The great moving *countering violent extremism* show:
An ethnography of CVE in the Canadian context

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Abstract

My dissertation critically examines through ethnographic fieldwork the rise of countering violent extremism [CVE] programs in Canada. CVE is an offshoot of counter-terrorism, with programs first taking hold in the mid-2000s following 'homegrown terrorism' incidents in Madrid and London. CVE is based on the premise that a 'radicalization process' precedes terrorism. This allows for security and civil society-based interventions in the 'pre-crime' space to interrupt terrorism before it happens. The most thorough and controversial example of this is the UK's Prevent strategy, which legally mandates human services professionals to refer individuals showing signs of 'radicalization'. In Canada, no such duty exists, though its national strategy nonetheless aims to harness 'all of society' toward preventing violent extremism, enlisting the cooperation of teachers, artists, psychologists, social workers along with actors in the private sector.

My study is not about how individuals turn to 'violent extremism' or 'radicalization' but rather about examining that edifices that have created to respond to these perceived problems The implications of CVE as an 'all of society' endeavour are manifold, particularly as the scope of CVE expands beyond 'Islamism' toward preventing 'all types' of violent extremism, most recently on right-wing groups and violence against racial, ethnic, and gender minorities. Broadly, my research attempts to conceive of the implications of this expansion. What drives CVE's growth in the face of sustained criticism over its deleterious impacts on Muslim communities? How do practitioners in CVE align their interests with the cause? What social functions does CVE take on? Moreover, can boundaries even be drawn around what constitutes CVE?

My study draws on interviews with 46 CVE practitioners and participant observation over a three-year period (2018-2020) with CVE entities operating in Canada. My findings indicate how an absence of knowledge over how to conduct CVE propels its encroachment into ever more diverse areas of social life. The paradigm operationalizes 'uncertainty' to enroll actors with diverse interests and foster partnerships with communities including those (racialized, Indigenous, LGBTQ) that have had fraught relationships with security institutions.

In Chapter 1 - Searching for the CVE space I discuss my immersion in CVE and the type of fieldwork activities conducted. I also attempt to define my research object, outlining how CVE comprises a field of practice, a paradigm, a moral-social *imperative*, and lastly a *space.* Chapters 2 and 3 historicize CVE's contemporary presence and disturb common understandings of its origins. I critique the explanation of CVE's rise as *a necessary and spontaneous reaction* to evolving security threats to understand it as an outcome of performative security knowledge, where new security threats are discursively created rather than responded to. Chapters 4 and 5 focus on my fieldwork experience, examining how actors 'enroll' in the CVE cause through the open-ended, *speculative* quality of its activities. A distinction emerged with Muslim-identifying CVE practitioners, whose motivations to represent their communities in often hostile institutions and reduce the harm of CVE practices were typified by the repeated phrase "if you're not at the table, you're on the menu". In the conclusion chapter I connect the varying threads of preceding analysis and what they portend for CVE's effects on societies. This includes examining how CVE's

efforts to redirect political grievances toward 'pro-social' ends potentially disempowers social justice movements, reinforcing state hegemony and existing power inequities.

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AIVD	Netherlands' General Intelligence and Security Service
AVE	Against Violent Extremism network
CACP	Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police
CLSC	Centres locaux de services communitaires (Québec)
CPN-PREV	Canadian Practitioners Network for the Prevention of Radicalization and Extremist Violence
CPRLV	Centre for the Prevention of Radicalization Leading to Violence (Montréal, Québec)
CR	Counter-radicalization
CRV	Countering radicalization to violence
CSTPV	Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence (University of St. Andrews, Scotland)
CVE	Countering violent extremism
CSIS	Canadian Security Intelligence Service
CTIO	Counter-terrorism Information Officer
EGVR	European Union Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation
FOCUS	Furthering Our Community by Uniting Services (Toronto)
GIRDS	German Institute on Radicalization and De-radicalization Studies
INSET	Integrated National Security Enforcement Team) Royal Canadian Mounted Police
ISD	Institute for Strategic Dialogue
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
MERIT	Multiagency Early Risk Intervention Tables (Ottawa)
MGEIP	UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development
NYPD	New York Police Department
OPV	Organization for the Prevention of Violence (Edmonton)
PRAC	Program on prevention, rehabilitation, post-release care – Saudi Arabia
PVE	Preventing Violent Extremism
RAN	Radicalisation Awareness Network, European Union
RAPS	Recherche et Action sur les Polarisations Sociales
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
RWE	Right-wing extremism
UK	United Kingdom
UNESCO-PREV	UNESCO Chair on the Prevention of Radicalization and Violent Extremism (United Nations)
US	United States of America

Chapter 1: Introduction – searching for the CVE space

"It's a three headed monster. It just takes one person to nix something."

It was late afternoon in a near empty conference room. Jasmine was drawing out the various components of Edmonton Resiliency, a municipally-based countering violent extremism initiative, on a whiteboard while I rapidly took notes. Written at the top with an arrow pointing down and back was "Public Safety Canada" the primary funder and reporting recipient. At the bottom of the diagram was a list of local social service and community organizations the project intended to reach through its engagement efforts. In the centre was a triangle with arrows flowing in multiple directions, indicating the Resiliency project's "three headed" executive comprised of municipal administration, the Edmonton Police Service, and an upstart non-profit entity specializing in CVE called the Organization for the Prevention of Violence [OPV].

Jasmine explained her role in leading public engagement efforts with local service providers and community organizations. "We find that there's a lack of knowledge and awareness of what is radicalization? What is violent extremism? What are the indicators?", she described of their efforts, "we set up to try to ask people these questions, and more importantly, to ask 'what can *you*, as a social service provider, as a youth worker, a case worker, do in this pre-criminal space?'" Jasmine's comment that "it takes one person to nix something" was in reference to a pilot training workshop she would be leading at the end of the week. I had planned to attend this event as part of my fieldwork but had my invitation revoked (without explanation) days before arriving in Edmonton. As we walked out of the conference room, Jasmine suggested that the decision likely had to do with the sensitivity that leadership felt around the project,

which to develop 'community resilience' to violent extremism required buy-in across multiple sectors:

> A lot of this is trust building, you know? We are cognizant that other CVE programs have been very police heavy, very investigatory and surveillance based. In order to avoid stigmatization, we need to be able to have a perspective from everyone.

As we entered the elevator, Jasmine and I ran into her colleague, Rebecca. "Are you excited for Friday?" the colleague asked Jasmine, "it looks like a good turnout … about 40 coming, and still some on the fence". Jasmine introduced us and informed Rebecca that we had a scheduled interview the following day.

"Oh, I don't know what I'll be able to add", Rebecca replied.

A social worker by trade, Rebecca was serving on the executive for the Resiliency project, one of several government and social services employees that had taken on new responsibilities through the project in addition to their usual work. In our interview the next day, Rebecca quipped on the evolution of her job with laughter "I am a social worker, but sometimes I don't really feel like it anymore".

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

This is an ethnographic study of 'Countering Violent Extremism' [CVE] in Canada, engaging with actors in a sub-area of counter-terrorism that has increasingly insinuated itself in the societal life of many countries. However, my project did not start out this way. When I began, I did not know what CVE was, or that multi-agency, 'community resilience' based projects such as Edmonton Resiliency existed. I had initially set out to investigate 'homegrown terrorism', a term which rose to prominence in 2014 due to

incidents of Canadians being killed by individuals inspired by 'Islamist extremism'[1] along with reports of Canadian 'foreign fighters' with ISIS in the Syrian war. My research at the time on media coverage of Somali Canadian youth (Millett, 2014) began finding that dominant discourses that associated this population with gang violence (e.g., D'Aliesio, 2014; Poisson, 2014) began to be supplemented with stories over Somali youth being at risk of jihadist 'homegrown terror' (e.g., Bell, 2014). I became concerned about how the *mounting societal reaction*[2] to this new theme of 'homegrown terror' heightened the 'supra-visibility' (Perry, 2015) of Muslim communities in general, further placing them at the interstices of crime control and national security campaigns. My concerns increased when a Somali Canadian man, Mohamed Hersi, was sentenced to 10 years in prison for "attempting to participate in terrorist activity abroad" despite having no proven link to a terrorist entity.[3] I began to think more about the assumptions

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[1] This involved the death of Corporal Nathan Cirillo in a shooting incident on 22 October, otherwise known as the Parliament Hill attack, and the killing of Warrant officer Patrice Vincent in a vehicle attack by on the previous day in St-Jean-sur-Richelieu. The incidents are widely considered as the first successful acts of 'homegrown terrorism' on Canadian soil.

[2] On top of intense news media attention, Canada's federal government responded swiftly to 'homegrown terrorism', passing legislation (Bill C-51) that overhauled Canada's terrorism laws. It also tabled several legislative amendments that sought to curtail the citizenship rights of dual nationals, including a proposed 'terror tourism' ban that limits the countries Canadians are allowed to travel to. There were other proposed laws by the governing Conservative party during the 2015 federal election undergirded by fears of the intrinsic terrorist risk carried by Muslims. This included a proposal to ban face coverings during Oath of Citizenship ceremonies (as well as the government's attempt to prevent one woman, Zunera Ishaq, from covering her face for the swearing-in ceremony), and the campaign promise of an RCMP tip-line available for Canadians to report 'barbaric cultural practices'.

[3] Hersi was arrested at Toronto's Pearson International Airport before for attempting to join Al-Shabaab, though Hersi maintained that he was travelling to Cairo to study Arabic. His defence attorney argued, in vain, that Hersi had been a victim of entrapment by Toronto police and RCMP, stating that the conviction amounted to a "thought crime". The prosecution alleged that Hersi told an undercover cop that has was going to join Al-Shabaab. Hersi countered by stating that the undercover officer expressed wanting to join the organization and was asking Hersi for advice. As reported in Shepard (2014) in the *Toronto Star,* the case ultimately pitted the credibility of Hersi versus the undercover officer, with the jury deciding in favour of the latter. The 10-year sentence was described

that undergirded 'homegrown terrorism', including how it had seemingly re-energized the security campaigns that originated out of the 'War on Terror', albeit through a more domestic, yet still racist and orientalist lens.

My investigation into state-media deployments of 'homegrown terrorism' (e.g., Millett, 2020) led to my encounter with 'radicalization', a concept seemingly born from concern over the potential for Muslim citizens to carry out attacks within Western countries. I learned that a new subfield of counter-terrorism aimed at countering 'radicalization' and 'violent extremism' had been developing in Europe since the mid-2000s, and that multi-sector projects in this vein were being launched in Canada including through the newly formed Centre for the Prevention of Radicalization Leading to Violence [CPRLV] in Montréal. In 2018 I began making contacts with the CPRLV and other Canadian entities involved in CVE, leading to what amounted to a 3-year span of fieldwork attempting to locate, understand, and interpret the meaning of this rapidly developing global phenomenon. It is important to establish here that mine is not an investigation on why people turn to 'violent extremism' or on what steps governments ought to take to curb 'radicalization' (though I may add insights into these matters). My study is not *about* 'violent extremism' and 'radicalization' but rather the edifices that societies have created to respond to these perceived problems. It is a sociological exploration of the phenomenon (sometimes) called CVE, the reasons for its contemporary presence, the functions it serves and effects it has in contemporary societies like Canada.

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in news media as "precedent-setting" and noted by the RCMP as "a significant milestone" (Shephard, 2014).

The 'story of CVE' in brief

Before detailing my primary research questions and methods of analysis, I will provide a brief description of what CVE 'is' and how it developed in Canada (if only to deconstruct it later). *Countering violent extremism,* which is also called 'counter-radicalization' (CR), 'countering radicalization-to-violence' (CRV), and 'preventing violent extremism' (PVE), denotes efforts to prevent or pre-empt terrorism through a variety of 'soft' measures involving state, civil society, and community-based actors. Gaining traction in the mid-2000s, CVE marked a break from coercive, military-oriented responses of the 'War on Terror', moving counter-terrorism efforts *inward* toward domestic populations (read: Muslim communities) deemed vulnerable to the appeals of terrorism, and *forward* by working with potential future terrorists in the 'pre-crime' space. This is based on the premise that a 'radicalization process' precedes terrorism – whereby non-radical or non-violent people come to adopt "extremist belief systems" and a willingness to use violence to promote a political cause[4] – and a commitment to intervening before 'radicalization' leads to violence. Strategies include training police and human services professionals on detecting 'signs' of radicalization and referring individuals to CVE programs; intervention cases where teams assess 'vulnerability' and 'protective' factors in a referral's cognitive makeup and social milieu to conduct one-on-one counselling (this is typically called *secondary prevention*); and awareness- and resilience-building efforts across the entire population (i.e., *primary prevention*) which

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[4] This definition of 'radicalization' is adapted from a presentation slide "what is violent radicalization" obtained from the CPRLV during their open house training session on 6 February 2019.

aim at countering 'extremist rhetoric', addressing stereotypes and discrimination, and

building social cohesion.[5]
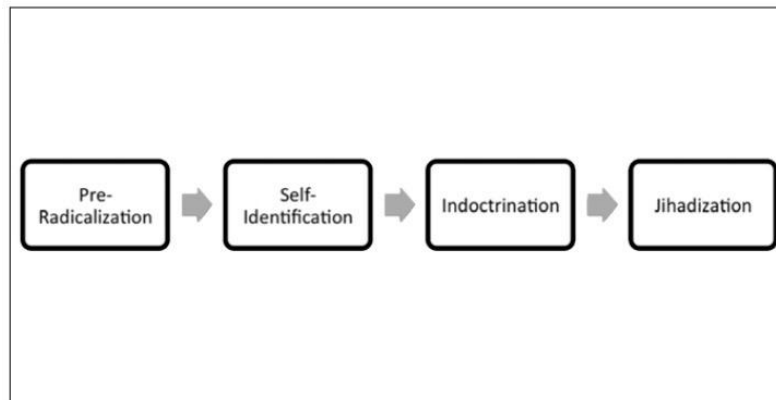
Fig I. The "NYPD Model of Jihadization" created by Silber and Bhatt (obtained
from Borum 2011, p. 41).

One of the first notable CVE projects is the UK's Prevent Strategy, a project launched in

2007 and delivered by the Home Office and two other government agencies. It remains

the paradigmatic example of CVE and has the most literature dedicated to it.[6] Prevent

initially focused on community policing and engagement activities with Muslim

community organizations, looking to develop 'counter-narratives' to al-Qaeda and

promote 'shared values' (O'Toole et al., 2016). Later iterations of Prevent centralized

operations to focus more on extremist ideologies across the broader population, leading

to the Prevent Duty in 2015, an unprecedented policy that mandates professionals in

health, education, and social services to report signs of 'radicalization' among their

clientele to program authorities. Another influential CVE project was developed by the

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[5] A final form of CVE is *tertiary prevention* or 'de-radicalization', which attempts to rehabilitate and
reintegrate individuals who have committed offenses. This was a less reported in my data.
[6] Detailed, critical accounts of Prevent are offered in Winter, et al. (2022); Sweid (2020), Busher &
Jerome (2020), Younis & Jadhav (2020; 2019), Abbas (2019); Skoczylis & Andrews (2019), Stanley,
Guru & Coppock (2017); Ragazzi (2017); Heath-Kelly (2017; 2013); O'Toole et al. (2016); Qureshi
(2015); O'Toole, DeHanas, & Modood (2012), and Kundnani (2009).

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City of Amsterdam. It is thought to have contained three components[7]: a Radicalization

Information Management system linking schools, law enforcement, and public services

on indicators of 'radicalization' among the Muslim population; a training program for

non-governmental personnel on spotting 'radicalization'; and a multi-agency Case

Council for developing intervention strategies for referred individuals (Kundnani &

Hayes, 2018, p. 6). Like the UK plan, Amsterdam's emphasized "social cohesion",

introducing programming to address the perceived alienation young Muslims felt from

Dutch identity. This led to activities promoting cultural awareness and integration and

partnerships between the city and local mosques to combat extremist expressions

(Slootman & Tillie 2006, p. 129).[8]

These state- and city-led multi-agency CVE projects would be emulated, first

across Europe in the late 2000s and then transnationally over the next decade. Large

CVE-specific organizations emerged that sit at arms-length from states and conduct

work in different countries. This includes the Institute for Strategic Dialogue [ISD] in

the UK, Hedayeh in United Arab Emirates, and other state-based and supranational

entities like GIRDS [German Institute on Radicalization and De-radicalization Studies],

the EU's Radicalization Awareness Network [RAN], as well as private and social

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[7] Information on Amsterdam's CVE program is scarce and sometimes contradictory. Most knowledge is drawn from a single report by Colin Mellis, a policy advisor on the program, entitled *Amsterdam and Radicalization: The Municipal Approach*, which is no longer available. Authors provide differing start dates for the program (or make no mention of start dates) and the bodies established under this program are given different names (e.g., Demant & De Graff, 2011; Kundnani & Hayes, 2018; Vermeulen, 2018).

