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POSTGRADUATE  
SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

**THESIS**

**TAILORING VIOLENT EXTREMISM PREVENTION: A  
TARGETED INTERVENTION METHOD**

by

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December 2018

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**TAILORING VIOLENT EXTREMISM PREVENTION:  
A TARGETED INTERVENTION METHOD**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The threat that emanates from violent extremism in the United States has shifted from large-scale networked cells to lone-wolf attackers. These violent extremists vary in ethnicity, race, age, religion, and motivations, and their path to radicalization is not linear. However, the majority of Department of Homeland Security programs designed to combat violent extremism still focus exclusively on the Muslim population and on community-based approaches.

This thesis identifies two separate but related deficiencies in current countering violent extremism (CVE) programs: first, their inability to prevent attacks perpetrated by individuals who have been interviewed by law enforcement but did not become subjects of a formal investigation, and second, their inability to provide early intervention for individuals who are vulnerable to radicalization. This research proposes a multi-disciplinary, comprehensive model to prevent violent extremism at every intervention point, leveraging law enforcement capabilities, neighborhood policing models, and more robust threat assessment methods.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

ALF	Animal Liberation Front
CVE	countering violent extremism
DEEP	Disruption and Early Engagement Project (New York)
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
ELF	Earth Liberation Front
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
IS	Islamic State
MCM	Montgomery County Model (Maryland)
MDT	multidisciplinary team
NCO	neighborhood coordination officer
NTAC	National Threat Assessment Center
NYPD	New York City Police Department
PATHE	Providing Alternatives to Hinder Extremism
PCSO	police community support officer (Prevent program)
START	National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism
UK	United Kingdom
VERA-2R	Violent Extremism Risk Assessment model
WORDE	World Organization for Resources, Development and Education

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Terrorist recruitment and radicalization is a hazard facing our nation, regardless of whether the threat is from a domestic or foreign terrorist organization.<sup>1</sup> There are many ways an individual can radicalize, and the path to radicalization is not linear.<sup>2</sup> In order to implement a sustainable program that disengages violent extremists and makes communities safer, we must first understand the diverse causes of violent extremism.

The thesis examines ten case studies to determine how individuals have historically been recruited, inspired, and radicalized to provide an analytic framework for assessing the diversity of the current threat environment. The subjects reviewed vary in age, race, and ideological beliefs. Within the ten cases, the analysis found thirty-eight total factors that contribute to violent extremism, demonstrated by grievances, ideology, networks (virtual and in-person), and public health. Together, these case studies show there is not a single contributing factor that causes an individual to carry out an act of terrorism. Many of the subjects ascribed to different ideologies and theologies, suffered from personal and specific grievances, or had a virtual or in-person network, and two individuals displayed signs of mental illness.

To prevent individuals from going down a path toward violent extremism, countering violent extremism (CVE) efforts began in the United States in approximately 2011. In September 2015, then-Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson implemented the Office of Community Partnerships.<sup>3</sup> With the growing threat of homegrown terrorism, it became apparent that the Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) did not conduct community engagement; the Office of Community Partnerships was established to fill this gap. Through this program, Johnson

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<sup>1</sup> “DHS Awards Grants to Counter Terrorist Recruitment and Radicalization in U.S.,” DHS, accessed July 23, 2017, <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2017/06/23/dhs-awards-grants-counter-terrorist-recruitment-and-radicalization-us>.

<sup>2</sup> Martha Crenshaw, “The Causes of Terrorism,” *Comparative Politics* 13, no. 4 (July 1981): 379, <http://courses.kvasaheim.com/hist319a/docs/Crenshaw%201981.PDF>.

<sup>3</sup> “Countering Violent Extremism Task Force Fact Sheet,” U.S. Department of Justice, January 8, 2016, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/countering-violent-extremism-task-force-fact-sheet>.

aimed to leverage positive community relationships to increase trust, create outlets for engagement, and better secure our nation.<sup>4</sup>

U.S. CVE programs have created a solid foundation from which to grow, and have certainly come a long way. They have fostered relationships with communities and established early interventions via youth education. Although community engagement is an essential aspect of this relationship building, it is difficult to measure the effectiveness of engagement when it comes to deradicalization. Government aspirations to facilitate better relationships with minority communities are undoubtedly well-intentioned; however, they may have an adverse effect if such relationship building is focused on only one community, or if they foster ulterior motives beyond establishing a genuine community bond. Moreover, CVE programs focus on building community relationships to counter the jihadist threat but fail to account for the full spectrum of other violent extremism, including white supremacy, left-wing terrorism, and non-ideologically motivated mass shooters.

Another problem with current CVE programs is that they are not designed to operate in the pre-criminal space. They do not address the surfacing issue of former law enforcement subjects who, though released from police investigation, go on to carry out an attack. Additionally, current programs do not provide a window for an active bystander to report concerning behavior *before* it becomes violent.<sup>5</sup> When a terrorist attack occurs that involves a prior subject of law enforcement, the media widely criticize law enforcement. This brings great public attention to particular segments of the community and can overshadow the community's willingness to get involved, especially since people who are close to a radicalized individual—or a person in the process of radicalizing—have expressed desire to assist the appropriate agency.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> “Statement by Secretary Jeh C. Johnson on DHS’s New Office for Community Partnerships,” Department of Homeland Security, accessed July 23, 2017, <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2015/09/28/statement-secretary-jeh-c-johnson-dhss-new-office-community-partnerships>.

<sup>5</sup> Robert L. McKenzie, “Countering Violent Extremism in America: Policy Recommendations for the next President,” Brookings, October 18, 2016, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/countering-violent-extremism-in-america-policy-recommendations-for-the-next-president/#footnote-22>.

<sup>6</sup> Matt Apuzzo, “Only Hard Choices for Parents Whose Children Flirt with Terror,” *New York Times*, April 9, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/10/us/parents-face-limited-options-to-keep-children-from-terrorism.html>.

However, there is a model that helps address the issue of violent extremism using a range of diverse professionals. The model is known as multidisciplinary teams (MDTs). MDTs draw professionals from distinct disciplines (law enforcement, mental health, education, mentor organizations, religious organizations, etc.) who jointly work to address the community's needs.<sup>7</sup> An MDT's resources may not always be a perfect fit for at-risk persons; however, their interventions can contribute to early identification and intervention of impending violent behavior. Researchers have found that early preventative measures are most effective when they are carried out by multiple collaborating agencies or MDTs.<sup>8</sup> The research indicates that MDTs can play a vital role in two ways: by creating risk assessment identifiers that help pinpoint individuals who are at risk of violent extremism, and by determining the best way to prevent the individual from becoming more entrenched in the extreme ideology.<sup>9</sup>

The two risk assessment models studied in this thesis, the VERA-2R and the National Threat Assessment Center school safety model, focus on different types of threats but have commonalities. Both models use MDTs and stress an individualized approach, and both look at a broad spectrum of factors. Moreover, both stress that although there is a group dynamic involved in assessing risk, risk assessment tools should not be the only consideration. Gathering additional data from stakeholders or interviews might inform a better decision. As a recent DHS study points out, "Proper validation of an assessment instrument involves collecting data from a known population and applying the tool to those cases to determine how effectively it performs."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), "Reframing CVE as a Multidisciplinary Approach to Promoting Community Safety" (research brief, START, June 2015), 2, [https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START\\_CVEtoPromotingCommunitySafety\\_ResearchBrief\\_June2015.pdf](https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START_CVEtoPromotingCommunitySafety_ResearchBrief_June2015.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> Kiran M. Sarma, "Risk Assessment and the Prevention of Radicalization from Nonviolence into Terrorism," *American Psychologist* 72, no. 3 (2017): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000121>.

<sup>9</sup> RTI International, "Countering Violent Extremism: The Application of Risk Assessment Tools in the criminal Justice and Rehabilitation Process" (literature review, Science and Technology Directorate, February 2018), 1, [https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/OPSR\\_TP\\_CVE-Application-Risk-Assessment-Tools-Criminal-Rehab-Process\\_2018Feb-508.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/OPSR_TP_CVE-Application-Risk-Assessment-Tools-Criminal-Rehab-Process_2018Feb-508.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> RTI International, 32.

Equally important to MDTs is trust between communities and the police. An effective model shows the community members that they play a role in keeping their community safe. If MDTs can garner community support, they may be better able to identify the core causes of active targeted violence. This partnership could encourage community members to report alarming behavior to law enforcement, who can then intervene earlier in the radicalization process and offer appropriate treatment.<sup>11</sup> The NYPD neighborhood policing program has provided a platform that works to both establish trust and protect citizens. Such relationship-building techniques are essential for establishing a centralized reporting plan and a sense of shared responsibility—a connection between the local law enforcement department and its community members, and confidence in citizens who report crimes.

The thesis concludes by suggesting a law enforcement–led intervention model. The proposed model is not designed to replace current CVE programs exclusively; it should be used in addition to current existing preventive measures. The targeted intervention model is aimed at addressing all extremist ideologies that pose a threat toward our communities and advocates for forming an MDT that is chaired by law enforcement or another city agency. The thesis includes considerations about how the MDT should be organized, the factors team members should consider when developing an intervention topic, and the procedure for establishing a reporting and information-sharing system.

To support tailored disengagement programs, the public should be educated about the MDT program and its objectives. Both the public and the program’s stakeholders should also understand the different behavioral signs that might identify an individual who is going down a path to violent extremism. This is particularly important because, at times, there is a negative connotation when law enforcement is operating in the non-criminal space. The agencies involved should build on the existing relationships between members of the MDT and the community when explaining the program. Such relationships help the public become receptive to the program based on existing trust.

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<sup>11</sup> John D. Cohen, “The Next Generation of Government CVE Strategies at Home: Expanding Opportunities for Intervention,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 668, no. 1 (2016), <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0002716216669933>.

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## A. PROBLEM STATEMENT AND HYPOTHESES

What we have gathered so far looks to us like this is a complete multi-system failure, that you had the school system failed ... you had the mental health system failed .... When he [a violent extremist] went to purchase a gun, that system failed .... The FBI failed. When you look at it, this should never have happened.

—Howard Finkelstein<sup>1</sup>

Government-funded countering violent extremism (CVE) programs are flawed. Because the basic unit of engagement for CVE programs is the community rather than the individual, and the broad goal social cohesion and integration, they tend not to be effective at early intervention. Furthermore, CVE programs focus on building community relationships to counter the jihadist threat but fail to account for the full spectrum of other violent extremism, such as white supremacy, left-wing terrorism, and non-ideologically motivated mass shooters. Their exclusive focus on Muslims has caused that population to feel stigmatized and targeted.<sup>2</sup> Although government aspirations to facilitate better relationships with minority communities are undoubtedly well-intentioned, they may have an adverse effect if such relationship-building is focused on only one community, or if they foster ulterior motives beyond establishing a genuine community bond. Because they tend to target Islamic extremists, CVE programs also fail to include the larger range of social services (and thus multidisciplinary partners) required to treat other root causes of

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<sup>1</sup> Tim Craig et al., “Teachers Say Florida Suspect’s Problems Started in Middle School, and the System Tried to Help Him,” *Washington Post*, February 18, 2018, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/teachers-say-florida-shooters-problems-started-in-middle-school-and-the-system-tried-to-help-him/2018/02/18/cdff7aa6-1413-11e8-9065-e55346f6de81\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.6132c7a3bff2](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/teachers-say-florida-shooters-problems-started-in-middle-school-and-the-system-tried-to-help-him/2018/02/18/cdff7aa6-1413-11e8-9065-e55346f6de81_story.html?utm_term=.6132c7a3bff2).

<sup>2</sup> Stevan Weine, Ahmed Younis, and Chloe Polutnik, *Community Policing to Counter Violent Extremism: A Process Evaluation in Los Angeles* (College Park, MD: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, 2017), 2, <http://www.start.umd.edu/publication/community-policing-counter-violent-extremism-process-evaluation-los-angeles>.

radicalization, such as mental illness, social isolation, and personal grievances.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, CVE programs overlook a crucial channel: identifying and engaging individuals who have radicalized, or who potentially will radicalize. Many individuals who have been released from law enforcement investigation or arrest continue to pose a threat; some even attempt or carry out an attack. Law enforcement must play a larger, more active role in the continued engagement of these individuals and must build a stronger rapport with the communities that can offer vital information.

Although CVE programs have helped immigrant communities assimilate into Western societies and have educated minority communities about the dangers of radicalization, they have failed to engage the collaboration needed among stakeholders to carry out targeted interventions.<sup>4</sup> Three strategies can potentially improve current CVE programs: multidisciplinary teams (MDTs), the public health model, and the New York City Police Department (NYPD) neighborhood policing model. MDTs have successfully integrated a wide range of professionals in support of a common cause; for example, the Montgomery County, Maryland, MDT draws professionals from distinct disciplines (law enforcement, mental health, education, clergy, etc.) who jointly work to address the community's—and its peoples'—needs.<sup>5</sup> The MDT approach might not work for every at-risk person, but it may reduce the number of eventual attackers who had at some point been investigated by law enforcement but were released without further engagement—such as Omar Mateen and Elton Simpson.

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<sup>3</sup> Amy-Jane Gielen, “Countering Violent Extremism: A Realist Review for Assessing What Works, for Whom, in What Circumstances, and How?” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, May 3, 2017, 9, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2017.1313736>.

<sup>4</sup> “What Is CVE?” Department of Homeland Security, accessed April 13, 2018, <https://www.dhs.gov/cve/what-is-cve>; Lorenzo Vidino and Seamus Hughes, “Countering Violent Extremism in America” (report, George Washington University, 2000), 2, <https://scholarspace.library.gwu.edu/downloads/3x816m65h>.

<sup>5</sup> National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), “Reframing CVE as a Multidisciplinary Approach to Promoting Community Safety” (research brief, START, June 2015), 2, [https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START\\_CVEtoPromotingCommunitySafety\\_ResearchBrief\\_June2015.pdf](https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START_CVEtoPromotingCommunitySafety_ResearchBrief_June2015.pdf).



## **B. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. How can law enforcement re-engage subjects who were once under investigation for terrorism and, though released, are still at risk of radicalization?
2. How can law enforcement adopt a collaborative approach to expand its community outreach model concerning violent extremism?

## **C. LITERATURE REVIEW: APPROACHES FOR MITIGATING VIOLENT EXTREMISM**

There are many ways an individual can radicalize, and there is no linear process toward radicalization.<sup>6</sup> In order to implement a sustainable program that disengages violent extremists and makes communities safer, we must first understand the diverse causes of violent extremism. There are four main schools of thought about motivations—and thus approaches to mitigation—behind violent extremism and radicalization: grievance-based, ideology-based, network-based, and most recently, public health-based. This literature review discusses the key scholars and sources associated with each.<sup>7</sup>

### **1. Grievance-Based Approach**

The grievance-based literature focuses on anger (especially toward perceived inequality) as the core driver of radicalization at the individual level. According to this school of thought, radicalized individuals become violent due to feelings of rage and resentment toward a certain race, government, or religious group. Proponents of this theory point to cases such as Palestinian suicide bombers who feel oppressed by the Israeli government, Tamil Tigers who wish to vindicate their heritage and culture by fighting the Sinhalese regime, and the Russian terrorist group People’s Will, which felt the police did

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<sup>6</sup> Martha Crenshaw, “The Causes of Terrorism,” *Comparative Politics* 13, no. 4 (July 1981): 379, <http://courses.kvasaheim.com/hist319a/docs/Crenshaw%201981.PDF>.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew Francis, “What Causes Radicalisation? Main Lines of Consensus in Recent Research,” *Radicalisation Research*, January 24, 2012, <https://www.radicalisationresearch.org/guides/francis-2012-causes-2/>; Khouwaga Yusoufzai and Franziska Emmerling, “Explaining Violent Radicalization in Western Muslims: A Four Factor Model,” *Journal of Terrorism Research* 8, no. 1 (February 2017): 68; Crenshaw, “Causes of Terrorism,” 379.

not investigate a crime properly.<sup>8</sup> The research supports the idea that grievances lead to anger, and anger leads to a group or individual being willing to carry out acts of violence. In doing so, they are at risk of joining a terrorist organization or carrying out a lone wolf–style attack.<sup>9</sup>

James Piazza, a researcher for the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (also known as START), has published journal articles and books focusing on political, socioeconomic, and religious aspects of terrorism. Piazza found, after studying 176 different countries from 1970 to 2006, that grievances suffered by minority communities are often a catalyst for domestic terrorism.<sup>10</sup> According to Piazza, factors that contribute to those grievances include poor living conditions, lack of opportunity, workplace discrimination, and exclusion from health benefits, education, and social services. In Piazza’s view, “the empirical results show that countries that permit their minority communities to be afflicted by economic discrimination make themselves more vulnerable to domestic terrorism in a substantive way.”<sup>11</sup>

French scholar Olivier Roy, who compiled a dataset of individuals involved with terrorism in France, echoes Piazza’s stance.<sup>12</sup> Roy believes that individuals radicalize because of a grievance toward a group, or because they want to avenge people with whom they ideologically align, even when those people are in or from a completely different country.<sup>13</sup> Roy states, “France’s rigorously secular government and society have helped

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<sup>8</sup> Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, “Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways toward Terrorism,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 20, no. 3 (2008): 415–433, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09546550802073367>.

<sup>9</sup> Louis Fink, “Understanding Radicalisation & Dynamics of Terrorist Networks through Political-Psychology” (report, International Institute for Counter-Terrorism, March 2014), 14, <https://www.ict.org.il/UserFiles/UNDERSTANDING%20RADICALISATION.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> James A. Piazza, “Poverty, Minority Economic Discrimination, and Domestic Terrorism,” *Journal of Peace Research* 48, no. 3 (2011): 343, <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/5692/35e01290b3937bd6ea6ce563f32a84edabaf.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> Piazza, 12.

<sup>12</sup> Olivier Roy, “Who Are the New Jihadis?” *Guardian*, April 13, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2017/apr/13/who-are-the-new-jihadis>.

<sup>13</sup> Roy.

create an airless environment that has allowed jihadism to thrive.”<sup>14</sup> In addition, he argues that assimilation issues occur with alienated immigrants who have trouble adjusting to a new social environment or with those who suffer from political grief and believe that they have to carry out an act of violence to be vindicated.<sup>15</sup> Francois Burgat, the senior researcher and political sociologist at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique in France, agrees with Roy and Piazza.<sup>16</sup> However, he adds that governmental policies contribute to a lack of assimilation with diaspora groups in Western countries, and if countries lack social policies to accept immigrant groups, members of those groups are more likely to carry out acts of violence.<sup>17</sup>

Although Burgat believes that grievances can be a main cause of radicalization, he also believes that the allure of fighting explains why some travel overseas to join a foreign terrorist organization.<sup>18</sup> Highly regarded terrorism scholar Bruce Hoffman also sees among the radicalized—both in expatriate communities and among converts—an inability to fit into Western society.<sup>19</sup>

## 2. Ideology-Based Approach

Others argue that grievances are an insufficient explanation for radicalization—that there are plenty of people who are poor, oppressed, and suffering from harsh and unjust socioeconomic conditions but who do not carry out acts of violence. The ideology-based

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<sup>14</sup> Robert F. Worth, “The Professor and the Jihadi,” *New York Times*, April 5, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/05/magazine/france-election-gilles-kepel-islam.html>.

<sup>15</sup> Catherine Putz, “Kepel vs Roy: Arguing about Islam and Radicalization,” *Diplomat*, July 14, 2016, <https://thediplomat.com/2016/07/kepel-vs-roy-arguing-about-islam-and-radicalization/>.

<sup>16</sup> Sari Hanafi, “The Appeal of the Islamic State: An Interview with François Burgat,” *Global Dialogue* 8, no. 1 (April 2018), <http://globaldialogue.isa-sociology.org/the-appeal-of-the-islamic-state-an-interview-with-francois-burgat/>.

<sup>17</sup> Hanafi.

<sup>18</sup> Hanafi.

<sup>19</sup> Bruce Hoffman et al., *The Radicalization of Diasporas and Terrorism* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2007), 3, [https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/conf\\_proceedings/2007/RAND\\_CF229.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/conf_proceedings/2007/RAND_CF229.pdf).

camp believes that ideological factors are responsible for violent extremists.<sup>20</sup> Some researchers, such as French scholar Gilles Kepel, argue that many Islamic extremists radicalize in order to become martyrs, and to achieve the utopian dream of establishing an Islamic state across the world. Such are the promises of Salafism, which embraces the older culture and traditions of Islam that date back to the days of Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him).<sup>21</sup> Such powerful, religiously sanctioned calls for radicalization have been effective when wielded by radical preachers like Anwar al-Awlaki, who propagated extremist material via social media outlets, providing him the ability to reach a global audience.<sup>22</sup>

Indeed, Kepel believes that it is impossible for someone to be a jihadist without being a Muslim first, a concept he refers to as the “radicalization of Islam.”<sup>23</sup> Kepel believes the Muslim religion, when misinterpreted, acts as a catalyst to radicalization.<sup>24</sup> C. J. M. Drake agrees that ideology motivates violent extremists to pick their targets and provides them a justification for their actions, though he sees this dynamic outside of the Muslim community as well.<sup>25</sup> Drake defines an ideology as

the beliefs, values, principles, and objectives—however ill-defined or tenuous—by which a group defines its distinctive political identity and aims . . . . Some ideologies—particularly separatism and politicized religion, but others as well—may include elements of historical, semi-mythical, and supernatural beliefs.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> European Foundation for Democracy, “Ideology: The Driving Force behind Radicalisation?” (policy briefing, European Foundation for Democracy, February 2017), 1, <http://europeandemocracy.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Policy-Briefing-IN-Design..pdf>.

<sup>21</sup> Emma-Kate Symons, “A New Book Says Islamists and the Far Right Work Hand-in-Hand to Promote Jihad in France,” *Quartz* (blog), December 16, 2015, <https://qz.com/574889/islamists-and-the-far-right-work-hand-in-hand-to-promote-jihad-in-france/>.

<sup>22</sup> “Awlaki Justifies Deaths of Millions,” *Insight Blog on Terrorism & Extremism*, accessed March 3, 2018, <http://news.siteintelgroup.com/blog/index.php/about-us/21-jihad/113-awlaki-justifies-deaths-of-millions>.

<sup>23</sup> Putz, “Kepel vs Roy.”

<sup>24</sup> Worth, “The Professor and the Jihadi.”

<sup>25</sup> C. J. M. Drake, “The Role of Ideology in Terrorists’ Target Selection,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 10, no. 2 (1998): 53–85, <http://doi.org/10.1080/09546559808427457>.

<sup>26</sup> Drake, 55.

Drake derives his conclusions from studying the Provisional Irish Republic Army (PIRA), German communist groups, and many other European terrorist organizations that existed before the jihadist threat.<sup>27</sup>

Drake, Kepel, and others, such as Robert Spencer and Tina Maggaard, agree that the root cause of radicalization is theological. Spencer and Maggaard further argue, based on their analysis of the Quran, that the Quran itself directly galvanizes adherents to commit acts of violence toward non-Muslims.<sup>28</sup> However, their Quranic verse analysis is selective and does not discuss the Quran as a whole.<sup>29</sup> It also fails to mention that the Quran was written during a time of ongoing violent tribal wars.<sup>30</sup> Spencer's and Maggaard's theories seem to be accurate insofar as terrorist recruiters cherry-pick Quranic verses to galvanize those who are vulnerable—what psychologist Fathali Moghaddam calls a feeling of “perceived deprivation.”<sup>31</sup>

By contrast, Scott Atran, an anthropologist and former adviser to the United Nations, states in a blog that most of the Islamic State fighters he interviewed had barely any knowledge of Islam, and were incorrectly taught by terrorists that Islam requires sacrifice of their lives to protect the Muslim religion.<sup>32</sup> Atran believes that the ideology of a terrorist group, not the religion, drives the individual to carry out the act of violence.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Drake, 71.

<sup>28</sup> Nicolai Sennels, “The Real Cause of Islamic Terrorism: ‘We Are Motivated by Our Religion, by Our Qur’an and Sunnah,’” *Jihad Watch*, May 31, 2017, <https://www.jihadwatch.org/2017/05/the-real-cause-of-islamic-terrorism-we-are-motivated-by-our-religion-by-our-quran-and-sunnah>; Orla Borg, “Islam Er Den Mest Krigeriske Religion [Islam Is the Most Warlike Religion],” *Jyllands-Posten*, September 9, 2005, <http://jyllands-posten.dk/indland/ECE5097347/Islam-er-den-mest-krigeriske-religion/>.

<sup>29</sup> Donald Holbrook, “Using the Qur’an to Justify Terrorist Violence: Analysing Selective Application of the Qur’an in English-Language Militant Islamist Discourse,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 4, no. 3 (2010), <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/104/html>.

<sup>30</sup> Holbrook.

<sup>31</sup> Fathali M. Moghaddam, “The Staircase to Terrorism,” *American Psychologist* 60, no. 2 (February–March 2005): 161–169, <http://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.60.2.161>.

<sup>32</sup> Greg Downey, “Scott Atran on Youth, Violent Extremism and Promoting Peace,” *Neuroanthropology* (blog), April 25, 2015, <http://blogs.plos.org/neuroanthropology/2015/04/25/scott-atran-on-youth-violent-extremism-and-promoting-peace/>.

<sup>33</sup> Downey.

