a sleeper cell within a hit squad, the infamous Hamburg cell (Leiken, 2004). The focus of this research is the sleeper cell and the possibilities of identifying its members in a timely fashion.

Khosrokhavar (2005) identifies five types of actors to be found in global jihadist networks. Two of these groups are most relevant for the present research. The first is made up of those Arabs or Southwest Asians who left their home countries to live in the West and then turned to radical Islam while living in the West. The second group consists of young second-generation Americans or Europeans who are children of immigrants, but who have never felt fully integrated into the culture and society of the land of their birth and who turned to radical Islam to fill the void. The first group may be identified as a foreign sleeper cell while the second may be identified as a homegrown sleeper cell. Although this research does not focus on the etiology of each of these cell types, there are basic similarities. Foreign sleeper cell members often are marginal men, not fully belonging to their own culture, from which they have become somewhat alienated, and yet never becoming fully socialized into Western culture, which in some ways they find superior (e.g., technology), but in other ways inferior (e.g., values). The corresponding anomie is compensated for by a commitment to radical Islam and terrorism (Ahmed, 2005; Nunn, 2004).[4]

Homegrown sleeper cell members may feel alienated from mainstream society due to the discrimination they perceive directed at them because of their racial, religious, and ethnic heritage. Although homegrown sleepers may show *cultural* assimilation, they may not attain *structural* assimilation, in that they are not widely accepted into cliques, clubs, and other social institutions on a primary group level (Gordon, 1964; Leiken, 2005; Marger, 2003). Resulting feelings of marginality along with various combinations of personal pressures (Demause, 2002; Lachkar, 2002; Martens, 2004; Meloy et al., 2001) and social pressures (Dingfelder, 2004; Post, 1986; Pynchon and Borum, 1999; Sageman, 2004) help explain why certain people are willing to murder others and take their own lives in what they believe to be service to their faith.[5]

At this point in time, however, most scholars do not believe terrorists suffer from any significant psychopathology, which might render them too unreliable for membership in a secret society demanding discipline

from its members (Silke, 1998). Because they may suffer no significant pathology, terrorists should not be expected to exhibit any pathological patterns of thought or behavior that would allow them to be readily profiled. Other scholars have argued, however, that suicide terrorists may share certain personality traits (e.g., authoritarian personality) and would, therefore, be susceptible to profiling efforts (Lester, Yang, and Lindsay, 2004). Grimland, Apter, and Kerkhof (2006) point out that the absence of clear evidence of psychopathology does not mean that terrorists are without major psychological disturbances, which might be detected if enough of these individuals could be carefully evaluated.

The challenge facing homeland security and local law enforcement is to detect the presence of sleepers in target communities and to prevent them from taking action. Because cell members are generally recruited through kinship, friendship, worship, and discipleship (Bell, 2005; Sageman, 2004), law enforcement infiltration is rather difficult. Some moderate Muslims also may be reluctant to report the existence of such cells in their communities due to passive support for their ideas, a fear of retaliation, or a combination of both. To the extent that profiles can be developed to focus attention on subjects likely to be involved in sleeper cell activity, these investigative difficulties may be lessened or mitigated to some extent. Care must be taken, of course, not to alienate the wider Arab American community, whose support is so crucial to successful homeland security efforts (Murray, 2005; Thatcher, 2005).

Criminal profiling, as currently practiced in the U.S. and other countries, is somewhat multifaceted, with different proponents advocating their own methodologies. Although all profilers draw inferences about demographic and behavioral characteristics of a perpetrator based on the manner in which he or she committed a crime, there are many variations of the profiling process.[6] Profiling can be either retrospective, investigating those who have *already* committed a crime, or prospective, drawing inferences about the characteristics of people who *will* commit a crime (Reddy et al., 2001). In the present research, we are concerned with a form of prospective profiling referred to as offender profiling. Basically, this approach attempts to identify behavioral characteristics of criminals who are likely to be involved in a particular type of crime (Homant and Kennedy, 1998). Examples of offender profiling include profiles of likely drug couriers, smugglers, aircraft hijackers, and child molesters. Overall, profiling is more an art than a science, and there have been several valid criticisms of profiling as a law enforcement tool (Allison, Bennell, and Mokros, 2002; Kocsis and Palermo, 2005). Nevertheless, when properly applied and based on

a sufficient scientifically derived foundation, offender profiling may have much to offer in the struggle against crime and terrorism alike (Hicks and Sales, 2006; Wilson, Lincoln, and Kocsis, 1997).

Although a terrorist sleeper profile can be a useful investigative tool, its use must be tempered with caution. For example, indiscriminate use of drug courier profiles has led to complaints of racial profiling and police harassment for Driving While Black (Harris, 2002; Wilson, Dunham, and Alpert, 2004). Likewise, Arab and Muslim Americans fear that the use of offender profiling techniques designed to identify sleeper cell members will lead to widespread harassment (Elliott, 2006; Henderson et al., 2006; Leadership Conference on Civil Rights Education Fund, n.d.). It is certainly true that any profiling method relying primarily on a subject's race or ethnic group classification will result in a completely unacceptable number of false positives. Not only would such a system be ineffective and illegal, it would also alienate those very people in a position to best assist homeland security in its efforts to identify threats to national security (Swiney, 2006). Profiling based on a subject's pre-attack behavior, which may be logically connected with terrorist activity, however, is both reasonable and constitutional (Heumann and Cassak, 2003; Macdonald, 2002, 2003; Schauer, 2003).