[8] In this vein, the City of Amsterdam co-financed of a television soap opera series, *West Side Soap*, that depicted the lives of four fictional families from Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese and Dutch backgrounds living on the same street in west Amsterdam (van Heelsum & Vermeulen, 2018, p. 171). The series emphasized interconnectedness and cultural exploration while aiming to address issues with prejudice and discrimination.

enterprise-based actors like Jigsaw (founded by Google) and Moonshot CVE. With the support of these entities, along with state institutions like the U.S. Institute of Peace, sub-networks have been developed which connect and provide support to ground-level practitioners and operators of municipal and national programs. These include the RESOLVE Network, Against Violent Extremism network [AVE], VOX-Pol, Strong Cities Network [SCN], and Extreme Dialogue.[9] Through this web of partnerships, CVE has continued to expand its global reach, with research from Caitlin Ambrozik finding existence of CVE programming in at least 84 countries as of 2017, based on U.S. State Department data (Ambrozik, 2019). It was thus common for me to hear practitioner interviewees describe that "an industry" had developed around the problem of 'violent extremism'.

The Canada context

Canada is considered a late adopter of CVE (McCoy, Jones & Hastings, 2021) however its actors have quickly emerged to play a prominent role globally. Research on the "radicalization of home-grown Islamic extremists" was undertaken by Canada's spy agency, CSIS, beginning in 2005 and in 2008 the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police sent a 'Counter-Radicalization Study Group' to the UK to study the Prevent Strategy and meet with program representatives (CACP, 2008).[10] Research on

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[9] To give a sense of the multisector, transnational partnerships that ensue is the example of Extreme Dialogue, which creates educational resources on 'violent extremism'. Its sponsors and partners include the European Commission, Public Safety Canada, UK Government Home Office, and Institute for Strategic Dialogue, as well as foundations in Germany and Hungary.

[10] Interestingly, the 'Counter-Radicalization Study Group' found that the Prevent strategy's "focus on a specific ethno-cultural community [i.e., Muslim-majority expat communities] is at odds with Canada's long-standing approach to multiculturalism and community engagement." The report argued that a Canadian radicalization prevention strategy "should be applicable to Canadian society as a whole and not to any single religious, ethnic or cultural constituency (CACP, 2008, p. 4).

'radicalization' was also undertaken by the RCMP in its 2009 report *Radicalization: A guide for the perplexed.* The report called for "the development of meaningful public policy aimed at addressing radicalization" (RCMP, 2009, pp. 4).[11] However, a federal policy would not materialize for nearly a decade when Public Safety Canada released its *National Strategy on Countering Radicalization to Violence* in late 2018. What transpired in between has been described as an "isolated", "ad hoc", patchwork of initiatives mainly involving training police to recognize radicalization 'indicators' during frontline duty (McCoy, Jones & Hastings, 2021; Monaghan & Molnar, 2016).

Canada's CVE efforts reached a more mature level in 2015 with the launch of the Québec government's plan d'action *La radicalisation au Québec, Agir, prévenir, détecter et vivre ensemble* which outlined 59 measures across eight ministries (including immigration, diversity and inclusion, health and social services, and education). The plan made radicalization training available to social services personnel and contained a section, *vivre ensemble,* promoting respect for diversity and for building positive identity association with Québec among ethnic minorities (Gouvernment de Québec, 2015). By the release of the *National Strategy* in 2018, Canada had a robust collection of CVE projects and entities in existence. In Québec this includes the Centre for the Prevention of Radicalization Leading to Violence (CPRLV), a nonprofit organization co-funded by

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[11] Police research in this period was centered on understanding the 'Toronto 18' bomb plot. This involved a series of raids by CSIS and RCMP against a so-called terrorist cell of young people from Muslim backgrounds thought to be planning al-Qaeda-inspired attacks on prominent targets in Toronto and Ottawa. The case was depicted in media and political circles as marking the 'arrival of homegrown terrorism' in Canada (CACP, 2008) but elicited controversy in part because of the role of Mubin Shaikh, a 'former extremist' who was paid by the RCMP to infiltrate the group and was accused by defence counsel of entrapping the youth. This was due to his role in running a 'terrorist training camp', delivering incendiary political sermons, and purchasing and teaching them to use firearms. Ontario's Superior Court ruled in 2010 that the youth would have committed the offense with or without Shaikh's involvement (see Friscolanti, 2012).

the City of Montréal and Government of Québec. The CPRLV produces research on 'radicalization', offers training, and conducts psycho-social interventions, notably containing a 'hotline' where members of the public can seek counsel on potentially radicalized people. Other prominent Québec CVE entities include the Canadian Practitioners Network for the Prevention of Radicalization and Extremist Violence (CPN-PREV) and Recherche et Action sur les Polarisations Sociales (RAPS). There are also 'clinical teams' of psycho-social councillors installed to conduct CVE interventions in Québec's CLSC health centres in Montréal, Sherbrooke, Laval, Gatineau and Québec City. These initiatives are joined by other prominent CVE entities such as the Organization for the Prevention of Violence (OPV) in Edmonton and Re-direct in Calgary. As of this writing, there are several multi-agency CVE projects being implemented across Canadian cities. This includes the Edmonton Resiliency project, SHIFT in British Columbia, the MERIT and Re-Set projects in Ottawa, and FOCUS in Toronto. These municipally based projects employ 'hub models' derived from public health and crime prevention strategies, which places 'at the table' governments, cultural organizations, charities like YMCA and United Way, police agencies, schools, and other human services in a collective effort to address cases of 'radicalization' and build 'community resilience' (McCoy, Jones & Hastings, 2021; Thompson & Bucerius, 2020). Canada's plan at the federal level has largely centred on advising and providing funding supporting to these independent CVE projects through its *National Strategy,* the Canada Centre for Community Engagement and Prevention of Violence [Canada Centre], Public Safety Community Resilience Fund, and National Expert Committee on Countering Radicalization to Violence.

Canada has taken a more 'hands-off' approach to CVE in comparison to places like the UK and its Prevent Strategy.[12] Nonetheless, Canada has quickly gone from 'policy taker' to 'policy maker' in a few short years (McCoy, Jones & Hastings, 2021). The country has nurtured CVE nationally and abroad through government funding arms and entities such as the OPV and the CPRLV have become global exporters in CVE research and 'best practice'.[13] Canadian organizations carry out CVE training and implementation in other countries, and through grants like the Public Safety community resilience fund, foreign entities access funding to conduct projects in Canada. Canada's CVE network is embedded within, and contributes to, a global CVE ecosystem, which enlists a wide body of actors that bridge different spheres of society and government.

Critiques, perseverance, evolution

Criticisms of CVE began to arise not long after the first state-led programs came into operation, occurring in academia (including critical terrorism studies), civil liberties and Muslim advocacy groups, and also within the field of terrorism and radicalization research itself. Part of what is significant to my study is CVE's ability to avert or absorb these criticisms and continue to expand and evolve.

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[12] The orientation of the federal government toward CVE has been described in my discussions with experienced practitioners as "wanting to show that it's doing something about it [radicalization and violent extremism] without being so involved that they are prone to criticism for its negative externalities" (Marc interview, March 2019).

[13] It is important to note that this fledgling 'CVE scene' in Canada operates concurrently with older counter-terrorism practices at the level of CSIS, RCMP and in the Criminal Code of Canada that are a legacy of the 2002 *Anti-terrorism Act* and amendments such as in Bill C-51. This includes peace bonds (protection orders issued by judges to individuals deemed to be a high-risk threat of committing a terrorism offense), investigative hearings, and electronic surveillance (Ahmad & Monaghan, 2020).

In research, the concept of 'radicalization' has been repeatedly criticized for its vague definition, and its reliance upon other vague and subjectively applied terms such as 'terrorism' and 'extremism' (Sedgwick, 2010; Kundnani, 2012). Stage models of the radicalization process [e.g., Fig 1] lack empirical support and are accused of portraying a simplistic "conveyor belt" pathway to violence (Schmid, 2013). Meanwhile, the supposed drivers of 'radicalization' (i.e., perceived injustice, social isolation, desire for identity and belonging) have been criticized both for being too broadly applicable, and in other cases for pathologizing benign aspects of Muslim peoples' lives such as wearing a hijab or attending a mosque as 'signs of radicalization'. The research-at-large has been criticized for religious and orientalist biases and for emphasizing the individual at the expense of wider social circumstances (Sedgwick, 2010; Kundnani, 2012) with some (e.g., Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010) calling into question whether the field has produced any scientifically verifiable findings.

Criticism has naturally extended to the efficacy and impacts of CVE programs. Problems raised include the difficulty in identifying those 'vulnerable' to radicalization, leading to false positives, and the absence of clear criteria for measuring whether CVE programs work. Questions over the effectiveness of CVE programs are further compounded by evidence that CVE can have counter-productive effects (e.g., Abbas, 2019; Parker & Lindekilde, 2020; Taylor, 2020). The detrimental effects of CVE efforts include extending logics and practices of security into the domains of health, education and social services provision (e.g., Durodie, 2016; Ragazzi, 2017) and most significantly, for furthering the image of Muslim diasporas as 'suspect communities' in the West (Pantazis & Pemberton, 2009; Breen-Smyth, 2014). As a scheme that aims to prevent "Islamist" terrorism by engaging people presently uninvolved in it (Onursal &

Kirkpatrick, 2021) CVE practices particularly in the UK with Prevent, are argued to have fundamentally altered the state's relationship with Muslim populations, resulting in increased stigmatization, and securitization (Ahmad, 2020; Kundnani, 2012) opening Muslim-identifying or Muslim-passing individuals to a wide range of interventions ranging from surveillance and policing, on one hand to community cohesion and social programming, on the other (Martin, 2014). CVE policies are thus charged with suppressing Muslim identity and alternative worldviews, and for justifying racial profiling and cultural discrimination (e.g., Coolsaet, 2016; Awan, Hoskins & O'Loughlin, 2011; Lynch, 2013; Qureshi, 2015; Monaghan & Molnar, 2016). These findings are particularly striking since CVE ostensibly requires 'buy-in' from these communities, soliciting their participation in its execution. Studies out of the UK note that young Muslims have been referred in disproportionate numbers via the Prevent Duty. The high attrition rates for these referrals suggest many are being targeted based on orientalist misperceptions and anti-Muslim biases (Thomas, 2020).

In sum, CVE has been charged of being on shaky theoretical grounding while facing the dilemma of securitizing Muslim communities and being unable to prove that it works. These problems are not lost within its community of scholars (as well as within my interview data as Chapter 4 shows). Rik Coolsaet, a member of the first EU Expert Group on Violent Radicalization, surmised in 2016 that radicalization "didn't live up to expectations" while acknowledging the "unintended adverse consequences" CVE policies have for Muslims in the West (Coolsaet, 2016, p. 4). At the same time, Coolsaet mused that the paradigm is "too entrenched in political and bureaucratic discourse to be easily jettisoned" (p. 46). Ensuing years have shown this assertion to be correct. Criticism has yet to slow the momentum of CVE research and programming, and what

has been described as a "failed discourse" (Githens-Mazer & Lambert, 2010) continues

to permeate new areas of governance and touches wider target populations. Indeed, CVE

programs today no longer exclusively focus on so-called Islamist extremism, but now

aim to address forms of 'right-wing extremism' and hate-based violence. The history of

radicalization research is known for containing anecdotal 'non-Muslim' examples of

extremism to suggest that the targets were never intended to be just Muslim (Monaghan

& Molnar, 2016). However, CVE efforts on the far-right have moved from platitudes to

concrete action, particularly in the wake of the deadly mosque shootings in Christchurch,

New Zealand in 2019. 'Violent extremism', once synonymous with 'Islamism', is now

conceived in the literature as a 'global phenomenon' of overlapping illiberal ideologies

that encompasses acts of terrorism, hate crimes, and forms of lone actor violence (e.g.,

Hamm & Spaaij, 2017; Berger, 2018). My research finds Canadian CVE entities

incorporating 'hate crimes and incidents' in their mandates with the field at large

adapting its models and methods to accommodate 'radicalization' in multiple contexts

based on the premise that a "similar trajectory, process, vulnerabilities" underlies all

types of non-state, lone-actor or group-led violence.[14] These gestures and the work

behind them must be qualified by acknowledging that CVE efforts on Islamic extremism

have hardly gone away, nor has state counter-terrorism surveillance of Muslim

community organizations dissipated. The logic that the development of extreme Islamic

beliefs is problematic and dangerous is still prevalent in CVE, leading to the conclusion

in Canada and elsewhere that Muslim communities remain the primary target of counter-

radicalization efforts (Ahmad, 2020; Thomas, 2020).

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[14] From my fieldnotes, based on a discussion with practitioners at the CPRLV during their open house training session on 6 February 2019.

To close this brief 'story': CVE and its key concepts 'radicalization' and 'violent extremism' went from being non-entities in the public consciousness and policy circles to becoming the preeminent means for which terrorism is understood and fought against. This has moved counter-terrorism toward a 'soft', more internal/domestic focus, going beyond the realm of policing and security and prior temporal confines to redirect *potential future* terrorists in the 'pre-crime' space. As Thomas Martin (2014) puts it in regard to the UK Prevent Strategy, this is "to act before the subjects of its interventions have even considered the possibility of committing an act of terrorism" (p. 64). Recently, CVE's aim has come 'full circle', from protecting Western societies from 'Islamist' violence toward also protecting Muslims from right-wing extremism and hate-based violence. This is the problematic I explore and critically reinterpret the meaning of, from the relative vantage point of Canada's 'network within a network'.

Central research questions

I am guided by four broad, overarching research questions, which are less directly answerable than they facilitate the direction of my inquiry:

(1) What is CVE?

Notwithstanding my above account, a central aspect my study involves grappling with the question of *what CVE is.* In the literature it has been described as a "language" (Kundnani & Hayes 2018) "framework" (Schmid, 2013), "paradigm" (Green & Proctor, 2016) and "policy theme" (Romaniuk, 2015) with adjectives often changing within a single text.[15] The titles it is given also differ, as noted by the interchangeable use of

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[15] An example of this is in a 2018 report on "The globalization of Countering Violent Extremism policies" by the Transnational Institute think tank. Its one-page foreword by UN Special Rapporteur

CVE, PVE, CRV and CR, and ambiguity persists over the meaning of its key concepts 'radicalization' and 'violent extremism' (Sedgwick, 2010; Schultz, Bucerius, & Haggerty, 2021).

These differences over language hint at the challenge of addressing CVE as an empirical object. It was difficult, on one hand, to draw clear boundaries between CVE and longer-standing counter-terrorism efforts in the security realm, and on the other hand, to decipher "upstream" CVE measures (Stephens, Sieckelinck, & Boutellier, 2021) in public health, education, and social work from activities that routinely take place in these areas. The sense that CVE becomes enmeshed in a range of other practices led to difficulties in determining *who* carries out CVE work, as Chapter 4 of my dissertation attests. Many CVE practitioners wear 'multiple hats' while others were reticent to speak or uncertain of what position they occupy (or even if they occupy a position in CVE). My study thus consistently avoids taking CVE's definition at face value, and the research design has in large part been vested in, as the title of this Introduction indicates, 'searching for the CVE space'.

To set up my investigation, later in this Introduction I outline 4 ways that I conceive of CVE operating, which establishes the dimensions of *what* I study and how I employ the terminology. These are (1) CVE as a paradigm; (2) a CVE field of practice; (3) a moral-social CVE imperative, and (4) CVE as a 'space'. Ultimately, as the title of my dissertation suggests, *what CVE is* remains unsettled, due to propensity to evolve and

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Fionnuala Ní Aoláin describes CVE variously as a "language", "concept", "vocabulary", "discourse and set of normative standards", while also referring to "the field of CVE" (Kundnani & Hayes, 2018, p. 2).

be shaped by the changing political landscape and of different networks in flux.[16]

Moreover, I investigate how actors operationalize its uncertainty to align CVE with the interests of recruited employees and partner agencies, and to the priorities of governments.

(2) How is CVE's existence and continued growth to be understood?

> "And what do you think is driving that narrative? CVE to start just eating up everything else… like that prevention space is now looking wider, wider, and wider and everything that's encompassing it… it's like, ok, this normally would not have been considered CVE or PVE, now *let's bring in basketball*, and *let's bring in hockey*… (laughter) What's the end goal of it?
>
> --Warsame, CVE interventions, Ontario

As the above passage indicates, many practitioners express astonishment over the speed and extent to which countering violent extremism has grown. My question here contains two parts, first, why CVE exists today and not in the past, and second, how does CVE expand and perpetuate itself considering the critiques that have been levelled against it? In other words, what is the contemporary presence, persistence and expansion of CVE emblematic of, and how can it be understood from a sociological perspective?

To expand on the <u>first part</u> of the question is to acknowledge that the problem of terrorism is at least as old as the modern nation-state, but that it is only since 2006 that CVE initiatives have formally existed. This includes the science of 'radicalization', which was not approached as a subject of scientific inquiry *in itself* prior to the mid

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[16] My project's title – 'great moving *countering violent extremism* show' – is a nod to Stuart Hall while illustrating my object of study's sense of constant motion, seemingly re-inventing itself in terms of what the radicalization problem is 'represented to be', approaches to 'solving' it, and in terms of the field's own self-presentation. It speaks to the challenges and also the intrigues of researching this topic.