### 3. Network-Based Approaches

Still other scholars argue that, although ideology and grievances contribute to radicalization, there is a social network element to radicalization. This school of thought proposes that individuals resort to violence because of the influence of peer networks and group dynamics.<sup>34</sup> According to Michael Steinbach, the executive assistant director of the National Security Branch of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), recruiters lead at-risk individuals to believe the only way to achieve their political goal is by carrying out violent attacks against innocent civilians.<sup>35</sup> Social media platforms have acted as a silo for radicalization, leading many at-risk individuals to extremism or espousing violent ideologies.<sup>36</sup>

U.S. terrorism expert and forensic psychiatrist Marc Sageman believes that individuals follow a path to violence because of their “social identity.”<sup>37</sup> Sageman explains that there is usually a conflict between two groups that causes some sort of political friction. This is also known as the “in-group and out-group” narrative of social identity theory, of which Sageman is a proponent. According to Sageman, over time, a quarrel escalates, which leads the individual to want to commit an act of violence. That act of violence occurs when the individual feels as if he or she has to personally protect his or her community.<sup>38</sup> Sageman warns that although individuals might point to grievances as the justification for

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<sup>34</sup> Mohammed Hafez and Creighton Mullins, “The Radicalization Puzzle: A Theoretical Synthesis of Empirical Approaches to Homegrown Extremism,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 38 (2015): 958–975, <http://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2015.1051375>.

<sup>35</sup> *ISIL Online: Countering Terrorist Radicalization and Recruitment on the Internet and Social Media: Testimony before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs* (statement of Michael Steinbach, Executive Assistant Director of the FBI National Security Branch) (2016), <https://www.fbi.gov/news/testimony/isil-online-countering-terrorist-radicalization-and-recruitment-on-the-internet-and-social-media->.

<sup>36</sup> Mehmet Nesip Ogun (ed.), *Terrorist Use of Cyberspace and Cyber Terrorism: New Challenges and Responses* (Amsterdam: IOS Press, 2015), 87.

<sup>37</sup> Arie W. Kruglanski et al., “The Psychology of Radicalization and Deradicalization: How Significance Quest Impacts Violent Extremism,” *Advances in Political Psychology* 35, no. S1 (February 2014): 71, <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12163>.

<sup>38</sup> Alex P. Schmid, “Marc Sageman: Turning to Political Violence: The Emergence of Terrorism,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 11, no. 4 (2017), <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/630/html>; “Interview—Marc Sageman,” E-International Relations, November 20, 2014, <http://www.e-ir.info/2014/11/20/interview-marc-sageman/>.

a violent act or a radical ideology, if like-minded violent extremists congregate, they are at even greater risk of radicalization, a process Sageman labels “mobilization through networks.”<sup>39</sup> This type of social network development, Sageman explains, can be found on social media platforms, in communities, or among individuals traveling to foreign terrorist organizations.<sup>40</sup>

Atran echoes Sageman’s and Roy’s social theory concerning radicalization: he argues that individuals recruited by terrorist groups tend to be searching for their social identity and end up finding acceptance within a terrorist organization.<sup>41</sup> Olivier Roy, a scholar who spent years in Afghanistan interviewing members of terrorist organizations, agrees with Atran’s social acceptance theory—that an individual’s radicalization to violence occurs due to social exclusion. Atran finds that such individuals do not suffer from mental illness, nor have they displayed suicidal behavior.<sup>42</sup>

Seamus Hughes and Lorenzo Vidino, in a report titled *ISIS in America: From Retweets to Raqqa*, note that not all radicalization occurs—or starts—on social media.<sup>43</sup> Online platforms do, however, play a large role in establishing virtual networks that are able to provide curious and vulnerable individuals a feeling of belonging.<sup>44</sup> Hughes and Vidino believe that when at-risk individuals start reading and aligning with violent extremist propaganda online, or start being groomed by an online terrorist organization

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<sup>39</sup> Michael King and Donald M. Taylor, “The Radicalization of Homegrown Jihadists: A Review of Theoretical Models and Social Psychological Evidence,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 23, no. 4 (2011): 609, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2011.587064>; Andrew Silke, ed., *The Psychology of Counter-Terrorism* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 8.

<sup>40</sup> King and Taylor, “Radicalization of Homegrown Jihadists,” 609.

<sup>41</sup> Downey, “Scott Atran on Youth.”

<sup>42</sup> Maggie Penman and Shankar Vedantam, “The Psychology of Radicalization: How Terrorist Groups Attract Young Followers,” NPR, December 15, 2015, <https://www.npr.org/2015/12/15/459697926/the-psychology-of-radicalization-how-terrorist-groups-attract-young-followers>.

<sup>43</sup> Lorenzo Vidino and Seamus Hughes, *ISIS in America: From Retweets to Raqqa* (Washington, DC: George Washington University Program on Extremism, 2015), 11, <https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/extremism.gwu.edu/files/downloads/ISIS%20in%20America%20-%20Full%20Report.pdf>.

<sup>44</sup> Vidino and Hughes, 19.

recruiter, they begin down a path of violent extremist beliefs.<sup>45</sup> In addition, Hughes and Lorenzo believe that online platforms provide terrorist organizations an opportunity to disseminate propaganda at a galactic rate of speed while also providing a great range of reachability.<sup>46</sup>

#### 4. Public Health Approaches

The school of thought surrounding public health approaches is the newest one, and likens de-radicalization to the process through which a doctor diagnoses and treats a patient. The public health approach argues that the radicalization process can be caused by multiple factors, as previously discussed, as well as by mental health conditions.<sup>47</sup> A 2015 study concluded that approximately 32 percent of violent lone actors suffered from a mental illness.<sup>48</sup> The public health approach argues that teams composed of multidisciplinary professionals—including psychologists, social workers, educators, family members, community leaders, and religious clerics—are needed to confront violent extremists who have mental illnesses. These team members can intervene at an early stage to prevent the person from carrying out an act of violence.<sup>49</sup>

Kamaldeep Bhui and Edgar Jones point out that many people who feel oppressed or marginalized, or who align with an extreme ideology, do not commit violence; they are able to express their dissatisfaction with peaceful protests.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, they argue that while the leaders of terrorists groups might be mentally sound, their followers suffer from

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<sup>45</sup> Vidino and Hughes, 4.

<sup>46</sup> Vidino and Hughes, 16–19.

<sup>47</sup> Kamaldeep S. Bhui et al., “A Public Health Approach to Understanding and Preventing Violent Radicalization,” *BMC Medicine* 10, no. 16 (2012): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1186/1741-7015-10-16>.

<sup>48</sup> Stevan Weine, “Addressing Violent Extremism as Public Health Policy and Practice,” *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression* 9, no. 3 (2017): 6, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19434472.2016.1198413>.

<sup>49</sup> Junaid M. Afeef, “Can Mental Health Professionals Prevent Ideologically Inspired Targeted Violence?” Illinois Targeted Violence Prevention Program, November 3, 2017, [www.illinoistvpp.org/blog/2017/11/03/can-mental-health-professionals-prevent-ideologically-inspired-targeted-violence](http://www.illinoistvpp.org/blog/2017/11/03/can-mental-health-professionals-prevent-ideologically-inspired-targeted-violence).

<sup>50</sup> Kamaldeep Bhui, “The Challenge of Radicalisation: A Public Health Approach to Understanding and Intervention,” *Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy* 31, no. 4 (2017): 402, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02668734.2017.1354908>.



some sort of psychological distress or mental illness, leaving them susceptible to aligning with a terrorist organization and carrying out acts of violence.<sup>51</sup> Hughes and Vidino found that there is no specific profile for violent extremists; they vary in age, sex, social conditions, ethnicity, and education levels.<sup>52</sup>

Similarly, a 2016 report from by the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCF) explains that the radicalization process begins when an individual no longer accepts his or her living conditions and, eventually, decides to act in a violent manner in order to influence change.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, the GCF states there is no clear pattern for radicalization, and it can occur in many different ways. Like Hughes and Vidino, the study states that individuals who are determined to embrace a radical ideology or carry out an attack do not have a certain religious belief, race, or gender.<sup>54</sup> It is important to remember, however, that not all radicalized individuals will carry out an attack.<sup>55</sup>

Faiza Patel, co-director of the Brennan Center’s Liberty and National Security Program, concludes there is no single trajectory or group of identifiable actions that can point to an individual being radicalized.<sup>56</sup> She believes that the path to radicalization is not a “conveyer belt,” and that there is no commonality among those who are radicalized.<sup>57</sup> She also adds that an individual’s religious beliefs are not a driving factor when it comes to radicalization; rejecting the view of radicalization as a linear process, she argues that most individuals radicalize mainly due to “social science” issues.<sup>58</sup> Moghaddam, in “The Staircase to Terrorism,” concurs: the process of or reasons for radicalization are not linear,

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<sup>51</sup> Bhui, 403–404.

<sup>52</sup> Vidino and Hughes, *ISIS in America*, 5.

<sup>53</sup> “GCTF Life cycle Initiative Annotated Guide,” Global Counterterrorism Forum, September 9, 2016, 2, <https://toolkit.thegctf.org/en/Prevention/Detail/id/74>.

<sup>54</sup> Global Counterterrorism Forum.

<sup>55</sup> Global Counterterrorism Forum.

<sup>56</sup> Faiza Patel, *Rethinking Radicalization* (New York: Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law, 2011), 9, <https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/RethinkingRadicalization.pdf>.

<sup>57</sup> Patel, 8.

<sup>58</sup> Patel, 8.

but rather like a staircase, which represents opportunities escalating from dissatisfaction to recruitment.<sup>59</sup>

## **5. Summary**

This literature review focused on theories regarding the drivers of radicalization and the leading causes of violent extremism. It is impossible to know which school of thought is correct; it seems more likely that they are all valid—to different extents—for different reasons and depend on the individual. While the scholars have identified factors that may lead to radicalization, they tend to focus on their limited findings, and have failed to recognize how multifaceted the radicalization process is. A comprehensive CVE program would focus on all aspects of radicalization and gather the best strategies in order to prevent at-risk individuals from carrying out an act of violence or attempting to radicalize others.

## **D. RESEARCH DESIGN**

This thesis conducts a thorough review of current U.S. threat assessment processes and programs to confirm their limitations, analysis gaps, and failures. It also analyzes the United Kingdom (UK) Channel and Prevent programs, which place law enforcement on the front lines in the battle to prevent at-risk individuals from radicalizing. Based on the limitations, gaps, and failures, and on the key elements and best practices of the collaboration models, the thesis presents a comprehensive preventive and proactive extension of the existing CVE model that will enable law enforcement to take a larger role in preventing violent extremism.

A major part of this research involves developing a method for identifying radicalized individuals who have not yet mobilized to violence. The thesis hypothesizes that the identification process can occur through two means:

1. Continued visibility of or contact with individuals who are no longer under law enforcement investigation but who demonstrate behaviors,

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<sup>59</sup> Moghaddam, “Staircase to Terrorism,” 1.

conditions, or beliefs that, according to sociological and psychological theories, put them at risk of radicalization.

2. Information volunteered by bystanders or by the individuals themselves.

When an individual is flagged by law enforcement for suspected terrorist activities or sympathies, but they do not meet evidentiary requirements for prosecution, law enforcement could conduct a separate analysis and outreach or re-engagement plan in collaboration with clergy, psychologists, mental health professionals, and threat assessors.

After an introduction to radicalization in the United States, presented in Chapter II, Chapter III examines U.S. government-funded CVE programs in Los Angeles, Boston, Minneapolis, and Montgomery County, Maryland, as well as the UK program. These programs were chosen because they already have a law enforcement component. The chapter reviews the programs' limitations as well as their successful elements in order to determine how to introduce new methods into CVE programs. Chapter IV examines how multidisciplinary team models operate within CVE programs, and studies a successful community empowerment program that has established high levels of trust between the police and at-risk communities—the NYPD neighborhood policing program. This program was chosen because it has led to substantial crime reduction and is considered a national model to replicate by other law enforcement agencies.<sup>60</sup>

The final chapter synthesizes the lessons learned and successful elements from the models into a new model that allows law enforcement to proactively disengage individuals who espouse a radical ideology but who have not yet committed a violent act. Is preventing violent extremism a subset of a law enforcement unit, or does it require such a large number of resources that it should be its own standalone group or unit? This thesis aims to provide recommendations for a tailored disengagement program that includes a greater role for law enforcement.

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<sup>60</sup> Vincent J. Bove, “NYPD Neighborhood Policing Must Intensify as Crime Records Plunge,” *Epoch Times*, January 11, 2018, [https://www.theepochtimes.com/nypd-neighborhood-policing-must-intensify-as-crime-records-plunge\\_2411653.html](https://www.theepochtimes.com/nypd-neighborhood-policing-must-intensify-as-crime-records-plunge_2411653.html).

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## II. RADICALIZATION IN THE UNITED STATES

The terms radicalization and deradicalization are widely used, with different definitions. The FBI defines radicalization as “the process by which individuals come to believe their engagement in or facilitation of nonstate violence to achieve social and political change is necessary and justified.”<sup>61</sup> Academics such as Lorenzo Vidino and James Brandon divide radicalization into a two-step process: cognitive radicalization and violent radicalization. They state,

Cognitive radicalization is the process through which an individual adopts ideas that are severely at odds with those of the mainstream, refutes the legitimacy of the existing social order, and seeks to replace it with a new structure based on a completely different belief system. Violent radicalization occurs when an individual takes the additional step of using violence to further the views derived from cognitive radicalization.<sup>62</sup>

The definitions vary substantially between government and academia. The term radicalization is also often attached only to Muslim extremists, despite the fact that the radicalization process occurs in individuals who support all types of extremist groups and ideologies, including white supremacy groups, the Jewish Defense League, the Puerto Rican separatists, anti-fascist militant groups (such as in the Antifa movement), and the Black Liberation Army.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Ryan Hunter and Daniel Heinke, “Perspective: Radicalization of Islamist Terrorists in the Western World,” *Perspective*, September 1, 2011, <https://leb.fbi.gov/articles/perspective/perspective-radicalization-of-islamist-terrorists-in-the-western-world>.

<sup>62</sup> Lorenzo Vidino and James Brandon, *Countering Radicalization in Europe* (London: International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, 2012), 9–10, <https://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/ICSR-Report-Countering-Radicalization-in-Europe.pdf>.

<sup>63</sup> Jack Hitt, “We Don’t Talk about ‘Radicalization’ When an Attacker Isn’t Muslim. We Should.,” *New York Times*, December 6, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/06/magazine/we-dont-talk-about-radicalization-when-an-attacker-isnt-muslim-we-should.html>; Brian Michael Jenkins, *Terrorism in the United States*, P-6474 (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1980), 9, <https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/papers/2006/P6474.pdf>; *Radicalization in the U.S. and the Rise of Terrorism: Testimony before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Subcommittee on National Security, Subcommittee on Government Operations* (statement of Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, senior fellow, Foundation for Defense of Democracies, chief executive officer, Valens Global) (2016), <https://oversight.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Gartenstein-Ross-Statement-Radicalization-9-14.pdf>.

Examining recent homegrown violent attacks against the United States may help identify the root causes and early indicators of radicalization; this chapter analyzes ten such cases. An in-depth study may also help us develop a program that can identify—and intervene in—an individual’s trajectory on the path to violent extremism. Additionally, a historical review of how groups recruit, inspire, and radicalize members to violence provides an analytic framework for assessing the diversity of the current threat environment and methods through which law enforcement can reduce that threat.

#### **A. THE EVOLUTION OF FOREIGN TERRORIST GROUPS AFTER 9/11**

The United States does not have as much experience as other countries in CVE, mainly because terrorism is new to our nation, while other countries have endured long histories of domestic terrorism. The United States’ CVE programs were developed in response to the 9/11 attacks to counter a violent Islamic narrative, which created a very specific and narrow CVE model. Since 9/11, however, the threat of terrorism in the United States has continuously evolved—there have been over sixty terrorist attacks since then that were foiled by local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies.<sup>64</sup> Prior to 9/11, law enforcement and intelligence agencies focused on tracking individuals who entered the United States to set up sleeper cells; this style of clandestine planning by foreign terrorist groups has led to massive attacks, such as those on 9/11.

While countering this method remains an essential focus, the threat has transformed since the emergence of the terrorist group the Islamic State (IS). IS and other terrorist organizations have leveraged social media to inspire others; one of the most well-known figures to use social media this way was Anwar al-Awlaki, a U.S. citizen and radical imam. After living in the United States for decades, al-Awlaki traveled to Yemen to become a commander of Al-Qa’ida in the Arabian Peninsula. He realized the power of social media shortly after 2010, and started producing videos that encouraged hate against Western

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<sup>64</sup> Steven Bucci, James Carafano, and Jessica Zuckerman, “60 Terrorist Plots Since 9/11: Continued Lessons in Domestic Counterterrorism” (special report no. 137, The Heritage Foundation, July 2013), <https://www.heritage.org/terrorism/report/60-terrorist-plots-911-continued-lessons-domestic-counterterrorism>.

countries. Using his natural charisma, al-Awlaki was able to inspire others to adopt an “us versus them” ideology and engender hate toward Western culture.<sup>65</sup>

Although he was later killed by a U.S. drone strike, the FBI identified a two-year period between 2007 and 2009 during which al-Awlaki managed to virtually inspire five Americans to carry out acts of violence, or to attempt to travel overseas to join terrorist organizations. The five individuals were Nidal Hasan, Michael Finton, Faisal Shahzad, Zachary Chesser, and Tamerlan Tsarnaev.<sup>66</sup> Although social media companies began suspending accounts that contained violence or violated the platform’s rules and regulations, al-Awlaki’s content was neither overtly violent nor gory, and initially only indirectly discussed committing acts of violence against the West.<sup>67</sup> The first message he delivered instructed individuals to travel overseas to join the terrorist group.<sup>68</sup> The second message—conveyed to followers across the world but particularly to those in Western countries—instructed others to carry out attacks in the name of IS in their own communities.<sup>69</sup> This method was successful; in January 2018, the FBI stated that it was investigating over 1,000 individuals in the United States with connections to foreign terrorist organizations.<sup>70</sup> To better understand al-Awlaki’s influence, the next two sections examine two cases: Nidal Hasan and Tamerlan Tsarnaev.

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<sup>65</sup> Alexander Tsesis, “Social Media Accountability for Terrorist Propaganda,” *Fordham Law Review* 86, no. 2 (2017): 611, <http://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5444&context=flr>; Scott Shane, “The Lessons of Anwar Al-Awlaki,” *New York Times*, August 27, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/30/magazine/the-lessons-of-anwar-al-awlaki.html>.

<sup>66</sup> Webster Commission, “Final Report of the William H. Webster Commission on the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Counterterrorism Intelligence, and the Events at Fort Hood, Texas, on November 5, 2009,” Homeland Security Digital Library, accessed August 24, 2018, 34, <https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=717443>.

<sup>67</sup> Scott Shane, “In ‘Watershed Moment,’ YouTube Blocks Extremist Cleric’s Message,” *New York Times*, November 12, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/12/us/politics/youtube-terrorism-anwar-al-awlaki.html?smid=fb-nytimes&smtyp=cur>.

<sup>68</sup> J.M. Berger, “How Terrorists Recruit Online (and How to Stop It),” Brookings, November 9, 2015, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2015/11/09/how-terrorists-recruit-online-and-how-to-stop-it/>.

<sup>69</sup> “Abu Muhammad Al-Adnani,” Counter Extremism Project, accessed February 1, 2018, <https://www.counterextremism.com/extremists/abu-muhammad-al-adnani>.

<sup>70</sup> Katie Bo Williams, “FBI Has 1,000 Open Domestic Terror Investigations,” *The Hill*, September 27, 2017, <http://thehill.com/policy/national-security/352670-fbi-has-1000-open-domestic-terror-investigations-director>.

## **1. Nidal Hasan Fort Hood Attack**

U.S. Army Major Nidal Hasan carried out the largest mass shooting on an Army base on November 5, 2009, at Fort Hood, Texas. Hasan killed twelve soldiers and injured over thirty others. Almost ten years before the attack, Hasan lost both of his parents during a very short time and started gravitating toward Islam; he began attending a mosque in Virginia called Dar Al-Hijrah, where he claims he met al-Awlaki.<sup>71</sup> Nidal was angry with the U.S. military because he believed that innocent Muslims were being killed by American soldiers. Instead of leaning on the religion for peace and comfort, Nidal used it to justify his acts of terror.

Less than a year before the attack Hasan started communicating with al-Awlaki via email. In one email Hasan had asked: “I heard a speaker defending suicide bombings as permissible and have been using his logic in debates to see how effective it really is.”<sup>72</sup> Al-Awlaki allegedly told an FBI subject “that Hasan had contacted him via the Internet and had asked what he could do to help Muslims ... al-Awlaki advised Hasan that since he was an American soldier, he should kill other American soldiers.”<sup>73</sup> Although the FBI was not able to validate that claim, they did discover that Hasan—who was serving as a psychologist in the Army—had been plotting to kill those who worked by his side. The FBI was also able to determine that Hasan had searched the Internet for content related to jihad and the Taliban in the hours leading up to the attack.<sup>74</sup>

## **2. Boston Bomber Tamerlan Tsarnaev**

Tamerlan Tsarnaev, also inspired by al-Awlaki, was one of the two Boston Marathon bombers on April 15, 2013; the bombing claimed the innocent lives of three people and injured over 260 others.<sup>75</sup> Tsarnaev immigrated to the United States at a young

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<sup>71</sup> Webster Commission, “Final Report,” 34.

<sup>72</sup> Webster Commission, 57.

<sup>73</sup> Webster Commission, 62.

<sup>74</sup> Manny Fernandez, “Fort Hood Gunman Told His Superiors of Concerns,” *New York Times*, August 20, 2013, <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/21/us/fort-hood-gunman-nidal-malik-hasan.html>.

<sup>75</sup> “Boston Marathon Bombing,” History.com, accessed April 29, 2018, <http://www.history.com/topics/boston-marathon-bombings>.



age and was living what many would call the American dream—with hopes of becoming a great American boxer. However, that dream came to an end when he was no longer able to participate in the Golden Gloves tournament due to a domestic violence complaint filed against him.<sup>76</sup> On January 21, 2012, an angered Tamerlan traveled to Russia, where he began to associate with radical groups.<sup>77</sup> Even before this trip, the FBI was alerted by Russian officials that Tamerlan and his mother were radical Muslims; however, the FBI did not have enough evidence to investigate further.<sup>78</sup> Tamerlan returned from Russia on July 17, 2012, and the FBI later discovered his alarming overseas Internet activity.

Tamerlan’s ex-girlfriend stated that she noticed his radical behavior beginning between 2006 and 2009; when he was in Russia, she told the FBI, he was disseminating and viewing jihadist propaganda online.<sup>79</sup> The FBI executed a search warrant on his laptop and recovered videos of al-Awlaki as well as downloaded copies of Al-Qa’ida’s *Inspire* magazine, produced by al-Awlaki. The issue found on Tamerlan’s computer contained an article titled “Make a Bomb in the Kitchen of your Mom,” which included detailed instructions as to how to make a bomb at home—exactly what Tamerlan and his brother later did, with the intention of causing mass fatalities near the finish line of the Boston Marathon.<sup>80</sup>

With the rise of IS and the proliferation of its violent ideology—which is in reality a continuation of the global jihadism espoused by Al-Qa’ida—our nation is still vulnerable to the threat of sympathetic individuals radicalizing. Some areas of the United States have been silos for people radicalized by violent Islamic extremist ideology, such as

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<sup>76</sup> Clint Watts, “Detecting the Radicalization and Recruitment of the Boston Bombers,” Foreign Policy Research Institute, April 26, 2013, <https://www.fpri.org/2013/04/detecting-the-radicalization-and-recruitment-of-the-boston-bombers/>.

<sup>77</sup> Inspector General of the Intelligence Community et al., “Unclassified Summary of Information Handling and Sharing Prior to the April 15, 2013 Boston Marathon Bombings,” Department of Homeland Security, April 10, 2014, 8, [https://www.oig.dhs.gov/assets/Mgmt/2014/OIG\\_Bos\\_Marathon\\_Bom\\_Rev\\_Apr14.pdf](https://www.oig.dhs.gov/assets/Mgmt/2014/OIG_Bos_Marathon_Bom_Rev_Apr14.pdf).

<sup>78</sup> Inspector General of the Intelligence Community et al., 9.

<sup>79</sup> Inspector General of the Intelligence Community et al., 18.

<sup>80</sup> Inspector General of the Intelligence Community et al., 20.

Minneapolis, Minnesota.<sup>81</sup> In 2014, nine Somali men in Minnesota—some in their late teens and some in their early twenties—were arrested on terrorism charges and eventually sentenced for purportedly desiring to travel overseas to join IS.<sup>82</sup> To further examine the influence terrorist organizations have on vulnerable Americans, the next sections review the cases of Elton Simpson and Omar Mateen.

### **3. The First IS-Inspired Attack on U.S. Soil: Elton Simpson**

On May 3, 2015, Elton Simpson and Nadir Soofi drove to Garland, Texas, with one thought on their minds: they wanted to kill political activist Pamela Geller and the participants in a Prophet Muhammad cartoon-drawing contest.<sup>83</sup> The attack by Simpson and Soofi left one security guard injured. For Simpson, this was a culminating event on his path to radicalization, but it was not the first time he was on law enforcement’s radar. Simpson was first brought to law enforcement’s attention in 2006 due to his connectivity with Hassan Abu-Jihad, who was found guilty for sharing classified information with the Taliban and the IS-linked Azzam Publications.<sup>84</sup>

The term “cognitive opening” describes a sense of vulnerability that allows someone to accept a new ideology.<sup>85</sup> Simpson had dreams of becoming a professional basketball player; the cognitive opening that led him to violence occurred when he was in

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<sup>81</sup> “TSG IntelBrief: Fifteen Years since America’s Darkest Day, The Soufan Group, September 9, 2016, <http://www.soufangroup.com/tsg-intelbrief-fifteen-years-since-americas-darkest-day/>.

