Michael H. Becker, Ph.D.

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Education

American University, Washington, DC

Ph.D. Justice, Law, and Criminology (Spring, 2025)

Doctoral Dissertation: "Refining the General Strain Theory of Terrorism – Examining the Role of Politically Salient Stress in Support for Political Violence"

Committee: Joseph Young (Chair), Thomas Zeitzoff, Talisa Carter

University of Maryland, College Park, MD

M.A. Criminology and Criminal Justice (2017)

Master's Thesis: "Control, Learning, and Vulnerability: An Interactional Approach to Engagement in Violent Extremism"

Committee: **Laura Dugan (Chair),** Gary LaFree, Terrence Thornberry

University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN

B.A. Psychology and Spanish Studies (2013)

Research Interests

Criminological Theory; Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism; Quantitative Methods.

Peer Reviewed Publications

10. Koehler, D., **M. H. Becker**, G. Clubb, J. Belanger, and M. Williams (2025). "Lived Experience and Messenger Credibility: a replication study on P/CVE messenger credibility in Germany". *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*. DOI: 10.1080/1057610X.2025.2545794

9. **Becker, M. H.**, Williams, M. J., & Hassan, A. (2025). Examining the Impacts of a Gamified Media Literacy Intervention in Indonesia. *Journal for Deradicalization*, *43*, Article 43.

8. Leap, B. and **M. H. Becker** (2023). The Not-So-Silent 'Majority': An Automated Content Analysis of Anti-government Online Communities. *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 17(1), 103-123.

7. Fisher, D. and **M. H. Becker** (2023). Successful for Whom?: An Examination of the General Deterrent Impact of the Targeted Killing of Terrorist Leaders on Global Terrorist Fatalities. *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression* DOI: 10.1080/19434472.2023.2172444.

6. Koehler, D., G. Clubb, J. Bélanger, **M. H. Becker** & M. Williams (2023). Don't Kill the

Messenger: Perceived Credibility of Far-Right Former Extremists and Police Officers in P/CVE Communication. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*. DOI: 10.1080/1057610X.2023.2166000

5. **Becker, M. H.**, S. Decker, G. LaFree, D. Pyrooz, K. Ernest, & P. James (2022). A Comparative Study of Initial Involvement in Gangs and Political Extremism. *Terrorism and Political Violence*. DOI: 10.1080/09546553.2020.1828079.

4. Jasko, K., G. LaFree, J. Piazza, & **M. H. Becker** (2022). A comparison of political violence by left-wing, right-wing, and Islamist extremists in the United States and the world. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. DOI: 10.1073/pnas.2122593119.

3. **Becker, M. H.** (2020). Deciding to Support Violence: An Empirical Examination of Systematic Decision-Making, Activism, and Support for Political Violence. *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, DOI: 10.1177/1748895820914385.

2. **Becker, M. H.** (2019). When extremist become violent: Examining the association between social learning, social control, and engagement in violent extremism. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, DOI: 10.1080/1057610X.2019.1626093

1. Fisher, D. & **Becker, M. H.** (2019). The heterogeneous repercussions of killing Osama bin Laden on global terrorism patterns. *European Journal of Criminology*, DOI: 10.1177/1477370819850103

Book Chapters

LaFree, G. and **M. H. Becker** (In Press). Measuring Terrorism with Event Databases. In A. Basuchoudhary and G. Schulze (Eds.), *Cambridge University Handbook for the Economics of Terrorism.* Cambridge University Press.

Manuscripts Under Review

Becker, M. H., E. Greenbaum, L. M. Wasser, S. Sin, & A. Doctor (Under Review). "Lethal Adaptation or Overpriced Junk? A Practitioner-Informed Assessment of Geospatial-Enabled Threats by Non-State Adversaries"

Becker, M. H., D. Fisher, L. Dugan, and J. V. Carson (Under Review). "Eroding deterrence for terrorism: The impacts of sanctuary messages on the emboldenment of online preparatory actions for the January 6th".

Wright, L. and **M. H. Becker** (Under Review) "Performance, Persuasion, and Distraction: Examining Official Use of Twitter in Kentucky and Tennessee Following the Leak of the Dobbs Decision".

Muibu, D., S. Lynch, **M. H. Becker**, D. Gutierrez, E. Ferguson, and J. K. Young (Under Review). "The Hidden Costs of Security: Examining the Impacts of Exposure to Violent Material".