2000s.[17] Why is terrorism dominantly understood and fought against is this way, now? Why is CVE deemed to be needed now but not in the past? Why does this problematization resonate today?
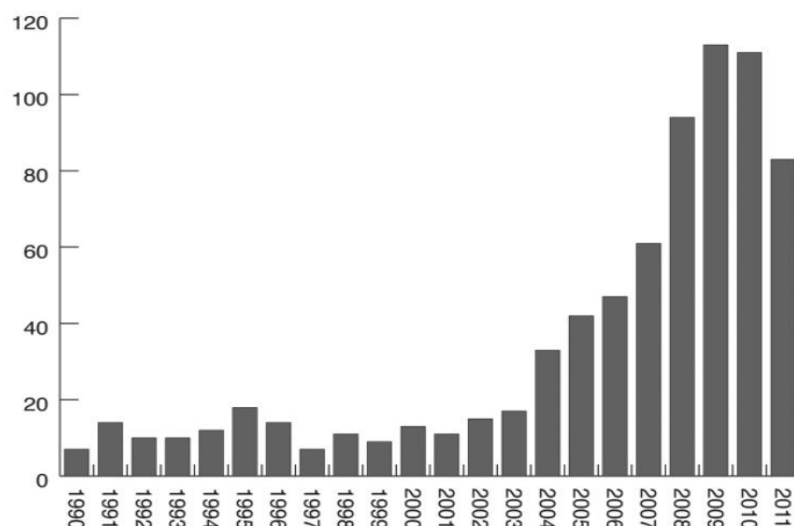
Fig II. Articles mentioning radicalization in peer reviewed journals from 1990-2011 (in Kundnani, 2012).

In addressing these questions, I critically interrogate the dominant discourse that CVE arose as a *spontaneous, necessary reaction* by Western political and security authorities to the unfolding danger of 'homegrown Islamist terrorism', developing in kind to respond to the evolving terrorist threat (e.g., Crone & Harrow, 2011; Blair & Panetta, 2016). Chapters 2 and 3 of my dissertation provide a challenge the logic of *spontaneous necessity* in their detailed examination of important antecedents to CVE in the years prior to its ascension in Europe.

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[17] Scholarship in previous decades employed 'radicalization' as an adjective or verb rather than a noun. The radicalization process was not the centre of inquiry, and radicalization was not associated with terrorism nor Islam. The tone toward radicalization was sometimes positive or at least agnostic, research focused on social movements rather than individuals, and macro-structural explanations were offered that use historical and comparative analysis (e.g., Apter, 1971, Rush, 1972, della Porta, 1995).

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The second part of this question explores the durability of CVE's concepts and practices against persistent criticism. As I note in chapters 4 and 5, criticisms of CVE's ineffectiveness and negative externalities were often shared and expanded upon by the actors that I interviewed. Yet CVE has largely been unhindered by this and has continued to expand and evolve. CVE initiatives are no longer the province of Western 'developed' countries, as programs have proliferated across the Global South through the endorsement by the UN, ASEAN, and other international bodies (Kundnani & Hayes, 2018; Ambrozik, 2019; Shanaah & Heath-Kelly, 2022). As I attest to above, the targets of CVE initiatives have also expanded beyond 'Islamist extremism' and 'risky' Muslim communities, and the practices used have redefined what counter-terrorism looks like, connecting it to an array of other state-, media-, expert-mediated social problems.

I approach this question as different points in the chapters that follow. In conceiving of CVE's growth curve, I engage with theories on neo-liberal risk and speculation (Konings, 2016; Amoore, 2013) and logics of 'preemption' (Massumi, 2015) which are seen to increasingly define how security practice is envisioned in 'post-normal times' (Sardar, Serra, & Jordan, 2019). In this sense, matters of CVE's ineffectiveness or detrimental impacts might prove secondary to the appeal of its *anticipatory* orientation as a means of acting in the present to secure uncertain futures. In my study, I also examine how CVE works to sustain and justify itself though ground-level practices and in the 'enrollment' (Callon & Law, 1982) of an increasingly diverse (and divided in aims) practitioner community. In examining the relationship between CVE activity around highly mediatized terrorism 'events' (Wagner-Pacifici, 2017), I also indicate how CVE's growth and continued ascension is anything but uniform or guaranteed.

(3) What is CVE's function in societies today?

The above two questions filter into a broader endeavour on *the social function of CVE and if (and how) it changes.* This is to delve beyond its normative 'function' to "disrupt and end violent extremism", as stated in the mission of UK-based organization Moonshot CVE.[18] In doing so, my intention is not to resurrect a structural-functionalist analysis. It is instead clear that interrogating the social function of CVE, and posing alternatives to it, has been implicit in most of the critical literature on CVE thus far. I will examine here a couple of prevalent cases.

It has been posited that CVE primarily serves to give the *impression* that states can prevent terrorism. Charlotte Heath-Kelly examines this through the role of the 'radicalization' concept, which renders a "linear narrative around the production of terrorism, making it accessible to problem-solving approaches" (Heath-Kelly, 2013, p. 395). This function was identified in interviews I had with two experienced practitioners in CVE:

> [I]it is my opinion that the political will to implement the 'radicalization' concept was to give the impression that they are actually able to intervene in the process. Because the War on Terror didn't work, and terrorism is very, you know, frightening, and gives the feeling that we cannot do anything, because it's like impossible to grasp. So, to spread the idea that politicians are able to prevent it is to substitute the word 'violent radicalization' for terrorism, because when you hear 'radicalization' you hear a process, and if there is a process, there is a way to intervene and stop the process (Micheline – 9 July 2019, emphasis mine).

A similar sentiment was expressed in by Marc, a CVE researcher in Québec, noting the success he had with 'radicalization' in boiling down the complexities of terrorism for policing and social services audiences: "it was something that they could catch onto,

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[18] Taken from screenshot of Moonshot CVE's homepage, 7 July 2019.

that's easy to understand, that's simple. They'd say 'We want to do that'". Heath-Kelly describes how this "illusion" of terrorism prevention contains a performative function, in that 'radicalization' discourse "performs a story about terrorism, and enables the performance of security around it" (2013, p. 401). In this performative role, critics have argued that CVE serves as a form of governmentality to construct "appropriate" and "non-threatening" Western Muslim political subjects (e.g., Qureshi, 2015; Ahmad, 2020). Health-Kelly argues the Prevent policies actively try to "induce specific types of conduct from British Muslim communities" in the process of securitizing them (2013, p. 396). This form of governmentality creates reciprocal functions, which Martin (2014) notes in the context of UK Prevent allows states to police the boundaries of national identity, suppressing of Muslim political subjectivities while normalizing and regenerating an unthreatening version of "Britishness" (pp. 63, 66, also see Winter et al., 2022). Martin concludes that acts of Prevent "are deeply political" (pp. 63-64) in that they curtail the scope of what it politically possible and who counts as politically able subjects.

This leads to a final, still emerging threshold of critique that considers CVE's function in larger hegemonic terms. More recent literature covering UK Prevent has begun to do this, albeit indirectly. Stanley, Guru & Coppock, in their ethnographic study on UK social workers tasked with performing CVE, ask near the end of their paper how CVE practices "reinforce Western hegemony in Gramscian terms" (2017, p. 484). Here they cast CVE's 'soft' counter-terrorism tactics such as instilling 'British values' as examples of "'predominance' gained through consent, 'popularisation', and diffusion, rather than through force" (p. 484). They note further that these efforts have "historical

resonance with colonial practices", raising Frantz Fanon's articulation of how colonizers in Africa had to suppress colonized populations through cultural and subjective dimensions as well as through openly coercive and violent means (Fanon, 1967). Winter et al. also recognize a hegemonic function in the teaching of 'British Values' as "universal moral values" in CVE efforts in schools, which they argue presents "the British political system and culture as the only acceptable model" (2022, p. 101). Skoczylis and Andrews (2019) draw this out further in arguing that Prevent "should be seen as part of the mission to create neoliberal subjects, who internalise specific ideas about democracy, participation, the market and the individual while rejecting more radical ideas or critiques of the state" (p. 352).

My study engages with and contributes to this theme by advancing it beyond the context of the UK Prevent Strategy and toward fuller consideration of CVE's paradigm shift toward 'right-wing extremism'. Inroads on the latter have also been made in recent literature by Younis and Jadhav (2019; 2020) and Winter et al. (2022) on UK Prevent, examining how newfound efforts against the far-right function as 'performative colourblindness', working to obscure racism and Islamophobia embedded in counter-terrorism as well as institutional racism within broader social policy. In the chapters that follow I examine CVE's function in several ways. Firstly, I compare the language around CVE's aims to important antecedents, such as the PRAC Strategy in Saudi Arabia, where objectives to "solidify the legitimacy of the ruling order" and "eliminate violent opposition" were clearly stated government objectives (Boucek, 2008, p. 4). I later examine European political responses in 2005-6 to 'homegrown terrorism' incidents in Madrid, Amsterdam, London, which led to CVE programs but also seemed

to function as a means to foster support for European continental integration. Later, in Chapter 5, I consider how CVE recruits participation across social divides by aligning the perceived interests of actors involved with those of CVE. This tends to *blur distinctions* (between social aims, ends, and actors in power relations). I consider how this pre-emptively redirects dissent toward 'pro-social' ends and leads to new and unusual alliances between security actors, activists, and minority communities. By interviewing racialized and Muslim-identifying practitioners, my work also extends to examine how the right-wing turn alters the relationship, in the Canada context, between its security apparatus and communities traditionally targeted and discriminated against by it. This is of added significance as CVE, and the security state more broadly, seek participation from cultural, political, sexual (etc.) minorities in the fight against RWE.

What began as an intuition in my initial fieldwork now appears incontrovertible: CVE functions to preserve the legitimacy of nation-states and of the broader 'rules-based international order', strengthening national values and identity, increasing public confidence in government institutions and security agencies, and perhaps of a 'ruling class' seen through it to be cooperating across society to tackle this issue. My research maintains that questions of state/system hegemony are always at stake in CVE, despite how far its practices and attached ideas seemingly fall from this issue. My work thus asks how is state legitimacy and hegemony re-produced, as well as sometimes challenged through the outcomes of CVE? In reference to the last part of this question, since 'what CVE is' cannot be settled, conclusions around its social function are also neither definite nor final. My research suggests that different actors at different positions instrumentalize CVE toward competing ends, which in my fieldwork led to direct

challenges of state laws and efforts by marginalized communities co-opt the language of CVE to gain funding to address community needs outside of terrorism prevention.

<u>(4) Who works in CVE, and how do they make sense of their involvement?</u>

My final guiding research question is methodologically oriented, serving as the means for pursuing the above three questions. It also takes on the primary subject of chapters 4 and 5. I ask: what is a 'CVE practitioner'? Who does this kind of work? What motivates them, and how do they reflect on the meaning of their involvement?

The premise of my research design is that, in communicating the experience of practitioners in CVE – their background, journey and enrollment, how they grapple with dilemmas and critically reflect on their work – I can speak to larger questions, gaining insights into CVE's broader sociological meaning and function. This follows the ethnographic model of 'thick description' according to Clifford Geertz (1973) where the researcher moves from describing the particular (persons' experiences and relationships) to interpretation, pulling meaning out of what is observed to produce abstract theorization (the generation of arguments, concepts, critique). My approach centres on the 'CVE practitioner', an admittedly elastic term for the people that I encountered and interviewed in CVE during my fieldwork. I will further elaborate in this in the methodology section below, but will for now note the following: The practitioners I interviewed are people who worked for CVE-specific organizations and 'outside professionals' (in policing, health and social services, education, community services, charities and non-profits, private sector) who have had aspects of CVE introduced in their work. These practitioners conduct one-on-one interventions with people referred to CVE programs for being 'at-risk' of radicalization, and devise forms of 'counter-

messaging' to dissuade individuals from seeking 'extremist' content online. They produce research on the problem of 'radicalization' and 'violent extremism', programming materials and guidelines, train professionals in the human services sphere, and engage in a host of *primary prevention* activities. This includes community engagement and consultation, public awareness-raising events, education workshops in secondary and post-secondary schools, and a host of 'upstream' CVE measures such as community-based art projects and sporting activities. In this respect, my research question addresses an identified lack of data on the ground-level experiences of practitioners involved in CVE (Ponsot, Autixier, & Madriaza, 2018) and the lack of field-based research in terrorism studies as a whole (Sageman, 2014). In sections of chapters 4 and 5 of my dissertation, my engagement with responses from racialized and Muslim-identifying CVE practitioners also addresses a call for centering the experiences in counter-terrorism of individuals from communities that have been most negatively impacted by its practices (Qureshi, 2020).

Methodology and fieldwork

The parameters of my study fit within the methodological approach of ethnography. This involves qualitative research methods used across the social sciences – i.e., interviews, focus groups, participant observation, document analysis – attuned to a theoretical approach that privileges the importance of engaging people in naturally occurring social settings, documenting what transpires to induce or interpret its societal, cultural, political meaning (Hammersley, 2018).

The *interpretivist* approach of ethnography privileges the assumption that a researcher can learn about the social and cultural meanings of their object through

people who are involved in it. As Veena Das and Marilyn Strathern attest, ethnographers "route connections through persons" (Das, 2007, p. 3). In attending to people's acts and intensions, reflections, they come to infer broader systems at play. As Das puts it, the "concrete relations that we establish in living with others are like shadows of the more abstract questions" (2007, p. 4). In other words, it is through examining human interactions that insights into the social structure are revealed. In this vein, I came to privilege the 'CVE practitioner' their actions, thoughts, relations, justifications as a key site for understanding the societal purchase of the CVE paradigm. This line of analysis is particularly borne out in chapters 4 and 5 of my dissertation.[19]

It is this emphasis on human participants that distinguishes interpretivism from other qualitative approaches such as post-structuralist analysis. This distinction is highlighted in the work of Carol Bacchi (2015) who points out that interpretivist approaches focus on the roles of social actors in political processes at the expense of scrutinizing the 'problematizations'[20] that operate in these processes.[21] In my study, I do not necessarily adhere to this distinction. Chapters 2 and 3 are more attuned to

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[19] For instance, a different approach was taken by Awan, Hoskins, & O'Loughlin (2011) et al. where they critically examined the sociological meaning of discourses on 'radicalization' by, in part, following the circulation of 'Islamist content' as a commodity in the online social media and news media sphere.

[20] This is drawn from Foucault: problematization as in how something is represented and actively constituted as a 'problem'. Bacchi (2012) explains how 'problematization' is both the object of study (examining how an issue has come to be problematized) as well as a method of analysis (problematizing hegemonic thinking that informs governing practices).

[21] Bacchi suggests that an "ontological disagreement about the nature of political subjectivity" exists between interpretivism and post-structuralism, with interpretivists viewing political subjects as "sovereign or foundational subjects, who stand outside of and shape 'reality'" (2015, p. 3). My position on the role of actors differs and is more akin to Bourdieu's description of actors possessing an agency that includes but extends beyond their role as mere bearers of discourse and structure (2014, p. 96).

problematizations in CVE and their historical antecedents, while chapters 4 and 5 glean insights into the sociological meaning of the CVE paradigm through persons involved. In other words, I attend to and privilege the significance of the 'social life' in CVE – the actors, their actions and reflections, the relationships they form – while conceiving also to understand how this interacts with and through discourses that have been shaped and legitimized by particular historical and cultural conditions (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). This sense of 'dual' commitment patterns the improvised, 'multi-sited' shape (see below) that my fieldwork took.

Description of fieldwork phases

My research design was both improvised and exploratory, taking on distinctly different shapes as the figure of the research object (as articulated above) came into better focus. I will describe here the various iterations that my research took in over the project's lifespan, and detail the methods used, theoretical presuppositions, and limitations encountered.

Pre-fieldwork (2017-18): As noted at the beginning, this project began by inquiring into the sociological meaning and effects of the term 'homegrown terrorism' through a thematic content analysis of its usage in Canadian news media articles, academic literature, and 'grey' literature (i.e., think thank and government commissioned reports). Here I found that a narrative template had formed presenting 'homegrown terrorism' as a 'new' and significant threat to national security; that tends to manifest in, and transform, "normal" youth; that lacks any tangible causes; and has culminated in a new regime of persistent threat and uncertainty in Canada. I interrogated this conceptualization,

including the criteria used in selecting cases, and the presence of racialized, orientalist discourses on Canadian Muslims that work to distinguish 'homegrown terrorism' from a history of political violence in the country and to render it antithetical to Canadian values. I do not present these findings in this dissertation – they are rather found in Millett (2020) – but I refer to them in several places (e.g., Chapter 3).