PIPES' MODEL FOR RECOGNIZING ISLAMIC SLEEPER TERRORISTS

Pipes (2003) has proposed a checklist of indicators of possible Islamist sleeper cell terrorists.[7] These indicators are intended to be helpful for law enforcement and homeland security personnel for identifying possible jihadists who are sleepers within the United States, whether as individuals or as members of organized cells. These indicators should not yet be considered a formal profile, in the sense of a large set of traits expected to be found together in the same person. Some of the items in Pipes' list are contradictory, such as "chooses to live in areas where many cultures are represented" (p. 154) and "avoiding contact with the larger society" (p. 154). Such contradictions are not necessarily a problem if we view Pipes' list of characteristics as a sort of "problem checklist" where any of a number of combination of items may indicate that concern is warranted. It is conceivable that upon further analysis, a typology of two or more distinct types of sleeper terrorist may be embedded in the checklist.

Pipes begins by presenting a general review of cases; most of them well publicized in the general media. Based on this review, Pipes makes a number of points about possible sleepers, such as "sleepers prefer to blend into the nonmilitant majority [of Muslims living in the U.S.] . . . they don't wear traditional beards and they don't pray at mosques" (p. 151). Pipes also cites an Al Qaeda handbook that counsels sleepers to even avoid going to mosques. While on the one hand, sleepers may live "blameless lives, holding down steady jobs" and the leaders [of terrorist groups] may "live abstemiously and according to Islamic precepts" (p. 151), their followers are likely to be "more self indulgent, with a taste for pornography, women, liquor, and drugs" (p. 151).

After explaining why sleepers are so difficult to identify and having presented many characteristics that are *not* useful for identifying sleepers, Pipes then lists some 42 traits or characteristics that he believes may be helpful in separating possible sleeper cell terrorists from the moderate Muslim community. Of course, he does not say that any one trait or even any combination of traits should mark someone as a terrorist; presumably, however, an accumulation of the traits listed by Pipes might make it more likely that a person is a sleeper. Thus, if a person shows enough such traits, or a few of them to an extreme, this would be a reason for concern and closer investigation or surveillance.

The 42 traits that Pipes lists are subdivided into six categories:

- *connection with foreign* countries (4 items);
- making *preparations* for (terrorist) operations (9 items);
- displaying certain *attitudes*, such as "accusing the West of trying to destroy Islam" (p. 153) (11 items);
- *identity* problems (e.g., "cover story that does not ring true," p. 153) (5 items)
- questionable *social activities* (e.g., financial support for militant Islamic groups) (6 items);
- *miscellaneous* pointers, such as "a preference for cash transactions" (p. 154) (7 items).

While Pipes' presentation of the characteristics of sleeper terrorists constitutes a starting point, two limitations should be noted. First, as noted earlier, there are some internal contradictions within the 42 characteristics. These contradictions mostly have to do with whether one should expect a sleeper to fully blend in with mainstream Americans and to exhibit an Americanized way of life (e.g., drinking alcohol; casual dating) or whether they

are likely to have continued contact with Islamist extremists, for example in attending mosques "known for their militant orientation." (p. 154). To some extent these seeming contradictions can be explained, though Pipes himself does not really discuss them. For one thing, Pipes is not presenting a profile of a single sleeper type, but rather a checklist of characteristics that may indicate a sleeper. Perhaps too great a deviation in either direction (from a more moderate, slightly Westernized Islam) could be a basis for caution. Another possibility is that the contradictions may represent the phenomenon of "bleed through." That is, even though a sleeper may be committed to hiding his extremist orientation by portraying a very Americanized, non-Islamist type of person, nevertheless his extremism may be betrayed by certain slips.[8] Whether or not either of the aforementioned explanations account for the contradictions in Pipes' checklist, more analysis and clarification is called for.

The second limitation is that the empirical basis for Pipes' 42 characteristics is not at all clear. While Pipes uses some actual terrorist cases to illustrate points, many of the characteristics seem to be unsubstantiated generalizations from one or two cases, or even mere armchair analysis. This is not meant as a fatal criticism of Pipes' methodology. In the absence of sufficient cases to draw clear inferences in comparison to a known baseline, a certain amount of speculation may be helpful. At the very least, such speculation provides a rich source of hypotheses for further testing. But even if one could point to a substantial number of cases to illustrate each of the 42 characteristics, there would still be a need to compare these cases against some baseline in order to be sure that they did not apply equally to non-terrorists.

PURPOSE OF PRESENT RESEARCH

The main purpose of the present research, then, is to further explore the characteristics proposed by Pipes as indicators of possible sleepers. In the absence of a validation sample of suitable sleepers, we propose instead to conduct an exercise that evaluates the face validity and the content validity of Pipes' measure. As such, this research is exploratory in nature and seeks primarily to evaluate the utility of a particular instrument; our aim is not to generalize to a universe of Muslims in the United States, but to determine whether a particular sleeper profile can be developed. We propose to do this through a combination of quantitative and qualitative data.