<sup>82</sup> “Nine Minnesota Men Sentenced for Providing Material Support to ISIL,” U.S. Department of Justice, November 16, 2016, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/nine-minnesota-men-sentenced-providing-material-support-isil>.

<sup>83</sup> “Elton Simpson,” Counter Extremism Project,” accessed August 11, 2017, <https://www.counterextremism.com/extremists/elton-simpson>.

<sup>84</sup> “Former Member of U.S. Navy Sentenced to 10 Years in Federal Prison for Disclosing Classified Information,” Department of Justice, April 3, 2009, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/former-member-us-navy-sentenced-10-years-federal-prison-disclosing-classified-information>; Azzam Publications is a media wing that is supportive of the Taliban and the Islamic State in Afghanistan.

<sup>85</sup> Alfredo J. Beutel, “Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism in Western Muslim Communities: Lessons Learned for America” (backgrounder, Minaret of Freedom Institute, August 2007), 5, <http://www.minaret.org/MPAC%20Backgrounder.pdf>.

a car accident, which destroyed his athletic aspirations.<sup>86</sup> He felt like his life was crumbling and he no longer stood a chance at receiving a college scholarship.<sup>87</sup> Simpson learned about Islam from an individual he met on the campus of Phoenix College.<sup>88</sup> In his conversion essay, titled “From Darkness to Light,” he wrote that he believed Christianity was not a choice for African Americans, who—dating back to slavery—were not given the option to practice religion freely.<sup>89</sup>

In 2009, Simpson was arrested for lying to federal agents regarding his plans to travel overseas and join a terrorist organization.<sup>90</sup> He was eventually convicted for “falsifying information in relation to domestic and international terrorism” and sentenced to three years’ probation.<sup>91</sup> His attorney, Kristina Sitton, stated that Simpson did not display signs of radicalization; she described him as “kind hearted” and “respectful.”<sup>92</sup> However, Simpson, along with his roommates Nadir Soofi and Abdul Malik Abdul Kareem, began to think of ways to support IS around June 2014.<sup>93</sup> All three individuals identified targets in the United States that they could attack, such as military bases, sports arenas, and shopping malls.<sup>94</sup>

Simpson found comfort in an online jihadist community called “Baqiya family,” a closed group on Twitter.<sup>95</sup> Days before the attack, Simpson told a Baqiya family member

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<sup>86</sup> Amarnath Amarasingam, “Elton ‘Ibrahim’ Simpson’s Path to Jihad in Garland, Texas,” War on the Rocks, May 14, 2015, <https://warontherocks.com/2015/05/elton-ibrahim-simpsons-path-to-jihad-in-garland-texas/>.

<sup>87</sup> Amarasingam.

<sup>88</sup> Elton Simpson, “From Darkness to Light: Ibrahim S’s Story,” War on the Rocks, accessed August 11, 2017, 4, <http://2k8r3p1401as2e1q7k14dguu-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Ibrahim-Simpson-Conversion-Essay.pdf>.

<sup>89</sup> Simpson, 1.

<sup>90</sup> Counter Extremism Project, “Elton Simpson.”

<sup>91</sup> Counter Extremism Project.

<sup>92</sup> Counter Extremism Project.

<sup>93</sup> Counter Extremism Project.

<sup>94</sup> “Phoenix Man Convicted of Conspiracy to Support ISIL and Other Terrorism-Related Offenses,” U.S. Department of Justice, March 17, 2016, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/phoenix-man-convicted-conspiracy-support-isil-and-other-terrorism-related-offenses>.

<sup>95</sup> Amarasingam, “Elton ‘Ibrahim’ Simpson.”

that he had a dream “about a woman in hijab looking down at him on the road.”<sup>96</sup> He took this dream as a sign that he was about to be a martyr.<sup>97</sup> Days before the attack, in which he died, Simpson exchanged messages with known IS recruiters; later, those same recruiters praised Simpson on Twitter for carrying out the attack.<sup>98</sup>

#### 4. Omar Mateen’s Radicalization

Omar Mateen carried out the second deadliest mass shooting terrorist attack in U.S. history—at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida, in June 2016. Born in Queens, New York, Mateen’s neighbor described him as a child who lacked discipline.<sup>99</sup> The Pulse nightclub shooting was not the first time the federal government had heard about Omar Mateen.<sup>100</sup> In 2013, Mateen was working as a security guard in the Saint Lucie County, Florida, court system, employed by a well-known security firm called G4S Secure Solutions.<sup>101</sup> After making numerous remarks to his co-workers expressing an affinity for terrorist organizations, the FBI investigated him for approximately ten months and placed him on a terrorist watch list.<sup>102</sup> In a lengthy letter to his supervisors, Mateen stated that he had only made the remarks in retaliation for racial slurs his coworkers had directed toward him over the past two years; for example, they had said to him: “Why are you working security? To act normal then strike like the Boston bomber and Ft. Hood Shooter?”<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Amarasingam.

<sup>97</sup> Amarasingam.

<sup>98</sup> “Jihad in Texas: In-Depth Look at the Shooters, Islamist Ties and Influences,” Homeland Security Today, accessed August 11, 2017, <http://www.hstoday.us/industry-news/general/single-article/jihad-in-texas-in-depth-look-at-the-shooters-islamist-ties-and-influences/09a2b7fc15abb51b28e5449d93bbf852.html>.

<sup>99</sup> Ryan Bonner, “Orlando Killer Was Born in New Hyde Park,” Patch, last updated June 13, 2016, <https://patch.com/new-york/newhydepark/orlando-killer-was-born-new-hyde-park-0>.

<sup>100</sup> Bonner.

<sup>101</sup> “Omar Mateen Mental Stability Records,” Judicial Watch, accessed August 24, 2018, <https://www.judicialwatch.org/document-archive/omar-mateen-mental-stability-records>.

<sup>102</sup> Russell Berman, “Was Omar Mateen on the Terrorist Watch List?” *The Atlantic*, June 14, 2016, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/06/closing-the-terror-gun-loophole-might-not-have-stopped-the-orlando-massacre/486863/>; Eyder Peralta, “Omar Mateen: What We Know So Far about the Suspected Orlando Shooter,” NPR, accessed August 15, 2017, <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/06/12/481787369/what-we-know-so-far-about-the-suspected-orlando-shooter>.

<sup>103</sup> Judicial Watch, “Omar Mateen.”

Mateen closed the letter patriotically, praising the professionalism of the FBI agents who were interviewing him, and stating that he strongly opposed terrorism and had aspirations to be a federal agent.<sup>104</sup> Despite this statement, Mateen’s supervisor indicated that Mateen appeared “obviously distressed about the interview,” and had created “a difficult and borderline hostile working relationship/environment.”<sup>105</sup>

In 2014, Mateen again came onto the FBI’s radar. It was discovered that he had connections to Mohammad Abu-Salha, the first American to carry out a suicide bombing in Syria.<sup>106</sup> Abu-Salha and Mateen attended the same mosque in Florida; when the news of Abu-Salha appeared, family friend Mohammed Malik—who also attended the mosque—called Mateen to discuss the attack.<sup>107</sup> Malik wondered how it was possible for Abu-Salha to have been radicalized, particularly because the imam of the mosque never spoke in a radical manner.<sup>108</sup> During the conversation, Mateen informed Malik that he had been watching videos made by radical imam Anwar al-Awlaki.<sup>109</sup> Malik immediately informed the FBI; however, the FBI did not have sufficient evidence to continue the investigation.<sup>110</sup> Both former President Barack Obama and former Director of the FBI James Comey stated that they believed Mateen was radicalized online via terrorist propaganda videos.<sup>111</sup> Additionally, there were multiple unconfirmed reports that Mateen

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<sup>104</sup> Judicial Watch.

<sup>105</sup> Judicial Watch; Peralta, “What We Know.”

<sup>106</sup> Holly Yan and Joshua Berlinger, “Omar Mateen Timeline: What Led up to the Gunman’s Rampage?” CNN, last updated June 23, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/06/22/us/omar-mateen-timeline/index.html>.

<sup>107</sup> Yan and Berlinger.

<sup>108</sup> Mohammed A. Malik, “I Reported Omar Mateen to the FBI. Trump Is Wrong That Muslims Don’t Do Our Part,” *Washington Post*, June 20, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2016/06/20/i-reported-omar-mateen-to-the-fbi-trump-is-wrong-that-muslims-dont-do-our-part/>.

<sup>109</sup> Malik.

<sup>110</sup> Mark Mazzetti, Eric Lichtblau, and Alan Blinder, “Omar Mateen, Twice Scrutinized by F.B.I., Shows Threat of Lone Terrorists,” *New York Times*, June 13, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/14/us/politics/orlando-shooting-omar-mateen.html>.

<sup>111</sup> Ed Pilkington and Dan Roberts, “FBI and Obama Confirm Omar Mateen Was Radicalized on the Internet,” *Guardian*, June 14, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/jun/13/pulse-nightclub-attack-shooter-radicalized-internet-orlando>.

frequented Pulse—a gay nightclub—and had been active on gay dating applications.<sup>112</sup> However, the FBI could not find evidence on Mateen’s electronic devices, or through other investigative techniques, to confirm the information.<sup>113</sup>

On June 12, 2016, Mateen strategically attacked the Pulse nightclub. Approximately twenty minutes after the attack, Mateen called 9-1-1 and professed that he was acting in the name of IS, stating, “Tell America to stop bombing Syria and Iraq .... My homeboy Tamerlan Tsarnaev did his thing on the Boston Marathon, my homeboy [unidentified name but believed to be referencing Abu-Salha] did his thing, okay, so now it’s my turn, okay?”<sup>114</sup> The research indicates that Mateen’s behavior shows he may have suffered from mental health issues or anger issues, or that he was radicalized by al-Awlaki’s videos.<sup>115</sup> Mateen’s words from the 9-1-1 transcripts echoed what he told his coworkers at the courthouse back in 2013.<sup>116</sup> Mateen praised an individual he had connectivity to while carrying out the attack, and that same individual brought the FBI back to Mateen in 2014. Although the FBI interviewed him twice, they could not meet the necessary legal threshold to criminally charge him.

## **B. DOMESTIC TERRORISM THREAT**

IS and Al-Qa’ida are not the only groups that encourage individuals to espouse a violent extremist ideology: domestic terrorism groups include a wide array of organizations that express extremist views related to race, animal rights, the environment, and the government. The FBI states that between 2016 and 2017 it investigated over 1,000 cases

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<sup>112</sup> “Omar Mateen,” Counter Extremism Project, June 13, 2016, <https://www.counterextremism.com/extremists/omar-mateen>.

<sup>113</sup> Counter Extremism Project.

<sup>114</sup> “Transcripts: Pulse Shooter Omar Mateen Conversations with Police,” CNN, September 23, 2016, 2, 4, <http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/pulse-orlando-nightclub-shooting/os-transcripts-pulse-shooter-omar-mateen-police-20160923-htlmlstory.html>.

<sup>115</sup> Adam Goldman, Joby Warrick, and Max Bearak, “‘He Was Not a Stable Person’: Orlando Shooter Showed Signs of Emotional Trouble,” *Washington Post*, June 12, 2016, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/ex-wife-of-suspected-orlando-shooter-he-beat-me/2016/06/12/8a1963b4-30b8-11e6-8ff7-7b6c1998b7a0\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.05a0a3a7eccf](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/ex-wife-of-suspected-orlando-shooter-he-beat-me/2016/06/12/8a1963b4-30b8-11e6-8ff7-7b6c1998b7a0_story.html?utm_term=.05a0a3a7eccf).

<sup>116</sup> CNN, “Transcripts.”

concerning domestic terrorist groups and made approximately 176 arrests.<sup>117</sup> Domestic terror groups have adapted similar recruitment techniques to the methods utilized by foreign terrorist groups. Dylann Roof, the violent white supremacist who killed nine African Americans in a Charleston, South Carolina, church in 2015 (discussed in more detail later in this chapter) shared his ideology online through his own website, which he created in order to galvanize others to commit similar acts of violence.<sup>118</sup> The research suggests that parallels between Roof and Al-Awlaki are clear: their postings are protected by the First Amendment, as both men were expressing their opinions on politics and religion.<sup>119</sup> Both men also used the “us versus them” psychological approach; scholars have identified this social factor as one of the main causes of radicalization—anger toward one group, or as Marilyn Brewer states, “when does ingroup love become outgroup hate?”<sup>120</sup>

Unlike foreign terrorist organizations, when domestic terrorism acts occur, suspects cannot be charged under the same federal legal statute as individuals who support foreign terrorist organizations; there is no legal statute that criminalizes providing material support to a domestic terrorism organization.<sup>121</sup> The FBI and the Department of Justice do not designate domestic terrorism organizations.<sup>122</sup> By studying the recruitment and radicalization cycle in both domestic and foreign terrorist groups this chapter provides a better analysis of how the groups function and operate.

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<sup>117</sup> Williams, “Domestic Terror Investigations.”

<sup>118</sup> Frances Robles, “Dylann Roof Photos and a Manifesto Are Posted on website,” *New York Times*, June 20, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/21/us/dylann-storm-roof-photos-website-charleston-church-shooting.html>.

<sup>119</sup> Tsesis, “Social Media Accountability for Terrorist,” 612.

<sup>120</sup> Clark McCauley, “Psychological Issues in Understanding Terrorism and the Response to Terrorism,” in *Psychology of Terrorism: Coping with the Continued Threat*, ed. Chris E. Stout (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), 37–38, <https://books.google.com/books?id=fp2AKXWF9HEC&printsec>.

<sup>121</sup> Greg Myre, “Why the Government Can’t Bring Terrorism Charges in Charlottesville,” NPR, August 14, 2017, <https://www.npr.org/2017/08/14/543462676/why-the-govt-cant-bring-terrorism-charges-in-charlottesville>.

<sup>122</sup> “Domestic Terrorism: An Overview,” EveryCRSReport.com, August 21, 2017, <https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/R44921.html>.

## 1. Ruby Ridge

In the 1990s, the nation battled an array of foreign and homegrown extremist groups radicalized by a broad range of ideologies. On August 21, 1992, U.S. Marshals executed an arrest warrant for Randall Claude “Randy” Weaver, who the federal government believed had ties to white supremacy group the Aryan Nations.<sup>123</sup> Weaver was wanted on charges for firearms sales to an undercover agent and stated to federal agents that he would die in battle and not surrender to the government.<sup>124</sup> Weaver’s radicalization began due to socioeconomic issues and grievances toward the government. He thought that the government was controlling everyone’s life.<sup>125</sup> That feeling of anger grew deeper when he found out he had been duped by an undercover agent; Weaver thought he had been helping an individual who shared his ideology, only to discover that the individual was an undercover agent.<sup>126</sup> This solidified his view that the U.S. government is malicious and authoritative.<sup>127</sup>

When U.S. Marshals confronted Weaver at Ruby in Idaho, they were met with armed resistance, which resulted in the death of Marshal William Deagan, as well as Weaver’s wife and child.<sup>128</sup> The conflict lasted for eleven days; activists and federal law enforcement alike heavily criticized the tactics used during the standoff.<sup>129</sup> As a result of the flawed standoff, Weaver and his friend Kevin Harris were tried in court and found not guilty on all murder charges; however, Weaver was found guilty on weapons charges and

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<sup>123</sup> Timothy Egan, “White Supremacist Surrenders after 11-Day Siege,” *New York Times*, September 1, 1992, <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/09/01/us/white-supremacist-surrenders-after-11-day-siege.html>.

<sup>124</sup> Egan.

<sup>125</sup> Cori Brosnahan, “Ruby Ridge, Part One: Suspicion,” PBS, accessed September 9, 2017, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/ruby-ridge-part-one-suspicion/>.

<sup>126</sup> Brosnahan.

<sup>127</sup> Brosnahan.

<sup>128</sup> Brosnahan.

<sup>129</sup> George Lardner Jr. and Richard Lei, “Standoff at Ruby Ridge,” *Washington Post*, September 3, 1995, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1995/09/03/standoff-at-ruby-ridge/3704b446-abed-4cf9-9a89-7b19208079b9/>.



served eighteen months in jail.<sup>130</sup> Ruby Ridge remains a symbolic site for right-wing extremist groups. The Ruby Ridge incident resonated not only with white supremacist groups but also with antigovernment groups and their supporters.<sup>131</sup>

## 2. Branch Davidians

On February 28, 1993, federal agents attempted to execute a warrant on a domestic extremist group—or cult—called the Branch Davidians, which had established a community in Waco, Texas. The agents were attempting to capture the cult leader, David Koresh, who was accused of polygamy and militarizing the compound by storing large amounts of weapons.<sup>132</sup> Four members of the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms and five members of the Branch Davidians died as a result of the initial exchange of gunfire.<sup>133</sup> The event led to a multi-agency, fifty-one-day standoff that finally ended on April 19.<sup>134</sup> By the conclusion of the incident, there were over seventy lives lost, including unarmed civilians, children, and Koresh.<sup>135</sup>

The events in Waco are still cited today as a radicalizing factor for many domestic terrorists and extremists. For example, Timothy McVeigh carried out the second deadliest terrorist attack on the two-year anniversary of the Branch Davidians incident.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> “18 Months in Jail for Supremacist,” *New York Times*, accessed August 7, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/10/19/us/18-months-in-jail-for-supremacist.html>.

<sup>131</sup> Brosnahan, “Ruby Ridge.”

<sup>132</sup> John Burnett, “Two Decades Later, Some Branch Davidians Still Believe,” NPR, April 20, 2013, <https://www.npr.org/2013/04/20/178063471/two-decades-later-some-branch-davidians-still-believe>.

<sup>133</sup> Burnett.

<sup>134</sup> “What Really Happened at Waco: Six Years Later Controversy Continues,” CBS, January 25, 2000, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/what-really-happened-at-waco/>.

<sup>135</sup> CBS.

<sup>136</sup> “Oklahoma City Bombing,” History.com, accessed August 7, 2017, <http://www.history.com/topics/oklahoma-city-bombing>.

### 3. Timothy McVeigh

Timothy McVeigh was born on April 23, 1968, close to Buffalo, New York; at a young age he developed an affinity for firearms.<sup>137</sup> As a child, McVeigh grew up in an economically depressed environment and was surrounded by a right wing ideology.<sup>138</sup> He was bullied in high school, faced a troubled life when his father and mother were divorced, and was even more devastated when his mother left him.<sup>139</sup> In May 1988, McVeigh enlisted in the U.S. Army, where he was described as a “model soldier” and earned a Bronze Star for his marksmanship, killing two Iraqi soldiers in the Persian Gulf War.<sup>140</sup> McVeigh’s “cognitive opening” is believed to have been when he failed to qualify for the Green Berets, a prestigious special forces unit within the Army.<sup>141</sup> McVeigh’s hatred for the U.S. government grew due to his failure, and he blamed everyone around him for his inability to achieve his dream of becoming a Green Berets.<sup>142</sup> While in the military, McVeigh expressed his anti-government and white supremacy ideology freely; he even suggested that his superior officer read *The Turner Diaries*, and was cautioned not to engage in that type of behavior.<sup>143</sup> McVeigh then discharged from the Army and went back to his family. Armed with military training and a hatred for the government—and struggling to find a job—he grew obsessed with anti-government literature and started to believe that the government was attempting to strip away citizens’ right to bear arms.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Brent L. Smith, Kelly R. Damphousse, and Paxton Roberts, “Pre-incident Indicators of Terrorist Incidents: The Identification of Behavioral, Geographic, and Temporal Patterns of Preparatory Conduct” (report, Department of Justice, 2006), 57, <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/214217.pdf>.

<sup>138</sup> Paul K. Davis, et al., *Using Behavioral Indicators to Help Detect Potential Violent Acts: A Review of the Science Base* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2013), 224, [https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_reports/RR200/RR215/RAND\\_RR215.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR200/RR215/RAND_RR215.pdf).

<sup>139</sup> Davis et al., 224.

<sup>140</sup> Smith, Damphousse, and Roberts, “Pre-incident Indicators,” 59.

<sup>141</sup> Geraldine Sealey, “McVeigh: Soldier Turned Terrorist,” ABC News, June 11, 2001, <http://abcnews.go.com/US/story?id=93055&page=1>.

<sup>142</sup> Smith, Damphousse, and Roberts, “Pre-incident Indicators,” 60.

<sup>143</sup> “*The Turner Diaries* is a fictional novel that tells a story of an anti-government white supremacy militia that carried out an attack on an FBI building.” Smith, Damphousse, and Roberts, 58.

<sup>144</sup> Smith, Damphousse, and Roberts, 60.

While the Branch Davidian standoff in Waco, Texas, was ongoing, anti-government rallies across the nation erupted; before the standoff was over, McVeigh drove down to Waco, where he profited from selling anti-government memorabilia and engaged in illegal firearms sales.<sup>145</sup> A short period of time later, McVeigh, along with accomplices, started planning the Oklahoma City bombing.<sup>146</sup>

On April 19, 1995, a truck packed with a diesel-fuel-fertilizer bomb exploded and caused the death of 168 people, including nineteen children, and injured hundreds more.<sup>147</sup> Two individuals, Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols—who were believed to have ties to sovereign citizen ideology and a right-wing extremist group called the Michigan Militia—carried out the attack.<sup>148</sup> Both McVeigh and Nichols were tried and found guilty; McVeigh was executed by lethal injection and Nichols received a life sentence.<sup>149</sup> McVeigh was galvanized by both the Ruby Ridge and Branch Davidians incidents.<sup>150</sup>

#### **4. Animal Liberation Front, Earth Liberation Front, and “the Family”**

According to the FBI, from 1976 until 2005 ecoterrorism groups caused property damage exceeding \$110 million dollars, and groups like the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) and the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) have been responsible for over 1,100 criminal acts.<sup>151</sup> One of their members, identified as Craig Marshall but known as “Crittter,” says people participate in the groups with varying degrees of intensity: “More passive people

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<sup>145</sup> Smith, Damphousse, and Roberts, 60.

<sup>146</sup> Smith, Damphousse, and Roberts,” 61.

<sup>147</sup> History.com, “Oklahoma City Bombing.”

<sup>148</sup> Gary Ridley, “Michigan Militia Still Active 20 Years after Oklahoma City Bombing,” MLive, April 22, 2015, [http://www.mlive.com/news/flint/index.ssf/2015/04/militias\\_remains\\_active\\_20\\_yea.html](http://www.mlive.com/news/flint/index.ssf/2015/04/militias_remains_active_20_yea.html).

<sup>149</sup> “Terry Nichols Gets Life without Parole,” NBC News, last updated August 9, 2004, <http://www.nbcnews.com/id/5650369/>.

<sup>150</sup> Gore Vidal, “The Meaning of Timothy McVeigh,” *Vanity Fair*, September 2001, <https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2001/09/mcveigh200109>.

<sup>151</sup> John E. Lewis, “Animal Rights Extremism and Ecoterrorism,” FBI, May 18, 2004, [www.fbi.gov/news/testimony/animal-rights-extremism-and-ecoterrorism](http://www.fbi.gov/news/testimony/animal-rights-extremism-and-ecoterrorism).

do tree-sits. More active people are comfortable risking their well-being. There's a line a lot of people are not willing to cross. I was willing to cross it."<sup>152</sup>

The ELF and ALF websites reveal that both organizations promote their movement, detail their mission, and provide operational procedures for their members. In an interview with ELF founder John Hanna on their website, Hanna states that he felt aggrieved about companies that were causing damage to the environment;

At the time, I was frustrated. I chose to go underground and employ guerrilla tactics in defense of the earth. I felt conventional methods of civil disobedience were ineffective. I was upset because pesticide use and cancer rates were increasing in spite of the best efforts of the concerned scientific community to point out the hazards and alternatives to pesticides.<sup>153</sup>

The ALF website hosts a forum where members can share their common ideologies and interact with one another, as well as a page that exposes informants and enemies of the organization.<sup>154</sup>

ALF and ELF do not focus their grievances toward violence; they have three goals:

- To incur financial harm on those benefitting from the devastation and misuse of the common environment.
- To better inform the public about the cruelties against the environment and animals due to certain industries participating in damaging practices.
- In any case, to avoid causing injuries to humans and animals.<sup>155</sup>

However, literature from the U.S. government suggests that ALF and ELF are not as benign as they portray themselves to be in social and other forms of media. Although the groups identify themselves as part of a larger social movement—not as terrorist organizations—

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<sup>152</sup> Bruce Barcott, "From Tree-Hugger to Terrorist," *New York Times*, April 7, 2002, <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/04/07/magazine/from-tree-hugger-to-terrorist.html>.

<sup>153</sup> "Interview with Founder," Earth Liberation Front, accessed April 30, 2018, <https://www.theearthliberationfront.org/interview-of-founder>.

<sup>154</sup> "Animal Liberation Front," accessed April 30, 2018, <http://animalliberationfront.com/>; "Opposition," Animal Liberation Press Office, accessed April 30, 2018, <https://animalliberationpressoffice.org/NAALPO/opposition/>.