What my study of 'homegrown terrorism' representations elucidated was the depiction of an underlying process of 'radicalization' as a perceived ingredient in the lead-up to violent incidents and as a rhetorical device in media and political descriptions of such events. This led me to critically review literature on the concept of 'radicalization' which I wrote up for my comprehensive examination. This formed the backdrop for my eventual fieldwork, as I learned of the key authors in 'radicalization' studies and key approaches including stage models of the 'radicalization' process. I found that 'radicalization' did not exist as a concept and domain of academic counter-terrorism knowledge prior to the mid-2000s and that the history of its emergence was largely speculative and unknown. I undertook some preliminary 'genealogical' research into the history of 'radicalization' and its sister term 'violent extremism'. I found that previous use of 'radicalization' was as a descriptive term attached to other phenomena, was not associated with terrorism, nor with Islam or any other religion, and the tone toward the subject that was relatively positive or at least agnostic, leading to macro-structural explanations that use historical and comparative analysis (e.g., Apter, 1971; Rush, 1972; della Porta, 1995). During this comprehensive study I also learned that a field of practice was becoming instituted around the idea of countering 'radicalization'

and 'violent extremism', leading me to direct my research efforts toward this emerging paradigm.

It was lastly in this 'pre-fieldwork' period I officially got my 'feet wet' in the CVE field, taking a 6-month Research Assistant role in the Spring of 2017 for a federally-funded CVE research project based out of the Université de Montréal. The project sought to deconstruct the communication appeals made by 'violent extremist' recruiters in order to create pedagogical tools that would dispel them. For the project, I helped select a list of 'radical' websites to draw content from, provided a background briefing report on 'radicalization', and undertook an analysis of content I downloaded from the Stormfront web forum covering the period around the August 2017 Charlottesville 'Unite the Right' rally. I do not operationalize any of this research in my dissertation, however, this field experience was informative in gaining a sense of the culture of the fledgling CVE field in Canada, the various players in the Québec scene, and a first-hand look at some of the types of work happening in the field.[22]

Formal ethnographic fieldwork (2018-2020): In the summer of 2018, I gained ethics clearance to formally begin fieldwork with actors in CVE. I began by creating an inventory of existing CVE organizations and CVE projects in Canada, downloading website contents where possible. This began by consulting the recipients of grant funding from the Department of Public Safety's Community Resilience Fund, which

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[22] It was during this RA stint that I encountered the 'wild west' nature of the burgeoning CVE field. The project directors had no experience or subject expertise on CVE, 'radicalization' nor counter-terrorism (prompting me to create a background report). This became punctuated during an encounter with the project lead. While looking over 'Islamist' content they had obtained from Telegram, I pointed out a post containing a quote from radical cleric Anwar al-Awlaki, to which the director responded: "Who is that? Is he important?".

since 2016 has been one of the preeminent facilitators of CVE-related activities in Canada. This allowed me to create a list of key contacts to pursue. By examining the listed sponsors and partners on CVE project websites, I also began to comprehend the vast global network of connected entities that had developed in relation to CVE. I realized that my project on *CVE in Canada* would need to account for the fact that Canadian actors and activities were nestled in a broader globalized network of CVE. Practitioners in Canada can be seen to influence the global production of CVE and vice versa, through regular meetings and knowledge transmission with international counterparts and in project collaboration. It was evident that the Government of Canada was funding entities outside Canada to conduct CVE inside the country and also that Canadian CVE entities conducted work in many other parts of the world. I lastly found out through this inventory exercise how diverse and splintered from the state this transnational field of actors had become. The work of CVE had largely superseded earlier state-bound efforts such as the UK Prevent Strategy, and now involved a mix of non-profit and social enterprise-based CVE organizations that operate at relative arms-length positions from states (e.g., Institute for Strategic Dialogue [ISD] and Moonshot CVE in the UK, Hedayeh in the United Arab Emirates, CPRLV and the Organization for the Prevention of Violence [OPV] in Canada). In this mix of actors, private corporations occasionally took part, such as the advertising agency M&C Saatchi, Molson Brewery, and tech industry think-tank Jigsaw (Google). It was also apparent that many charities such as the United Way and John Howard Society had become involved as partners in municipally-based, 'multi-agency' CVE projects such as the Toronto FOCUS project and Project ReSet in Ottawa. Other charities and non-profits had obtained federal funding to conduct CVE work adjacent from their missions, such as with UNESCO,

YMCA Canada, and the Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative. In this new CVE

model, the role of states such as Canada's was not to create CVE programs but rather

advise, fund, and facilitate a multiplicity of actors. This role is envisioned in the

objectives of the Canada Centre for Community Engagement and Prevention of

Violence, created by the federal government in 2017 to provide "national leadership on

Canada's efforts to prevent radicalization to violence".[23] The Canada Centre states its

mission to work with "all levels of governments, not-for-profit organizations,

communities, youth, frontline practitioners, academia, law enforcement, and

international organizations". The Canada Centre does not manage or implement CVE

projects, but rather prioritizes "action areas", works with partners to support intervention

efforts, measuring and evaluations, and "engaging with groups across diverse sectors to

create opportunities for collaboration".[24]

Armed with this new knowledge, I began to pursue contacts within the

networked cluster of non-profit, public-private, think-tank, and start-up organizations

involved in countering radicalization and violent extremism in Canada. In September

2018, I began attending CVE events in the Montréal area, looking for opportunities to

interview CVE practitioners and for participant observation of project work. Through

this I began to know people affiliated with the Centre for the Prevention of

Radicalization Leading to Violence (CPRLV), RAPS (Recherche et Action sur les

Polarisations Sociales), Project Someone, and CPN-PREV (Canadian Practitioners

Network for the Prevention of Radicalization and Extremist Violence). This kicked of a

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[23] From Public Safety Canada "About the Canada Centre" www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/bt/cc/bt-en.aspx
[24] Ibid

period extending to March 2020 of regular interviewing of CVE practitioners across Canada, participant observation of CVE-related activities, and in a couple of cases, paid work undertaken for CVE projects. I will describe these phases of research respectively.

CVE practitioner interviews: In total, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 45 individuals working in CVE in Canada. These were primarily sit-down interviews in Québec, Ontario, and Alberta. Some of these interviews took place adjacent to CVE-related conferences, where I was able to access practitioners working in different locations across Canada. 12 interviews occurred over the phone, Skype, and Zoom with practitioners I was not able to arrange in-person meetings with. This includes interviews with 6 practitioners based in the UK, and 2 practitioners based in the U.S. who contribute remotely to CVE projects in Canada. There were additional interviews conducted over Zoom during the COVID-19 pandemic. In line with ethics guidelines, the identity of interviewees is anonymized; therefore, the interviewees quoted are assigned a pseudonym (except for one interviewee who permitted their name to be published). Other identifying information, such as the name of CVE project interviewees worked on and place of employment, has been omitted in order to reduce participant identification. In some places, to reduce identifiability or to illustrate a point, I refer to the practitioner's organization or location of employment rather than pseudonym.

These interviews were 'semi-structured', in that I devised a short list of questions [fig. III] that provided a general guide of what I aimed to cover. The questions focus on CVE practitioner backgrounds, what prompted them to become involved, and how they reflect on the meaning of their work. My aim was to get a sense of *who* the CVE practitioner are, what motivates them, and how they make sense of their work. Semi-

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structured interviews differ from structured or open interviews in they aim to give flexibility for participants to share knowledge and issues they see relevant while remaining close to the themes and questions of the research (Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson, & Docent, 2016). They encourage reciprocity between the interviewer and participant, enabling the interviewer to improvise follow-up questions based on participant′s responses allowing space for participants' individual verbal expressions (Ibid.). Often, I began an interview by asking participants to describe the type of work they do, how they became involved in the field, and said little after this beyond interjecting occasionally to emphasize or expand upon a point. In these circumstances, I did not cover many of the questions on the schedule, as the conversation took on its own character, veering into more interesting places. In other cases, I found myself entering passionate discussions over the social remit of CVE work. My approach was to remain *grounded,* attempting to put aside what I knew or read to privilege what CVE looks like to the practitioner interviewed, whose voice is often left out of the discourse on CVE.

Fig. III - semi-structured interview schedule included as an appendix to consent
forms distributed to interview participants

The semi-structured interviews tended to last between 1-2 hours, and in several cases,

follow-up interviews took place when it was agreed that more time was needed for the

practitioner to express their views. In one case, I conducted a group interview of two

practitioners – this was at the request of the participants, who felt they could give a

richer account of the work that they do by being in dialogue with each other. It is worth

noting here that I treat 'CVE practitioner' as an umbrella term for a variety of actors

engaged in this paradigm. This firstly includes individuals employed by CVE-specific

organizations such as the CPRLV and OPV or who fulfill a CVE-related mandate for a

partnering organization. Others I deem as 'outside professionals' working in parallel

fields that find their work linking to CVE projects. This includes health and social

services professionals, psychologists, educators, police officers, national security

officers, people who work in art therapy, youth services, advertising, technology, and

religious leaders. The term 'CVE practitioner' is used in other studies of the field (e.g.,

Lehane, 2018; El-Amraoui & Ducol, 2019; Schulten, 2022) however important questions

were raised by my fieldwork participants over what exactly 'CVE practitioner' means

and where its boundaries lie.[25] As my study will demonstrate, the definition has become

further complicated as more actors within health, social services, non-profit and private

industries incorporate elements of CVE into their missions. The trend of 'primary

prevention' as a way of stopping radicalization-to-violence has also led to the increasing

intersection of CVE programming and with other types of youth and health-related work.

In Chapter 4 I discuss my participant selection criteria in more detail and present a series

of 'practitioner archetypes' based on dominant dispositions, orientations, and social and

political subjectivities that were present in my interview base. It is in that chapter that I

begin grappling with divergent responses from 10 of my practitioner interviewees who

were from racialized and Muslim-identifying backgrounds. As I will show, the inclusion

of racialized and Muslim-identifying individuals in CVE is both a novel and

longstanding practice. Typically, CVE projects have sought to recruit racialized 'key

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[25] In a meeting with members of a CVE mapping project at CPN-PREV, one of the participants challenged me directly on the rigour of this category, noting the difficulties (I would later come to realize are true) regarding the boundaries of CVE work. The participant asked: "do you count a high school drama teacher working on a play about Syrian foreign fighters as a CVE practitioner? Is a person putting on an after-school basketball program receiving money from Public Safety a 'CVE practitioner'?".

figures' who can help connect and provide legitimacy to projects in 'hard to reach' communities (Vermeulen, 2014). For example, early versions of the Prevent Strategy in the UK sought the participation of Muslim religious, civil and community organizations to deliver its programming, in the process significantly changing the way the state engaged with Muslim communities (O'Toole et al., 2016). My study explores the added complexity of this relationship, firstly, in light of the traditionally fraught relationship between Canada's security apparatus and communities of colour and, secondly, regarding the transition occurring within CVE towards engaging with Muslim communities to prevent 'radicalization' and 'violent extremism' but also to protect them from radical right-wing threats.

The practitioners that I interview form what can be described as a *CVE community.* The community may be spread out geographically, but it is rather small and close knit. As put by one practitioner (Jasmine): "the CVE field is small enough that even if people don't know of each other directly, they know *of* each other". It is likely that few of my interviewees would be unknown to the others, and the same practitioner joked about how how it will be difficult for me to disguise their identities. It is this networked form of 'CVE community' that allows consideration of my project as a 'multi-sited ethnography' (Marcus, 1995)[26] in that my research participants are connected to each other in a networked sense, in and outside of Canada.

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[26] 'Multi-sited ethnography' is a methodological term popularized in anthropology by George Marcus which acknowledges that social research inevitably leads to following themes and topics across space, landing in different 'sites' both physical as well as abstract (i.e., commodity chains, circulations of ideas). This challenges the conventional myth of ethnographic research as bounded within the 'local' as a specific community or institution with well-defined boundaries (Coleman & von Hellermann, 2011).

The interview process took on more ethnographic qualities as I moved through the field, blending with participant observation. I encountered my participants after the interviews at later events. Relationships formed, leading to more informal phone conversations and socializing during after-work hours. Some participants made great efforts to help facilitate my immersion in the field. Other relationships formed where I offered solicited advice on projects and pointed to relevant materials. This process was reciprocal, as much of the background readings, reports, documents I analyze in this dissertation were provided or pointed out to me by my research participants. This proved immensely important when writing chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation where I attempt to historicize CVE as an object. More on this later in this section.

Participant Observation of CVE activities:

"You need to go into the field…"
"But isn't this the field?"[27]

Concurrent with the semi-structured practitioner interviews were my efforts at participant observation of CVE activities. This began, as mentioned, by attending events on CVE that were open to the public. This involved initiatives aimed at public awareness raising and education on CVE, directed toward outside practitioner audiences, parents and other interested members of the public. Other events concerned launch events for new materials and programming produced by Canadian CVE entities. I attended events like these regularly in the Fall of 2018 and Winter of 2019, typically put on by Québec-based entities like CPRLV and RAPS. Eventually, I would be invited to more field-specific events such as pilot training workshops, partners meetings and other knowledge

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[27] An exchange between myself and an employee at the CPRLV offices in Montréal in April 2019.

dissemination activities among CVE actors in different sectors. The contacts I made during these events led to additional interview opportunities.

It was here in the participant observation phase that I began to face significant limitations concerning access. I found that actors in CVE were very willing to lend their time to be interviewed, speaking at length and with candour, and rarely declined a follow-up request.[28] However, when I inevitably asked about opportunities to observe their CVE work the generosity subsided. CVE organizations tended to be sensitive to having outside researchers present. Reasons for this included the sense that 'enough research was already being done', i.e., many practitioners were themselves researchers and did not see a need for outside study. In other cases, concerns were expressed regarding "the security of the client", i.e., the 'radicalized' or 'radicalizing' individuals they work with. As one project manager expressed it: "We don't want to expose vulnerable individuals we're trying to help". This meant that I was unable to witness any one-on-one or group CVE interventions, and plans made to follow and observe the delivery of CVE training modules in school classrooms never came to fruition (though I would briefly participate in the creation of these materials).

The sensitivity over my presence extended to tensions over the public optics of carrying out CVE. This relates to the scenario I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter on being disinvited to a pilot training event with the Edmonton Resiliency project. A similar thing happened in Ottawa with the MERIT Project, who convened a multi-day co-creation event with local stakeholders (police, school boards, charities),

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[28] My research contacts were also open and proactive in sharing with me the materials they use, such as in training and program self-evaluation. "We're not a security agency […] what we work on is public", is what one director of a CVE organization stated to me when agreeing to allow the work I undertook for them to appear in my research.

national CVE experts as well as members from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. "This would be a good opportunity to see how a multi-sector team comes together in the 'real world' of P/CVE", is how one of its organizers described it to me over the phone. However, a week prior to the event, I was informed that the organizers deemed "it would no longer be feasible" to have me participate, citing "challenges with process, community tension, and space". Adrianna, an interlocutor specializing in Canada-wide CVE trainings talked about this type of sensitivity: "it's tricky because we are a network. And if you say some negative things, which you will because… I mean, I can see them, for the credibility of our over 115 partners it's going to be tricky". Francis, a federal security programs officer, spoke similarly regarding the difficulties of multi-sectoral CVE projects:

> There is tension in all the projects between the optics of the city, in which way they want to go, and issues around the sharing of information. You can sit five different departments at the same table at a restaurant and starve them to death because they won't talk to each other. We're trying to create a mechanism, a kind of pipeline to share information across sectors but it's challenging. Everybody wants to be the gatekeeper.

Limited access for observing CVE-based activities presented a challenge to my objective to witness how CVE projects come together and are implemented, i.e., to decipher what CVE programs *do* compared to what they *say.* Ethnographically, my project felt compromised in being afforded lessened opportunities for the "deep hanging out" (Renato Rosaldo) that the genre privileges. To ameliorate this, I engaged in several virtual and remote activities, including webinars in Canada and Europe on the development of 'good practices', and I enrolled in an online course "Religion, Radicalisation, Resilience" delivered by the European Union-funded GREASE Project.

What I also did, in a couple of instances, was conduct paid services on CVE projects. These were not opportunities that I purposely sought but were proposed by CVE field members that I agreed to take on. The first of these was the creation of a 'tip-sheet' on Islamophobia for an organization involved in the training of 'frontline' practitioners on CVE. I also provided editing services on a federal grant proposal on behalf of a Québec-based CVE organization. Lastly, I assembled an online focus group of CVE practitioners across Canada to discuss best practices in CVE program evaluation. The group of participants were largely based on the existing contacts I had developed in CVE. The data from the focus group I transcribed and coded in NVivo and produced a mission report on findings for the organization. In all cases of this paid work, the organizations involved granted me permission to use these findings in my dissertations, and references are made to these activities in later chapters.