Traditionally, measurement theorists are concerned with four aspects or types of validity in judging the usefulness of a measuring instrument: face,

content, construct, and criterion, the latter often subdivided as concurrent and predictive (cf. Anastasi and Urbina, 1996). If we consider Pipes' 42 characteristics of sleepers as a type of rating scale for identifying sleepers, then we suggest that these types of validity have certain requirements. Face validity would be a matter of whether knowledgeable or expert judges agree that the items in the instrument *appear* to measure the thing being assessed (i.e., whether someone is likely to be a sleeper). It should be noted that with some psychometric instruments, especially those designed to measure unconscious or subtle traits, a lack of face validity could even be a good thing.

Content validity raises the issue of whether the items making up an instrument fairly represent the domain of possible items. In the present case, this would mean whether or not all those factors that could indicate a sleeper are at least somewhat represented among the 42 items that Pipes has proposed. Has any significant warning indicator been omitted?

Construct validity has to do with whether data derived from the instrument make theoretical sense, when compared with other data. Thus, people who "score high" when assessed against Pipes' characteristics ought to at least differ from those who score low, perhaps in their readiness to participate in an anti-American demonstration.

Finally, the real measure of an instrument's effectiveness is whether it measures what it is intended to measure, that is, criterion validity. Do people or groups who score high when assessed by Pipes' instrument in fact turn out to have a higher percentage of sleepers among them than those who score low? (If the characteristic of actually being a sleeper can be currently determined, this may be referred to as concurrent validity; if one has to wait and see who actually turn out to be sleepers, this would be called predictive validity.)

In this study, then, we are concerned with face and, to a lesser extent, content validity. The ideal "judge" of the characteristics of a sleeper would be an insider who understands the role and behaviors of the sleeper. In the extreme, this might call for consulting those who have been involved with terrorist organizations (as members, former members, infiltrators, etc.). This is obviously impractical, but we mention it by way of stating the ideal. Close to this ideal is someone who is an "insider" to Islam and who may have more insight into extremist thinking and behavior, by having encountered them in a religious community from time to time. This is the type of group that we propose to tap as our experts. In anthropology, an insider's interpretation of a cultural phenomenon versus an outsider's interpretation is often referred to as an emic versus an etic explanation,

respectively. Emic explanations have the advantage of being able to convey how members of the culture in question look at and understand the phenomenon at issue—the sleeper/terrorist in this case.[9]

METHOD

Questionnaire Construction

The logic of this research called for getting a diverse sample of Muslim "insiders" to evaluate the 42 characteristics listed by Pipes as being possible indicators of a sleeper. The 42 characteristics were presented in a 6-page questionnaire that explained the research, defined the concept of a sleeper, presented and explained a 5-point scale to be used for judging the items, asked for some basic demographic data from the subjects, and then concluded with an open-ended question about what the subject thought the main things were that should be kept in mind in trying to identify a sleeper.
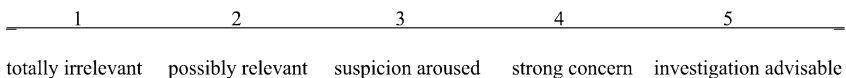
First, a sleeper was defined as follows: A "sleeper" is a person who is part of a terrorist organization who lives in the country that will be a target for terrorist activity. The sleeper is in the country legally, has citizenship or at least is a legal resident, and goes about the business of being a regular citizen. The sleeper may have minimal contact with the terrorist organization until there is a suitable time to engage in a terrorist act.

Subjects were then presented with the following scale to use (see Figure 1) in judging the items in the questionnaire:

> Put a number from 1 to 5 on the blank in front of each item below to indicate whether the item might help to identify a sleeper connected to a jihadist terrorist group. In each case, assume the person is known to have an Islamic background and is living in an American city.

This scale was followed by 62 items. These items were derived as follows: 43 items were taken directly from Pipes' (2003) chapter on recognizing terrorists. In some cases the wording was exactly the same as

FIGURE 1. A conceptual model of decision process.

1	2	3	4	5
totally irrelevant	possibly relevant	suspicion aroused	strong concern	investigation advisable

in Pipes' original work. In other cases, a basic idea was made more concrete. Thus, for one characteristic Pipes had, "Long unexplained absences; or absences for vague purposes of religious education, charity work, or pilgrimage" (p. 152). We re-wrote this as: "There have been one or two periods of several months when this person was simply not around; no one seems to know where he was."

One of Pipes' items, in the "preparation" category, seemed to be an especially strong indicator of possible terrorist activities: "possession of such artifacts as detonators and a protective suit against chemical and biological weapons" (p. 152). We decided to use two versions of this item in order to assess whether the subject felt that *any* characteristics were indicative of terrorism. Our two versions were worded: "A suit of chemically protective clothing was found in this person's closet," and "Detonators for explosives found in garage."