<sup>155</sup> Brian A. Jackson et al., *Aptitude for Destruction, Volume 2 : Case Studies of Organizational Learning in Five Terrorist Groups* (Santa Monica, CA : RAND, 2005), 147, <https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG332.html>.

in 2004, the FBI designated both organizations as domestic terrorism groups.<sup>156</sup> ALF and ELF are unique because they are able to share the same group of followers and, through their websites, they share their ideological beliefs and criminal acts with their audience. Many of the messages delivered to their audience are protected by the First Amendment.

As the FBI uncovered, during almost a ten-year span between the late 1990s and early 2000s there was a network of ALF and ELF followers that went by the name of “the family”—a group of approximately eighteen hardened environmental and animal rights activists.<sup>157</sup> The group’s name represented its social cohesion; similar to the “Baqiya family” Twitter group to which Elton Simpson belonged, “the family” relied heavily on social bonding. Scholars believe that social cohesiveness can play a leading role in individuals supporting one another ideologically.<sup>158</sup>

The family accepted predominantly activists who had established reputations as “true believers” of the cause; however, they also accepted those who were validated by their members. The family’s members would recruit others within their networks, such as romantic partners and trusted friends, and then hold what they called “book club” meetings to surreptitiously discuss their plans, mentor new members, and discuss lessons learned from previous attacks and how to improve their tactics.<sup>159</sup>

From 1995 to 2001, members of the family carried out more than forty separate criminal acts in the name of ALF and ELF, causing an estimated \$48 million in property damage.<sup>160</sup> Their attacks were successful mainly due to their organization, structure,

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<sup>156</sup> Lewis, “Animal Rights Extremism”; Jackson et al., *Aptitude for Destruction*, 144.

<sup>157</sup> START, “Countering Eco-Terrorism in the United States: The Case of ‘Operation Backfire’” (report, START, September 2012), 17, [https://www.start.umd.edu/sites/default/files/files/publications/Countermeasures\\_OperationBackfire.pdf](https://www.start.umd.edu/sites/default/files/files/publications/Countermeasures_OperationBackfire.pdf).

<sup>158</sup> START, 16.

<sup>159</sup> START, 17.

<sup>160</sup> Matt Young, “The Family: The Most Prolific Domestic Terrorism Cell in the United States,” News.com, December 13, 2015, <http://www.news.com.au/technology/environment/the-family-americas-most-prolific-domestic-terrorism-cell/news-story/62da5ed8a0f54112834e207846783946>; Jerome P. Bjelopera, *Domestic Terrorism: An Overview*, CRS Report No. R44921 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2017), 12, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/terror/R44921.pdf>.

mobility, recruitment, and internal social dynamics.<sup>161</sup> Their criminal acts came to an end when the FBI created a task force called Operation Backfire, which, in January 2006, resulted in the indictment of eleven individuals, many of whom were sentenced to lengthy prison terms.<sup>162</sup>

Other individuals who carried out violent extremist attacks felt grievances against the U.S. government. However, their ideological motives were different from ELF and ALF's. The next two case studies will discuss Dylann Roof and James Harris Jackson; both were stirred by their strong hate toward African Americans. The details to follow explain how they glorified this hate and embraced the white supremacy ideology.

## 5. Dylann Roof

Dylann Roof, a twenty-one-year-old white male, walked into a church in Charleston, South Carolina, in June 2015 and murdered nine African American congregants. Unlike McVeigh, Roof claimed he did not grow up in a racist environment; according to his manifesto, Roof attended an interracial school where he had black friends.<sup>163</sup> His curiosity about black-on-white crime was piqued when African American teen Trayvon Martin was fatally shot by a white male named George Zimmerman in Florida in 2012. Many argued that Martin, who was unarmed at the time, never should have been killed. Others contended that although Martin was unarmed and a teenager, he overpowered Zimmerman and Zimmerman acted in self-defense. In July 2013, a jury found Zimmerman not guilty; activists demonstrated against the judge's decision all over the country. Racial tensions grew across the country as the media heavily covered the incident.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> START, "Countering Eco-Terrorism," 3.

<sup>162</sup> "Eco-Terror Indictments: 'Operation Backfire' Nets 11 Indictments," FBI, January 20, 2006, <https://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2006/january/elf012006>.

<sup>163</sup> "Dylann Roof's Manifesto," *New York Times*, December 13, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/12/13/universal/document-Dylann-Roof-manifesto.html>.

<sup>164</sup> Southern Poverty Law Center, "The Miseducation of Dylann Roof," YouTube video, posted January 18, 2017, 1:29, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=89&v=qB6A45tA6mE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=89&v=qB6A45tA6mE).

Roof, who sided heavily with Zimmerman, went to the internet to solidify his ideology. His searches for black-on-white crime led him to a white supremacy group called the Council of Conservative Citizens, whose website identified a large number of white individuals who were killed by black individuals.<sup>165</sup> He also visited the white supremacy website stormfront.org and an alt-right forum titled “The Daily Stormer.” Roof found like-minded individuals on the forum and began to post racist material on the site under the handle “AryanBlood1488,” such as:

White culture is World Culture, and by that I don’t mean that our culture is made up of ones from around the world, I mean that our culture has been adopted by everyone in the world. This makes us feel as if it isn’t special, because everyone has adopted it.

I have serious, great respect for the CofCC because they are the ones who woke me up to black on white crime in the beginning. It was the first site I went to the day that changed my life, the day I decided to type in “black on white crime” into Google.<sup>166</sup>

Fearing an attorney would bring up concerns over his mental health, Roof legally represented himself during his trial. In Roof’s words: “I want state that I am morally opposed to psychology. It is a Jewish invention, and does nothing bit (sic) invent diseases and tell people they have problems when they don’t.”<sup>167</sup> Psychiatrist Dr. James Ballenger believes that Roof showed signs of “Social Anxiety Disorder, a Mixed Substance Abuse Disorder, a Schizoid Personality Disorder, depression by history, and a possible Autistic Spectrum Disorder.”<sup>168</sup> Ballenger believes mental illness caused Roof to alienate himself and prevented him from socializing—which is perhaps why Roof found a sense of

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<sup>165</sup> Cory Collins, “The Miseducation of Dylann Roof,” *Teaching Tolerance* 57 (Fall 2017), <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/fall-2017/the-miseducation-of-dylann-roof>.

<sup>166</sup> Abby Phillip, “Dylann Roof Was Active on White Supremacist Web Forum, Group Says,” *Washington Post*, June 22, 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2015/06/22/dylann-roof-was-active-on-white-supremacist-web-forum-southern-poverty-law-center-says/>.

<sup>167</sup> Kevin Sack and Alan Blinder, “Dylann Roof Himself Rejects Best Defense against Execution,” *New York Times*, December 22, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/01/us/dylann-roof-execution-defense-charleston-church-shooting.html>.

<sup>168</sup> Glenn Smith and Jennifer Berry Hawes, “Unsealed Documents Shed Light on Dylann Roof’s Mental Health Issues,” *Post and Courier*, February 2, 2017, [https://www.postandcourier.com/church-shooting/unsealed-documents-shed-light-on-dylann-roof-s-mental-health/article\\_404a01bc-e959-11e6-ad24-0f32fef2c5bb.html](https://www.postandcourier.com/church-shooting/unsealed-documents-shed-light-on-dylann-roof-s-mental-health/article_404a01bc-e959-11e6-ad24-0f32fef2c5bb.html).

belonging in the online community. However, Roof was found competent to stand trial; U.S. District Judge Richard Gergel stated, “Indeed, Defendant was extremely engaged during his two-day competency hearing.”<sup>169</sup> In January 2017, Roof was found guilty on thirty-three counts and received the death penalty.<sup>170</sup> In response, he stated, “In my (FBI confession) tape I told them I had to. But it’s not true: I didn’t have to. No one made me. What I meant was: I felt like I had to do it. I still feel like I have to do it.”<sup>171</sup>

## 6. James Harris Jackson

James Harris Jackson grew up in Maryland in a liberal, democratic family; Jackson’s grandfather had rallied for school integration. At a young age, Jackson attended a school that serves children who suffer from dyslexia. He later went to a Quaker school and, upon graduation, became an intelligence research analyst.<sup>172</sup> Jackson voted for President Obama in the 2008 elections, suggesting that he did not have overtly white supremacist leanings his whole life.<sup>173</sup>

Jackson, however, stated that he felt dislike toward the black race at the age of three, a view that he discussed with like-minded individuals.<sup>174</sup> It was only after he was radicalized online that his hatred materialized to violence.<sup>175</sup> Like Roof, Jackson found a feeling of belonging on the white supremacist website The Daily Stormer, and he also

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<sup>169</sup> Smith and Hawes.

<sup>170</sup> Kevin Sack, “Trial Documents Show Dylann Roof Had Mental Disorders,” *New York Times*, December 22, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/02/us/dylann-roof-charleston-killing-mental.html>.

<sup>171</sup> Jamie Morrison et al., “Dylann Roof Makes No Attempt to Spare His Life for Church Massacre,” NBC News, January 10, 2017, <https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/charleston-church-shooting/church-massacre-trial-concludes-dylann-roof-saying-i-had-do-n705211>.

<sup>172</sup> Jean Marbella, “A Baltimore Man’s Inexplicable Path from Quaker School to Army to Rikers Island Cell,” *Baltimore Sun*, April 14, 2017, <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/crime/bs-md-jackson-profile-20170414-story.html>.

<sup>173</sup> Ellen Moynihan and Stephen Rex Brown, “White Supremacist James Jackson Reveals Deranged Desire to Kill Black Men to Save White Women in Jailhouse Interview,” *New York Daily News*, March 26, 2017, <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/james-jackson-twisted-regrets-killing-timothy-caughman-article-1.3009736>.

<sup>174</sup> Michael Harriot, “Vanilla ISIS: The Quiet Radicalization of America’s New al-Qaida,” *The Root*, May 24, 2017, <https://www.theroot.com/vanilla-isis-the-quiet-radicalization-of-america-s-new-1795520324>.

<sup>175</sup> Harriot.



shared alt-right and white nationalist views—such as concern with interracial relationships—on his YouTube channel. Andrew Anglin, the editor of *The Daily Stormer*, referring to interracial children, stated, “because it’s OUR WOMB—that’s right, it doesn’t belong to her, it belongs to the males in her society—that is being used to produce an enemy soldier.”<sup>176</sup> Jackson also subscribed to a YouTube channel called “Men Going Their Own Way Movement,” which collected videos that discussed a male-dominant world and racist views against African Americans.<sup>177</sup>

In March 2017, Jackson traveled from Baltimore to New York with the intention of randomly killing black males, which he accomplished when he killed a sixty-six-year-old man named Timothy Caughman in Times Square. His original intention was to go on a killing spree in hopes of deterring white women from mixed-race relationships.<sup>178</sup> Jackson told the authorities that he had chosen New York City because he believed his act would gain a lot of media attention and encourage others to do the same.<sup>179</sup>

### C. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Terrorist recruitment and radicalization is a hazard that faces our nation, whether the individual’s affinity is toward a domestic or foreign terrorist organization.<sup>180</sup> Then-Secretary of Homeland Security John F. Kelly remarked in 2017, “We are witnessing a global surge in terrorist activity, and in many ways our own backyard has become the battleground.”<sup>181</sup> Although jihadist extremists have been responsible for more deaths than

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<sup>176</sup> David Futrelle, “Inside the Dangerous Convergence of Men’s-Rights Activists and the Alt-Right,” *The Cut*, March 31, 2017, <https://www.thecut.com/2017/03/what-james-jackson-reveals-about-mgtow-and-the-alt-right.html>.

<sup>177</sup> Futrelle.

<sup>178</sup> Ashley Southall, “Suspect in Manhattan Killing Hated Black Men, Police Say,” *New York Times*, March 22, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/22/nyregion/manhattan-nyc-james-harris-jackson-hate-crime.html>.

<sup>179</sup> Southall.

<sup>180</sup> “DHS Awards Grants to Counter Terrorist Recruitment and Radicalization in U.S.,” DHS, accessed July 23, 2017, <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2017/06/23/dhs-awards-grants-counter-terrorist-recruitment-and-radicalization-us>.

<sup>181</sup> DHS.

domestic terrorists in recent years, far-right extremists have carried out a much greater number of attacks (see Figure 1 and Figure 2).<sup>182</sup>

From Sept. 12, 2001, to Dec. 31, 2016, there were 85 attacks by violent extremists in the U.S. resulting in 225 deaths.

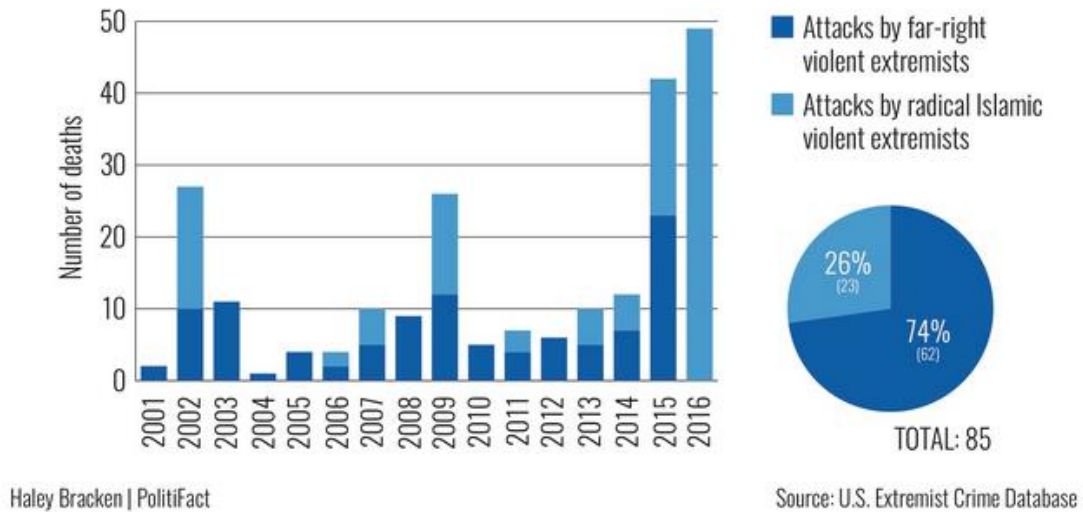


Figure 1. U.S. Violent Extremist Attacks<sup>183</sup>

<sup>182</sup> Mariam Valverde, “A Look at the Data on Domestic Terrorism and Who’s Behind It,” PolitiFact, August 16, 2017, <http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/article/2017/aug/16/look-data-domestic-terrorism-and-whos-behind-it/>.

<sup>183</sup> Source: Valverde.

From Sept. 12, 2001, to Dec. 31, 2016, 47% of deaths resulted from far-right extremists. The other 53% resulted from attacks by radical Islamic extremists.

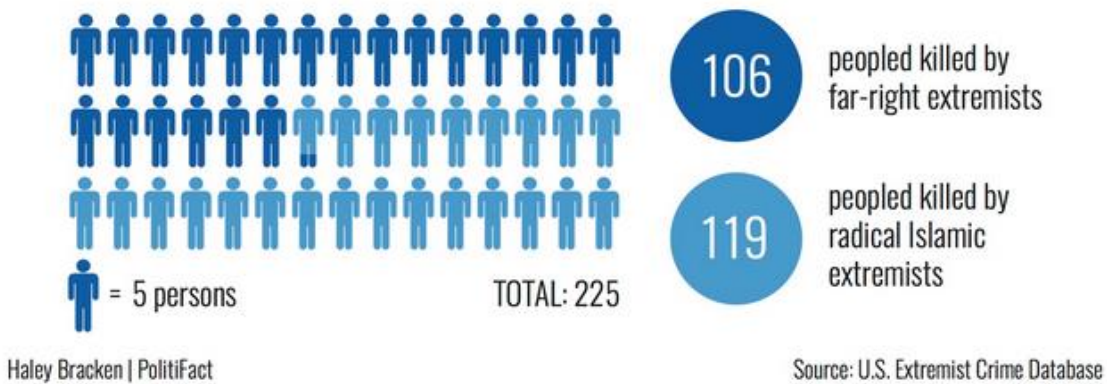


Figure 2. Deaths from U.S. Violent Extremist Attacks<sup>184</sup>

The case studies discussed in this chapter do not comprise a large dataset, but subjects varied in age, race, and ideological beliefs. To build a robust CVE program, we must understand what motivates people to carry out acts of violence. By dissecting each subject and highlighting their motivational factors, we can better determine which elements motivated the individuals' paths to extremism. Table 1, Figure 3, and Figure 4 show the ten cases and the schools of thought discussed in the literature review, and attempt to relate them to each other. Within the ten cases there are thirty-eight total contributing factors that were demonstrated by grievances, ideology, networks (virtual and in-person), and public health.

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<sup>184</sup> Valverde.

Table 1. Overall Data Analysis

Case	Grievance	Ideology	In-person Network	Virtual Network	Radicalized Online	Public Health Factor	Total Factors
Nidal Hassan	1	1		1	1		4
Tamerlan Tsarnaev	1	1	1		1		4
Elton Simpson	1	1	1	1	1		5
Omar Mateen	1	1		1	1	1	5
Ruby Ridge Branch	1	1	1				2
Davidians	1	1	1				3
Timothy McVeigh	1	1	1				3
ALF and ELF "The Family"	1	1	1	1			3
Dylann Roof		1		1	1	1	4
James Harris Jackson		1		1	1		3
Totals 10	8	10	6	6	6	2	36
Overall Percentage	22.22%	27.78%	16.67%	16.67%	16.67%	5.56%	
Percentage per Factor per Cases	80.00%	100.00%	60.00%	60.00%	60.00%	20.00%	

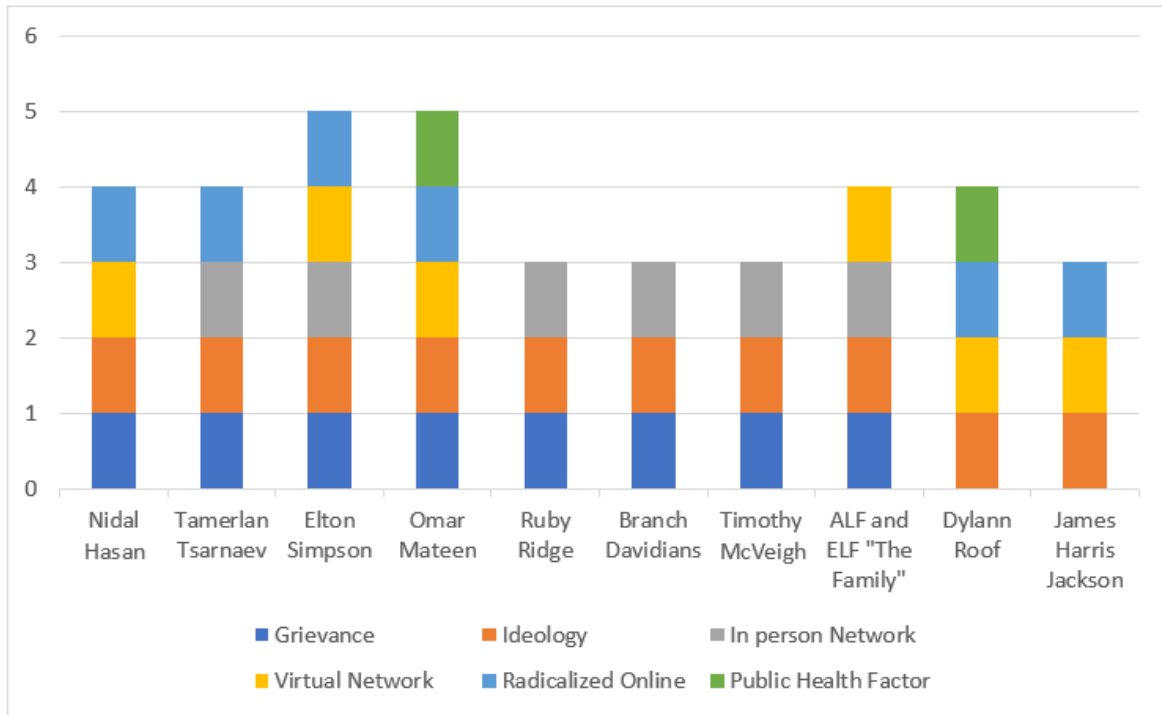


Figure 3. Contributing Schools of Thought per Case Study

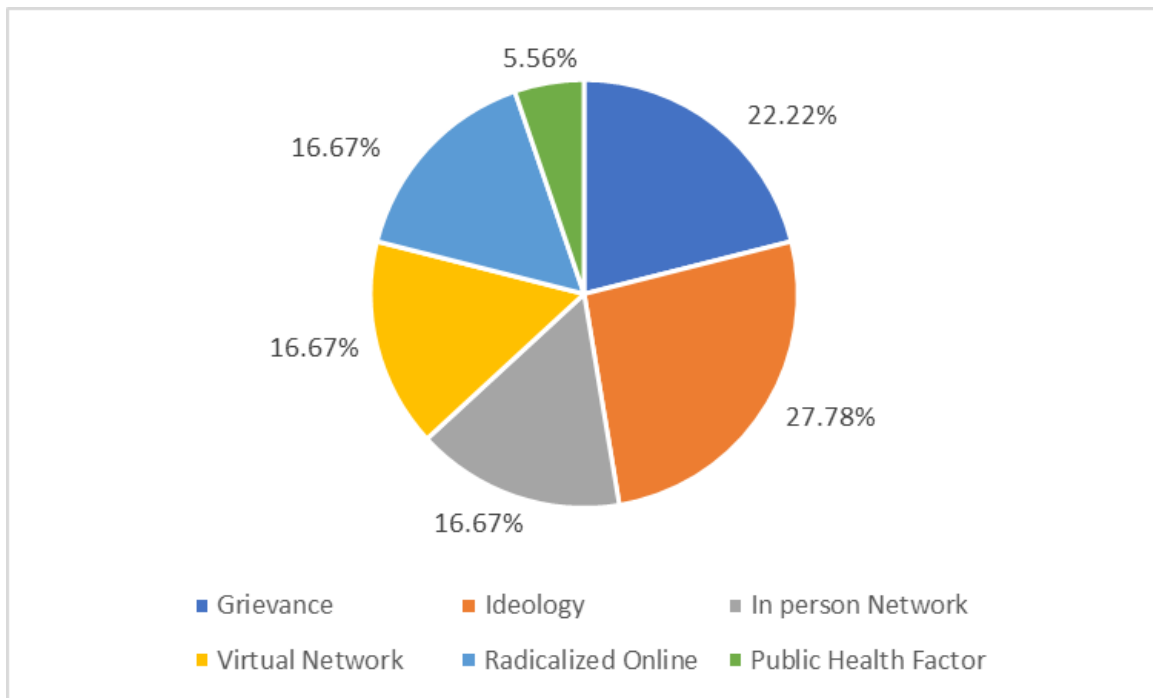


Figure 4. Percentages of Contributing Factors

The case of Nidal Hasan (shown in Figure 5) did not have an in-person network, nor was there a public health aspect. Hasan was motivated by grievances against the U.S. military, driven by theology, and radicalized online by al-Awlaki and jihadist propaganda.

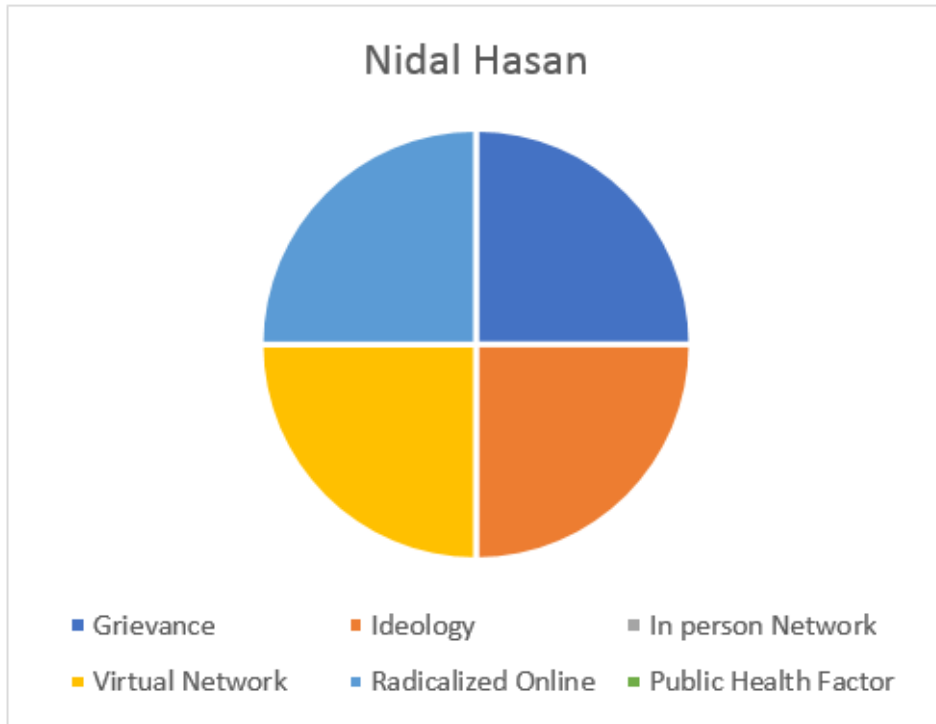


Figure 5. Contributing Factors: Nidal Hasan

Tamerlan Tsarnaev's case (Figure 6) could heavily relate to Fathali Moghaddam's staircase to radicalization theory and the radicalization of McVeigh and Simpson. Similar to Simpson and McVeigh, when Tsarnaev could no longer accomplish his dream of being a professional boxer he looked for others to blame. Tsarnaev found his outlet on social media platforms and, similar to Mateen, he was radicalized online. Tsarnaev suffered from both self and group grievances and was further radicalized after he connected with other like-minded individuals when he traveled to Russia.