The decision to take on paid work from CVE entities raises several ethical dimensions. I am left to acknowledge that having received payment from some CVE entities will affect how my findings are viewed, which was part of a trade-off for gaining better access to observe the daily happenings in CVE. Others involved the critical ethnography of 'studying up' have done similar. In Karen Ho's ethnography of Wall Street investment bankers, *Liquidated* (2009), Ho describes taking a job with an investment bank prior to her fieldwork. This allowed the author to build a sizable and diverse network of informants, along with gaining crucial opportunities for immersion in a field, similar to mine in CVE, where 'hanging-out' in the workplace was largely not permitted. Ho indicates that some of the observations she gained from this time on the job, such as ambivalent feelings Wall Streeters took towards their own 'downsizing'

became the central questions for her fieldwork, leading her to inquire into how the institutional culture of Wall Street investment banks contributes to the effects that the financial services sector has on the rest of American society. My experiences in paid work yielded a similar influence on the structuring of my inquiry, however, many of the promises I received of greater access to CVE-based activities did not bear out in reality.[29]

In my *pursuit of the CVE space* I lent services in other, less formal ways. This included moderating a panel at a 'youth radicalization' conference in Toronto in 2020, which put me in contact with many of my previous interviewees and led to new contacts. I also presented preliminary fieldwork findings in 2019 for a 'lunch and learn' knowledge share series for a Montréal-based CVE project. This I refer to at some length in Chapter 4, which helped gain critical feedback from members in the field on my emerging arguments and framing of the research object. In several instances, I provided feedback on materials that were being developed by my research participants and their colleagues, including demoing a online video game designed to train outside professionals on CVE by allowing them to 'role play' handling cases of radicalization. I also had a series of follow-up conversations where I provided advice to an interviewee who was tasked with developing a CVE project from scratch after receiving a Public Safety Canada Community Resilience Fund grant. In these conversations I offered by candid option on the research on 'radicalization' and 'violent extremism', the state of the field in Canada, and put the participant in contact with CVE actors who I felt could be of assistance. These efforts were successful in achieving the 'productive tension' of the

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[29] For instance, I created the Islamophobia tip-sheet based on a promise to be allowed "in the room" during their CVE training sessions. However, this did not come to pass.

insider/outsider positionality that is key to the ethnographic process (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). I realized that I had gained this status when at CVE events I began being misidentified as a representative of different organizations that I was studying.

With all this considered, it is important to be forthright about these limitations in my research design. I did not spend hundreds of hours in close contact with CVE practitioners as they were carrying out their duties. Instead, a great amount of my participant observation was reduced to interstitial moments, conversations with CVE practitioners between interviews and time spent in CVE offices when nothing was really happening.

This brings me to a final reflection on my participant observation of CVE activity, in that an argument can be made that *maybe there was not all that much to observe*. This was how one director literally responded – "You are welcome to hangout here, but there wouldn't really be anything for you to observe" – to my request to shadow their CVE organization in England. The sense of 'nothing to observe' firstly applies to physical spaces: in terms of workspaces, some were non-existent, and other CVE entities shared office space with other companies. "We are very much a virtual organization", responded the leader of one CVE entity to my request for participant observation, "our members are spread out geographically." The second point relates to a lack of concrete CVE activity with 'radicalized' or 'potentially radicalizing' clients occurring in the relatively nascent (at this time of writing) Canadian CVE context. In some of the above-mentioned cases, plans agreed upon for my participant observation simply fell through because the activities did not end up taking place. This includes canceled training schedules for outside professionals due to the onset of the COVID-19

pandemic or because no requests from training were made. From the vantagepoint of my

fieldwork, practitioners in CVE are largely occupied with applying (and reapplying) for

funding grants and preparing update reports to grant authorities; designing program

models, other materials (brochures, curricula, online audio-visual tools, etc.), and

research reports which they present to each other at CVE conferences and other

knowledge share activities though the globalized CVE network; and under the banner of

primary prevention, they create and deliver a host of public-facing campaigns (many of

which I witnessed/attended), highlighting their work at community events and through

their own awareness-raising sessions. Actual CVE interventions are rare. This is both

due to the relative infancy of CVE projects in Canada as well as 'radicalization' and

'violent extremism' being, in the words of one of my interviewees (i.e., Don), "a very

low-instances problem". Many referrals to CVE organizations by schools etcetera turn

out to be false positives based on misunderstandings, which leads CVEs toward more

public awareness efforts to address stereotypes and discrimination. This leads to three

concluding points that I return to in the later chapters of my dissertation: Firstly, much of

what CVE actors *do* is work to further the legitimacy of their field and the existence of

the intangible problem of 'radicalization'. Secondly, interviewees gave an implied (and

at times overtly addressed) sense that CVE diverts money and human capacity away

from social problems such as homelessness, addiction, and mental health, where existing

resources are unable to keep up with demand. Thirdly, studying the extent of CVE's

societal effects must carefully parse between considering the continual expansion of the

paradigm and imperative (into new social domains, into new problem spaces, i.e. 'incel',

white supremacy, male supremacy) and the sometimes precarious and uneven growth of

the field of actors and (as mentioned) the relatively low amount of tangible work that they do with publics.

Data analysis, coding, first phase of writing (2020-21): The arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic to Canada in March 2020 effectively ended the in-person phase of my fieldwork. I would continue to conduct some interviews online and over the phone, and attend events virtually, but I largely pivoted toward transcribing and coding my data, developing themes which I began to write up in the Fall of 2021.

Transcribing my audio interview data was a lengthy process that I undertook in conjunction with coding of already-transcribed interviews and fieldwork notes. My coding process adhered generally to the principles of 'grounded theory' (e.g., Corbin & Strauss, 1990). I engaged in open coding: rather than beginning with an established list of codes, my codes were derived through immersion with the data, assigning identifiers to pertinent themes that emerged across texts. This required multiple readings of interview transcripts as new codes were added and others modified. Certain codes that pertained to the same issue were grouped together, and other codes were assigned subcodes. In the end, a coding tree was constructed containing 95 main codes along with 92 subcodes. These codes were then identified (and co-identified) with the main research themes discussed above, and in Chapter 4 I provide additional details on my coding process. This covers my use of principles from qualitative thematic content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006) in my presentation of the data in chapters 4 and 5.

The process of transcription and coding continued in cycles through the Fall of 2021, when I began to write up my findings and analysis. This exercise in writing proved

unsuccessful, leading to another, final improvisation to my research design that greatly altered the eventual contents of my dissertation. I will describe this in more detail in the section below.

‘Historicization’: During my initial attempts at writing up my findings, I found that I was lacking the requisite historical knowledge of the CVE paradigm to sociologically analyze it as I had intended. This is to raise Pierre Bourdieu's assertion that "[i]t is impossible to do sociology on a contemporary phenomenon without giving a genetic history of this phenomenon" (2014, p. 87). I also became concerned that my work was repeating an error I had identified within CVE, of the field not knowing its own history.[30] Therefore, I decided to pause from writing to conduct additional research on the historical origins of CVE, reviewing documents I had collected during my fieldwork and gathering additional scholarship, government reports and political correspondence based on insights from interviews with experienced practitioners in CVE. I began this ‘historicization’ phase by reading European Union correspondence at the supposed genesis-point’ of CVE, the founding of the first Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation [EGVR] in Europe in 2006, and I read backward from there.

The findings from this research phase became realized in chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation. I then used these findings as a lens to critically reinterpret my data from the previous 2018-2020 fieldwork phase, which led to the writing of chapters 4 and 5. The body of this dissertation is thus a split between the most recent historical research I

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[30] This was described by one experienced leader as a "solipsism" within CVE "that they're doing something 'new' that's 'never been done before'". He then referred to antecedents in community policing and actions against gang violence in the 1980s and 1990s.

undertook, and a portion of the prior ethnographic fieldwork. Of course, data from interviews and participant observation are present in chapters 2 and 3, and my move toward analyzing historical documents is not 'unethnographic'. Part of the argument from proponents of 'multi-sited' ethnography is that pursuing the social or cultural meaning of a research object involves following it through a diversity of 'sites' across space and time, physical locations embodied by people but also discursive and more abstract spaces (Coleman & von Hellerman, 2011). For my project, part of this meant examining security industry discourses in the 1990s and gleaning the subtext of political responses in Europe to the Madrid, Amsterdam and London 'homegrown terror' attacks in 2004 and 2005.

My aim with this approach was not to undertake a comprehensive "history of CVE", but rather to *historicize* present understandings to open them to sociological analysis. My methodology for this phase was influenced by a commonality I found in the otherwise differing approaches to history of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu.

Foucault's method of *genealogy* is a mode of critique that uses history to defamiliarize the meaning of present-day phenomena, opening intellectual and political space around them to contest dominant forms of knowledge (Foucault, 1977; Garland, 2014). As William Walters points out, genealogy aims to lessen our "perspectival captivity" and improve the capacity to imagine other forms of politics and subjectivity (Walters, 2012, p. 115). This is done by tracing a research object's lines of descent and exploring forgotten struggles. For my study, I trace strands of the CVE paradigm back in time to discover unexpected linkages, discontinuities, and conflicts. This includes examining debates around 'conflict prevention' in the 1990s and struggles over the

purpose of European security agencies after the Cold War; usages of the terms

'radicalization' and 'violent extremism' prior to 2005; process models in the 1960s on

the psychology of religious conversion; and older paradigms of rehabilitation such as by

the Saudi Arabia government for detained al-Qaeda combatants. My efforts correspond

to comments by David Garland on the import of Foucault's genealogy:

> [Foucault's] aim was to reveal something important – but hidden – in our
> contemporary experience; something about our relation to technologies of power–
> knowledge that [make up] a general, constitutive aspect of modern individuals and
> their experience (2014, p. 368).

Bourdieu's approach to *genetic structuralism* shares similarities with Foucault's. Both

take a 'presentist' orientation to historical analysis, valuing history as a means of critical

engagement with current phenomena.[31] They both challenge conventional

historiography, rejecting linear conceptions of history and the legitimacy they accord to

existing power relations, and instead opt to construct analyses in non-chronological

fashion. They both privilege the inherent ambiguity of "beginnings"[32] and seek to

unearth previously forgotten knowledges as a tool for countering domination. Both

favour indeterminacy over finality and highlight the importance of contingency in

historical developments. However, Bourdieu qualifies this to a greater degree in paying

fine grained attention to issues of structure and agency, contingency and necessity.[33]

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[31] Bourdieu sounds very familiar to Foucault when arguing that "[t]he function of historicization is to release these historical constraints inserted into the unconscious by history (2014, p. 88).

[32] Foucault speaks of the "accidents that accompany every beginning" (1977, p. 144) while Bourdieu speaks of "the arbitrariness of beginnings" (2014, p. 115).

[33] This helps frame the parameters of my inquiry, as I am cognizant of according too much power to either structures or contingency/chance in the rise of CVE. The development of counter-terrorism research and practice, as literature in Critical Terrorism Studies demonstrates, has been dominated by the role of *power elites* (Mills, 1956) and the strategic interests and geopolitical considerations related to Western hegemony. At the same point, my method seeks to unearth the contingent and sometimes

Where Bourdieu departs from Foucault is in his assertion that historical inquiries can unearth a research object's "specific logic" (2014, pp. 89-90). Bourdieu cites Émile Durkheim on the necessity to go "back to the elementary" to understand the social functioning of an institution (Ibid). Bourdieu also suggests that study a particular case, or cases, lead to grasping "the universal forms" embedded within a research object (2014, pp. 86-87). This emphasis on the 'elementary' and 'universal' goes against the epistemological principles of poststructuralist, Foucault-inspired genealogical studies.[34] Yet it corresponds to what my study of CVE's 'pre-history' found, as I locate in CVE's disconnected, 'descendant paradigms', something akin to an inherent *elementary logic*. This leads me to argue in Chapter 2 that these *elementary principles CVE* which have anchored the CVE field and paradigm's growth and otherwise seemingly open-ended (scattershot) development globally.

It is thus through this exercise of 'historicization' that I develop several key questions and arguments that I pursue and elaborate in the later, 'fieldwork-based', chapters. This includes on the CVE field's networked character and questions over how it and its concomitant concepts and imperative achieve legitimation; the naturalization of 'violent extremism' as a framework for understanding conflict involving nonstate actors and its social and political consequences; as well as how the rise expresses a shift in the *operative logic* of security from one of 'prevention' to 'pre-emption' (McCulloch & Wilson, 2015; Massumi, 2015). As my subsequent fieldwork chapters will demonstrate,

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accidental ways that CVE arrived at its present state (which informants of mine with experience knowledge of CVE's past tended to highlight).

[34] Bourdieu distinguishes his view from conventional historiography in noting that the site of the elementary is not necessarily found in an object's 'origins'. For Bourdieu, "the original" is rather "the place where a certain number of things are formed that, once formed, pass unnoticed" (2014, p. 89).

it is a transition that remains in tension, with the simultaneous presence of the competing logics of prevention and pre-emption animating different debates and ruptures in CVE field, affecting its social function and connected implications.

Additional theoretical considerations

As mentioned at the outset, my research is based on methodological interpretivism. It might also be called 'problem-driven' research (Shapiro, 2002) in that it begins with a *problem,* a "social phenomenon that appears normal or true" (i.e., CVE), asks how this characterization came about, and offers a "problematizing re-description*"* that interacts with previous accounts and offers a new interpretation (Vucetic, 2011, p. 1301; Shapiro, 2002, p. 615).[35] Problem-driven research is inherently *inductive,* it does not employ vast theoretical frameworks nor does it aim to test or vindicate pre-existing theories. However, this does not mean that it eschews theory. Ethnographic data is inherently theory-laden and my research did not occur in a theoretical vacuum.[36] I primarily employ mid-level concepts (Amit, 2015) for thinking through my research design and interpreting data. Examples in the chapters that follow include the concepts of 'field' and 'space' (discussed later in this Introduction), as well as 'template' (Kitzinger, 2000) in Chapter 2, 'interpellation' (Althusser, 1971) in Chapter 3, and 'enrollment' (Callon & Law, 1982) in Chapter 5. The underlying theoretical presuppositions of these 'mid-level' concepts do not always align, and where appropriate I attempt to ameliorate and justify their coexistence (for example in Chapter 5 between 'interpellation' and 'enrollment').

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[35] Similar types of problem-driven research are undertaken in *working with problematizations* in the Foucauldian post-structuralist sense (e.g., Bacchi, 2012).

[36] On this, Shapiro notes "there is no 'raw' description of 'the facts' or 'the data'" (2002, p. 604).

In other places, I employ my findings to comment on sociological theory. It is part of my objective with this fieldwork study of CVE to contribute to theoretical debates on contemporary social processes. This includes, but is not limited to, the medicalization of society[37] and the securitization of society[38], including the places in my research where these processes meet and begin to influence each other (see Chapter 4 on Durodie (2016) and the 'theraputization of security'). Other areas of social theory examined and commented on include debates in the post-structuralist study of security on the dominance of anticipatory logics of 'pre-emption' (governing the present to mediate an uncertain future) in wider society (e.g., Massumi, 2015; Martin, 2014; McCulloch & Wilson, 2015) and on the encroachment of speculative, finance-oriented thinking and practice from the management of the economy in the security realm (e.g., Amoore, 2013; Konings, 2016). My findings also contribute in a small way to the study

[37] The contemporary existence of CVE reflects what Peter Conrad (2007) calls 'the medicalization of society', where an increasing amount of human events and problems are viewed as medical conditions. The language of medicalization – via CVE – has proliferated through the discourse on counter-terrorism, seen in the presentation of 'radicalization' and 'violent extremism' in the language of illness (Millett, 2020), the efforts to identify and assist 'vulnerable' individuals and communities, and the idea of fostering *resilience* to radicalization as a key task of CVE. This is also apparent in the use of 'public health' models for CVE programing, the employment of psycho-social clinicians, and evidence of hospitals (e.g., Boston Children's Hospital) and health clinics (CLSCs in Québec) as sites of research on CVE and service provision.

[38] CVE's growth has embedded counter-terrorism imperatives in social institutions beyond policing and security, cross-pollinating with other schemes of prevention and social care. This connects to a broader literature on *securitization* in political science, sociology and criminology, which examines how an increasing number of issues become defined as security problems, with the prism of security increasingly serving as an organizing principle of political and social life (see Bigo, 2002; Buzan, Waever, & de Wilde, 1998). My findings speak to ways that meanings of security converge (international/domestic) and begin to morph and degrade into other paradigms through its continued extension. This includes how the 'securitization' taking place in CVE might change the tactics, discourses and social positioning of 'security' itself.

of racialization[39], particularly in sections of chapters 4 and 5 on the experiences of CVE practitioners, which moves consideration from racialized 'targets' or 'clients' of CVE toward how practitioners working in CVE are actively 'raced' (see chapter 4). My data aims to make a novel contribution to these bigger discussions of theory from the particularist case of my engagement with CVE in Canada.

Contribution to literature

I have elected to review existing relevant literature on CVE in places throughout this introduction rather than confine it to a specific section. Here I will briefly recap the main strands of research on CVE and suggest where my study fits.