Besides his basic 42 items, Pipes also made some general background comments about what to and not to look for; these supplied an additional four items. Finally, we believed that it would be important to include a set of control items in our list: items that no one thought had anything to do with identifying a sleeper. This would allow us to be sure that our subjects were carefully considering the items and not falling into a pattern of simple agreement. To this end we essentially reversed the idea in 15 of Pipes' characteristics. An example of this would be: "Works in a department store selling clothing." This was a negation of Pipes' item: "Working in an area (such as import/export) that serves as a cover for preparation for an operation" (p. 152). These 15 control items were expected to get particularly low scores on our scale.

Identifying Expert Insiders

For this research, we define as an "insider" anyone who grew up in the Islamic religion and culture, and has some knowledge of what it means to be a Muslim in a Westernized society. Eventually, we were able to sample from three groups of Islamic insiders. We will refer to these groups as critics, defenders, and mainstream Muslims, respectively. In what follows, we describe our method of sampling from each group.

Critics

We use the term "critic" to refer to someone of Islamic background who has overtly criticized certain key aspects of Islam. Over the past decade, a number of Muslims have put into print various of their objections to

both extremist interpretations of Islamic theology and even to some of the basic tenets of Islam itself (see, for example, Bostom, 2005; Hamid, 2005; Gabriel, 2002; Shienbaum and Hasan, 2006; Shoebat, 2005). According to the authors of these books and chapters, terrorists should not be viewed as "extremists" in the sense of people who have perverted an intrinsically benign message—Islam—by taking it too far; rather, the extremists are in fact following the original, literal (intended) message of the Koran, and without a reform within Islam itself, we should expect that terrorists will continue to be generated by this belief system. Several of these authors were solicited to participate in this research; eventually we obtained completed questionnaires from seven of them.

Defenders

"Defenders" refers to activists who offer a rational defense of Islam. Needless to say, the events of 9/11 put many Muslims in the United States on the defensive. Anger and suspicion were directed at them, and the incidence of hate crimes against them rose dramatically. As we began our research, then, we became aware of both local and national organizations that were oriented toward showing non-Muslims the reasonableness of moderate Islam and generally defending the American Islamic community against any potential charges of disloyalty.

E-mail contact was made with some of the members of the organization Free Muslims and responses were eventually solicited from two members of this group. Local contacts in the Detroit area resulted in responses from four additional Muslims, giving us a total of six defenders.[10]

Mainstream Muslims

The final component of our insider sample consisted of 20 local "mainstream" Muslims recruited through various personal contacts established through some of the Arab students in our various criminal justice academic programs. These were local residents variously employed throughout the Detroit metropolitan area. They were neither critics nor Muslim activists, but rather could be taken to represent the Muslim "man in the street."

Sample Characteristics

Our sample of insiders eventually totaled 33 respondents. The final sample was 69% male. Subjects ranged in age from 17 to 62 with a mean age of 33.2. One third of the subjects were born in the United States;

36% were born in an Arabic country, 18% in India or the far east, 1 (3%) person each in Iran and Brazil, and 2 subjects did not report their country of origin. With respect to current residence, 85% were currently residing in the United States; 9% were in Asia or South America and 6% did not answer this question. The 14 subjects who described themselves as having been born outside the United States and who were currently citizens (n = 12) or residents (n = 2) had spent a mean of 18.0 years in the United States.

In terms of religion, all but one subject was Islamic from birth, the exception having been raised in Judaism and converted to Islam. Currently, 84% professed to still be Muslims, 6% said they were Christians, and 10% indicated "none" for current religion. Of those who were Muslim, 56% said that they were Sunni and 44% were Shia. Given the choices of "yes, somewhat, no," 29% described themselves as being religious, 29% were somewhat religious, and 42% were not religious.

Educationally, 24% had less than a high school education (all from the mainstream Muslim subsample), 24% were high school graduates, 24% had some college, 20% had a bachelor's degree, and 8% had post-graduate education.

We included an additional question that was to prove very helpful in interpreting subjects' responses to Pipes' checklist. The question measured how critical or important subjects saw the issue of identifying sleeper terrorists:

"Considering only those Muslims currently living legally in the United States, what percentage do you believe support the jihadists and their use of terror attacks against Western countries?" Only 25 of our 33 subjects answered this question, but their answers gave us our first confirmation of the diversity of our sample. Subjects' estimates of terrorist support ran from 0% to 70%, with two subjects at each of these extreme scores. Subjects' mean score was 34% (median = 30%), with a standard deviation of 22.2%. While more or less symmetrical, the distribution was very flat (hence the high standard deviation).

RESULTS

Scale Consistency

In our first perusal of the data, one thing that stood out is that some subjects believed that many characteristics merited a response of 3 or more

("suspicion aroused"), while other subjects seldom gave a response above 2 ("possibly relevant") unless there was a direct reference to bomb-making materials. This suggested that all the items were correlated, in the sense that if a subject gave a higher score to one item, he or she would likely give a higher score to other items. To assess this, we treated all 47 items taken from Pipes as a single scale, which we refer to as the Terrorism Concern Scale. This scale proved to be highly internally consistent: Cronbach's alpha = .96.