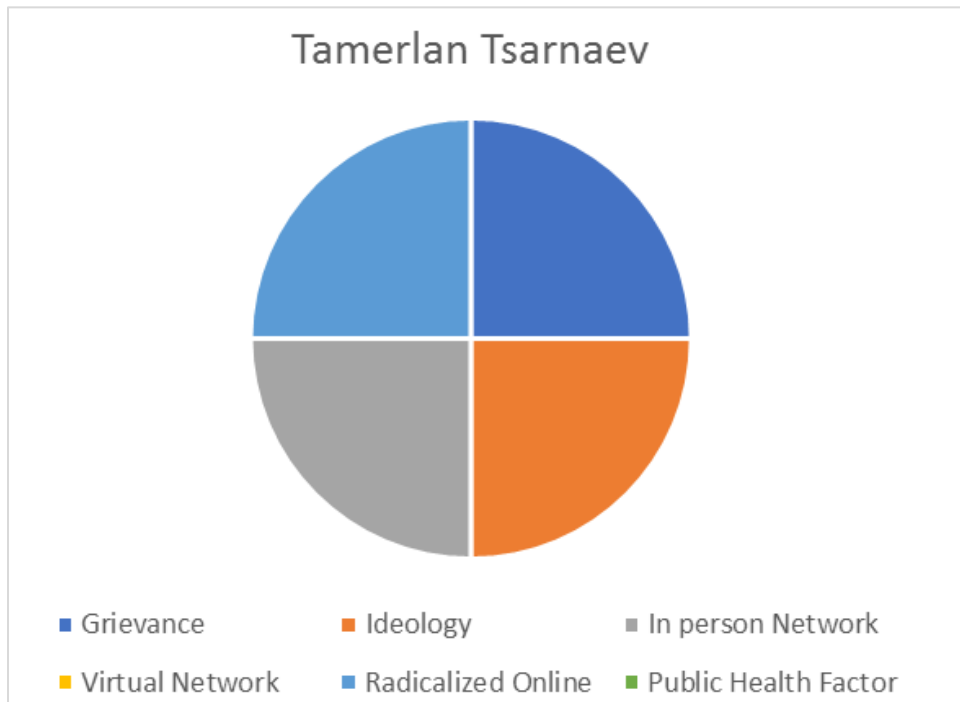


Figure 6. Contributing Factors: Tamerlan Tsarnaev

Elton Simpson's case (Figure 7) was unique because he established two types of networks. Although Simpson was radicalized in person, the driving factor that led him to carry out an attack occurred in cyber space. Simpson pledged allegiance to IS online and felt strong grievances toward a Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, drawing competition.

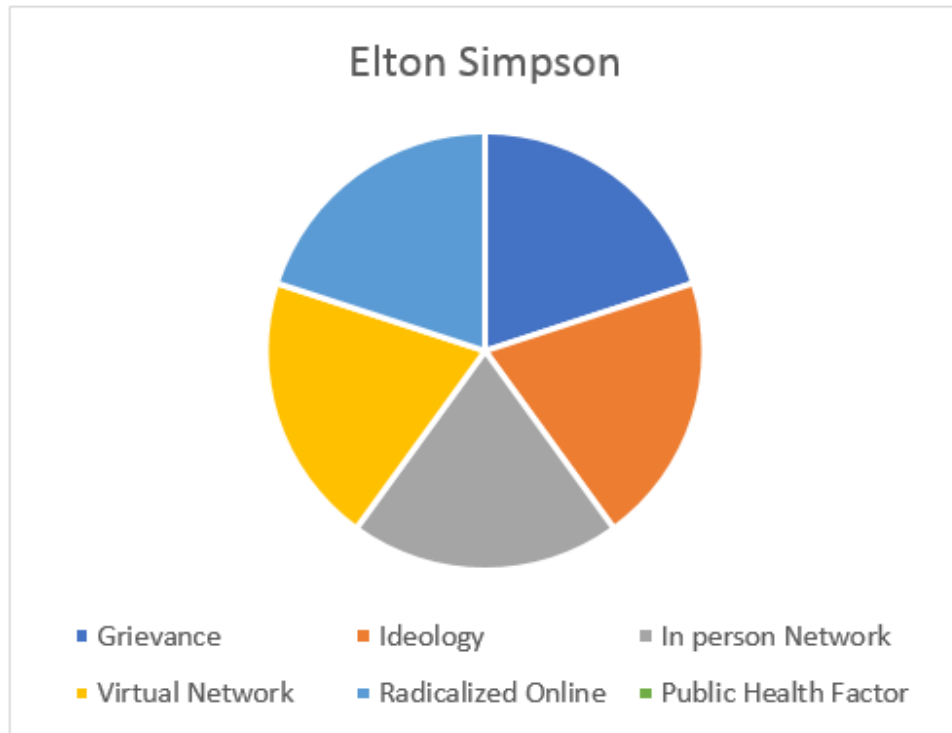


Figure 7. Contributing Factors: Elton Simpson



Omar Mateen, whose contributing factors are summarized in Figure 8, felt grievances toward the U.S. government for carrying out attacks against Syria, and he was also radicalized online by al-Awlaki. Mateen did not have an in-person network that pushed him to carry out an attack; he self-radicalized online. Mateen’s ex-wife described as an unstable person who suffered from mental health issues.

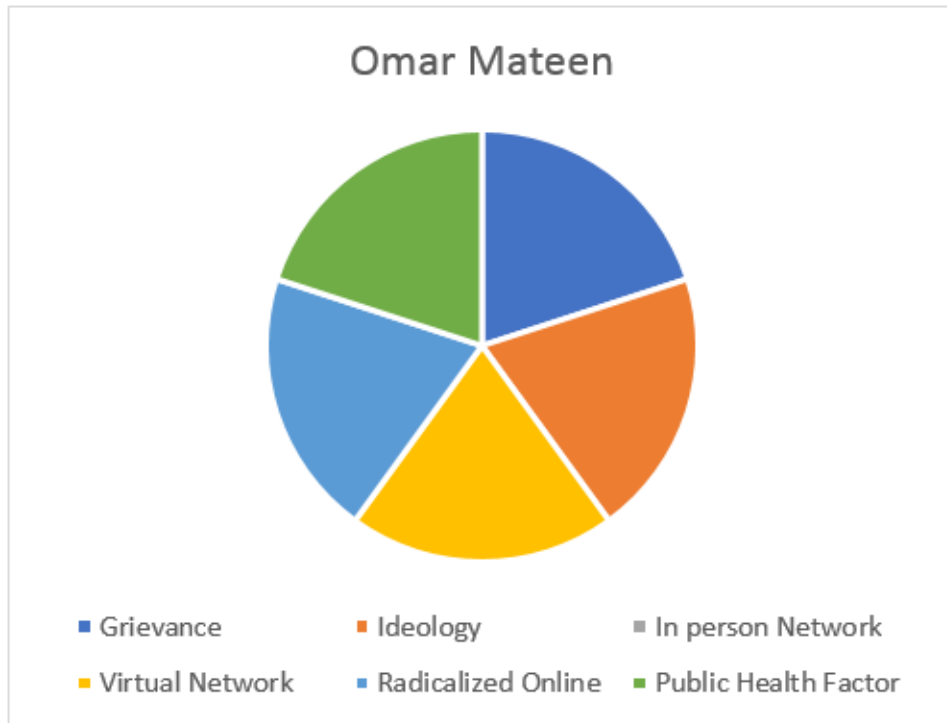


Figure 8. Contributing Factors: Omar Mateen

The Ruby Ridge and Branch Davidians incidents (shown in Figures 9 and 10) have commonalities with the Nidal Hassan and Timothy McVeigh. They were fueled by a white supremacy and anti-government ideologies. Although Mateen and Hassan were of Muslim faith, they both felt strong hate toward the U.S. government and were radicalized via a virtual network as opposed to a peer-to-peer network. The grievances suffered, combined with a strong ideological belief, justified the violent attacks.

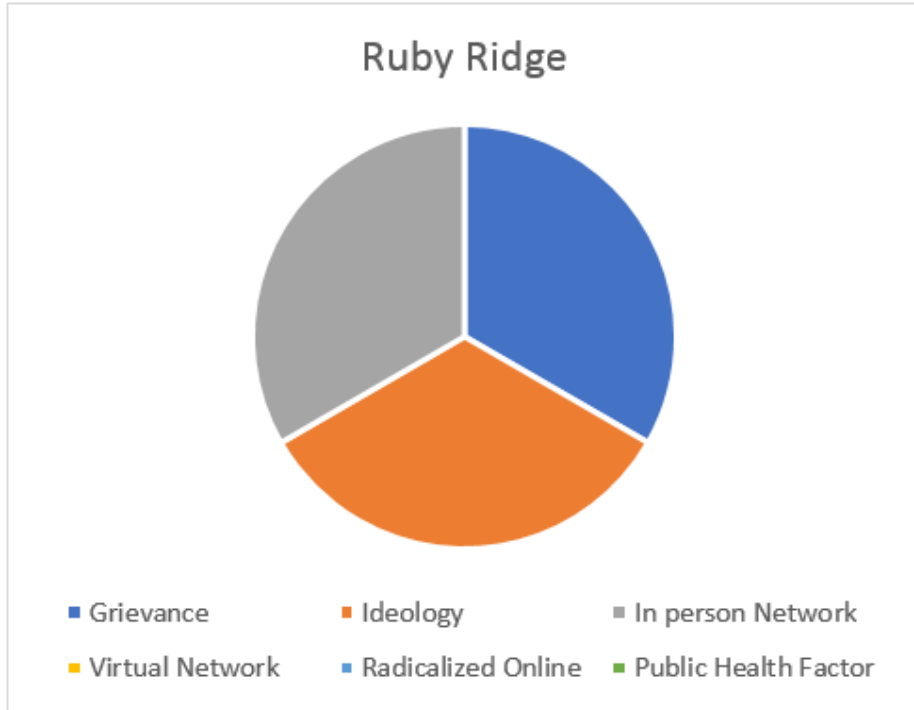


Figure 9. Contributing Factors: Ruby Ridge

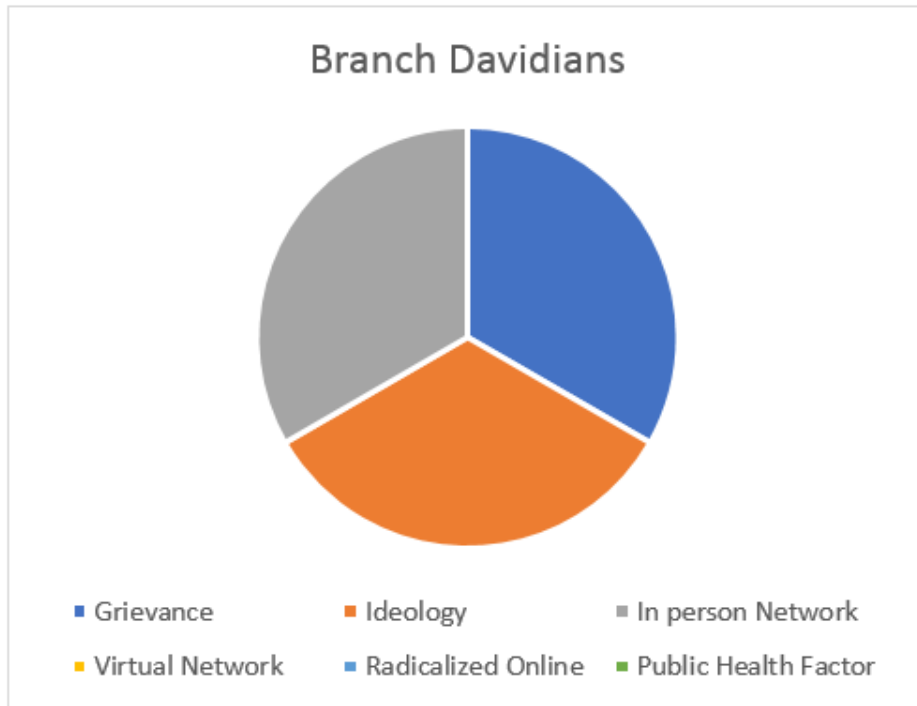


Figure 10. Contributing Factors: Branch Davidians

Timothy McVeigh (see Figure 11) operated within the white supremacy and sovereign citizen ideologies and displayed strong hatred toward the U.S. government. He was supported by a co-conspirator and in many ways displayed ideological similarities to the Branch Davidians.

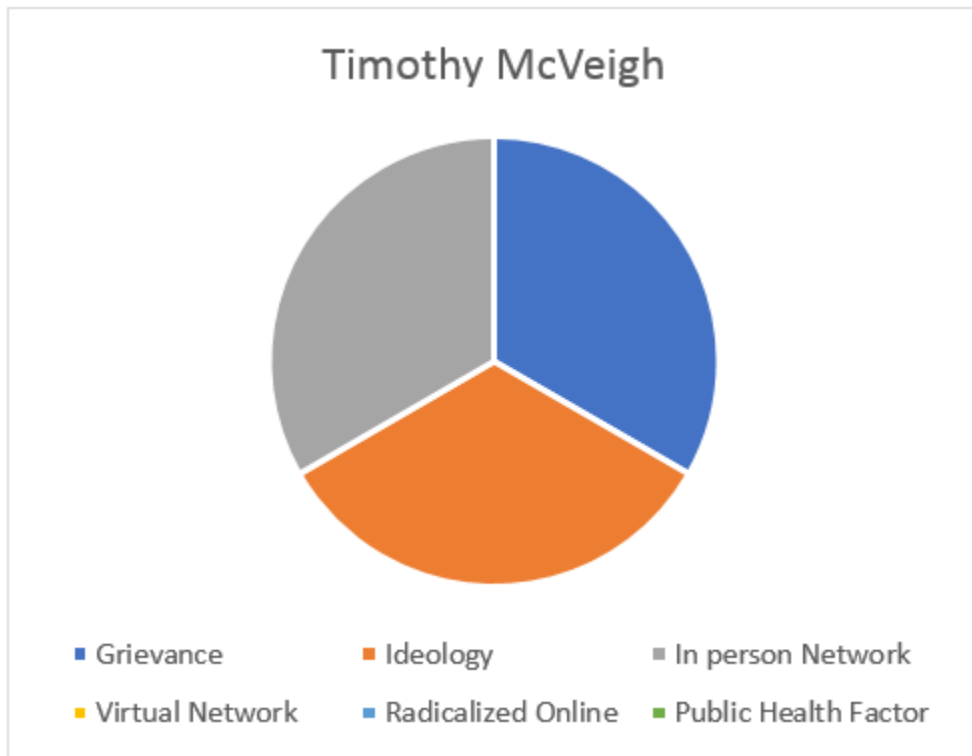


Figure 11. Contributing Factors: Timothy McVeigh

The ALF and ELF “family” (see Figure 12) operated in both in-person and online networks. They group was radicalized by grievances against corporations and businesses—especially those that, in the family members’ minds, did not respect the environment or animals. They were ideologically bonded by their common ideology.

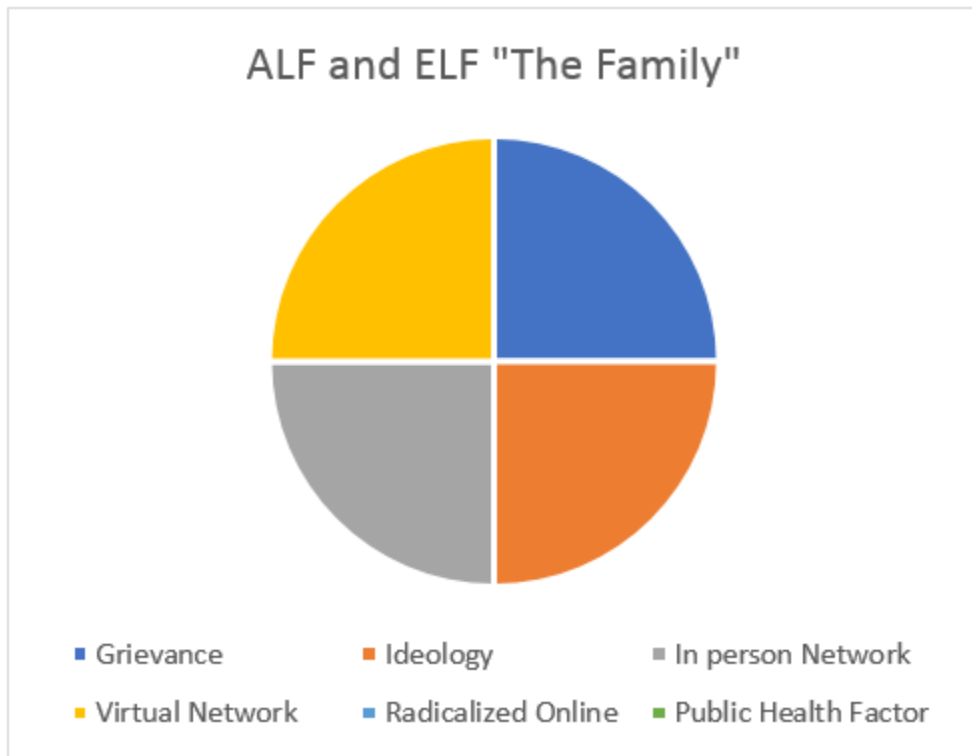


Figure 12. Contributing Factors: The Family

Dylann Roof, as shown in Figure 13, demonstrated mental health problems. He was described as a loner and found a sense of acceptance on white supremacy forums. He displayed allegiance to the white supremacy ideology by killing nine African Americans who were peacefully praying in a church. His network was virtual and he acted out on his own, much like Omar Mateen.

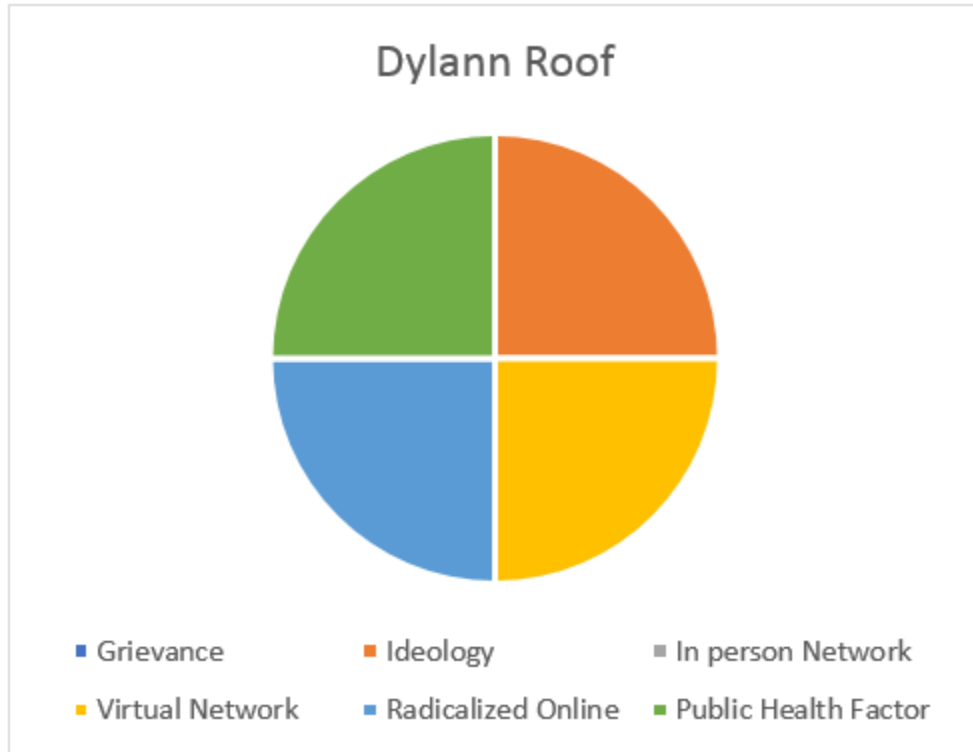


Figure 13. Contributing Factors: Dylann Roof

James Harris Jackson (Figure 14) espoused the same ideological beliefs as Dylann Roof. He did not show signs of mental health issues; however, he did find a sense of ideological acceptance with those who shared his racist beliefs in virtual communities. He felt aggrieved by interracial relationships and felt that he had to act on behalf of his beliefs.

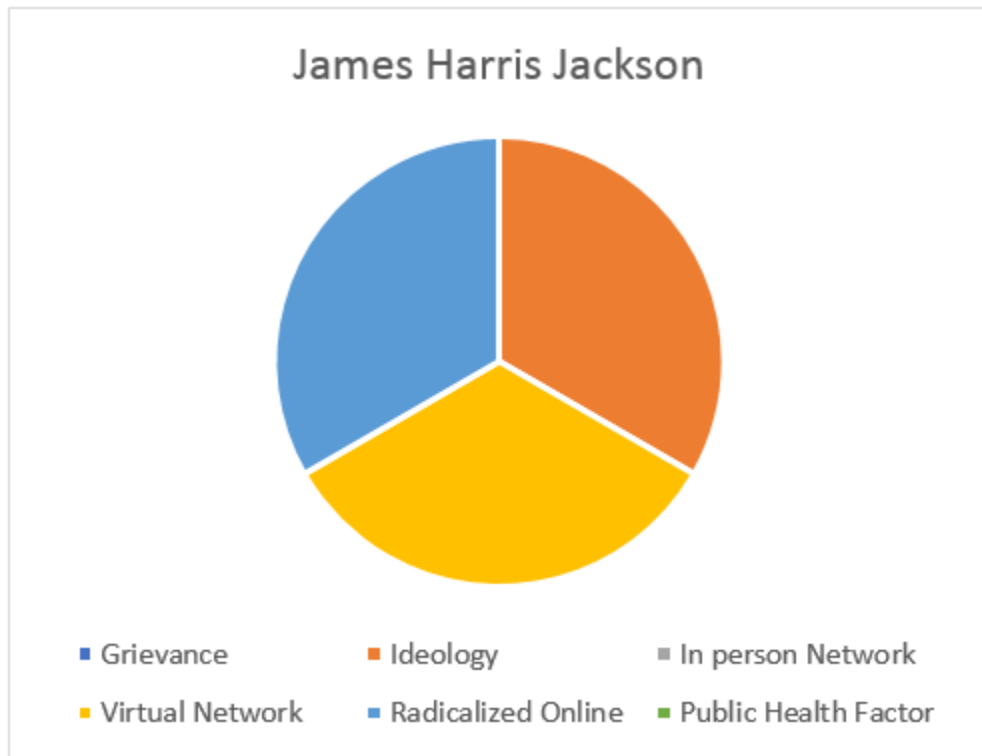


Figure 14. Contributing Factors: James Harris Jackson

The case studies, together, show that there is not a single contributing factor that causes an individual to carry out an act of terrorism. Many of the subjects believed in different ideologies and theologies, suffered from personal and specific grievances, or had a virtual or in-person network, and two individuals displayed signs of mental illness. In order to efficiently combat violent extremism, we must next examine the current CVE programs to determine how they are structured, how they operate, and how they address these factors.

### III. COMBATTING HOMEGROWN VIOLENT EXTREMISM

CVE efforts began in the United States in approximately 2011. In September 2015, then-Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson implemented the Office of Community Partnerships.<sup>196</sup> With the growing threat of homegrown terrorism, it became apparent that DHS's Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties did not conduct community engagement; the Office of Community Partnerships was established to fill this gap. Through this program, Johnson aimed to leverage positive community relationships to increase trust, create outlets for engagement, and better secure our nation.<sup>197</sup>

In June 2017, DHS awarded \$10 million in grants to build community partnerships, in hopes of deradicalizing individuals.<sup>198</sup> The grants were divided into five different classifications: "Developing Resilience," "Training and Engagement," "Managing Interventions," "Challenging the Narrative," and "Building Capacity."<sup>199</sup> A majority were awarded to law enforcement, predominantly for community engagement and training; the intent was to help officers develop relationships with people from different cultures and religions with whom they do not typically interact.<sup>200</sup>

Although community engagement is an essential aspect of this relationship building, it is difficult to measure the effectiveness of engagement when it comes to deradicalization. Community-led CVE programs engage communities at large; the current programs do not address the surfacing issue of former law enforcement subjects who return

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<sup>196</sup> "Countering Violent Extremism Task Force Fact Sheet," U.S. Department of Justice, January 8, 2016, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/countering-violent-extremism-task-force-fact-sheet>.

<sup>197</sup> "Statement by Secretary Jeh C. Johnson on DHS's New Office for Community Partnerships," Department of Homeland Security, accessed July 23, 2017, <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2015/09/28/statement-secretary-jeh-c-johnson-dhss-new-office-community-partnerships>.

<sup>198</sup> "Homeland Security Awards \$10 Million for Community-Led Counter Terrorism Initiatives," Homeland Preparedness News, June 28, 2017, <https://homelandprepnews.com/stories/23027-homeland-security-awards-10-million-community-led-counter-terrorism-initiatives/>.