Broadly my work seek to contribute to areas of Critical Security Studies and the Critical Anthropology of Security, disturbing "common-sense and taken-for-granted notions of security" from an ethnographic lens (e.g., Maguire, Frois, & Zurawski, 2014). Within the study of terrorism and counter-terrorism, my work sits on the 'critical' side of the spectrum between 'orthodox' and 'critical' scholarship. To unpack this briefly, 'Orthodox' Terrorism Studies (OTS) denotes scholarship across multiple social science disciplines stretching back to the 1970s that takes the problem of terrorism as 'given' and seeks to understand it via different methods. Much of this work has been facilitated by scholars from the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence (CSTPV) at the University of St. Andrews and the associated flagship journals *Terrorism and Political Violence* and *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism.* It is within this field that academic knowledge on 'radicalization' and 'violent extremism' first appeared in the

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[39] Here I consider racialization as a social process involving the extension of racial meaning [with racial outcomes] to a previously racially unclassified social relationship, social practice or group (see powell, 2012; Omi & Winant, 2014; Gans, 2017).

mid-2000s and continues to emanate (e.g., Moskalenko & McCauley, 2009; Dalgaard-

Nielsen, 2010; Bartlett & Miller, 2012; Malthaner & Waldmann, 2014; Morgades-

Bamba, Raynal, & Chabrol, 2020). Within this domain, an entire journal now exists

dedicated to research for a CVE practitioner audience, e.g., the *Journal for*

Deradicalization. 'Critical' Terrorism Studies (CTS) arose in response to the above

field, taking issue with its lack of critical engagement with the concept of 'terrorism' and

normative alignment with the geo-political interests of Western states (Jackson,

Gunning, & Breen Smyth, 2007). It is within this sub-field, and its journal *Critical*

Studies on Terrorism, that many of the prominent critiques against radicalization and

countering violent extremism have appeared (e.g., Lynch, 2013; Qureshi, 2015; Heath-

Kelly 2017; Busher, Choudhury & Thomas 2019; Breidlid, 2021).

In terms of underdeveloped areas of research, qualitative studies of CVE,

focusing on the day-to-day operations at the practitioner level, have been minimal, both

in 'orthodox' and critical literature. Moreover, the majority of critical literature on CVE

has come out of the UK and is focused on analyzing the Prevent Strategy. Perhaps due to

the comparatively underdeveloped nature of Canadian CVE, only a small amount of

research has emerged from Canada thus far (e.g., Monaghan, 2014; Monaghan &

Molnar, 2016; Silva, 2017; Ahmad, 2020; 2021; Millett & Ahmad, 2021; Schultz,

Bucerius & Haggerty, 2021). Some of the CVE practitioners I interviewed commented

on how Canada has yet to develop the civil society opposition to CVE that exists in the

UK and other countries. Whether this speaks to specific nature of CVE in Canada, the

historically ambivalent attitude of Canadians toward securitized responses to perceived

domestic threats (Clément, 2020), or is rather something that may develop as CVE

efforts in the country mature, remains to be seen. It is the intention of my study to contribute to a critical consciousness on CVE in Canada, as well as join work from outside the UK context (e.g., Sweid, 2020; Breidlid, 2021; Bastani & Gazzotti, 2022) dedicated to the critical analysis of CVE as a global project.

Chapter summary

The remainder of my dissertation is organized in five chapters. Chapters 2 and 3 concentrate on historicizing CVE's contemporary presence to disturb common understandings of its origins. The title of Chapter 2 plays with the idea of CVE's 'origins' as located in the response to mid-2000s 'homegrown terror' attacks in Europe. In this sense I critique the explanation of CVE's rise as *a necessary and spontaneous reaction* to evolving security threats, finding that key aspects of the paradigm were already in place prior to these events. In Chapter 3 I look more closely at the events of 'homegrown terror' in Europe and the character of the political response from the European Union and its member states. This established the institutional mechanisms for CVE to proliferate globally. A case is also made that embedded in the European response were efforts to summon a symbolic 'common' European community whose existence was threatened by the spread of 'radical Islam'. This community, summoned to unite in the cause of countering violent extremism, was discursively drawn *through* European Muslim communities, who represent both the source of, and potential antidote to, the 'violent extremism' problem. This lends understanding to how CVE efforts at the governance level operate during perceived crises in hegemony.

Chapters 4 and 5 centre the contemporary experiences of CVE practitioners in the Canadian context. Here I construct character archetypes for the practitioners I

encountered and examine how people *become* CVE practitioners. Most practitioners

communicated "finding themselves" in CVE, an outcome that speaks to the paradigm's

expansion toward addressing 'right-wing extremism' and its growing influence in

multiple sectors of society. In Chapter 5 I examine how actors 'enroll' in the CVE cause,

primarily through the open-ended, *speculative* quality of its activities, and the manner in

which practitioners outside interests become aligned with CVE. It is also through these

practices of interest alignment that distinctions become blurred, allowing for political

grievances to be recast toward non-threatening 'pro-social' ends. A distinction emerged

with the enrollment of Muslim-identifying CVE practitioners, whose motivations to

represent their communities in often hostile institutions and reduce the harm of CVE

practices were typified by the repeated phrase "if you're not at the table, you're on the

menu". In the underline conclusion chapter I connect the varying threads of preceding analysis and

what they portend for CVE's effects on societies. Primarily I return to three of central

guiding research questions addressed above – *What is CVE? How is its existence and*

growth to be understood? What is its social function? – and reflect on how the data in

chapters 2-5 contributed new insights toward their understanding. I close by outlining

some underdeveloped conclusions on my research and potential questions for future

study.

Ethics and positionality

On research ethics, I concur with Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith that field research

in the social sciences should always be grounded in the principle of reciprocity and

feedback (Smith, 1999). In my fieldwork with CVE practitioners, I employ First Nations

principles of Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP). This includes sharing

my research findings with the parties involved and allowing participants in my research to review my conclusions and attach their opinions to the final research. I adopted this approach on the request of one of my practitioner interviewees, who based the terms of his participation on this condition. I decided that it would strengthen my research to extend this protocol to all participants, in the interests of adding a more collective dimension to my ethnographic endeavour.

While I effort to accurately communicate the opinions and experiences of my interlocutors, the contours and conclusions of this study are subjective and idiosyncratically mine. At the beginning of this Introduction, I noted my encounter with CVE stemmed from research on media representations of Somali Canadians, and I was critically attuned to how the paradigm might exacerbate the disproportionate targeting Canadian Muslims as national security threats and compromise their civil liberties (e.g., Zine, 2012). I entered fieldwork with these concerns yet found my own positions on the meaning and effects of CVE transformed multiple times over. At times, I developed a great affinity for my interlocutors in CVE and an appreciation of their approach to the work. Nonetheless, if pressed to take a 'for/against' position on CVE it would be on the latter. More concernedly, I would argue that part of CVE's remit is to eliminate such questions of for/against and the disconcerting implications they might hold for power elites. I remain concerned over 'radicalization' and 'violent extremism's damaging effects, what they permit power to do, they demean and homogenize dissent, and support structural violence and racialized discrimination – all for the ambiguous (possibly futile) effort to prevent extremely 'low instance' (at least presently in the West) occurrences of individual and small group led non-state violence. I am under little illusion that my study

will contribute to 'ending (countering) violent extremism', to vulgarize a phrase from Moonshot CVE, but I hope it helps us consider the issues at the heart of the CVE paradigm in new and different ways.

Prescript to findings chapters: defining CVE as a research object

Proceeding with my study requires additional thinking over what countering violent extremism (CVE) *is,* while acknowledging the diversity of meanings it can take on. To set-up the chapters that follow, I outline four primary forms that I conceive CVE as taking (a paradigm; a field of practice; a moral-social CVE imperative, and a 'space'). This helps explain the typical ways that I use the term CVE in this study, and broadly, what I conceive my research object to 'be', with the caveat that its open-endedness is also a crucial finding. I then offer clarity on the terminology I use in this study.

1.   CVE as a *paradigm* (discourse, problematization)

The first way of understanding CVE is as a *paradigm* containing a specific *discourse* and *problematization* of terrorism. This paradigm has become central to understandings of terrorism and counter-terrorism, and tends to become adopted as a "cross-sectoral policy issue" (O'Halloran, 2021) driving an array of legislative, strategic and program efforts across different areas of governance.

'Paradigm' in this sense can be defined as "a way of looking at something", a theoretical framework within which sets of concepts, generalizations and experiments are formulated and performed (*Merriam-Webster*).[40] Often the term implies a sense of

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[40] "Paradigm." *Merriam-Webster.com, Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/paradigm. Accessed 2 Aug. 2022.

prevalence, as referred to by the idea of a *paradigm shift* "when the usual way of thinking about or doing something is replaced by a new and different way" (Ibid).[41] While not the most common form of description, *paradigm* has been used as an adjective for CVE (e.g., Green & Proctor, 2016) *and brought to my attention as a term of description during practitioner interview*. For my purposes, paradigm encapsulates a number of other terms ascribed to CVE such as "framework" (e.g., Schmid, 2013), "concept" (e.g., Ibid; Frazer & Nünlist, 2015) "approach" (Ibid.), and "policy theme" (e.g., Romaniuk, 2015). My use of *paradigm* is also influenced by my fieldwork interviews. One of my informants involved in CVE research (Marc) noted his preference for "paradigm" in that it helped to think "in terms of what we do and the way we do it", allowing their work to be compared with other paradigms such as "alcoholism". My informant also captured how paradigms rise and supplant previous forms of understanding and can quickly take hold and stick in the popular consciousness. Marc commented on witnessing CVE "being slowly built into a paradigm" in the 2010s due to "momentum at the international level", while later mentioning how he responded to a colleague who debated the merits of CVE by saying: "CVE is not going anywhere because it's something that driving a lot of the ways we think".

To describe CVE as a paradigm, then, is to consider it as a *way of thinking and acting upon terrorism,* containing various embedded theories, concepts, and practices distinguished from traditional counter-terrorism by their anticipatory and non-coercive orientation. Within the CVE paradigm is a *discourse,* i.e., a group of statements,

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[41] "Paradigm shift." *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/paradigm%20shift. Accessed 2 Aug. 2022.

concepts, ways of thinking, and courses of action (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002) which might also be described as a *problematization* of terrorism. At the core of CVE's *problematization* is the hypothesis that a 'radicalization process' precedes terrorism, and that interventions in this 'pre-crime' space can curb the future risk of terrorism by addressing certain 'vulnerability' and 'protective' factors in an individual's milieu. This type of thinking may resemble problematizations in other prevention fields such as youth drug addiction, however, the relevance of underlying psycho-social processes was long disputed in the field of terrorism studies (Hamm, 1994; Stampnitzky, 2013) and entirely absent in counter-terrorism practice prior to the mid-2000s (Coolsaet, 2016).

In sum, conceiving of CVE as a *paradigm* works to connect disparate adjectives used (i.e., policy theme, discourse, concept, approach) that coalesce around a *way of thinking and acting upon terrorism*. This opens avenues for critical inquiry into CVE's evolving core of discourses, problematizations and practices, as well as into how this paradigm originated and why it has resonated the way it has in a specific time. This serves as a reminder that, despite the given status 'violent extremism' and 'radicalization' have attained in official discourse as objective social phenomena, neither existed as an object of thought prior to the mid-2000s. Chapters 1 and 2 are particularly attuned to the conditions of CVE's emergence and contend with competing narratives in mainstream security discourse (that CVE arose out of 'spontaneous necessity' in response to evolving security threats) and critical terrorism studies (where anti-terror practices serve as instruments of power). Studying paradigms also permits inquiry into its social and political effects. Jal Mehta (2013), in discussing education reform in the United States, observes how "paradigms create politics" in their own right, working to

"shift the direction and boundaries of debate", "which actors are involved" and "redirect policy goals" (pp., 286-287). The latter chapters on my fieldwork are addressed to this.

2. CVE as a field of practice (network)

If CVE can be considered as a *paradigm* spawning actions across different sectors of society, it stands to consider how a specific *field* of CVE practice has developed around the paradigm. As Arun Kundnani suggests, a "rhetorical commitment" at the governance level to combatting 'radicalization' and 'violent extremism' in the mid-2000s led to "the emergence of a government-funded industry of advisers, analysts, scholars, entrepreneurs and self-appointed community representatives" (Kundnani & Hayes, 2018, p. 2; Kundnani, 2012, p. 4). References to CVE as a 'field', 'industry' or 'ecosystem' are now commonplace in the professional literature even if what is meant by 'CVE field' is not defined.

Following Pierre Bourdieu, fields are "relatively autonomous social microcosms" where human agency and social structures interact, involving competition and cooperation by agents over resources and public rewards (Bourdieu, 2005; 2014, p. 98). As a lens for CVE, this definition does illuminate several characteristics. This includes cooperation on the part of CVE practitioners who share knowledge and tools across national contexts as well as competition among these agents, not only for government funding grants, but over what approaches to CVE become legitimized over others. 'Field' also guides inquiry into the differing motivations of actors in the field, attempts to win prestige, and efforts to instrumentalize the CVE discourse for other purposes. The idea that field agents are both constrained by, and act upon, structural forces (Bourdieu, 2005) draws attention to examples in my fieldwork of actors engaging in practices of

direct contestation and subversion of CVE's aims. 'Field' also serves as a way of

conceiving CVE's relationship to the state security apparatus and exploring its level of

autonomy vis-à-vis more established counter-terrorism approaches. This includes

dilemmas CVE practitioners face in obtaining 'trust' from their clients due to their

connections to the state, and debates over the appropriate role for police, academics,

educators, and psychologists (among others) within terrorism prevention. Finally, as has

been intimated in this discussion, the conception of CVE as a *field* also serves to render

it as a *profession.* Indeed, the idea of the 'CVE practitioner' is a category that I mobilize

in my methodology and critically engage with in Chapter 4 by examining my

informants' pathways into the CVE field, their motivations, what they understand their

work to be and how they critically reflect on it.

The concept of field, however, does have some limitations in its application to

CVE, particularly since there exists debate on where counter-terrorism itself is really a

bounded field in the Bourdieusian sense. Lisa Stampnitzky (2013) views the production

of terrorism knowledge rather as a site of action that "straddles several 'fields'" and

"operate(s) on the boundaries of fields" (pp., 11-12). Stampnitzky concludes that the

boundaries of the counter-terror field are "weak and permeable" and prefers to describe

it as a "liminal", "irregular" or "interstitial field" (Ibid, p. 13).

This intervention raises how CVE often serves as a meeting point where

representatives from other competing fields intermingle. It also draws attention to two

other terms often used to describe CVE: *network* and *space* (the latter I address below).

'Network' is used in social science to investigate relationships between sets of

interlinked actors (Amit & Caputo, 2015) or to conceive forms of social structure

(Castells, 2000; Latour, 2005). It is a concept that fittingly applies to the way the CVE field operates (or at least how it views itself as operating). My research found the networked features of CVE organizations to be on full display (some such as CPN-PREV and Against Violent Extremism are actual networks) with websites listing numerous partner affiliations globally and highlighting knowledge shares conducted with their partners and representatives from government and civil society. As I mentioned earlier in the Introduction, in the absence of many formal cases of 'radicalization', these networked activities comprise a large part of what CVE organizations *do:* conducting research, devising program models, and presenting them at conferences. The concept of 'network' thus provides a useful lens into the anatomy of the CVE field, capturing themes of interdependence and the open exchange of ideas that I found prevalent during my study. I will expand on some of these thoughts later in my discussion of CVE as a *space.*

3. CVE as a moral-social imperative

Another important but less explicit way that CVE can be understood is as an *imperative* operating within and beyond the CVE paradigm and (networked) field of practice. This is to consider the fight against 'radicalization' and 'violent extremism' as a moral or social necessity, a duty or will "not to be avoided or evaded" (Merriam-Webster n.d.).[42] Another suitable word might be *directive*, "to impel toward an action or goal", or *motivation*, "a motivating force, stimulus, or influence" (Ibid). The sense of CVE as an imperative is evident from the paradigm's early launch in European security and political

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[42] "Imperative." *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/imperative. Accessed 10 Aug. 2022.

communication after the 2004 Madrid train bombing, where opposing "violent

radicalisation" was declared a "fundamental priority" requiring "whole of society"

participation (European Commission, 2004, pp. 3, 4) and "radical Islam" as a

multidimensional threat to Europe's "democratic legal order" (AVID, 2004). Another

way to conceive of the CVE imperative might be to compare it to moral entrepreneurship

around the U.S. War on Drugs, where heavily mediatized representations of the drug

problem led to concerted action from multiple areas of society.[43] Both CVE and the War

on Drugs have imperatives that connect to broader anxieties over 'at-risk'[44] populations,

and employ "deficit frames": Similar to the 'underperforming' youth in education, the

'at-risk' subject in CVE is depicted as in need of a variety of protective factor

interventions (vocational, leisure, life-skill development) in order to improve life

chances and reduce their potential harm to society (Dudley-Marling, 2015). In the case

of CVE, the imperative is particularly rooted in longer standing "Muslim question"

(Kazemipur, 2014) over the ability of Muslim diaspora populations to "adapt" to

Western social and cultural norms.