The implication is that subjects who gave mostly high ratings throughout the questionnaire believed that sleepers were a significant problem, while those who gave uniformly low ratings believed that sleepers should not be a significant concern. To verify this, we checked the correlation between subjects' scores on the Terrorism Concern Scale and the item measuring the perceived support of terrorism by western Muslims. These two measures correlated + .55 (df 23, p= .004). In other words, those subjects who felt that a relatively high percentage of western Muslims supported the jihadists also tended to feel that there should be a high overall concern for identifying sleepers (and thus rated most of the questionnaire items highly).

Insiders Subgroups and the Terrorism Concern Scale

Having identified a "Terrorism Concern Scale," we next investigated its properties. On the total 47 item scale, subjects had a mean score (per item) of 2.739, with a standard deviation of .679. This translates to a mean score of 2.45 per item, with an item standard deviation of 0.59 (i.e., just over half a scale point). In other words, the average item, derived directly from Pipes' analysis, was rated in the "suspicion aroused" area of our 5-point scale (i.e., between 2.5 to 3.5).

To further explore the nature of the Terrorism Concern Scale, we looked at its relationship to the three different subgroups that made up our sample. It was expected that the critics would have the highest mean score on the scale, followed by the mainstream Muslims, and then the defenders with the lowest mean score. This is indeed what the results showed, as can be seen in Table 1. The critics subsample (n = 7), who were selected for this study precisely because their writings criticized Islam for its lack of reform and for the fact that when taken literally the Koran supports the terrorist ideology of the extremists, gave a mean score that was actually above the 3.0 point of the scale ("suspicion aroused"): the average identifying characteristic given by Pipes was seen as sufficient for arousing suspicion by

TABLE 1. Type of insider and mean terrorism concern scale scores

Subsample	n	Mean	S.D.
Critics	7	3.10	.68
Mainstream Muslims	20	2.72	.71
Defenders	6	2.38	.68
Total Group	33	2.739	.679

Pearson correlation: r = +.34, df 31, p = .03 (one-tailed).

these critics. In contrast, the defenders, who were expected to see terrorism as less of a problem, were closer to the scale position "possibly relevant" in their assessment of Pipes' characteristics. The more accidentally selected mainstream Muslims were in between these two groups.

In order to determine whether the subgroups differed among from each other significantly, we assigned the values 3, 2, and 1 to the critics, mainstream Muslims, and defenders, respectively, indicating the approximate degree of concern each group was expected to have about sleepers. When these scores were then correlated with the Terrorism Concern Scale, the r was $+ .34$ (df 31, $p = .03$, one-tailed). Thus, there is evidence of significant disagreement among our insider subsamples over the degree to which one should be concerned about possible terrorist sleepers, given the warning signs that Pipes has suggested. This statement should be considered a hypothesis for future testing, rather than a conclusion, given the post-hoc nature of the analysis and the small subgroup sample sizes.

The Areas of Concern

As indicated earlier, Pipes' checklist is divided into six categories, indicating different aspects of attitude, behavior, and background that might raise concerns about a possible sleeper. In addition, we derived 4 items from some preliminary statements that Pipes made, and we included our own 15 control items. These categories, along with an example item and the mean scores obtained for items in the categories, are given in Table 2.

As can be seen in Table 2, identity problems and foreign connections stand out as the types of items generating the most concern. Other than the Control items, which were designed to score low, the Background, Miscellaneous, and Social Activities items had the lower ratings. The differences in the mean scores according to category were highly significant ($F = 6.05$, df 7/54, $p = .001$), but this was entirely due to the control items standing

TABLE 2. Mean scores according to type of item

Type	Typical tem	N	Mean
Background	Arabic is the person's native language	4	1.78
Foreign connection	Came to U.S. from a country where a violent Islamic group is known to operate in a widespread fashion.	4	3.23
Preparations	Detonators for explosives found in garage. garage.	10	2.73
Attitudes	Excuses terrorist actions against the the 11 the U.S. because they were provoked by U. S. policies.	11	2.87
Identity Problems	Falsely claims to be a French citizen.	5	3.28
Social Activities	Attends services at a local mosque known for the militancy of its Imam.	6	2.31
Miscellaneous	Lives in a multicultural, "anything goes" sort of neighborhood.	7	2.23
Control	Works in a department store selling clothing	15	1.44

Note: N refers to the number of items in the scale for this category.
F = 6.05, df 7/54, p = .001.

apart from the other categories. The 47 items derived directly from Pipes' checklist did not show any significant differences among them based on the category of the items. There was a lot of within-group variance, especially in the preparations category, where the detonator question received a mean of 4.58 but another item, "Is employed by an import-export firm" received a mean of only 1.57. (This latter item obviously reflects a much less suspicious form of "preparation.")