Becker, M. H., J. K. Young, and T. Zeitzoff (Under Review). All Politics are Local,

All Conspiracies are Global: Cluster Analysis of Conspiracy Theories in the United States.

Other Publications

Barclay, L., G. Barrett, **M. H. Becker**, S. Campbell, B. Kent, & J. K. Young (2024, October 21). "Increasing Evidence Use through Research-Policy Partnerships". Evaluation.Gov. https://www.evaluation.gov/evidence-partnerships/

Muibu, D., J. K. Young, **M. H. Becker**, S. M. Lynch, E. Ferguson, & L. Barclay (2024, June 30). "Vicarious Trauma in Counterterrorism Practitioners". *Reports, Projects, and Research*. 86. https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/ncitereportsresearch/86

Becker, M. H. (2023, June 22). How pardoning extremists undermines the rule of law. The Conversation. https://theconversation.com/how-pardoning-extremists-undermines-the-rule-of-law-207272

Becker, M. H. (2022, May 11). A Budget for Data Transparency and National Security. Medium. https://medium.com/@michaelhbecker/a-budget-for-data-transparency-and-national-security-e003139b99

Bosco, F., & **Becker, M.** (2018, July 16). Transnational Organized Crime and Violent Extremist Organisations: Which Links? Retrieved August 20, 2018, from https://www.ispionline.it/en/pubblicazione/transnational-organized-crime-and-violent-extremist-organisations-which-links-20966

Maimon, David, **Michael H. Becker**, Sushant Patil, & Jonathan Katz. (2017). Self-Protective Behaviors Over Public WiFi Networks, presented at The LASER Workshop: Learning from Authoritative Security Experiment Results, Arlington, VA, October, 2017. Berkeley, CA: USENIX.

Public Datasets Hosted

Michael H. Becker. (2022). United States Federal and State Twitter Project [Data file]. Retrieved from (https://mhbecker.shinyapps.io/US_Government_Twitter_Data/).

Invited Lectures

2024   "Protecting the Protectors", Plenary Panel Speaker at Eradicate Hate Global Summit. Pittsburgh, PA. October 23, 2024. https://youtu.be/nS16_SPXPBQ

2024   "Navigating the Nuts and Bolts of R", Graduate Seminar at American University.

2024   "Summoning the Mob: Why People Support Political Violence", Guest Lecture, Saint Mary's College of Maryland

2023   "Asking (and Answering) Quantitative Questions" Remote Guest Lecture, Tennessee Tech. March 28, 2023.

2022   "Domestic and International Differences in the Use of Ideologically Motivated Extremist Violence" Remote Guest Lecture, University of North Carolina at Wilmington. November 1, 2022.

2021   "A Comparative Study of Initial Involvement in Gangs and Political Extremism" Washington Institute Countering Violent Extremism Working Group. March 15, 2021.

2017   "Terrorism and Counter Terrorism." University of Maryland, Office of International and Executive Programs. July 28, 2017.

Conference Presentations

2024   "Divisive and Mundane: Understanding How Politicians Construct Their Image on Social Media" American Society of Criminology Annual Meeting, San Francisco, CA. November 16, 2021.

2024   "Granting Permission to Hate? Examining the Application of Techniques of Neutralization in Online Forums Following Instances of Political Violence" American Society of Criminology Annual Meeting, San Francisco, CA. November 15, 2021.

2024   "The Hidden Costs of Security: Examining the Impacts of Exposure to Violent Material" American Society of Criminology Annual Meeting, San Francisco, CA. November 15, 2024.

2024   "Support for Political Violence and the Ambiguous Role of Empathy" American Society of Criminology Annual Meeting, San Francisco, CA. November 13, 2021.

2024   "The Good, the Bad, and the Gruesome: Violence Exposure and Resilience in Counterterrorism Practitioners", Society for Terrorism Research Annual Conference, Edmond, Oklahoma. September 4. 2024.

2024   "A Forum for Grievance, Influence, and Mobilization toward Violence: A Thematic Analysis of the Role of Online Forums in the January 6, 2021 Attack", Terrorism and Social Media National Conference, Swansea, Wales, UK. June 19. 2024.

2024   "The hidden costs of security: Examining the impacts of exposure to violent material" Hidden Costs of Security Workshop, American University.