The CVE imperative is both catalytic and insidious, with the ability to attach to

and reanimate public anxieties over issues like youth deviance, technology, immigration,

on top of the pervasive threat of terrorism. The discourse that no country or society is

"immune" to radicalization and violent extremism (e.g., European Commission 2004)

compels elites from multiple sectors to take on prevention roles while encouraging

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[43] Many parallels can be explored here. Like CVE and 'radicalization', the War on Drugs imperative imagined a largely linear concept of drug addiction, impelling both 'hard' and 'soft' intervention measures that largely focused on a racialized population thought to need 'controlling'.

[44] A category often problematically affixed to youth from racialized groups (Toldson, 2019).

ordinary citizens to be "vigilant" (e.g., Government of Canada, 2015). As I discuss in

Chapter 3, the CVE imperative is also propelled by high profile *events* that re-invoke

dominant discourses and keep CVE active on political agendas and in the public

consciousness. In Canada, this includes the 2014 Parliament Hill shooting, which was

described in government communication as having put the "Canadian way of life under

attack" and necessitating a "long term ideological struggle" with a "constantly mutating

threat" (Government of Canada 2015, p iii; Canadian Press, 2015). These high-profile

events also contribute to the CVE imperative's expansion (along with the field and

paradigm) into new problem areas. This is exemplified by incidents such as the 2019

mosque attack in Christchurch and the 2018 Toronto van attack, which solidified right-

wing 'extremism' and 'incel' violence as new domains of CVE research and

programming globally. For my informants, the timing of these events create large swings

in terms of how their work is received and resource opportunities that are presented.

Ultimately, the CVE *paradigm* and *imperative* are highly portable. They can

exist in a policy proposal, a news media story, be expressed and put into action by

politicians, and inhabit the minds and designs of educators, social workers, artists, and

health professionals (to name but a few). Thus, the paradigm and imperative can move

CVE efforts into harder to detect places well beyond the recognizable output of any

organized 'field' of CVE practice.

4. CVE as a 'space'

The final way I present CVE in my work – as a *space* – is also less explicit but unlike

'imperative' is frequently used by my informants. As a complement to 'field' and

'network', *space* might best illustrate the arena CVE practitioners operate in, where daily

interaction occurs with representatives from different sectors of government, civil society and elsewhere on matters around 'violent extremism'. Some CVE entities directly operationalize this conception by fashioning themselves as 'communities of practice'[45] or 'affinity spaces'[46], which invite the participation of outside actors at differing degrees and junctures around issues of shared interest. This is something I witnessed as an attendee of 'partners meetings' for two different Canadian CVE entities in 2018-2019, where a rotating group of participants from education, social services, police, cultural communities, academia and other domains met and discussed new advancements in CVE. Like the idea of 'network', participation in this 'space' denotes a *learning* disposition present within CVE. It speaks to the longevity of dominant discourses surrounding 'homegrown terrorism' and 'radicalization' as having "no known causes" and of the phenomenon being either "new" or "evolving": discourses that drive further research, funding, and policy attention toward the issue (Millett, 2020).

The idea of 'space' provides an elastic way of conceiving the relationship between CVE's various components, and how it can inhabit different places. As an academic concept, 'social space' analyzes the interaction between physical spaces, spaces of social relations, and more abstract 'mental spaces' (e.g., Henri Lefebvre). For my research design, this works to clarify the distinctions between the space of CVE relations and geographical space. Having set out to study the practice of countering violent extremism

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[45] As in where people engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of interest, building a repertoire of knowledge and resources (Wenger, 1998). CVE communities of practice have been established in the UK by the British Council and in Australia by the Compact Alliance.

[46] A space where people from different backgrounds come together to pursue a common endeavour or goal (Gee, 2005). It differs from 'community of practice' in that it does not imply 'practitioner' status or group belonging to its participants. This highlights the reality that many people I observed during my fieldwork participating in CVE were not in any sense 'CVE practitioners'.

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in Canada, I soon realized that CVE 'in Canada' is a transnational enterprise. This led to interviews with actors and analyses of practices in Europe, the United States and Western Asia that reach the Canadian population directly. The attraction of 'space' goes beyond the ability to capture CVE actors' 'sphere of interaction' (Reed-Danahay, 2015) and toward locating the more abstract 'pre-crime space' CVE initiatives aim to operate. Through the lens of 'social space', one can see how the 'pre-criminal' space can inhabit both <u>physical</u> spaces where 'radicalization' is thought to occur – schools, health centres, religious institutions – as well as <u>mental</u> spaces of cognition – where 'extreme' ideologies are thought to interact with psychological attributes and lived experiences to produce the 'violent extremist'. Both examples illustrated by the repeated calls to "contest the space" via the creation and dissemination of 'counter-narratives' to violent extremist propaganda (Awan, Miskimmon, & O'Loughlin, 2019), a statement that evokes spaces in both digital and mental senses.

Finally, the concept of 'space' connotes *movement* (expansion and contraction), an idea that is helpful for conceiving the growth of the CVE field and mutability of the paradigm and imperative. During CVE's existence different actors, tools, methods, problematizations, and contexts of violence have moved in and *through* the CVE space, and the contours of this space have spread and dissolved across different and competing 'problem spaces' (Lury, 2021). In this regard, the trajectory of my fieldwork over the past 4 years might be described as a *search for the CVE space,* which began by analyzing the concept of 'radicalization' in official discourse, its extension to cover forms of right-wing 'extremism', then tracking the launch of prevention initiatives in Canada and seeking out participating organizations to arrange interviews and observe activities (as I have outlined in the section on methodology). As a space of practitioner

relations and an abstract 'pre-crime' space that embodies physical and mental spaces, the *search for CVE* was often a fraught endeavour.

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In the chapters that follow, I will add detail and (hopefully) clarity to the relationship I am drawing out between CVE as a paradigm, imperative, field, network, and space.[47] Framing the diversity of CVE meanings in this manner highlights some additional limitations to my study. This is to recognize, as I suggest earlier, the greater and yet less tangible currency of the CVE paradigm and imperative, which stretches beyond and sometimes exists independently from the field's actions (which are bound by numerous obstacles related to funding, resources, and a lack of legitimacy among traditional security actors). Acknowledging these differences speaks to the challenge of determining CVE's *social function.*

Terminology and political implications

I adopt the term Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) as the name for my research object, serving as an umbrella term describing programs ranging from diverting people early in 'radicalization process' from violence, to combatting 'extremist' belief systems and attempting to 'de-radicalize' those who have already subscribed to violence.[48] My

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[47] Another term capturing these different forms is *dispositif,* used by Foucault in his study of the modern prison, which denotes a "regulatory ensemble" of discourses, imperatives, practices, spaces, as well as related norms, policies, institutions, legal decisions, state-civil society relations, moral propositions, scientific statements (see Garland, 2014). *Dispositif* has been used to describe CVE as "a heterogeneous assemblage of discursive and material elements for governing social problems" (Martin, 2014, p. 75). While I recognize the merit considering CVE as a *dispositif* I am cognizant of William Walters' (2012) remark that *dispositif* often accords more power, solidity, and longevity to research objects than reality might dictate. CVE might rather be a *dispositive* in-the-making, or a paradigm/imperative that is summoning an emerging *dispositif* of regulatory apparatuses.

[48] Earlier accounts (e.g., Schmid, 2013) drew distinctions between counter-radicalization (as intervening with individuals in the 'radicalization process'), CVE (as countering supportive belief

choice of 'CVE' stemmed from my informants, who most frequently used it to describe their work. Having stated this, I acknowledge that other terms such as 'Preventing Violent Extremism' (PVE), 'CRV' (countering radicalization to violence), or 'CR' (counter-radicalization) would be suitable choices.

The overlapping use of CVE with CRV, CR, etcetera speaks to an ambiguity over the phenomenon being addressed, whether it be 'radicalization/violent radicalization', 'violent extremism' or simply 'terrorism'. The relationship between these terms is often difficult to discern in the scientific literature,[49] and definitions tend to rely upon each other. For instance, many definitions of 'radicalization' rely on the concept of extremist beliefs and behaviours, yet what this 'extremism' itself represents is often not defined (Sedgwick 2010, p. 483).[50]

My observation is that 'violent extremism' has, for several reasons, begun to eclipse 'radicalization' as the primary term used for the phenomenon under focus. Part of this is related to 'violent extremism's' broader applicability, in that it is conceived as both an *ingredient in* the 'radicalization' process, in the belief systems that influence people to commit violence, and an *outcome of* 'radicalization', in terms of actual terrorism incidents.[51] In this latter usage, 'violent extremism' it thought to have

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systems) and de-radicalization (as rehabilitating terrorism offenders). Today, however there is very little practical difference in how these terms are used, with the exception of 'de-radicalization' having a pejorative connotation among my informants.

[49] Mandel (2009) attempts to distinguish radicalization and extremism in terms of 'velocity' versus 'position', radicalization as a "positive change in the degree of extremism expressed by an individual or group" (p, 111).

[50] As example of this is the Government of Canada's definition of 'radicalization' as "a process by which an individual or a group gradually adopts *extreme* positions or ideologies that are opposed to the status quo and challenge mainstream ideas" (Government of Canada, 2018, p. 7, *emphasis mine*).

[51] This is seen in Randy Borum's phrase "radicalization into violent extremism" (e.g., Borum, 2011).

subsumed the concept of terrorism and attached it to other forms of ideologically

motivated violence (Romaniuk, 2015),[52] a development that mirrors CVE's evolution

and the expansion of its problem space beyond notions of 'Islamist' radicalization. In the

CVE field, 'violent extremism' has taken on a specific utility to suggest a *universal*

phenomenon that covers forms of non-state violence across the ideological spectrum.

This is evidenced in the oft-repeated phrase in my fieldwork of there being "a similar

trajectory, vulnerabilities, and process of involvement underlying all types of violent

extremism".[53]

     Beyond its elasticity and universality, there is benefit for field practitioners to use

'violent extremism' over 'radicalization' due to its greater ease of application. Since its

popular take-up, scientific usage of 'radicalization' has typically received qualifiers,

either by noting that its etymology (*radical* as getting to the root of an issue) is not

inherently problematic, or through paying lip-service to the positive contributions to

society of people deemed "radical" in the past (e.g., EGVR, 2008; RCMP, 2009;

Schmid, 2013). Consequently, 'radicalization' sometimes appears with the adverb

violent, which connotes an understanding that not all radicalization leads to violence

(e.g., Bartlett & Miller, 2012) as well as implying that socially acceptable degrees of

political or religious radicalism are possible (Aly & Striegher, 2012). 'Violent

extremism' on the other hand, does not contain any of the neutral-to-positive

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[52] This is typified by O'Halloran's comment that: "All terrorism is violent extremism, but not all
violent extremism meets the Criminal Code threshold of terrorism" (2021: 2-3).

[53] This is paraphrased from several statements made my interviewees and heard at CVE events,
including CPRLV open house training, February 2019.

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connotations associated with the latter[54] and thus might be thought to grant legitimacy to

the field and paradigm that was lacking through the terminology of 'radicalization'. For

all the criticisms over 'radicalization's' problematic ambiguity (e.g., Sedgwick 2010;

Kundnani, 2012), its users must at least nominally confront the prospective legitimacy of

the beliefs and aims of the groups or individuals they affixing it to. It should be

recognized then that the interchangeable deployment of 'radicalization' and 'violent

extremism' in my fieldwork, while often not a conscious decision, is nonetheless not

value neutral. Part is this is due to the type of unqualified 'bad' that 'violent extremism'

represents (vis-à-vis 'radicalization') and its efficacy as a catch-all term that pools

together different strands of ideologies and violent acts, which include and extend

beyond terrorism. It is *this* construction that allows J.M. Berger (2018) to assert that

'violent extremism' is "destabilizing civil societies around the globe" and to call it "a

defining challenge of our age" [55] (pp., 1-2) or as put by Tony Blair and Leon Panetta in a

U.S. CVE report, "a global generational challenge" (2016, p. vi).

In sum, part of labelling my study CVE is to make the case that 'violent

extremism' is what this paradigm/field (etc.) is increasingly focused on preventing (and

that it is the social impact and purchase of 'violent extremism' to which critical analyses

must consider). This definition of 'violent extremism' may include terrorism as well as a

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[54] It might be noted however that the contemporary popular usage of 'radical' and 'radicalization' is much closer to 'extremism' than its etymology (of getting at the root of an issue) suggests. Derek Silva's examination of the usage of 'radicalization' in American news media between 1969-2014 found its tone has moved increasingly away from positive and neutral descriptions toward negative (as well as anti-Muslim) descriptions (Silva, 2017b).

[55] This sentiment is shared by the publisher, MIT Press, as 'extremism' is the only political concept that garners a book in their *Essential Knowledge Series,* which sits alongside other books on 'cloud computing', 'machine learning', 'neuroplasticity', 'technological singularity', etc.

broader range of ideologically motivated violence, within which the 'radicalization' process is considered a crucial component.

Chapter 2: The 'origins' of *Countering Violent Extremism* (a critical reinterpretation)

> As soon as you conduct historical research, you discover in fact that at the origin of institutions things were discussed that nowadays have to be discovered in an extremely laborious way.
>
> --Pierre Bourdieu, 1992 *On the State: Lectures at the Collège de France*.

Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that countering violent extremism did not appear on any academic or policy agenda until the mid-2000s (e.g., Neumann, 2013). It is recorded to have had its start in the aftermath of events in Europe between 2004 and 2005, namely, the Madrid train bombings, the assassination of filmmaker Theo van Gogh in Amsterdam, and the '7/7' bombings in London's transit system. As recounted by many, the incidents in question indicated that an *internal* frontier in the 'War on Terror' had opened by way of 'Islamist homegrown terrorism': a new phenomenon where westerners from Muslim backgrounds "no longer directed by al-Qaeda but subscribing to its ideology" carry out attacks independently against their own country (Coolsaet, 2016, p. 8; Crone & Harrow, 2011). In other words, the incidents in Madrid, Amsterdam, and London were considered acts of 'international Islamist terrorism' and yet were differentiated as being something *new* as, unlike the 9/11 attacks, the perpetrators in these cases were home residents of where the violence occurred.

A consequent 'watershed' in counter-terrorism is thought to have ensued. The reactive and coercive approaches of the War on Terror were seen to have failed or needed to be supplemented (e.g., Nye, 2004). Policy focus turned *inward* toward

national populations (read, Muslim diasporas) analyzing the dynamics of young, loosely affiliated individuals who meet over the internet and in local spaces (Sciolino & Schmitt, 2008). Policies also moved *forward,* encroaching into the so-called 'pre-crime' space, to identify potential terrorists and non-coercively intervene before violence occurs. As stated in a 2007 report by the New York Police Department:

> Where once we would have defined the initial indicator of the threat at the point where a terrorist or group of terrorists would actually plan an attack, we have now shifted our focus to a much earlier point—a point where we believe the potential terrorist or group of terrorists begin and progress through a process of radicalization. The culmination of this process is a terrorist attack (Silber & Bhatt, 2007, p. 5).

In short, a new counter-terrorism paradigm was born. Policy responses to Madrid, Amsterdam and London moved the locus of counter-terrorism research and practice away from deterring formal terrorist organizations in favour of addressing the ideologies thought to justify terrorism and relevant individual psychological, cultural and social vulnerability factors. Interest was renewed in examining the dynamics that lead to terrorism, bucking a trend after 9/11 where it had become politically incorrect to discuss root causes (Neumann, 2013). The concept of 'radicalization' quickly became the dominant lens for understanding terrorism, which along with its variant 'violent extremism' spawned sub-disciplines of research. Political will across Europe and North America would facilitate the institutionalization of this new paradigm, with CVE-style programs initiated across most countries, mobilizing a host of new actors through 'society-wide' terrorism prevention initiatives. For Western Muslims living in a post-9/11 climate of heightened securitization (Razack, 2008), they became subject to a host of new interventions, with their community institutions and cultural practices freshly scrutinized as sources of terrorist potential. Eventually, CVE practices would become

extended across populations at large in the interest of countering violent extremism's 'evolving nature' (Berger, 2018) including efforts against forms of 'right-wing extremism' and hate-based violence.

Variations of this narrative on CVE's rise can be found in numerous literature reviews on the subject (e.g., Schmid, 2013; Romaniuk, 2015). In this chapter I wish to problematize aspects of this account, historicizing present understandings to create space for critical engagement. I am interested in challenging the common perception that this new paradigm and field of practice emerged out of nowhere as the product of a *spontaneous* and *necessary reaction* by security officials to an objectively changing threat environment, as represented by 'homegrown terrorism'. As I will show, CVE has several important antecedents that can be uncovered in unexpected places. The contents of these antecedents help reveal the eventual trajectory that the CVE field and paradigm would take.