High and Low Item Mean Items

At this point in our analysis, we have established that the items derived from Pipes constitute an internally consistent scale and that our insider judges adopt a consistent pattern in evaluating the items. While some judges, especially from the defender subsample, are inclined to discount the threat of sleeper terrorists and to give the items a low overall score, others, especially from the critic subsample, are inclined to see sleeper terrorists as a significant problem and to give Pipes' items relatively high scores. Taken as a whole, the sample gave the average item substantial support. Sorting the items by their categories (Table 2) showed that there was a similar amount of support for each area. We decided, then, to look at three

sets of items in order to determine if there was any particular commonality in their content that would account for their degree of support. Specifically, we looked at three groups of items: high scores, low scores, and what we call "key items," to be described in the following section.[11]

For the high items and low items, we grouped together the 10 items with the highest and lowest mean scores, respectively. The 10 highest scoring items had mean agreement scores ranging from 4.56 (for the "detonators item" previously mentioned) down to 3.42. Four of these items were from the "preparations" category, with the others scattered among the other categories. For the most part, all of the items indicated a fairly close link to Islamist extremism and/or obviously suspicious activity.

The 10 lowest items had mean scores ranging from 1.79 down to 1.33. Many of these were based on Pipes' subtle characteristics, that is, things a sleeper might do to distance himself from the Muslim community as a whole. Others represented minor, subtle behaviors that might be totally innocuous. For example, one of Pipes' characteristics in the "preparations" category is worded simply "physical training" (p. 153). We represented this idea with an item worded as follows: "Took a course in judo at a community college." This item received a mean score of 1.7. While quite low, 17 of our 33 insiders (52%) did give it a 2 or a 3 ("possibly relevant" or "suspicion aroused"). This, we expect, is about the level of concern that Pipes' believes such an item merits. To quote him directly, "These . . . imprecise indicators . . . must be seen in the context of the whole personality and a wider pattern of behavior" (Pipes, 2003, p. 155). In other words, these low scoring items are useful because they are subtle enough that a careful sleeper might not avoid them and if enough such items co-occur in the same individual then reason for more careful attention may well exist.

Critical Items

Finally, we created a category that we refer to as "critical items." We identified three criteria for referring to an item as critical: (1) the items had an intermediate mean score (from 2.3 to 3.3); (2) the items had high item variance; (3) the items had very high item-total correlations with the Terrorism Concern Scale. We selected the 10 items that best met these criteria and then examined them to see if any themes or commonalities stood out.

The first thing that was evident about the critical items was that 6 of the 10 were from Pipes' attitude category. These attitudes could all be considered anti-Western and Muslim extremist. One item illustrating this

was: "Says the Islamic law should be applied in the U.S." This item had a mean of 2.7 and, more importantly, a correlation of .804 with the total Terrorism Concern Scale. Fifteen (45%) of our insiders rated this item as only 1 or 2, perhaps reflecting the idea that such an attitude is not uncommon in the Islamic community. However, 8 subjects (24%) rated this item as "suspicion aroused" and another 10 subjects (30%) rated it either "strong concern" or even "investigation advisable." Looking at the three insider subsamples, 100% of the seven critics rated the item at least a 3, while 67% of the defenders rated it as only a 1 or 2. The 20 mainstream Muslims were fairly evenly divided, with 55% rating it 1 or 2 and 45% rating it 3 or above.

The four critical items that did not come from the attitude category all reflected behaviors that could easily have an innocent explanation, but taken in context with other characteristics, such as various extremist attitudes, might well arouse suspicion. Once again, the critic subsample was much more likely to show concern over these items than were the defenders; thus, scores on these items may say as much about the concern level of the rater as they do about identifying potential terrorists.

Qualitative Responses

At the conclusion of the questionnaire, subjects were asked: "Regardless of whether the idea has been included in the 62 items above, what are the main things that you would pay attention to in trying to identify whether some person was likely to be a sleeper? What would you advise security or law enforcement to look out for? Please write these below in your own words."

This section was essentially a check on the content validity of Pipes' checklist. It allowed us to determine whether our insiders might be attuned to characteristics that Pipes had overlooked. Twenty subjects (61%) responded to this item, with comments ranging from a few words to a neatly typed, single-spaced two pages. Some were very negative, for example, "Some of the ideas in the above survey were almost comical," or "Every human does these things" (i.e., the behaviors and attitudes reflected in the items). One respondent cautioned: "(The sleeper) may not exist in the U.S." A few made policy statements, typically indicating that U.S. policy in the Middle East was the main reason for terrorism. Many others supported the content of Pipes' items, by restating a point from the questionnaire: "(Someone who) purchases a large amount of chemicals."

A few of the suggested traits clearly extended Pipes' checklist, for example "(Someone who has) hatred; offended by little things." Other

suggestions, such as "Different cars at house throughout the day" and "Wife wears hijab or face veil," could be placed into Pipes' "social activities" category but are clearly different from the ideas that Pipes offered. Another suggestion in this vein was: "His kids hate Jews, Christians, (and) support violence." Another subject suggested: "Pretends (to be) westernized, but no pork, no drinking binge, and wife must convert." One new idea that fit well with Pipes' attitudes section was: "Talks about a willingness to commit suicide for a cause." More in keeping with Pipes were the comments: "Might try to blend in" and "Might be western minded, possibly as an act, or in actuality. "

In all, we were able to count some 88 different suggestions. Most of these suggestions could fit comfortably into three of Pipes' seven categories, as follows:

1. Attitudes (mostly involving extremist Islam; 33 comments) "Wears watch on right hand" (i.e., reflecting the belief that the left hand is unclean) "Outspoken pro-terrorist views"
2. Preparations (22 comments) "Purchase fertilizers in large quantities" "Supports self/family without a job"
3. Identity problems (21 comments): "Always checking (his own) ID" "Uses P.O. Box rather than home address."