<sup>199</sup> "DHS Countering Violent Extremism Grants," Department of Homeland Security, last published August 24, 2018, <https://www.dhs.gov/cvegrants>.

<sup>200</sup> DHS.

to carry out an attack.<sup>201</sup> When a terrorist attack occurs that involves a prior subject of law enforcement, the media widely criticize law enforcement; this brings great public attention to particular segments of the community and can overshadow the community’s willingness to get involved, especially since people who are close to a radicalized individual—or a person in the process of being radicalized—have expressed desire to assist the appropriate agency.<sup>202</sup> However, because most current CVE programs lack targeted intervention methods, this type of approach is difficult to achieve.

In developing a prototype for new U.S. CVE programs that focuses on tailored disengagement, it is important to first review current CVE programs. As mentioned, many homegrown violent extremists were once investigated by law enforcement, or exhibited disturbing behavior before carrying out an attack. Do current CVE programs address these issues? And do they address the research questions prompted in this thesis:

- How can law enforcement re-engage subjects who were once under investigation for terrorism and, though released, are still at risk of radicalization?
- How can law enforcement adopt a collaborative approach to expand its community outreach model concerning violent extremism?

In addition to reviewing U.S.-based programs, this chapter also reviews the UK’s Channel and Prevent programs. Unlike in U.S. CVE programs, in the UK program individuals can be referred to a multi-agency team for a targeted intervention. Moreover, law enforcement is able to refer radicalized individuals to the appropriate social services instead of involving them in a criminal investigation.

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<sup>201</sup> Robert L. McKenzie, “Countering Violent Extremism in America: Policy Recommendations for the next President,” Brookings, October 18, 2016, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/countering-violent-extremism-in-america-policy-recommendations-for-the-next-president/#footnote-22>.

<sup>202</sup> Matt Apuzzo, “Only Hard Choices for Parents Whose Children Flirt with Terror,” *New York Times*, April 9, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/10/us/parents-face-limited-options-to-keep-children-from-terrorism.html>.



## A. CURRENT U.S. CVE PROGRAMS

### 1. The Montgomery County, Maryland, Model

In April 2013, the Montgomery County, Maryland, Police Department teamed up with the World Organization for Resources, Development and Education (WORDE), a non-profit organization that focused on building resilience against violent extremism.<sup>203</sup> The Montgomery County Model (MCM) for CVE that followed focuses on four main initiatives: engage, educate, connect, and intervene. To “engage,” the program builds community cohesion by involving partners from an array of professions, including “faith community leaders, public officials, law enforcement officers, educators, social service providers, and civic activists.”<sup>204</sup> The “educate” part of the initiative uses workshops to train and better inform community stakeholders about violent extremism.<sup>205</sup> The “connect” mission builds a network, and relationships, among partners in the community. And, finally, “intervene” means working with community organizations to deter individuals—at the earliest stages—from espousing a radical ideology, and offering alternatives to incarceration in criminal cases.<sup>206</sup>

The MCM has been praised by DHS, members of the community, and religious leaders.<sup>207</sup> The police believe this program provides the social cohesion needed to develop trust. The founder of WORDE, Dr. Hedieh Mirahmadi, stated, “I wanted to help foster a relationship between the Muslim community and their fellow County residents, together with law enforcement and County government, that was based on mutual respect and

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<sup>203</sup> “The Montgomery County Model,” WORDE, accessed February 8, 2018, [www.worde.org/programs/the-montgomery-county-model/](http://www.worde.org/programs/the-montgomery-county-model/).

<sup>204</sup> WORDE.

<sup>205</sup> “Maryland Program WORDE Is First of its Kind to Counter Violent Extremism,” *Star Tribune*, May 14, 2016, <http://www.startribune.com/maryland-program-worde-is-first-of-its-kind-to-counter-violent-extremism/379486331/>.

<sup>206</sup> WORDE, “The Montgomery County Model.”

<sup>207</sup> Aaron Miguel Cantú, “In Maryland, Faith Leaders and Law Enforcement Fight Radicalization,” *Al Jazeera America*, September 12, 2015, <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/9/12/in-maryland-a-new-way-of-policing-radical-ideology.html>.

collaboration.”<sup>208</sup> However, Mirahmadi insists that the program is designed to combat violent extremism holistically, not just in the Muslim community.<sup>209</sup>

Activist groups have expressed concerns that CVE programs like the MCM can be used as an intelligence tool, rather than one designed to truly help those at risk of radicalization—and that they use community members as neighborhood spies.<sup>210</sup> MCM administrators would argue, however, that the program provides the community with a great deal of self-belonging and the buy-in needed to secure the community. The president of the Muslim Public Affairs Council, Salam Al-Marayati, stated, “[The Muslim community] knows when it’s a threat versus just a troubled person, so the more we get involved and raise our voice, the more police and federal law enforcement will have to pay attention to what we have to say.”<sup>211</sup> Additionally, the MCM places the CVE onus on professionals from the community and reduces the responsibility of law enforcement. UK CVE stakeholders argue that “The risk of involvement in terrorism lies with the police .... The police are the most appropriate agency ... to assess and manage this risk.”<sup>212</sup> Therefore, imposing deterrence on the community rather than the police might not be the best option. However, activist groups have also expressed concern that the MCM lacks transparency and uses disproved radicalization cycle identifiers to identify individuals at risk of violent extremism.<sup>213</sup>

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208 Cantú.

209 Cantú.

210 Cantú; Thomas Nephew, “Analysis Touting Prototype MoCo ‘Countering Violent Extremism’ Program Flawed, Expert Says,” Montgomery County Civil Rights Coalition, April 2, 2017, <https://mocoivilrights.wordpress.com/2017/04/02/analysis-touting-prototype-moco-countering-violent-extremism-program-flawed-expert-says>.

211 Cantú.

212 Her Majesty’s (HM) Government, *Channel Duty Guidance: Protecting Vulnerable People from Being Drawn into Terrorism* (London: HM Government, April 2015), 16, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/425189/Channel\\_Duty\\_Guidance\\_April\\_2015.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/425189/Channel_Duty_Guidance_April_2015.pdf).

213 Waqas Mirza, “Montgomery County’s Flawed Model for Nationwide Counterterrorism Programs,” MuckRock, September 28, 2016, <https://www.muckrock.com/news/archives/2016/sep/28/cve-community-resistance/>.

## 2. District of Minnesota's Terrorism Disengagement and Deradicalization Program

In 2014, nine Somali men in Minnesota—who were all in their late teens or early twenties—were arrested for purportedly desiring to travel overseas to join the Islamic State. These men were not always aspiring jihadists; they were high school teens, some of whom had after-school jobs, excelled academically, and participated in activities such as basketball and football. However, after a fight broke out in their high school between Somali and African American students, one of the indicted teens stated, “We’re the minority here .... Why are we being attacked?”<sup>214</sup> Some of them had relatives who were already on the FBI’s radar for traveling overseas to join al-Shabaab. They began watching IS propaganda videos and expressing their interest in terrorist organizations online.<sup>215</sup> A majority of the teens fostered a strong hatred for the American culture due to assimilation issues; they felt a like-minded group such as IS would accept them.

Perhaps that is what drove U.S. District Judge Michael J. Davis to think of ideas other than incarceration; he wanted, instead, to provide the teens with the social services that could help integrate them into the community and rid them of their radical views. In reaching his sentencing decision, Davis studied deradicalization programs from around the world, including in Indonesia and Denmark, and brought in deradicalization specialist Daniel Koehler. Koehler was able to work closely with Davis and Kevin Lowry, the chief U.S. probation officer in Minnesota, to implement the first Terrorism Disengagement and Deradicalization Program in the nation. The program was designed to steer individuals away from violent extremist ideology after prosecution, while working with non-government organizations, religious leaders, probation officers (trained in deradicalization), and other social service providers in hopes to counter and eliminate the individual’s radical views. The program focuses on individuals who are facing terrorism

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<sup>214</sup> Paul McEnroe, Abby Simons, and Libor Jany, “From the Heartland to Jihad,” *Star Tribune*, September 20, 2015, <http://www.startribune.com/from-the-heartland-to-jihad-heeding-isil-s-call-to-terror/324121191/>.

<sup>215</sup> McEnroe, Simons, and Jany.

charges and attempts to assess candidates using the threat assessment method; the accuracy of this method, however, was challenged in court in December 2016.<sup>216</sup>

Abdullahi Yusuf, the single candidate for the deradicalization program, was released from his halfway house back to his family in November 2017. Yusuf will remain under close watch by deradicalization-trained probation officers for the next twenty years.<sup>217</sup>

### **3. Minneapolis–St. Paul Pilot Program**

The pilot CVE program in St. Paul, Minnesota, was initiated in February 2015. As previously mentioned, Minnesota is the U.S. state with the most arrests for providing material support charges, followed by New York and California.<sup>218</sup> The program was designed to engage the nation’s largest Somali community and strengthen an already existing relationship between the community and law enforcement. Community buy-in has provided great support for the program, which focuses on three major components: community engagement, prevention, and intervention. All three aspects of the program heavily involve the community.<sup>219</sup> The Minneapolis program aims to engage youth via the educational system, through after-school programs and peer mentors. The program also aims to engage the community by holding community meetings and by bringing in non-government organizations to help them better understand the Somali culture. These methods and strategies are designed to deter an individual from ever possessing a radical ideology.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Stephen Montemayor, “Attorney Seeks More Details on Researcher’s Assessment of Terror Defendant,” *Star Tribune*, December 15, 2016, <http://www.startribune.com/attorney-seeks-more-details-on-researcher-s-assessment-of-terror-defendant/406937446/>.

<sup>217</sup> “Twin Cities Man Who Tried to Join ISIS Is Released from Halfway House,” *Twin Cities*, November 9, 2017, <https://www.twincities.com/2017/11/09/twin-cities-man-who-tried-to-join-isis-is-released-from-halfway-house/>.

<sup>218</sup> Adam Goldman et al., “The Islamic State’s Suspected Inroads into America,” *Washington Post*, accessed August 28, 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/national/isis-suspects/>.

<sup>219</sup> “Building Community Resilience: A Minneapolis-St. Paul Pilot Fact Sheet,” DHS, February 2015, <https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/Minneapolis-St%20Paul%20Building%20Community%20Resilience%20Program-Pilot%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>.

<sup>220</sup> DHS.

Though the program does address a spectrum of concerns, it does not address how to deal with individuals who already espouse a radical ideology, and it does not have a framework for re-engaging individuals who were once the subject of law enforcement investigation but were never prosecuted. This gap might exist because Minnesota has had no subjects who were once on “law enforcement’s radar” and who later carried out an attack, or possibly due to the sensitive political climate in the region. In addition, the program does not have the empirical data needed to measure its successes or failures.

#### **4. Disruption and Early Engagement Project (DEEP)**

In early 2016, the Eastern District of New York’s chief prosecutor, Seth DuCharme, founded the Disruption and Early Engagement Project (DEEP). The program, like Minnesota’s disengagement program, focuses on deradicalizing individuals who are being prosecuted for terrorism charges. The program works with professional human assessors and uses threat assessment technology to evaluate the risk of each individual’s radicalization to violence and their acceptance of the prospect of being deradicalized.<sup>221</sup> This individual-targeted approach is what differentiates DEEP from other CVE programs; it is a more delicate, individualized way to let those who are prosecuted on terrorism charges know that they are being monitored, while at the same time providing them with the services they need to re-integrate into society. However, the program is not offered to every individual; federal authorities are extremely careful when selecting candidates, who must agree to cooperate with the program in lieu of a prison sentence.

The DEEP program did work with an individual who was a previous subject of law enforcement investigation, but his actions did not reach the legal threshold for prosecution; there currently is no policy that addresses individuals who possess a radical ideology.<sup>222</sup> Such individuals either never reach the legal threshold for prosecution, or have their cases closed due to legal constraints. This is the ongoing and evolving issue of targeted

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<sup>221</sup> Nicole Hong and Kholood Eid, “U.S. Officials See Terror Intervention as Possible Future Model,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 7, 2017, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-officials-see-terror-intervention-as-possible-future-model-1488898898>.

<sup>222</sup> .

disengagement—particularly of those who were once on law enforcement’s radar.<sup>223</sup> Furthermore, the DEEP program uses both government resources and non-government organizations, but does not involve the community; and there is no outreach component to the program. It is possible that the community is not involved due to the sensitive nature of the case documents, which often require a security clearance in order to be obtained. As the program continues, it will also need to determine how to ensure that the individual remains disengaged from a violent ideology when the enforcement arm of court action is removed.

## 5. The Los Angeles Framework

The Los Angeles framework for CVE promotes healthy community relations through three main objectives: prevention, intervention, and interdiction.<sup>224</sup> The prevention role focuses on educating the community and building relationships between the public and private sectors. Like others discussed in this chapter, the Los Angeles framework relies on cohesion between the community and law enforcement. For prevention, the program engages the community through seminars and educators who establish communication, much like the MCM’s network-building focus.<sup>225</sup> Because of legal complexity, disagreements among scholars about the path to radicalization, and lack of analysis, the Los Angeles framework currently has no official policy concerning intervention. It does, however, discuss the importance of “off-ramps”—“rehabilitative care to individuals who are moving down a path toward committing illegal activity.”<sup>226</sup> When it is identified that someone needs help, interventions are conducted with the help of clergy members, teachers, and parents.<sup>227</sup> For “interdiction,” framework focuses on prosecution,

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<sup>223</sup> Adam Goldman, “Why Didn’t the F.B.I. Stop the New York Bombing?” *New York Times*, December 21, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/22/us/fbi-terror-ahmad-khan-rahami.html>.

<sup>224</sup> Los Angeles Interagency Coordination Group, “The Los Angeles Framework for Countering Violent Extremism” (report, Los Angeles Interagency Coordination Group, May 2015), 3, [https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/LA%20Framework%20for%20Countering%20Violent%20Extremism%20-%20May2015\\_0.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/LA%20Framework%20for%20Countering%20Violent%20Extremism%20-%20May2015_0.pdf).

<sup>225</sup> Los Angeles Interagency Coordination Group, 6.

<sup>226</sup> Los Angeles Interagency Coordination Group, 7.

<sup>227</sup> Los Angeles Interagency Coordination Group, 8.

arrests, and investigations of violent extremists. The document states, “Law enforcement can more effectively mitigate the risk of individuals becoming potential victims of violent extremist recruitment and radicalization and prioritize their resources to focus on individuals that are current threats to public safety.”<sup>228</sup>

## **6. Boston: A Framework for Prevention and Intervention Strategies**

The Boston CVE program expands the definition of violent extremism, defining violent extremists as “individuals who support or commit ideologically-motivated violence to further personal, political or social objectives, sometimes without direction from or influence by a foreign actor.”<sup>229</sup> This definition avoids stigmatizing the Muslim community. In addition, the program highlights that there is no singular path to radicalization, and that radicalized individuals may not all display the same signs of radicalization.<sup>230</sup> The program focuses on better education stakeholders and building a stronger relationship among programs partners.

The Boston framework, however, does not discuss interdiction, or policies for supporting individuals who espouse a violent extremist ideology. The framework document states that, in the future, they hope to develop a plan that can be applicable to different professions, can better educate mental health professionals, and can provide crisis interventions to those in need. Finally, the program hopes to connect social workers with violent extremism experts, who are already in contact with vulnerable individuals who might be susceptible to radicalization.<sup>231</sup> Advocacy groups have attacked the program, stating that it invited in academics but failed to implement their advised policies.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> Los Angeles Interagency Coordination Group, 8.

<sup>229</sup> Boston region stakeholders, “A Framework for Prevention and Intervention Strategy” (report, District of Massachusetts, February 2015), 1, <https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/usao-ma/pages/attachments/2015/02/18/framework.pdf>.

<sup>230</sup> Boston, 3.

<sup>231</sup> Boston, 14.

<sup>232</sup> Waqas Mirza, “Boston Finds Muslim Surveillance Program ‘Flawed and Problematic,’ but Implements it Anyway,” MuckRock, May 13, 2016, <https://www.muckrock.com/news/archives/2016/may/13/boston-cve/>.

## B. THE UK'S "PREVENT" STRATEGY AND THE CHANNEL PROGRAM

The UK's counterterrorism strategy, known as CONTEST, is broken into four sections:

- Pursue: to stop terrorist attacks;
- Prevent: to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism;
- Protect: to strengthen our protection against a terrorist attack; and
- Prepare: to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack.<sup>233</sup>

Prevent complements investigative techniques and intelligence-gathering methods, and is designed to deter individuals from a path to violent extremism via early intervention. "We not believe it is possible," the CONTEST document states, "to resolve the threats we face simply by arresting and prosecuting more people."<sup>234</sup> To address all forms of violent extremism, Prevent's strategy is to conduct targeted interventions with individuals who have displayed alarming behavior or an interest in violent terrorist groups, whether white supremacist, jihadist, or separatist. The Prevent model partners with a wide range of professionals such as those who specialize in "education, criminal justice, faith, charities, the internet and health."<sup>235</sup> The goal is to have multiple agencies working with communities while being transparent about the mission.<sup>236</sup>

Within the Prevent section of CONTEST, a program called Channel operates as a robust deradicalization mechanism. Channel is led by law enforcement, who work closely with "local multi-agency panels."<sup>237</sup> The Channel police practitioner is always responsible for managing referrals, and Channel only works with organizations that do not have radical views or support violent extremism. The Prevent system also employs engagement officers

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<sup>233</sup> Her Majesty's (HM) Government, *CONTEST: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism* (London: HM Government, 2011), 6, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/97994/contest-summary.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97994/contest-summary.pdf).

<sup>234</sup> HM Government, 9.

<sup>235</sup> HM Government, 10.

<sup>236</sup> HM Government, 64.

<sup>237</sup> HM Government, 66.



and police community support officers (PCSOs). Engagement officers “connect counter-terrorism policing, neighborhood policing and communities” by developing contacts within the community and understanding the issues a particular neighborhood faces.<sup>238</sup> PCSOs help build cohesiveness within communities through daily interactions with the public, and by routinely patrolling the communities they protect. The community support officers work hand in hand with the community, listening to their needs, and reporting matters of concern to regular police officers.<sup>239</sup> Although they do not have the same authority as police officers, PCSOs are armed with well-established inroads into the community. This relationship is crucial in securing the UK against acts of terrorism; it was the PCSOs who were essentially responsible for identifying a group of men who were planning to carry out a bombing in in July 2005.<sup>240</sup>

The Channel program is designed to be transparent and easy to understand. It focuses on conducting interventions in all communities, but predominately in cities that have proven to be vulnerable to radicalization. Channel has a three-step process to provide tailored solutions based on the individual referred to the program. The first three phases are:

- Identifying at-risk individuals;
- Conducting a risk assessment of the individual designated and;
- Developing a sustainable plan for the troubled individuals referred to the program.<sup>241</sup>

Acknowledging that the path to radicalization is not a linear process and individuals might be vulnerable to radicalization for many different reasons, Channel focuses on all forms of terrorism and does not focus on one religion or ethnicity. Individuals can be referred to

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<sup>238</sup> HM Government, 71.

<sup>239</sup> “Police Community Support Officer (PCSO),” Metropolitan Police, accessed April 15, 2018, <https://www.met.police.uk/careers-at-the-met/pcso/pcso-overview/>.

<sup>240</sup> John J. Tani Jr., “Black Flags of Their Fathers: The Islamic State’s Returning Foreign Fighter Youths and the Implications for U.S. Domestic Security” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2017), 96.

<sup>241</sup> HM Government, *Channel Duty Guidance*, 5.

Channel either by phone, email, or panel members. Once an individual is identified, the person is then referred to the panel. The panel is required by British law to be chaired by a member of law enforcement, as law enforcement personnel take more risk on a daily basis than any other profession. According to the Channel guidance document, “The risk of involvement in terrorism lies with the police. This is the risk posed by the individual to themselves and society through their potential active involvement in criminality associated with terrorism. The police are the most appropriate agency throughout the entire life of each Channel case to assess and manage this risk.”<sup>242</sup>

Enrollment into the program is entirely voluntary and guarantees that the individual will not be brought under investigation. The individual is only arrested if he or she carries out a crime. If the individual is a minor, then consent for the minor’s information can be obtained from a parent or a guardian. Once an individual is enrolled into the Channel program, either the police practitioner, a Prevent officer, or a “single point of contact” is responsible for directing and managing the referral. This person is responsible for:

- managing referrals and cases through the Channel process in accordance with the Channel guidance and case management principles;
- ensuring that referrals that are dealt with swiftly, and where appropriate, brought to the attention of the Channel panel as soon as possible;
- increasing understanding of Channel amongst panel partners and others;
- establishing effective relationships with panel partners, individuals and organizations who can deliver support; and
- managing any risk associated with the individual’s potential involvement in terrorist related activity.<sup>243</sup>

Figure 15 shows the Channel process in more detail.

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<sup>242</sup> HM Government, 16.

<sup>243</sup> HM Government, 11.

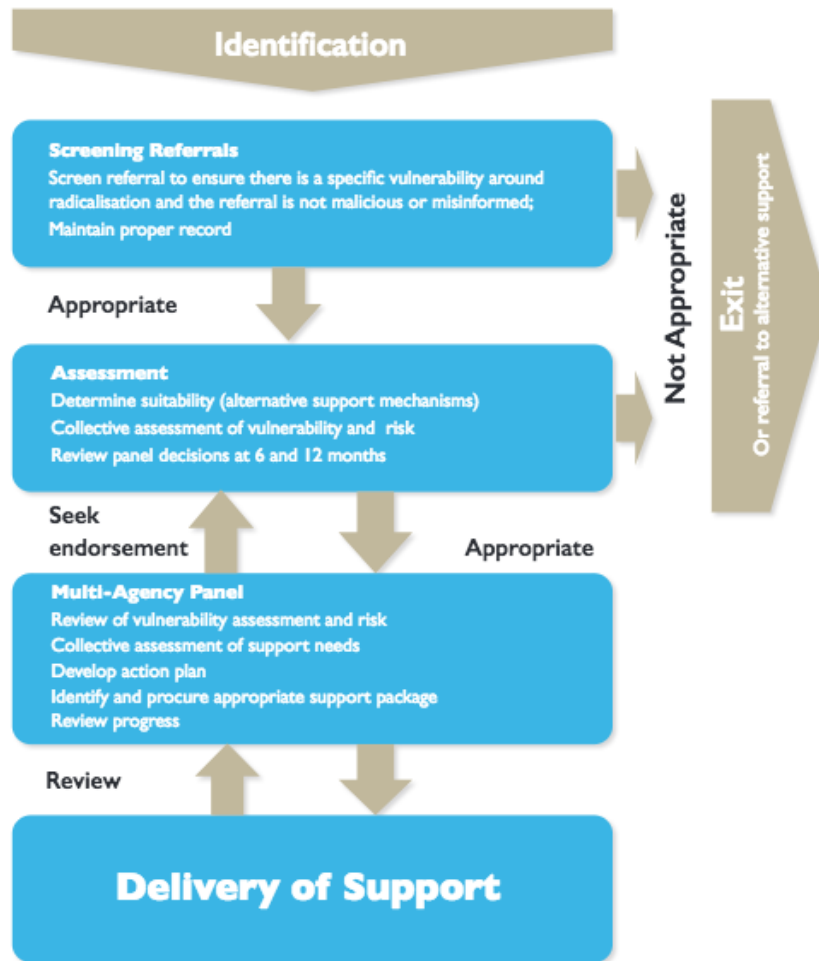


Figure 15. The Channel Process<sup>244</sup>

Most of the referrals to Channel are provided by “active bystanders” who are concerned about a vulnerable individual. Once a referral is received, the first step is to assess the individual. The assessment looks at three main factors:

- Engagement—how attached the person is to a faction, ideology or a cause.
- Intent—if the individual intends to harm others.
- Capability—how capable the individual is of carrying out an attack.<sup>245</sup>

<sup>244</sup> Source: HM Government, 6.

<sup>245</sup> HM Government, 11.

Each factor is considered separately, as an individual can be engaged with a group but may not intend to cause harm, or may not be capable of carrying out an attack.

If the referral is found to be not appropriate, the police practitioner will immediately close the referral and refer the individual to social services. If the referral is deemed to be within the Channel mission, then a further assessment is conducted by the Channel panel, who provide the information they have regarding the individual referred to the police practitioner. This process is simplified when panel members have a sharing order in place. Although the panel is required by law to provide information concerning the referred member, this law is overruled by the Data Protection Act of 1998. The sharing process is assessed on a case-by-case basis and is to take into consideration the necessity, relevance, proportion, and legality concerning the sharing of information. If there is a conflict of laws, the panel members seek advice from the police practitioner.<sup>246</sup>

Once the Channel panel assesses that the individual is fit to be a candidate and he or she is accepted into the program, the panel designs a tailored plan for support services. The support plan may include several agencies working together or one agency leading the effort, depending on the nature of the assessment. The panel meets regularly to manage the risk involved with intervention programs. “Risk is a theme that runs through the entire Channel process, i.e., risk to the individual; risk to the public; and risk to partners or organizations providing support to the individual, including any intervention providers. The panel is responsible for managing the risk in relation to the vulnerable individual.”<sup>247</sup>

The Channel program, though it has seen successes, has been criticized by civil rights and religious groups. The program came under scrutiny for its perceived targeting of Muslim communities, and earlier iterations of the program were not correctly vetting contracted partners.<sup>248</sup> Despite some challenges, the program has seen great support and

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<sup>246</sup> HM Government, 11.