2023   "The hidden costs of security: Examining the impacts of exposure to violent material" International Studies Association National Convention, Montréal, Canada.

2022   "Representation or Retribution? Examining the Relationship Between Perceptions of Government Legitimacy and Support for Political Violence in the United States" American Society of Criminology Annual Meeting, Atlanta, GA. November 16, 2022.

2021	"An Examination of Web Scraping as a Tool to Collect Prospective Data on Online Radicalization and Mobilization Toward Political Violence" American Society of Criminology Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL. November 19, 2021.
2019	"Thoughtful Decision-Making as Terrorism Prevention" American Society of Criminology Annual Meeting, San Francisco, CA. November 15, 2019.
2018	"Gangs and Extremist Groups: An Examination of Antecedent and Involvement Behaviors" American Society of Criminology Annual Meeting, Atlanta, GA. November 15, 2018.
2018	"Control, Learning, or Both? An Integrated Theoretical Framework for Ideologically-Motivated Violence." Citadel Intelligence & Cybersecurity Conference, Charleston, SC. September 25, 2018.
2017	"Situational Factors as Determinants of Public WiFi Behavior." American Society of Criminology Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, PA.
2017	"Is the Guardian Capable?: A Routine Activity Theory Approach to Cyber Intrusion on Honeypot Systems." Hot Topics in the Science of Security Annual Conference, Hanover, MD.
2016	"Investigating the Role of Religious Salience in Terrorist Violence" American Society of Criminology Annual Conference, New Orleans, LA.
2015	"Motor Vehicle Theft Following Homicide: Analysis of Motivational Undercurrents." American Society of Criminology Annual Conference, Washington, DC.
2015	"Motor Vehicle Theft Following Homicide: Analysis of Motivational Undercurrents." Homicide Research Working Group Annual Conference, Clearwater Beach, FL.

Ongoing Research

Cognitive Reflection and Political Dissent

Research on politically motivated behavior often makes the distinction between activism and political violence or dissenting behaviors. One under-studied aspect of this is the role of cognition and decision-making capacity of individuals in differentiating these concepts. This ongoing project builds an evidence base to explore if cognitive processing is a link between political attitudes and activism and higher levels may be associated with less support for illicit forms of political dissent. This project aims to develop survey instruments to gather individual-level information on cognitive processes, perceptions of threat to terrorist violence, activism and high-risk dissent behavioral intentions. The results from this will serve two primary purposes: publication of research results and a baseline from which to expand future work including

longitudinal data collection, qualitative interviews of high and low risk individuals, and the assessment of these constructs and at intake and exit from ongoing de-radicalization programs.

Exogenous Shocks and Borderline Rhetoric Online

Recent scholarship has shown how online communities play an important role in normalizing and in some cases, facilitating offline acts of political violence. An ongoing theme in research connecting the online and offline domains is the role of external actors in increasing the so-called 'temperature' on these platforms, and thus potentially increasing the risk of offline violence. This project leverages data collected from several alt-social platforms over time to empirically evaluate how communities react to unanticipated major events and statements by political leaders. Using these granular data, key tenets of criminological theories can be tested, and the dynamics of borderline rhetoric can be considered on a moment-to-moment basis rather than in purely retrospective contexts.

Research Experience

Research Associate

1/2025 – Present   University of Nebraska at Omaha, National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center

Coordinated the development and writing of academic manuscripts for 1) a project examining the evolving risk of GIS and technologically advanced threats by violent non-state actors, and 2) an arm of a project assessing the potential impacts of pre-charge detention of individuals and families suspected of traveling abroad as foreign terrorist fighters. Consulted and provided coordination and subject matter expertise in the development of grant outputs as needed.

PhD Research Associate

8/2022 – 5/2025   American University, Polarization & Extremism Research & Innovation Lab

Collaborated in the design, data collection, quantitative analysis, and reporting in service of two Codebooking projects identifying 2) emergent antisemitic tropes online, and 2) emergent male supremacist and misogynistic tropes around the 2024 U.S. General Election. Provided additional research support examining the overlap between antisemitic and male-supremacist content online.

Graduate Research Assistant/Project Manager

8/2022 – 8/2024   American University, Hidden Costs of Security Project

Managed research team for a multi-year NCITE grant examining the impacts of exposure to violent material on counterterrorism and countering violent extremism practitioners. Collaborated in designing and developing data collection, analysis, and implementing ongoing project evaluation. Assisted in running weekly team meetings, identifying business development opportunities,

and drafting requisite report documents and generating grant proposals responsive to new NOFOs and RFPs.