Finally, a small group of comments (12) supported Pipes' concern that the sleeper may take extra steps to avoid being linked to extremist Islam or terrorism, such as: "Drinks alcohol, and does not attend mosque nor donate money." A fitting summary statement was: "Tactics will change, only universal surveillance can work."

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

In this research we obtained responses from 33 Muslim "insiders" with respect to a list of characteristics that have been proposed as possible indicators of a sleeper terrorist (Pipes, 2003). A questionnaire was constructed that presented some 47 items based directly on Pipes' article along with 15 control items. Subjects responded to these items using a 5-point scale that indicated the degree to which each item would arouse the respondent's suspicion or concern about such a person. The basic findings were that the items formed a consistent scale, and the overall mean rating of the 47 items was 2.74, indicating a trend toward "suspicion aroused" by the average item. The three subgroups of insiders differed systematically from each other depending on whether they were critics, defenders, or mainstream

Muslims. In other words, whether a given item aroused concern over a possible sleeper depended more on the pre-existing attitudes toward the threat of sleepers in the United States than on the content of the item itself, except in the case of such obvious items as the possession of detonators. Those of our respondents who had a higher level of concern about the presence of sleeper jihadists in the United States were more likely to support the face validity of the questionnaire items by agreeing that they would indeed be reasons for concern. Pipes' list appeared to be fairly comprehensive and to contain a good mix of obvious and subtle characteristics. Most of the additional characteristics proposed by our sample were extensions of Pipes' basic categories.

While sample limitations preclude generalization to a broader community, our initial intention was to determine whether sleeper cell profile items demonstrated any practical level of face validity to a heterogeneous group of insiders, and if so, whether there were any significant omissions from Pipes' list of characteristics. During the course of our research we also confirmed the existence of at least three basic perspectives on the question of sleeper cells, as represented by the critic, defender, and mainstream subgroups. Further research will be necessary to identify the proportions of these and other subgroups within the approximately two million Muslims in the United States. Another major finding concerns the research process itself and the sensitivity toward profiling that characterizes both the questionnaire respondents and those who declined to participate. While members of the Muslim community find the issue of sleeper cells important, many were reluctant to participate in this research. It is not known whether this hesitation is out of distrust of the potential for profiling abuse by the government and the broader community, or due to a diffuse fear of terrorists themselves. In either case, any further research must proceed with these sensitivities in mind.[12]

Our research raises the issue of whether a terrorist profile can be constructed independently of the perspective of the person employing it. In other words, unless we are aware of the threshold for concern by the profiler, the same characteristic can be seen as warranting anything from mild suspicion to full blown surveillance. An obvious question that this raises is whether the differences in outlook in our insider (or emic) sample would be mirrored in a sample of law enforcement and homeland security personnel—an etic sample. Research in progress is designed to offer answers to this question.

Finally, the ultimate validity question of any profiling instrument is the extent to which it can discriminate between actual sleeper terrorists, such

as the recent arrestees at Fort Dix, New Jersey and the larger Muslim community. At this point, there may well be enough case histories of sleepers available so that this aspect of Pipes' checklist can be more directly investigated.

NOTES

1. Egyptian sheik Omar Abd al-Rahman provided a fatwa (religious ruling) justifying the attack on the World Trade Center in 1993. In 1998, Osama bin Laden, among others, endorsed a fatwa calling for the murder of Americans worldwide, declaring that their wealth would be a booty to those who killed them (Gunaratna, 2003). Although the religious authority of terrorist figures to issue such fatwas is generally doubtful (Bar, 2006), terrorist operatives will often rationalize their actions based on the issuance of these fatwas.

2. A not insignificant number of Muslims worldwide manifest varying levels of support for militant Islam. Pipes (2003) estimates that about 12% of Muslims accept militant Islam, although he offers no source for this figure. A recent poll conducted for a British newspaper revealed that sixteen percent of respondents felt that the bombers' cause, although not their actions, was just. Seven percent felt suicide attacks on British civilians were justified in some circumstances (*www.cnn.com/2006/world/europe/07/04/uk.muslims.just.ap*. Retrieved from the Internet on July 6, 2006). Another recent poll, in various Muslim countries, found that 7% of Moroccans approved of attacking civilians in the United States and an additional 8% had mixed feelings. In Pakistan, 5% approved of these attacks and 13% had mixed feelings. Six percent of Egyptians approved with 2% being of mixed feelings (retrieved from www.start.umd.edu, May 13, 2007). Compounding the problem of estimating support for jihadist Islam is the notion that there are at least six levels of potential passive and active support for terrorism (Moghaddam, 2005). Verbal expression of support for terrorist acts does not equate to an individual's willingness to personally participate.