<sup>247</sup> HM Government, 15.

<sup>248</sup> Amy Fires Bonanno, “Deterring Violent Extremism in America by Utilizing Good Counter-Radicalization Practices from Abroad: A Policy Perspective” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2017), 30, [https://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/10945/52953/17Mar\\_Bonanno\\_Amy.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/10945/52953/17Mar_Bonanno_Amy.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y).

participation from the public; between April 2016 and March 2017, the program received 6,093 referrals.<sup>249</sup> Of those, 332 received social services to help them disengage from violent extremism, and 54 percent of the total referred individuals were provided other social services. Additionally, almost 79 percent of the referred individuals left the program and were no longer interested in terrorism.<sup>250</sup>

### C. CONCLUSIONS

When President Trump took office in early 2017 and implemented new policies, the DHS grant program's funding for CVE efforts was frozen.<sup>251</sup> President Trump eventually cut funding to nonprofit organizations that countered domestic terrorism and instead awarded the grant money to foundations that mainly focused on combating foreign terrorist ideologies.<sup>252</sup> This policy change defies evidence that the domestic and international terrorism threats are equally prevalent. CVE programs need to focus on both; some academics even believe the radicalization processes for both groups are very similar.<sup>253</sup> As radicalization expert Mary Beth Altier explains, "There aren't really distinctions between joining a group like the KKK and ISIS."<sup>254</sup>

The goal of countering radicalization, as stated by political scientist Anfel Rabasa, is "to get the individual to change his belief system, reject the extremist ideology and embrace a moderate worldview."<sup>255</sup> This thesis argues that although current CVE programs might be useful, there is a need for a new approach. From studying different CVE

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<sup>249</sup> "New Figures Show Improved Referrals to Prevent and a Rise in Far-Right Concerns," Home Office, March 27, 2018, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-figures-show-improved-referrals-to-prevent-and-a-rise-in-far-right-concerns>.

<sup>250</sup> Home Office.

<sup>251</sup> Bethany Allen-Ebrahimian, "DHS Strips Funding from Group That Counters Neo-Nazi Violence," Foreign Policy, June 26, 2017, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/06/26/dhs-strips-funding-from-group-that-counters-neo-nazi-violence/>.

<sup>252</sup> Allen-Ebrahimian.

<sup>253</sup> German Lopez, "The Radicalization of White Americans," Vox, August 18, 2017, <https://www.vox.com/identities/2017/8/18/16151924/radicalization-white-supremacists-nazis>.

<sup>254</sup> Lopez.

<sup>255</sup> "Deradicalization Process Is Essential Part of Fighting Terrorism," RAND, November 29, 2010, <https://www.rand.org/news/press/2010/11/29.html>.

programs domestically and internationally, it is clear that law enforcement must play a larger role in preventing violent extremism. However, law enforcement should separate its CVE goals from its intelligence-collection goals. Trust and transparency are extremely important when implementing a CVE program. Therefore, CVE programs cannot be led by units within law enforcement that conduct intelligence operations. Such strategies have caused distrust between the community and law enforcement.<sup>256</sup> The CVE operations can be led, instead, by a law enforcement unit whose sole mission is CVE; specific community engagement units could focus on community outreach. Furthermore, these units should design tailored approaches—with the appropriate partners—to target already identified individuals who possess a violent ideology.

A tailored and targeted method can be used by both local and federal agencies that engage in CVE efforts. Often, family members and those who are close to an individual notice the person acting differently or in an alarming manner. These intimate details are not available to law enforcement, but family members might feel comfortable bringing the information to a clergy member or a community leader. Currently, there is no method for a concerned individual to ask for help from law enforcement without the possibility of the at-risk individual being arrested, nor is there a program that allows law enforcement to use resources and the services available to them to deradicalize these individuals. Such a program would not, by any means, be a way to intervene with active investigations; nor does it suggest that there is not a need for intelligence agencies to carry out terrorism investigations. This method is meant, rather, to disengage individuals who are no longer on the radar of law enforcement from a violent ideology; it can also be used to deter individuals from a path toward a violent ideology.

There are tensions between CVE programs and civil liberties groups, who believe there are no specific indicators of violent extremism, and the programs therefore target

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<sup>256</sup> Spencer Ackerman, “Documents Support Fears of Muslim Surveillance by Obama-Era Program,” *Guardian*, March 16, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/16/obama-countering-violent-extremism-muslim-surveillance>.

individuals who are simply going through a normal part of life.<sup>257</sup> In addition, civil liberties groups believe that the indicators used by CVE programs are “constitutionally protected behaviors.” However, law enforcement is constantly being criticized concerning new policy implementations. Although it is important to take into consideration the input of public and private sectors when implementing new policies, law enforcement should not base their policy implementations solely on the recommendations of these outside groups, as it would risk the safety and security of the United States.<sup>258</sup>

U.S. CVE programs have created a solid foundation from which to grow, and have certainly come a long way. They have fostered relationships with communities and established early interventions via youth education. However, they do not provide a window for an active bystander to report concerning behavior *before* it becomes violent, and they are not designed to operate in the pre-criminal space, nor to provide softer alternatives to subjects of law enforcement investigations. To mimic programs that address the current missing gaps in U.S.-based CVE programs, the next chapter reviews a number of collaborative police models and multidisciplinary teams (MDTs). Such collaborative models might help address the complex nature of radicalizations by looking at professional suggestions from different areas of expertise. Collaborative models might also provide ideas for building trust in neighborhoods and fostering community support.

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<sup>257</sup> Mirza, “Boston”; “Boston’s ‘Countering Violent Extremism’ Program: The Dangers of Reliance on a Debunked Theory of Terrorism,” Human Rights at Harvard, accessed February 9, 2018, <https://humanrights.harvard.edu/event/bostons-countering-violent-extremism-program-dangers-reliance-debunked>.

<sup>258</sup> Marq Claxton, “Criticism Shouldn’t Keep Police from Doing Their Jobs,” *New York Times*, June 4, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2015/06/04/have-fearful-police-brought-an-end-to-the-drop-in-crime/criticism-shouldnt-keep-police-from-doing-their-jobs>.

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#### **IV. MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAMS, RISK ASSESSMENT MODELS, AND NYPD NEIGHBORHOOD POLICING**

It's not just Neighborhood Coordination Officers—this isn't just a program, it is all 36,000 police officers. [Neighborhood policing] is a philosophy of treating one another with respect—treating the community with respect and us, as leaders, treating our cops with respect.

—Terrence Monahan, NYPD Chief of Department<sup>259</sup>

The research in the previous chapters shows that there is not a single path to radicalization and that radicalization is not exclusive to a single ideology or religion. The individuals examined went down a path of violent extremism for different reasons. Furthermore, each person experienced a different timeline between radicalization and the act of violence. One commonality, however, was that they all displayed disturbing behavior or indicators of a propensity for violence.

As demonstrated in the previous chapters, domestic CVE programs do not give the local community the opportunity to report alarming or concerning behavior to a local law enforcement agency if the behavior is not considered criminal in nature. Currently, law enforcement has no other option than using established protocols to investigate subjects involved or suspected of being involved in violent extremism. In some cases, the legal threshold to continue investigating violent extremists is not met, and the case must be closed. The individual, however, may still be susceptible to deeper radicalization.

There is a model, however, that helps address the issue of violent extremism using a range of diverse professionals. The model is known as multidisciplinary teams (MDTs). The MDTs draw professionals from distinct disciplines (law enforcement, mental health, education, mentor organizations, religious organizations, etc.) who jointly work to address the community's needs.<sup>260</sup> An MDT's resources may not always be a perfect fit for at-risk

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<sup>259</sup> “NY1 Inside City Hall: NYPD Chief of Department Monahan & Chief of Patrol Harrison on Neighborhood Policing,” NYPD News, January 25, 2018, <http://nypdnews.com/2018/01/ny1-inside-city-hall-nypd-chief-department-monahan-chief-patrol-harrison-neighborhood-policing/>.

<sup>260</sup> START, “Reframing CVE,” 2.

persons; however, they can potentially prevent future attacks. MDT interventions can contribute to early identification and intervention of impending violent behavior. An MDT, for example, may have prevented the attacks by Omar Mateen and Elton Simpson.

Researchers have found that early preventative measures are most effective when they are carried out by multiple collaborating agencies or MDTs.<sup>261</sup> While the agencies may not work together on a daily basis, they can come together to help unravel the complexity of countering violent extremism.<sup>262</sup> The research indicates that MDTs can play a vital role in two ways: by creating risk assessment identifiers that help pinpoint individuals who are at risk of violent extremism, and by determining the best way to prevent the individual from becoming more entrenched in the extreme ideology.<sup>263</sup>

#### **A. WHY EXPLORE MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAMS?**

Due to the complex nature of violent extremism, different professionals have different theories about why an individual radicalizes. The sociologist will identify socioeconomic, assimilation, and political factors as drivers.<sup>264</sup> The psychologist cannot rule out mental health issues or other psychological components.<sup>265</sup> The behavioral scientist suggests that violence is the result of an individual's struggle with emotions, anger, and frustrations.<sup>266</sup> Early educational intervention programs, on the other hand, have seen success by conducting community outreach and educating youth, who are

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<sup>261</sup> Kiran M. Sarma, "Risk Assessment and the Prevention of Radicalization from Nonviolence into Terrorism," *American Psychologist* 72, no. 3 (2017): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000121>.

<sup>262</sup> Sarma, 1.

<sup>263</sup> RTI International, "Countering Violent Extremism: The Application of Risk Assessment Tools in the criminal Justice and Rehabilitation Process" (literature review, Science and Technology Directorate, February 2018), 1, [https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/OPSR\\_TP\\_CVE-Application-Risk-Assessment-Tools-Criminal-Rehab-Process\\_2018Feb-508.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/OPSR_TP_CVE-Application-Risk-Assessment-Tools-Criminal-Rehab-Process_2018Feb-508.pdf).

<sup>264</sup> M. Schomerus, S. El Tarabouisi-McCarthy, and J. Sandhar, "Countering Violent Extremism" (topic guide, GSDRC Applied Knowledge Services, March 2017), 3, <http://www.gsdrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/CVE.pdf>.

<sup>265</sup> Kamaldeep Bhui, "Radicalisation: A Mental Health Issue, Not a Religious One," *New Scientist*, April 8, 2015, <https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg22630160-200-radicalisation-a-mental-health-issue-not-a-religious-one/>.

<sup>266</sup> Schomerus, El Tarabouisi-McCarthy, and Sandhar, "Countering Violent Extremism," 3.

particularly susceptible to radicalization.<sup>267</sup> In certain circumstances, an in-person, targeted intervention via a MDT has proven most successful, especially when the individual is displaying alarming behavior but has not yet committed a crime.<sup>268</sup>

MDTs are used across many professions, such as in the mental health, cybersecurity, and medical fields. Law enforcement agencies too have recognized their potential for non-prosecutorial options when diverting individuals from a violent path, such as in anti-gang campaigns and the opioid epidemic. Along with this, police agencies have also realized the importance of building trust and establishing programs that address relationships between the community and police. As NYPD Police Commissioner James P. O’Neill stated, “We are hearing story after story about how officers were able to respond more quickly and more effectively to crime and other problems because they are so firmly grounded in neighborhoods. Moreover, I believe we have just scratched the surface of what neighborhood policing can accomplish.”<sup>269</sup>

This chapter focuses on multidisciplinary team models while examining different programs that incorporate MDTs. The two risk assessment models—the Violent Extremism Risk Assessment model (version 2, revised; VERA-2R) and the U.S. Secret Service’s National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC) model for school safety—were chosen because they are the two most recent and innovative models available for assessing violent extremism. Moreover, the shared behavioral indicators between violent extremists and school shooters may place an individual on the same path toward violence. In line with this, the first model chosen is. The chapter also explores the NYPD neighborhood policing model—a model that is being used to establish trust between law enforcement and the community. Data suggest that the NYPD was able to drop the rate of crime by promoting

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<sup>267</sup> Samantha de Silva, “Role of Education in the Prevention of Violent Extremism” (working paper, World Bank, 2017), 10, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/448221510079762554/Role-of-education-in-the-prevention-of-violent-extremism>.

<sup>268</sup> Mohammed Elshimi, “De-radicalisation Interventions as Technologies of the Self: A Foucauldian Analysis,” *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 8, no. 1 (January 2, 2015): 110, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17539153.2015.1005933>.

<sup>269</sup> “Neighborhood Policing,” New York City Police Foundation, accessed October 1, 2018, <http://www.nycpolicefoundation.org/programs/neighborhood-policing/>.

the “shared responsibility” message while at the same time empowering both the community and the officers.<sup>270</sup>

## **B. MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAMS (MDTS)**

The MDT model is derived from the biopsychosocial model.<sup>271</sup> The biopsychosocial model explains how a person’s “biological, psychological, and social processes operate together to affect physical health outcomes.”<sup>272</sup> The biopsychosocial model is used predominately in the medical field to help patients recover from illness by focusing on external factors such as social conditions, rather than simply concentrating on the medical findings.<sup>273</sup> Similarly, MDTs gather a group of experts from different backgrounds who would not routinely work together.<sup>274</sup> The Department of Justice describes an MDT as:

A group of people (comprised of representatives from three or more disciplines who work collaboratively), bound by a common purpose (the MDT has a shared goal and shared the definition of the problem they are addressing), and is characterized by five elements:

- **Shared Decision-Making**  
The entire team participates in the decision-making process, sharing information, and sharing successes.
- **Partnership**  
MDTs are characterized by a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or an Interagency Agreement (IAA).
- **Interdependency**  
The team influences group and individual outcomes.

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<sup>270</sup> Samar Khurshid, “Why Does Crime Keep Falling in New York City?” *Gotham Gazette*, January 8, 2018, <http://www.gothamgazette.com/city/7410-why-does-crime-keep-falling-in-new-york-city>.

<sup>271</sup> “Introduction to Multidisciplinary Teams,” Department of Justice, accessed June 6, 2018, <https://www.justice.gov/elderjustice/1-introduction-multidisciplinary-teams>.

<sup>272</sup> J. Suls and A. Rothman, “Evolution of the Biopsychosocial Model: Prospects and Challenges for Health Psychology,” *Health Psychology* 23, no. 2 (March 2004): 119, <http://doi.org/10.1037.0278-6133.23.2.119>.

<sup>273</sup> Department of Justice, “Introduction to Multidisciplinary Teams.”

<sup>274</sup> Department of Justice.

- **Balanced Power**  
All members of the MDT have equal input and prohibit a single member from dominating the group.
- **Process**  
The development and use of protocols to introduce predictability and accountability into the case review process, including protocols for conflict resolution.<sup>275</sup>

MDT models have existed for decades in education and health fields, and are gaining popularity with law enforcement. In the medical field, MDTs have brought together health care professionals with psychologists and nutritionists when treating cardiac patients.<sup>276</sup> For educators, MDTs have helped parents work with children on the autism spectrum by bringing them together with professionals and school officials to provide tailored education solutions.<sup>277</sup> For CVE efforts, MDTs similarly gather experts from different disciplines to address the community’s specific needs.<sup>278</sup> Research shows that the professionals in an MDT are not only able to work together to disengage an individual from a violent ideology but also to bring a whole community closer together.<sup>279</sup> Many CVE programs have looked to MDTs to help solve a complicated issue.

### C. VIOLENT EXTREMIST RISK ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Law enforcement officials have realized that solving the issue of violent extremism requires more than just investigating and arresting those who threaten violence.<sup>280</sup> Researchers believe that intervention efforts are effective when an individual is approached early on in the radicalization process, before he or she commits a crime.<sup>281</sup> To carry out an

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<sup>275</sup> Department of Justice.

<sup>276</sup> J. Firth-Cozens, “Multidisciplinary Teamwork: The Good, Bad, and Everything in Between,” *BMJ Quality & Safety* 10, no. 2 (June 2001): 65–66, <https://doi.org/10.1136/qhc.10.2.65>.

<sup>277</sup> “The Multidisciplinary Team,” IRIS Center, accessed August 13, 2018, <https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/asd1/cresource/q2/p04/>.

<sup>278</sup> START, “Reframing CVE,” 2.

<sup>279</sup> START, 2.

<sup>280</sup> John D. Cohen, “The Next Generation of Government CVE Strategies at Home: Expanding Opportunities for Intervention,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 668, no. 1 (2016), <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0002716216669933>.

<sup>281</sup> Cohen.

effective targeted intervention, officials should conduct a behavioral risk assessment to analyze the individual's extremist views. That risk assessment will help explain why the individual is going down a path toward violent extremism.<sup>282</sup> Risk assessment is defined as “any process involving the systematic gathering and interpretation of information pertaining to an individual in order to predict the likelihood that the individual will engage in the behavior of concern in the future.”<sup>283</sup> The risk assessment and management process is ongoing and synergistic; practitioners must understand multiple disparate fields and continuously draw from one another to craft effective mitigation strategies that fit the specific case.<sup>284</sup> Risk assessment models are used in many different professions; in the medical field, for example, practitioners use the Broset violence checklist to predict violent outbreaks better. The most relevant examples of MDTs are those that function within risk assessment models. The two recent risk assessment models for CVE described in this chapter are the VERA-2R and the NTAC's school safety model.

In a recent study, DHS concluded that to assess an individual accurately, numerous assessment tools may have to be used; additionally, the study clarifies that risk assessment tools are not a silver-bullet solution.<sup>285</sup> The practitioners who conduct the risk assessment should augment their data by obtaining information from all the agencies involved in the risk assessment. Due to humans' dynamic behavior, static strategies may be counterproductive when assessing individual risk. This explains why different events galvanize different individuals to partake in violent acts.<sup>286</sup> For example, Elton Simpson committed violent acts in response to a dream in which a woman in a hijab signified that he must commit jihad to reach paradise.<sup>287</sup> For Timothy McVeigh, the Branch Davidians'

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<sup>282</sup> Cohen.

<sup>283</sup> Sarma, “Risk Assessment,” 280.

<sup>284</sup> D. Elaine Pressman and John Flockton, “Calibrating Risk for Violent Political Extremists and Terrorists: The VERA 2 Structured Assessment,” *The British Journal of Forensic Practice* 14, no. 4 (November 16, 2012): 4, <https://doi.org/10.1108/14636641211283057>.

<sup>285</sup> “OPSR\_TP\_CVE-Application-Risk-Assessment-Tools-Criminal-Rehab-Process\_2018Feb-508.Pdf,” 47.

<sup>286</sup> RTI International, “Countering Violent Extremism,” 29.

<sup>287</sup> Amarasingam, “Elton ‘Ibrahim’ Simpson.”

encounter with the FBI in Waco, Texas, motivated him in part to commit the Oklahoma City bombing.<sup>288</sup> These incidents, and others like them, support the theory of observing various behavioral signs when conducting risk assessments in order to accurately predict the risk of violent extremism in a particular individual.

### **1. Violent Extremism Risk Assessment, Version 2 Revised (VERA-2R)**

The VERA-2 model was the revised 2010 version of the original 2009 VERA.<sup>289</sup> Unlike other risk assessment tools being used to assess criminal behavior, the VERA looks specifically at risk factors associated with those who espouse a violent ideology. While it was designed for suspected terrorists, it is scalable to fit any spectrum of violent extremism. In 2016, the VERA-2 model was slightly modified and renamed the VERA-2R. The VERA-2R is designed to assess if an individual is willing to justify an act of violence based on ideological, political, or religious principles.<sup>290</sup> While the model remained predominantly the same, it added additional risk factors that focus on women, young adults, and violent extremists who have mental health issues.<sup>291</sup>

The model uses a two-step approach to evaluating the individual's risk: the first step is to assess the person's likelihood to commit an act of violence and the second is to implement a plan for intervention.<sup>292</sup> The model is broken down further into five domains:

1. Beliefs, attitudes, and ideology
2. Social context and intention
3. History, actions, and capability

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<sup>288</sup> *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. "Oklahoma City Bombing," accessed August 13, 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Oklahoma-City-bombing>.

<sup>289</sup> Pressman and Flockton, "Calibrating Risk," 243.

<sup>290</sup> "Violent Extremism Risk Assessment, Version 2-Revised (VERA-2R) (2016)," European Commission, August 4, 2017, [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/node/11702\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/node/11702_en).

<sup>291</sup> Joanne Richards, "High Risk or Low Risk: Screening for Violent Extremists in DDR Programmes," *International Peacekeeping* 25, no. 3 (May 27, 2018): 373–93, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13533312.2018.1440177>.

<sup>292</sup> "VERA: Definitions and Focus," Ministry of Justice and Security, accessed April 25, 2018, <https://www.vera-2r.nl/definitions-and-focus/index.aspx>.

4. Commitment and motivation
5. Protective and risk-mitigating indicators.<sup>293</sup>

The categories are designed to lessen the odds of false positives that could be caused by other risk assessment tools risk.<sup>294</sup> Altogether, the VERA-2R contains thirty-four indicators of violent extremism; while the current list is not publicly available (it can be obtained by attending a VERA-2R workshop), the thirty-one VERA-2 model indicators are shown in Table 2. One aspect that makes the VERA indicator sheet unique is that it can be used by any individual trained in violent extremism; its audience is not limited to certified health professionals. Due to the complex dynamics involved with violent extremism, the risk assessment team should comprise “law enforcement officers, intelligence and security professionals, professionals in corrections, psychologists and other behavioral scientists who have a demonstrable knowledge of terrorism and the requisite training in the methodology of risk assessment protocol administration.”<sup>295</sup>

Table 2. The VERA-2 Risk Indicators<sup>296</sup>

	<b>VERA 2 Indicator Items</b>	<b>Low Moderate High</b>
<i>BA</i>	<i>Beliefs and attitudes</i>	
BA.1	Commitment to ideology justifying violence	
BA.2	Victim of injustice and grievances	
BA.3	Dehumanization/demonization of identified targets of injustice	
BA.4	Rejection of democratic society and values	
BA.5	Feelings of hate, frustration, persecution, alienation	
BA.6	Hostility to national collective identity	
BA.7	Lack of empathy, understanding outside own group	

<sup>293</sup> “VERA: Domains,” Ministry of Justice and Security, accessed April 25, 2018, <https://www.vera-2r.nl/vera-2r-instrument/domains/index.aspx>.

<sup>294</sup> Pressman and Flockton, “Calibrating Risk,” 244.

<sup>295</sup> Pressman and Flockton, 241.

<sup>296</sup> Adapted from Pressman and Flockton, 245.



	<b>VERA 2 Indicator Items</b>	<b>Low Moderate High</b>
<i>CI</i>	<i>Context and intent</i>	
CI.1	Seeker, consumer, developer of violent extremist materials	
CI.2	Identification of target (person, place, group) in response to perceived injustice	
CI.3	Personal contact with violent extremists	
CI.4	Anger and expressed intent to act violently	
CI.5	Expressed desire to die for cause or martyrdom	
CI.6	Expressed intent to plan, prepare violent action	
CI.7	Susceptible to influence, authority, indoctrination	
<i>HC</i>	<i>History and capability</i>	
HC.1	Early exposure to pro-violence militant ideology	
HC.2	Network (family, friends) involved in violent action	
HC.3	Prior criminal history of violence	
HC.4	Tactical, paramilitary, explosives training	
HC.5	Extremist ideological training	
HC.6	Access to funds, resources, organizational skills	
<i>CM</i>	<i>Commitment and motivation</i>	
CM.1	Glorification of violent action	
CM.2	Driven by criminal opportunism	
CM.3	Commitment to group, group ideology	
CM.4	Driven by moral imperative, moral superiority	
CM.5	Driven by excitement, adventure	
<i>P</i>	<i>Protective items</i>	
P.1	Re-interpretation of ideology less rigid, absolute	
P.2	Rejection of violence to obtain goals	
P.3	Change of vision of enemy	
P.4	Involvement with non-violent, de-radicalization, offence-related programs	
P.5	Community support for non-violence	
P.6	Family support for non-violence	
<i>SPJ</i>	<i>VERA final judgment</i>	<i>Low Moderate High</i>

Note: Rating differences for protective items: high rating = more mitigation and less risk.

## 2. Enhancing School Safety: National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC) Model

To better understand the threat of violence that our nation’s schools K–12 schools face, specifically from active shooters, the United States Secret Service conducted a study.<sup>297</sup> Although the study was not able to find a specific profile that would identify a school shooter, it stresses that the first step for prevention should be forming an MDT.<sup>298</sup> To assess if an individual is a potential school shooter, the MDT should contain school teachers, law enforcement officials, guidance counselors, sports coaches, mental health experts, and school superintendents.<sup>299</sup> Furthermore, the MDT should have a designated leader—preferably a senior school administrator—and should establish “protocols and procedures” that outline how a student’s concerning behavior should be brought to the attention of the MDT.<sup>300</sup> The MDT should meet regularly—not just when a new case is identified—to help the members understand different views, build cohesiveness, and prepare via role-playing scenarios.<sup>301</sup>

The study further states that schools should define triggering behaviors. Although visible signs such as bullying, displaying violent behavior, harassing students, or bringing a weapon to school are observable behaviors, there could be other, less obvious signs that should be flagged for intervention. Those signs could include a student alienating him or herself, being excessively absent, showing signs of depression or other symptoms of mental illness, or using drugs or alcohol.<sup>302</sup> To be able to intervene and create safer schools, the threshold for intervention should be set at a very low level.<sup>303</sup> The research realizes that

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<sup>297</sup> Linda Alathari et al., “Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model: An Operational Guide for Preventing Targeted School Violence” (operational guide, NTAC, July 2018), 1, [https://www.secretservice.gov/data/protection/ntac/USSS\\_NTAC\\_Enhancing\\_School\\_Safety\\_Guide\\_7.11.18.pdf](https://www.secretservice.gov/data/protection/ntac/USSS_NTAC_Enhancing_School_Safety_Guide_7.11.18.pdf).