Graduate Research Assistant

8/2021 – 8/2022   American University, Department of Justice, Law, and Criminology

Coordinated the collection and coding of the Database of Conspiracy Theories in the United States (DOCT-US). Collaborated with colleagues in the analysis and drafting of manuscripts using machine learning and cluster analysis techniques to identify two categories of domestic conspiracy theories.

Consultant

10/2020 – 3/2021   Moonshot CVE

Aided in the design and implementation of a violence prevention project focused on politically motivated violence following the November 2020 United States General Election. Collaborated with stakeholders and partners in weekly meetings to ensure buy-in for the ongoing campaign. Implemented schema for testing, monitoring, and evaluation of campaigns in real-time. Drafted methodological memoranda for audience targeting and workflow optimization using R.

Faculty Research Assistant

9/2019 – 7/2020   University of Maryland, Department of Criminology & Criminal Justice

Coordinated work through the Maryland Governor's Office on Crime Control and Prevention (GOCCP) and the Maryland Crime Research and Innovation Center (MCRIC). Liaised Maryland with GOCCP Principals and Staff to facilitate collaboration and develop new opportunities for program evaluation. Analyzed crime and sentencing data for the state of Maryland, focusing on the city of Baltimore, using R Studio. Aided in the drafting and coordination of MCRIC's NIJ and BJA grants to evaluate crime-reduction programs. Drafted and submitted requests for data from the Maryland Department of Public Safety.

Graduate Research Assistant

8/2018 – 9/2019   University of Maryland, Department of Criminology & Criminal Justice

Collaborated with colleagues from across the US and internationally in the analysis and drafting of manuscripts using quantitative and qualitative data from the Profiles in Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS) dataset. Explored the viability of identifying comparison groups for the purposes of radicalization and terrorism research.

Summer Research Intern

5/2018 – 8/2018   United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute

Conducted research and providing analysis on the topics of terrorism, transnational organized crime, cybercrime, and human trafficking. Aided in drafting of grant applications and professional reports. Drafted and prepared background documents, reports, talking points, and presentations for program officers, and supported projects in South Africa and the Sahel.

Graduate Research Assistant

8/2017 – 1/2018   University of Maryland, Department of Criminology & Criminal Justice

Utilized a theoretically motivated coding schema in the Strategic Communication Around Terrorism project. Coded the content of Reuter's lead sentences based on predetermined criteria and discussed ambiguous details in weekly team meetings with project managers and fellow coders.

Graduate Research Assistant

5/2016 – 5/2017   University of Maryland, Department of Criminology & Criminal Justice

Performed data analysis of experimental data collected from the NSF grant #1223634 "Protecting the Bazaar: The Ecology of Cybersecurity in Weakly Fortified Networks" and a second dataset supported by a National Security Agency grant. Responsibilities included data extraction, data cleaning, and the development of theoretically informed frameworks to investigate the experimental data.

Graduate Research Assistant and Project Manager

5/2016 – 5/2017   University of Maryland, Department of Criminology & Criminal Justice

Coordinated data collection for the NSF grant #1444633 **"Physical, Social and Situational Factors as Determents of Public WiFi Users Online Behaviors"**. Performed administrative functions such as hiring, training, and interviewing of potential data collectors, while evaluating the performance of those already employed. Other responsibilities included data analysis and coding of wireless network packet data and spatial diagrams.

Graduate Research Assistant

7/2016 – 9/2019   National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START)

Assisted in the development of a theoretically informed qualitative framework for the analysis of the life histories of individuals radicalized within the United States. Coded a sample of case studies pursuant to the developed codebook and consulted with Drs. Scott Decker and David Pyrooz on the coding of a comparison sample of gang member interviews.

Homicide Researcher

9/2014 – 7/2015   Center for Homicide Research, Minneapolis, MN

> Performed open-source research on homicides for state and national databases. Conducted criterion-based data collection and analysis of homicide patterns in Minnesota. Further responsibilities included performing historical homicide research in collaboration with the Hennepin County Medical Examiner's office, cataloging all death records from the late 1800s and early 1900s. Developed research briefs and assisted senior staff in the training of incoming interns.