3. These and other data can be downloaded from the Foreign Policy website at www.foreignpolicy.com. Further evidence that domestic security officials are concerned about the existence of sleeper cells is provided by the FBI's increase in surveillance activities in Dearborn, Michigan. In August 2006, thousands of Arab-Americans and others demonstrated against Israeli military actions in Lebanon and American policy in the region. These demonstrations were often accompanied by inflammatory language and placards, with expressions of support for Hezbollah also being heard (Warikoo, 2006a, 2006b). Silverberg reports that intelligence officials agree that the entire spectrum of radical groups from the Middle East has been replicated in the United States, for example, Hamas, Al Qaeda, Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah, Muslim Brotherhood, Abu Sayyaf Group, and others (www.jfednepa.org/mark%20silverberg/sleeper.html). According to one news report, intelligence officials estimated there may be as many as 5,000 people in the United States linked to Al Qaeda, although the number of hardcore terrorists prepared to do harm is in the low hundreds or less (www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,57507,00.html). On the other hand, there are

reputable scholars who believe that the threat from sleeper cells is greatly exaggerated (Lustick, 2006; Mueller, 2006).

4.   In a comprehensive yet highly controversial study of Arab culture, Patai (2002) reports a direct correlation between the degree of cultural and linguistic assimilation to the West and the intensity of anti-Western feelings among many educated Arabs. Having tasted Western culture, the marginal man feels tainted by it and yet cannot view his own culture in the same manner as he once did. The identity problems generated by this cultural ambivalence may motivate certain individuals to utterly immerse themselves, even to the point of self-sacrifice, in a jihadist identity.

5.   Although there are similarities between foreign and homegrown sleeper cell members and Palestinian suicide terrorists, it is helpful to maintain an analytical distinction between them. Global jihadists groups such as Al Qaeda often have different organizational goals and territorial claims than Palestinian, Tamil, or Kurdish terrorist groups. There may also be a distinctive psychology and sociology involved (Bloom, 2005; Hafez, 2006; Hatina, 2006; Khasan, 2003; Pape, 2005; Pedahzur, 2005; Pedahzur, Perliger, and Weinberg, 2003; Soibelman, 2004; Weinberg, Pedahzur, and Canetti-Nisim 2003).

6.   Profiling constitutes an educated attempt to give investigative agencies specific information about the type of person who has committed or will commit a certain crime. It is the inference of offender traits from physical or behavioral evidence (Turvey, 2002). Petherick (2005) and McGrath (2000) have identified five major profiling methods. The first four are primarily inductive and the last, deductive: Diagnostic Evaluation; Criminal Investigative Analysis; Investigative Psychology; Geographic Profiling; and Behavioral Evidence Analysis. Profiling also refers to the succinct description of individuals and groups in an attempt to clarify their motives and the threat they may pose.

7.   We are aware that much of Pipes' work has stirred controversy among Middle Eastern scholars and political action groups. Certain of his writings have been described as "strident and downright prejudicial against Islam" (Charney, 2007, p. 142). Nevertheless, he is a well credentialed scholar who writes on topics of great importance to U.S. security. Given the urgency of the sleeper cell problem, we believe that polemics should not limit the range of ideas to be investigated.

8.   The concept of "bleed-through" is also referred to as the "Harum tendency." This refers to an Arab folktale in which Caliph Harum al-Rashid sometimes roamed around Baghdad in disguise in order to reveal himself when he found injustice. However, he would inadvertently betray his royal status by various words or actions. Likewise, it is thought by some that sleeper terrorists will often hint at their true plans in order to relieve tension and gain ego satisfaction (Suedfeld, 2004). Thus Mohamed Atta made comments that could have given away his plans. Likewise, certain of bin Laden's associates were worried that bin Laden would give away the 9/11 plot because of his tendency to drop hints that something big was coming (Jenkins, 2006).

9.   However, as Harris (1968) and others have emphasized, the etic explanation has the advantage of being able to see another culture more "objectively" and is often more likely to grasp more valid, infrastructural reasons for some cultural practice.

10.   We received feedback from many other defenders that we attempted to solicit for this research. The gist of this feedback was that any questionnaire directed at

identifying traits that might arouse suspicion about Muslims was *per se* unacceptable to the respondent and much of the Islamic community. In a few cases, the respondent was already familiar with the work of Daniel Pipes and considered him *persona non grata*. Even though we were able to convince one prominent local Muslim that our goal was to explore the utility of any checklist—not to support Pipes' list—he was still very unwilling to participate in the research. He eventually authored an article in a local Islamic paper that took a fairly objective tone in describing the research; although not necessarily urging Muslims to avoid our research, the article expressed a strong disapproval of the checklist of traits that Pipes had published, and indeed of Pipes himself.

    11. Examining individual item content involves the sort of specifics that may be inappropriate for general publication. Thus, we will not present tables with the actual wording of the items. Rather, we will make some generalizations about the different types of items, using an occasional illustration. The interested reader may consult the second author for details about specific items.

    12. At least among the mainstream Muslims, many of those who refused to participate voiced the suspicion that the research itself was a government subterfuge to get them to betray something about their own thinking.

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