<sup>298</sup> Alathari et al., 3.

<sup>299</sup> Alathari et al., 7.

<sup>300</sup> Alathari et al., 7.

<sup>301</sup> Alathari et al., 7.

<sup>302</sup> Alathari et al., 8.

<sup>303</sup> Alathari et al., 9.

the MDT members will necessarily observe all signs. Therefore, an anonymous referral mechanism—such as a website or phone hotline—should be implemented to allow students, relatives, friends, or concerned community members to report a student. Equally important, an MDT member must be designated to respond to the complaints, and all referrals should be confidential.<sup>304</sup> While the study does not provide a specific checklist for conducting a risk assessment, it identifies a number of indicators present in most shooters:

- If the student communicates his disturbing thoughts or desires to someone.
- The student’s interest in owning a weapon or carrying out an attack.
- The student’s capability to access a firearm or an explosive device.
- If the student very stressed or dealing with a significant setback in their life.
- If the student has any disability or mental illness.
- If the student feels like he/she is running out of opportunities.
- If the student has previously displayed violent behavior or is thinking about engaging in violence.
- If the student’s behavior concerned others and made them feel not safe
- If the student has expressed planning for an attack or researched implementing a school attack.
- If the student’s statements coincide with their actions or if they differ.
- If the student is engaged in social activities that promote social cohesiveness.
- If the student can develop trusted relationships with school employees
- If the student is emotionally associated with other students.<sup>305</sup>

If law enforcement is not a partner in the MDT, the study suggests that officers should be notified immediately if there is an imminent threat to the school. However, if there are no

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<sup>304</sup> Alathari et al., 9.

<sup>305</sup> Alathari et al., 7–20.

exigent circumstances, then the MDT must develop a strategic plan to reduce the risk. The study also states that removing the student from the school does not reduce the risk of an attack. Therefore, a risk reduction intervention plan should be individually tailored for the student.<sup>306</sup>

In closing, the study emphasizes the importance of appropriate training for all stakeholders; the safety of the school system is both an individual and a collective responsibility. Also, students should be educated about the importance of informing staff about a fellow student's intent to commit an act of harm or alarming behavior. The students may be willing to do so if they understand that there is a difference between helping a classmate and tattling.<sup>307</sup>

#### **D. NYPD NEIGHBORHOOD POLICING MODEL**

Research suggests that law enforcement can more effectively combat violent extremism through collaborative efforts with community members.<sup>308</sup> An effective model shows the community members that they play a role in keeping their community safe. This type of model builds trust between law enforcement and the community, which in turn helps lessen community bias against law enforcement. If MDTs can garner community support, they may be better able to identify the core causes of active targeted violence. This partnership could encourage community members to report alarming behavior to law enforcement, who can then intervene earlier in the radicalization process and offer appropriate treatment.<sup>309</sup>

In early 2015, NYPD Commissioner William Bratton changed the way the department executes its police mission by enacting the "NYPD Plan of Action."<sup>310</sup> This neighborhood policing plan was a shift away from the NYPD's older community affairs unit, which acted as the bridge between law enforcement and the community. The

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<sup>306</sup> Alathari et al., 21.

<sup>307</sup> Alathari et al., 25.

<sup>308</sup> Cohen, "Next Generation of Government CVE Strategies."

<sup>309</sup> Cohen.

<sup>310</sup> Bratton, "NYPD Plan of Action," 1

department realized that, to develop deep trust between the community and the police officers, it must dedicate more resources to in-person community interactions.<sup>311</sup> The NYPD thus restructured the way precincts were devoting their resources and focused on developing intimate relationships between the officers and the neighborhoods they protect.<sup>312</sup> The plan focuses on five main pillars:

- Tactics—a neighborhood policing plan that heavily involves community partners and addresses their concerns.
- Technology—advanced technological capabilities to empower police officers while they patrol the street.
- Training—an emphasis on shared best practices for street policing.
- Terrorism—a comprehensive plan for combating terrorism that involves interagency cooperation.
- Trust—the development of trust between the community and law enforcement. This also means being forgiving toward officers and not disciplining them if they make a bad judgment call—as long as it is not a criminal act.<sup>313</sup>

The final pillar, trust, is particularly important because it allows officers to make decisions without fear of repercussion; simultaneously, this also heightens the officers' sense of ownership, which naturally motivates them to make stronger community connections.<sup>314</sup> However, without a dual focus on enforcement, the NYPD's neighborhood policing efforts will fail. So the NYPD created Craft, an app that allows officers to document how they positively interact with the community in ways that are normally not recorded. This helps

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<sup>311</sup> Bratton, 5.

<sup>312</sup> Bratton, 5.

<sup>313</sup> Bratton, 2.

<sup>314</sup> Bratton, 3.

officers demonstrate to their superiors that they are carrying out their mission without affecting arrests.<sup>315</sup>

To establish relationships with communities, former NYPD Chief of Department and current Commissioner James O’Neill, along with Chief of Patrol Terrance Monahan, initiated a neighborhood policing plan.<sup>316</sup> Rather than assigning officers to different sectors, O’Neill’s new plan broke each precinct into four or five different industries, and staffed those sectors with the same officers on a daily basis. In addition, rather than having sector officers just answer 9-1-1 calls, the new plan required sector patrol officers to conduct at least two hours and twenty minutes of neighborhood engagement daily.<sup>317</sup> However, acknowledging that this was not enough, O’Neill also implemented a new position called neighborhood coordination officers (NCOs) who could help solve problems via investigative techniques and community interactions. The NCO program assigns two additional officers to each sector with core mission areas to:

- Monitor crime patterns and trends.
- Report their crime patterns and trends findings to other officers.
- Develop targeted enforcement plans that reduce crimes in their sector.
- Develop trusted relationships with the community members in their sector.
- Listen to complaints from the community and address their concerns.
- Respond to a few 9-1-1 jobs to stay aware of the crime patterns and develop personal relationships with those individuals they respond to aid.
- Develop community contacts and encourage citizen participation.<sup>318</sup>

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<sup>315</sup> Trevor Kapp, “Neighborhood Policing Changing Attitudes and Reaping Benefits, NYPD Says,” DNA Info, accessed August 16, 2018, <https://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/20170406/central-harlem/nypd-neighborhood-policing-nco-community-police-department>.

<sup>316</sup> Bratton, “NYPD Plan of Action,” 3.

<sup>317</sup> Bratton, 4.

<sup>318</sup> Bratton, 5.

Current NYPD Chief of Department Terrance Monahan believes the NYPD neighborhood policing program is responsible for a precipitous drop in crime. He stated,

This is all about getting to know people. You know, there's 8.5 million eyes out there in the city of New York, and we want to be able to reach out to as many of them, and get them comfortable to come up to us and kind of talk.... Someone's going to see something, and if they say something to us, hopefully we can prevent a tragedy like what happened in England.<sup>319</sup>

Monahan has evolved the program to focus more on a “shared responsibility” model between law enforcement and the community. The NCOs hold a neighborhood meeting that focuses on two main objectives: “To identify the public safety challenges of your specific neighborhood—big or small—and give everyone an opportunity discuss potential solutions together.”<sup>320</sup> These meetings establish dialogue and have enhanced trust between the community and police officers significantly.

The NYPD neighborhood policing program has become a national model for other law enforcement agencies.<sup>321</sup> Although its main goal is to combat crime, it also builds in-person relationships between the police and the community, allowing them to voice their opinions and inform NYPD personnel about matters that can help reduce crime.<sup>322</sup> With relationship building, trust is established; and with trust established, both entities can work together for a safer society.<sup>323</sup>

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<sup>319</sup> Zolan Kanno-Youngs, “NYPD’s Community Policing Aims to Take the Edge off Crime Fighting; The Neighborhood Program Is Slowly Breaking through Years of Fear and Distrust,” *Wall Street Journal*, December 27, 2017, [http://search.proquest.com/docview/1980405317?rfr\\_id=info%3Axri%2Fsid%3Aprimo](http://search.proquest.com/docview/1980405317?rfr_id=info%3Axri%2Fsid%3Aprimo).

<sup>320</sup> “NYPD Neighborhood Policing Program Aims to Connect Cops with Communities,” NYPD News, May 24, 2017, <http://nypdnews.com/2017/05/nypd-neighborhood-policing-program-aims-to-connect-cops-with-communities/>.

<sup>321</sup> Bove, “NYPD Neighborhood Policing.”

<sup>322</sup> Bratton, “NYPD Plan of Action.”

<sup>323</sup> “Importance of Police-Community Relationships and Resources for Further Reading,” Department of Justice, accessed March 17, 2018, <https://www.justice.gov/crs/file/836486/download>.

## E. CONCLUSIONS

This chapter began by reviewing how MDTs operate both within and outside of law enforcement—specifically, however, how they can be used as a tool to prevent violent extremism and protect communities. The two risk assessment models studied, the VERA-2R and the NTAC school safety model, focus on different types of threats but share commonalities. Both models use MDTs and stress an individualized approach, and both look at a broad spectrum of factors. Moreover, both stress that although there is a group dynamic involved in assessing risk, risk assessment tools should not be the only consideration; other factors must be reviewed when making a final determination, and gathering additional data from stakeholders or interviews might inform a better decision. As a recent DHS study points out, “Proper validation of an assessment instrument involves collecting data from a known population and applying the tool to those cases to determine how effectively it performs.”<sup>324</sup>

The VERA-2R and NTAC models also had some differences. Most notably, the VERA model uses a thirty-four-item checklist; the NTAC tool, however, relies on general factors to guide practitioners. Future iterations of the NTAC model might consider incorporating a comprehensive list of questions surrounding the alarming behavior displayed by those who carry out an act of violence in a school system, and adding a similar scale of the degree of risk that is associated with the factors. The NTAC model offered outsider input by providing a central reporting mechanism; this could be implemented into the VERA program to alert members about at-risk individuals.

History shows that laws legislated by state, federal, and local governments have caused the relationship between law enforcement and the communities to suffer. At times, police departments have suffered distrust from communities due to incidents involving unnecessary use of force or misconduct by police officers.<sup>325</sup> Similarly, law enforcement personnel lose confidence in the communities they police due to fatal attacks on police

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<sup>324</sup> RTI International, “Countering Violent Extremism,” 32.

<sup>325</sup> Department of Justice, “Importance of Police-Community Relationships,” 1.



officers.<sup>326</sup> These incidents cause a divide between the community and law enforcement, obstruct crime reduction goals, and prevent citizens from reporting. Agencies nationwide are trying to improve relationships between communities and law enforcement. As an example, after Eric Gardner died while being taken into custody by NYPD officers, riots began in New York and around the United States. Following this incident, NYPD focused its efforts on rebuilding community trust through the neighborhood policing program.<sup>327</sup>

The neighborhood policing program has provided a platform that works to both establish trust and protect citizens. It gives the community the incentive to invest in the mission of keeping their hometowns safe. Such relationship-building techniques are essential for establishing a centralized reporting plan. A centralized reporting mechanism cannot be implemented without significant trust between law enforcement and the community. The result of trust is also a sense of shared responsibility, a connection between the local law enforcement department and its community members, and confidence in citizens who report crimes—as well as their belief that they will remain anonymous and the appropriate services will be provided.

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<sup>326</sup> Seth Stoughton, “Is the Police-Community Relationship in America beyond Repair?” *Washington Post*, July 8, 2016, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/is-the-police-community-relationship-in-america-beyond-repair/2016/07/08/595c638c-454b-11e6-bc99-7d269f8719b1\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/is-the-police-community-relationship-in-america-beyond-repair/2016/07/08/595c638c-454b-11e6-bc99-7d269f8719b1_story.html).

<sup>327</sup> Anisha Nandi, “Neighborhood Policing Program Builds Relationships to Cut Crime,” CBS, March 23, 2018, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/nypd-community-policing-lower-crime/>.

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## V. A TAILORED VIOLENT EXTREMISM PREVENTION MODEL

If red flags exist, it is family members who might spot them. Such early suspicions are best described as simply “parent’s intuition.” These feelings and observations could never be quantified into a checklist, but some families sense that something is awry.

—Seamus Hughes<sup>328</sup>

### A. EXPANDING THE DEFINITION OF RADICALIZATION

To better combat violent extremism, this thesis began by identifying the different grievances, ideologies, networks, and public health components that explain radicalization. The research identified some triggers that can cause an individual to go down a path of violent extremism. One common misconception about those who have committed violent terror acts is that these radicalized individuals are generally of the Muslim faith.<sup>329</sup> This misconception can cause the Muslim community to feel as if they are unfairly targeted, especially since term radicalization in the intelligence community focuses predominantly on the Muslim community.<sup>330</sup> In 2006, the FBI stated that it would follow a two-step approach to understand the complexity of radicalization:

1. We are attempting to understand the dynamics of individual and organizational radicalization to identify early indicators as to whether individuals or groups are demonstrating the potential for violence.
2. We are engaged in extensive outreach to Muslim communities to dispel misconceptions that may foster extremism.<sup>331</sup>

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<sup>328</sup> Seamus Hughes, “Islamic State Is Successfully Radicalizing Americans. How Do We Stop Them?” *LA Times*, May 18, 2016, <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-hughes-stop-isis-recruit-radicalization-20160517-snap-story.html#>.

<sup>329</sup> Hitt, “We Don’t Talk about Radicalization.”

<sup>330</sup> Randy Borum, “Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories,” *Perspectives on Radicalization and Involvement in Terrorism* 4, no. 4 (Winter 2011): 26, <http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1139&context=jss>.

<sup>331</sup> Donald Van Duyn, “Islamic Radicalization,” FBI, September 20, 2006, <https://www.fbi.gov/news/testimony/islamic-radicalization>.

This limited view likely stems from 9/11; however, the growing literature base about domestic terrorism, including its potential catalysts, shows that the threat from Islamic terrorism comes from jihadist groups not solely in the United States but also in Europe. Islamic terrorist attacks have recently spiked in countries such as Germany, England, France, and Belgium.<sup>332</sup> These attacks have received significant media attention and have influenced policymakers to focus on jihadist radicalization rather than other factions of terrorism.<sup>333</sup> According to data from the Combating Terrorism Center, far-right ideologies are responsible for inspiring approximately 300 attacks per year.<sup>334</sup> Furthermore, data from the U.S. Extremist Crime Database indicates that far-right extremist groups perpetuate more attacks than jihadists; far-right extremist groups carried out sixty-two attacks between 2001 and 2016 while Islamic violent extremists carried out only twenty-three in the same time period.<sup>335</sup> This comparison between extremist ideologies was brought to light when James Fields carried out a devastating attack that killed one and injured nineteen others. Harris followed instructions disseminated by ISIS and Al-Qa’ida leaders, which called for the use of a vehicle to carry out attacks in Western countries.

Myriad factors contribute to violent extremism. It is our duty as a nation to expand our definition of radicalized individuals to include all ideologies that pose a terroristic threat against our country. The definition must encompass all individuals who go down a path toward violence—all individuals who aim to cause harm to our communities. The definition of a violent extremist should include those who support jihadist groups, white

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<sup>332</sup> Mark Hanrahan and Jessica Wang, “Number of Fatal Terrorist Attacks in Western Europe Increasing, Data Show,” Reuters, July 12, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-attacks/number-of-fatal-terrorist-attacks-in-western-europe-increasing-data-show-idUSKBN19X1QO>.

<sup>333</sup> Yusoufzai and Emmerling, “Explaining Violent Radicalization,” 68.

<sup>334</sup> Hari Sreenivasan, “U.S. Sees 300 Violent Attacks Inspired by Far Right Every Year,” PBS, August 13, 2017, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/u-s-sees-300-violent-attacks-inspired-far-right-every-year>.

<sup>335</sup> Miriam Valverde, “What the Data Shows on Domestic Terrorism Perpetrators,” PolitiFact, August 16, 2017, <https://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/article/2017/aug/16/look-data-domestic-terrorism-and-whos-behind-it/>.

supremacist groups, school violence, left-wing extremist, or any other violent ideology. A broader and deeper understanding of the issue of radicalization will help us:

- Dispel the ambiguities associated with the current definition of radicalization, which does not accurately describe the threat environment.
- Accurately assess individuals who are at risk of violent extremism.
- Provide those at risk of violent extremism with the appropriate social services or treatment.
- Focus the nation on preventing all aspects of violent extremism.
- Remove the stigma against Muslim communities, which is often caused by the singular approaches of current CVE programs.
- Improve first responders' safety by increasing awareness among the first responder community.

Using the term violent extremist more broadly will dispel the false connotation that radicalization is exclusive to jihadists. Moreover, by identifying individuals of all violent paths equally as violent extremists, we can perpetuate a message that law enforcement is more concerned about the violence and harm that can affect our communities, which can strengthen the trust between the community and law enforcement.

## **B. TAILORED DISENGAGEMENT**

A recent study in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review* contends that “no single organization is responsible for any major social problem, nor can any single organization cure it.”<sup>336</sup> Research also shows that there is no linear path to violent extremism.<sup>337</sup> Forming MDTs that include local law enforcement, mental health professionals, social workers, lawyers, religious leaders, and educators is the best strategy to inform

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<sup>336</sup> John Kania and Mark Kramer, “Collective Impact,” *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Winter 2011, [https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective\\_impact](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact).

<sup>337</sup> Hughes, “Islamic State.”

disengagement. MDTs must choose a leader, decide when to meet, arrange a centralized reporting center, assess risk, and deliver the message of risk to stakeholders.<sup>338</sup>

### **1. Pick a Leader**

Electing an MDT chairperson is critical; this person will be responsible for gathering all the members, assuring that collaboration between agencies is fluid, and that the MDT participants are engaged in meaningful discussion, providing expertise related to their professions. It is recommended that the chairperson of the MDT be from law enforcement or another city agency. Although community members can be involved in the program, it is in the researchers' best interest to only have a city agency chair the panel; models that have community members coordinating the program have been accused of employing community members as neighborhood spies.

### **2. When to Meet**

The MDT team should meet on a regular basis—not just when a new case is identified. Regularly scheduled meetings will allow the team to better understand opposing views, build cohesiveness, and prepare via role-playing scenarios.<sup>339</sup> In addition, the MDT should conduct interventions on a case-by-case basis, with a low threshold for intervention; there are a variety of behavioral signs that can point to violent extremism—some seem benign on the surface but might present concern to a professional from a specific field.<sup>340</sup> For example, if law enforcement identifies an individual who is mentally ill and requires treatment from a psychologist, the medical professionals conducting the intervention would determine how to proceed and would maintain the individual's privacy.

Members of the MDT should all sign confidentiality agreements and a memorandum of understanding. The memorandum will allow the agencies to exchange

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<sup>338</sup> Stevan Weine, John Cohen, and David Brannegan, "Moving Beyond Motive-Based Categories of Targeted Violence" (technical report, Argonne National Lab, 2015), 11–12, <https://doi.org/10.2172/1224067>.

<sup>339</sup> Alathari et al., "Enhancing School Safety," 7.

<sup>340</sup> Alathari et al., 4.

information and the confidentiality agreements will protect individuals' information from being leaked to those who are not involved with the disengagement.

### **3. Centralized Reporting Center**

An essential part of the intervention program should be a reporting mechanism for anyone who observes alarming behavior.<sup>341</sup> The program should establish an anonymous system for people to report the behavior to a centralized intake office for the MDT. It is important, however, that this system is for reporting only and that subjects are not criminalized or labeled as under investigation. Rather, the MDT should determine if the individual needs social or mental health services; the process will be managed in the pre-criminal stage and handled appropriately.<sup>342</sup>

Additionally, law enforcement should provide information about subjects they are no longer criminally investigating but who may still espouse a violent extremist ideology. The prior subjects can be referred to the centralized reporting center, where law enforcement can provide the information that has been gathered throughout the investigation.

### **4. Assessing the Risk**

The intervention process is a critical step in preventing violent extremism.<sup>343</sup> Two options for risk assessments are the VERA-2R model and NTAC school safety threat assessment model. Combining these tools—particularly their indicators for risk—can provide the risk assessors with more behavior data sets. When doing so, however, it is essential to differentiate between criminal and social behaviors that point to risk.<sup>344</sup> The combined assessment can provide inside information about the concerns of a vulnerable

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<sup>341</sup> Hughes, "Islamic State."

<sup>342</sup> National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, *Countering Violent Extremism through Public Health Practice* (Washington, DC: National Academies, 2017), 37, <https://doi.org/10.17226/24638>.

<sup>343</sup> National Academies, 45.

<sup>344</sup> RTI International, "Countering Violent Extremism," 6.

individual, which can help the MDT determine how to disengage that individual from a path to violent extremism.

Because there are many different causes of violent extremism, each individual may display different signs. Once an individual is identified, the members of the MDT should develop a personalized disengagement plan. The members of the MDT should maintain the management plan until the individual is no longer a concern to the panel and, more importantly, society. An important consideration is if an individual is threatening violent behavior or has immediate access to a weapon; if such peril is involved, law enforcement should be immediately notified.<sup>345</sup> Otherwise—if the MDT does not believe there is imminent danger—the MDT panel can determine the best way to approach the individual.

Since the individual is being referred to the program in a pre-criminal space, the MDT will also need to select a member to initially contact the individual and attempt to gain his or her voluntary cooperation. When building the intervention plan, each member of the MDT should evaluate the behavior indicators from his or her professional expertise to avoid redundant measures.<sup>346</sup>

## **5. Delivering the Message**

To better support tailored disengagement programs, the public should be better educated about the MDT program and its objectives. Both the public along and the program’s stakeholders should also understand the different behavioral signs that might identify an individual who is going down a path to violent extremism. This is particularly important because, at times, there is a negative connotation when law enforcement is operating in the non-criminal space. The agencies involved should build on the existing relationships between members of the MDT and the community when explaining the program. Such relationships help the public become receptive to the program based on existing trust and prior history.

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<sup>345</sup> Alathari et al., “Enhancing School Safety,” 6.

<sup>346</sup> “Mutually Reinforcing Activities,” Collaboration for Impact, accessed July 17, 2018, <http://www.collaborationforimpact.com/collective-impact/mutually-reinforcing-activities/>.



## C. CONCLUSION

The path to violent extremism is different for every individual. As a nation, we must develop methods for disrupting this non-linear threat of homegrown violent extremism. Arresting and charging an individual might not be a viable option when dealing with wanna-be terrorists or extremists, particularly if the individual's actions never rise to the level of prosecution. Law enforcement agencies hold a misconception that they can arrest their way out of a solution. Such practices are “not only ineffective but ultimately [do] more harm than good as made evident by the community's lack of trust in the department.”<sup>347</sup>

In 2013, the Los Angeles Police Department, in partnership with the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department, U.S. Attorney's office, DHS, and the FBI, began a law enforcement–led CVE intervention program called “Recognizing Extremist Network Early Warnings” (RENEW).<sup>348</sup> In October 2017, the program was renamed “Providing Alternatives to Hinder Extremism” (PATHE). The PATHE program aims to address the wide spectrum of violent extremism and not follow current myopic CVE programs.<sup>349</sup> In 2017, the program identified an individual who was making bomb threats and the MDT's mental health professionals determined that the individual suffered from schizophrenia. The members were then able to provide the individual with the appropriate treatment and no criminal charges were made. Deputy Chief Horace Frank stated, “Sometimes putting an individual like this in jail doesn't address the long-term issue.”<sup>350</sup>

The broad-based community engagement tactic is not the only option available for combating violent extremism; at times, encouraging community reporting has proven to be polarizing. Minority communities have felt as if they are being targeted and advocacy

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<sup>347</sup> National Academies, *Countering Violent Extremism*, 38.

<sup>348</sup> “CVE Lexicon,” Brennan Center for Justice, accessed August 21, 2018, [https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/CVE%20Chart%20Lexicon\\_final.pdf](https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/CVE%20Chart%20Lexicon_final.pdf).

<sup>349</sup> Lolita Lopez and Philip Drechsler, “LAPD Program Prevents Acts of Terrorism,” NBC Los Angeles, October 13, 2017, <http://www.nbclosangeles.com/news/local/LAPD-PATHE-program-alternatives-preventing-terrorism-450714453.html>.

<sup>350</sup> Lopez and Drechsler.

groups have expressed feelings of persecution and privacy violation. Due to civil liberties and legal constraints, any individual identified by an MDT does not have to cooperate with law enforcement; however, an attempt to encourage the individual to cooperate might be effective. The individualized approach may also welcome assistance from the people who are close to the subject, such as concerned, friends, family members, or community and religious leaders.

The assessment phase must be conducted by professionals who are familiar with the different components of violent extremism. This will provide the MDT with an in-depth behavior view and appropriate disengagement strategies. Another benefit of the individualized approach is the ability to measure the value of disengagement programs. Currently, there is no effective way to measure successes and failures of CVE programs; however, a targeted approach can provide an accurate measurement based on the individual's capability to disengage from a violent ideology after intervention.

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