Undergraduate Research

University of Minnesota, College of Liberal Arts

2013   Assistant to Dr. David Pellow

2011   Assistant to Dr. Cheryl Olman

Teaching Interests

Research Methods, Quantitative Analysis, Causes and Consequences of Political Violence, Criminological Theory, Cybercrime

Course Level	Courses Taught	Prepared to Teach
Graduate	• Justice Research Methods	• Conduct of Inquiry 1 • Conduct of Inquiry 2 • Criminological Theory • Terrorism and Political Violence • Survey Methods • Advanced Research Methods
Undergraduate	• Justice Research Methods II • Introduction to Criminology • Introduction to Criminal Justice	• Social Science Statistics 1 • Social Science Statistics 2 • Criminological Theory • Terrorism and Political Violence • Policing • Cybercrime • Courts

Teaching Experience

Graduate Teaching Assistant

1/2022 – 5/2022   American University, Department of Justice, Law, and Criminology

> Assisted in the administration of the M.A.-level course Introduction to Justice Research II (JLC 681) course in Spring 2022. Responsibilities included designing and conducting lectures on data management, developing course material, leading

active learning sessions in R, grading student papers, and holding office hours for a primary contact for a section of 21 professional-track masters students.

Graduate Teaching Assistant

1/2018 – 5/2018   University of Maryland, Department of Criminology & Criminal Justice

Assisted in the administration of the course Introduction to Criminal Justice (CCJS100) course in Spring 2018. Responsibilities included developing course material, leading discussion sections, assisting to proctor exams, grading student papers, and serving as a primary contact for four sections of 20-27 undergraduate students.

Graduate Teaching Assistant

8/2015 – 5/2016   University of Maryland, Department of Criminology & Criminal Justice

Assisted in the administration of the course Introduction to Criminology (CCJS105) in Fall 2015 and Spring 2016. Responsibilities included developing course material, leading discussion sections, assisting to proctor exams, grading student papers, and serving as a primary contact for undergraduate students.

Instructional Trainings

Certificate of Preparation for Effective College Instruction

6/16/2022   American University, Department of Justice, Law, and Criminology

Completed the Summer Module on University Teaching, including instruction and experience creating assignments and grading rubrics, developing lessons, crafting course syllabi, and drafting a teaching statement.

Honors and Awards

2021   *Graduate Merit Award - Department of Justice, Law, and Criminology,* American University.

2019   *Student Paper Award* - American Society of Criminology Division on Terrorism and Bias Crime, 2nd place.

2017   *Best Poster Award – Hot Topics in the Science of Security Conference*, Hanover, MD.

2015   *University Fellowship Recipient - Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice,* University of Maryland.

2010-2013   *Dean's List Scholar - College of Liberal Arts,* University of Minnesota

2013   *Graduate with Distinction,* University of Minnesota

Professional Affiliations and Service

2015 – Present   *American Society of Criminology*

2015 – Present   *American Society of Criminology, Division on Terrorism and Bias Crime*

      2021 – 2023   *Student Board Member*

      2023 - Present   *Web Manager*

2015 – Present   *Homicide Research Working Group*

2013 – Present   *Phi Beta Kappa - Academic Honors Society, University of Minnesota*

2013 – Present   *Psi Chi - International Honors Society in Psychology, University of Minnesota*

Peer Reviewer:

1. *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression*
2. *Crime, Law, and Social Change*
3. *European Journal of Criminology*
4. *Journal of Deradicalization*
5. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*
6. *Journal of Research on Crime and Delinquency*
7. *Journal of Threat Assessment and Management*
8. *Justice Quarterly*
9. *Perspectives on Terrorism*
10. *Terrorism and Political Violence*

Language, Computer Skills, and Trainings

Languages: 6 years of study of Spanish Language and Culture.

Computer Skills: R and R Studio, Google Analytics, Web Scraping in R, Tableau, STATA, SPSS, MAXQDA, Microsoft Excel, Adobe Acrobat Suite, Microsoft Office Suite (including Word, PowerPoint, and Outlook), and Salesforce

Studying Online Violent Extremism: Methods, Personal Safety, and Wellbeing

6/26/2023   University of Oslo, Center for Research on Extremism

Attended the Center for Research on Extremism (C-REX) and Global Network on Extremism & Technology (GNET) PhD Summer Training Workshop, including instruction on methodological approaches to online extremism research, digital ethnography, operational security, and strategies and techniques to maintain your wellbeing.