Presentations of CVE's origins as *spontaneous necessity* are prevalent across the literature in security studies and counter-terrorism. A causal chain is depicted where the events of Madrid, Amsterdam and London awoke political and security officials to the problem of 'homegrown' terrorism, leading to a change of thinking and subsequent interest in preventing 'radicalization' within Muslim communities. This is evident in the language of Rachel Briggs, an eventual member of prominent CVE entities Moonshot CVE and the Institute for Strategic Dialogue [ISD], who wrote in *International Affairs* in 2010 how the 7/7 London bombings "were a wake-up call" that "*caused* authorities to realize the complex web of radicalized people within local Muslim communities and […] that communities should be given a central role in addressing the problem" (quoted

in Vermeulen, 2014, pp. 291-92 *emphasis mine*). Similar explanations are on offer in the

flagship journal *Terrorism and Political Violence*, where Crone and Harrow recount

from their qualitative study of European terror incidents that:

> The London bombings in 2005 led to the perception that the terrorist threat had
> changed from external to internal […] To deal with this seemingly new
> phenomenon analytically—and to map out how to counter it—several concepts
> were (re-)invented: "homegrown terrorism," "radicalization," and "self-starter
> groups" (2011, p. 521).

This line of reasoning is also evident in Rik Coolsaet's review of the origins of

'radicalization' for the defense industry thinktank Royal United Services Institute.

Coolsaet, a member of the European Union's original Violent Radicalization expert

group, surmises how 'homegrown terror' incidents persuaded security officials to pursue

counter-terrorism efforts on new grounds:

> Terrorist incidents in the Netherlands, Spain and London soon shifted the focus
> from the external to the domestic realm […] these attackers were individuals
> who grew up in Europe and were often born there. How did they come to resort
> to terrorism and turn against their own countrymen? […] Untangling this process
> became the essence of radicalisation studies […] By taking this route, the EU
> pushed counterterrorism far beyond its traditional security-centred tools by
> linking prevention and security with the ultimate ambition of draining the
> breeding ground for terrorism. Counterterrorism *now* became a whole-of-
> government effort" (2016, pp. 3-10 *emphasis mine*).

Finally, this discourse of causality was evident in my interview data, as informants with

experience from that era referred to "a shift in the recognition of terrorism and landscape

of counter-terrorism" brought forth by the 'homegrown' events and how it spawned a

search for new answers[56]:

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[56] An important critical counter example was offered by an experienced interviewee (Micheline), who
stated: "it is my opinion that the political will to implement the 'radicalization' concept was to give
the impression that they are actually able to intervene in the process. Because the War on Terror
didn't work, and terrorism is very, you know, frightening, and gives the feeling that we cannot do

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> They [states] were looking for solutions because when it's people born abroad attacking western countries, the solution of course is to better triage, you know… who's coming in, detection and denied entry. But as the homegrown phenomenon emerged across the western world with the 7/7 bombings in London, Madrid bombings, Theo Van Gogh assassination, the Toronto 18 plot it was like 'okayyy…', you know? And I remember catching that wave (Karl, Ottawa)

In this chapter, I challenge the grounds of this interpretation by focusing on three specific 'episodes' that occurred in the years before the 'official' origin of CVE. These episodes appear at similar times on three different continents and are as follows: (1) the emergence of Dutch intelligence reports circa 2002 that describe a 'radicalization process' preceding terrorism and propose shifting to a 'broad' prevention approach; (2) models outlining the stages of the radicalization process beginning in the United States in 2003; and (3) the introduction of 'soft' counterterrorism practices in Muslim majority countries starting in 2000. In the content of these 'pre-history' episodes, I argue, lies the blueprint for most of the conceptual and practice-based innovations that have occurred in CVE from the mid-2000s to today. This includes the novel conceptualization of 'radicalization' that lies at the heart of CVE, models the add content to the concept, enabling interventions to be devised, and a suite of 'soft' approaches applied society-wide that employ an ever-broadening range of actors.

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anything, because it's like impossible to grasp. So, to spread the idea that politicians are able to prevent it is to substitute the word 'violent radicalization' for terrorism, because when you hear 'radicalization' you hear a process, and if there is a process, there is a way to intervene and stop the process". Micheline's explanation of 'radicalization' as state-enacted 'impression management' nonetheless conforms to the notion of circa-2005 origins. She added: "Historically 'radicalization' comes from the Council of Europe, who used the word for the first time in this context right after the attacks of London in 2005. The word had been used in the 60s and 70s, wars of independence in Central America, trade unions fights, but violent radicalization as a synonym for terrorism is really 2005."

I thus reach the conclusion that the CVE paradigm was created *prior* to the events of 'homegrown terror' in London, Amsterdam and Madrid. These events rather provided an opportunity for its mobilization and institutionalization (a process that I cover in the next chapter). This proposition leads to, among other things, re-thinking the ways in which expanded CVE practices really are new and innovative, and consequently, on what their social function and impacts are.

It also leads to further questions over how exactly CVE developed. This is because there is no evidence that the three episodes I cover in this chapter had any influence on each other, despite their degree of conceptual affinity, nor is it clear that the actors involved had any awareness of the others. Moreover, in the case of early 'soft' counter-terror strategies in the Muslim world, it is unclear to what degree they concretely influenced later CVE. These questions are underscored by the fact that neither the Dutch intelligence reports and 'soft counter-terror' innovations in the middle east contain any reference to influential texts nor antecedent examples. This leads again to the perception that this new paradigm and field of practice for counter-terrorism emerged from almost nowhere as a product of *spontaneous necessity* as policy makers adjusted and innovated to evolving threats. This 'void' in CVE's history leads me to propose that the 'prehistorical' emergence of the CVE paradigm illustrates the turn to *preemption* (Massumi, 2015)[57] as an operative logic in security governance: an anticipatory form of security governance which actively *produces,* as opposed to responding to, new discursive threats. This is particularly evident in the decision by

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[57] Massumi defines preemption as: "when the futurity of unspecified threat is affectively held in the present in a perpetual state of potential emergence(y) so that a movement of actualization may be triggered that is not only self-propelling but also effectively, indefinitely, ontologically productive, because it works from a virtual cause whose potential no single actualization exhausts" (2015, p. 15).

Dutch security authorities to focus on the *possible* 'radicalization' of the country's Muslim population rather than the documented rise of far-right racist violence at the time against ethnic and cultural minorities.

Pre-history episode 1: A 'broadening' of counter-terrorism in the Netherlands

While it is true that the concept of 'radicalization' did not receive mention in European Union policy until after the Madrid train bombing, traces of the paradigm shift are evident in Dutch security correspondence circa 2002. The first example is a report entitled *Recruitment for the jihad in the Netherlands: from incident to trend* on the deaths of two Dutch youth from Moroccan backgrounds in Kashmir in January 2002, prepared by the Netherlands' General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD). Rik Coolsaet suggests that the report contains first explicit reference to the "hitherto unknown concept of 'radicalisation processes'" (2016, p. 8). While my research disputes this claim, the report's outline of what it describes as "the phenomenon of enlistment" contains a series of claims that would repeatedly feature in later research on 'radicalization' and in CVE programming. It is worth outlining several of these statements, based on my own summarization:

1. A "trend" is emerging of second and third generation youth from Muslim backgrounds, raised in Europe, who are "responsive to radical Islamic opinions" and display increasing vulnerability to recruitment in support of 'jihad' (AIVD, 2002, p. 5).

2. The youths in question are "often in search of their identity" and find "something to hold on to in very radical Islamic beliefs" (AIVD, 2002, p. 10). Push factors include discrimination or outsider status in European society and pull factors involve

"the sense of self-respect, involvement, brotherhood and identity" they gain in the movement (11).

3. The recruitment to *jihad* occurs in linear stages, during which plural thinking narrows to black/white. Recruits gain a sense of existential security in coming to "feel that they are involved in a fight between good and bad", which usually leads to conflict with and isolation from friends and family (11, 18).

4. Muslim community institutions, such as Islamic centres and "orthodox mosques" are sites of recruitment (15-16). This is due in part to the dismantling of al-Qaeda's organizational capacity, resulting in 'jihadi' recruitment becoming more diffuse and independent from structured terror networks.

5. The potential danger of radical Islamic movements transcends public safety and rather represents "a huge threat" to "democratic legal order" (AIVD, 2002, pp. 5-6, 28). The movements are having a "polarising impact" on society by discouraging the integration of Dutch Muslims and sowing alienation and distrust between them and "the rest of the population" (28, 31).

6. Confronting the spread and susceptibility of radical ideas in domestic Muslim diaspora communities is "not the task of government alone" but will require cooperation with "all moderate forces" in society (32).

As implied in the report's title *from incident to trend,* AIVD concludes that the recruitment of Dutch Muslims in Kashmir was not an isolated incident, but rather "the first tangible illustrations of a tendency, closely related to a stealthy entrance of a violent radical Islamic movement in Dutch society […] also taking place in the rest of the western world" (2002, p. 31).

These themes are taken up with additional clarity and detail a year later in a piece by AIVD's director E.S.M. Akerboom entitled "Contraterrorisme in Nederland". Like in

AIVD (2002), Akerboom depicts "the creeping roots of a violent, radical Islamic movement"[58] in Dutch society, which has become a "significant endogenous threat" due to the rise of "self-supporting units" [zelfvoorzienende eenheden] that can carry out attacks independently of al Qaeda (Akerboom, 2003, pp. 1, 3). In response, the AIVD director calls for a new strategy for fighting terrorism, which he terms 'the broad approach' [een brede benadering]. Attention is first to be directed toward terrorism's "underlying radicalization process" [het onderliggende radicalisering proces] and its domestic breeding grounds [binnenlandse voedingsbodems] (Akerboom, 2003, pp. 1, 6). Authorities must be trained to recognize "signal behaviour" ['signaalgedrag'] of radicalization among youth to enable early intervention (2003, p. 9). To this end, the development of an "early warning system" is proposed for identifying and reporting radicalization trends [voor het vroegtijdig onderkennen van radicaliseringtendensen] (6).

The 'broad approach' outlined in Akerboom's report also necessitates action in policy areas beyond policing and the judiciary.[59] The author calls for the formation of strong partnerships within Muslim communities to build "social awareness" [maatschappelijke bewustwording] which might increase "resilience" against radicalism and extremism [toename van de weerbaarheid tegen radicalisme en extremisme] (2003, 5). Part of this involves promoting "moderate forces" within the Muslim community which can "erect a dam against radicalization processes and recruitment" [matigende en gematigde krachten daarbinnen een dam opwerpen tegen radicaliseringprocessen en

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[58] "[D]e rekruteringen voor de islamistische strijd waarmee Nederland de afgelopen jaren werd geconfronteerd op een sluipende worteling van een gewelddadige, radicaal-islamitische stroming in de Nederlandse samenleving".

[59] "[B]ehoeft ook voortdurende aandacht op andere beleidsterreinen" (Akerboom, 2003, p. 3).

rekrutering] (9). Akerboom closes by devising a 'ring model' [fig. 1] outlining the target

demographics of the broad approach. This calls for specific strategies tailored toward

"terrorists" (the smallest ring in the middle of the model), their wider base of

"supporters" and "sympathizers", and "the (Muslim) community" in general [de

(moslim)gemeenschap] (2003, 9). "Centripetal" movements between rings, the report

argues, ought to be flagged as indication of "radicalization processes" [Centripetale

bewegingen kunnen worden aangemerkt als radicaliserings processen] (7).

Het ringenmodel:

TERRORISTEN

ONDERSTEUNERS

SYMPATHISANTEN

SAMENLEVING
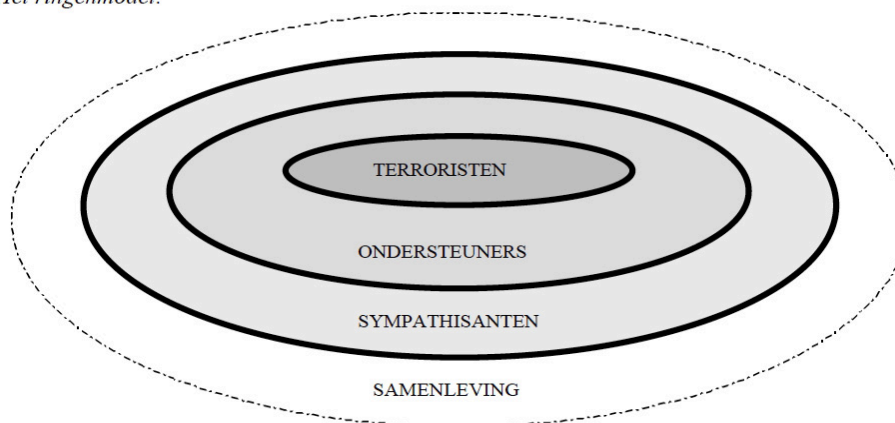
Fig. IV – AIVD ring model denoting "terrorists", "supporters", "sympathizers", and the broader Muslim community as recipients of counter-terror policies (Akerboom, 2003, p. 9)

The novelty of these propositions, and their connections to later CVE research and

practice, cannot be understated. For the first time, a 'radicalization process' involving

linear stages is positioned at the front end of terrorism, and it is argued that counter-

terrorism ought to emphasize detecting and preventing 'radicalization' over

apprehending known terrorists. CVE tropes on vulnerable Muslim youth "in search of an

identity" are present, along with the sense that the Dutch Muslim community as a whole

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is at risk with Muslim civic institutions acting as potential 'radicalization' incubators.[60] Furthermore, it is proposed that counter-terrorism employ societal actors beyond police and security, including 'moderate' forces in Muslim society, in community engagement efforts to address terrorism's wider support base. Other foundational statements are present in these reports that do not appear in CVE until years later. This includes reference to a trend of "polarization" in Dutch society produced by Islamic terrorism (AIVD, 2002, pp. 6, 29; Akerboom, 2003, p. 3), the use of medicalizing language to describe the spread of Islamist ideology, and the need to foster "resilience" to extremism in communities (Ibid, p. 5).

Contained in these reports then, is a *template*[61] for understanding and combatting terrorism that would become embodied in CVE. The approach in this template pre-dates (and anticipates) the actual occurrence of 'homegrown terror' events in Europe as well as the corresponding moves by the European Union that are thought to have produced CVE. The importance of this notwithstanding, it remains unclear as to how the AIVD arrived at these conclusions. Neither of the reports by the organization and its director refer to supporting data or literature, other than an oblique reference in the 2002 report to "information and insights [exchanged] with foreign security and intelligence services" (AIVD, 2002, p. 5). Further research I undertook indicates that some of the main items in these reports were circulating in Dutch political correspondence prior to the Kashmir

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[60] For instance, a 2015 Senate Committee report in Canada cited Canadian mosques, Muslim community centres, and religious schools as "centres of radical messaging", places where young Muslims were being "brainwashed" by "extremist jihadist ideology" and motivated to commit terrorism (Canada, 2015, pp. 3, 12).

[61] By using template, I draw on Kitzinger's work on *media templates* (Kitzinger, 2000)*,* which I employ in a previous study of 'homegrown' terrorism (e.g., Millett, 2020). I understand the concept of templates as a rhetorical shorthand providing a framework for understanding social events, guiding how they are studied, governed, and reported to the public.

incident, as seen in proceedings in Netherlands' Tweede Kamer [House of Representatives] on an October 2001 update to the Counterterrorism and Security Action Plan. Here it is stated that government authorities are investigating "radicalization tendencies that may lead to terrorism" [mogelijk tot terrorisme leidende radicaliseringtendensen] and even refer to a "broad approach" [het fenomeen terrorisme in brede zin]. The House correspondence also conceptualizes a relationship between radicalization, extremism, and terrorism, stating that Dutch policy aims to "prevent radicalization processes from overshooting to the most extreme form of radicalism, terrorism"[62] (Netherlands, 2002, pp. 6-7). Nonetheless, and similar to the AIVD reports, the broad strokes of a new counter-terrorism template are presented without indication given toward its supporting frameworks or influential precedents.

The absence of background information in the Dutch reports and political correspondence leads to asking *where did these concepts of the radicalization process and the 'broad approach', which formatively altered how societies experience counter-terrorism, develop?* My research indicates that this question cannot be definitively answered.[63] Thus, my interest is rather devoted to ways that ingrained assumptions *about*

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[62] "Doel van deze aanpak is te voorkomen dat radicalisering processen doorschieten naar de meest extreme vorm van radicalisme, het terrorisme" (Netherlands, 2002, p. 6).

[63] AIVD's precursor organization, BVD is reported to have had concerns with Muslim "radicalisation" as early as 1993 (de Koning, Roex, Becker, & Aams, 2014). Disconnected to this, my later research found an original conception of the "radicalization process" of right-wing terrorists in the journal *Terrorism and Political Violence* in 1995 (e.g., Sprinzak, 1995). It is also evident (but not widely reported in CVE literature) that CVE practices borrow from 'problem-oriented' policing strategies that came to prominence in the US and UK in the 1980s (Bowling, 1998), counter-insurgency theories from the 1970s on empowering 'moderate forces' in a suspect community (Burnett & Whyte, 2005), as well as primary and secondary prevention approaches in psychology and mental illness that date back to the "mental hygiene movement" of the early 1900s, as articulated by Spaulding & Balch (1983). In section 3 of this chapter, I highlight another important precursor to CVE practice, happening concurrently with Dutch reporting, in middle eastern states such as Saudi Arabia.

the origins of 'radicalization' can be fruitfully problematized. As discussed, the reports by AIVD and its director Akerboom present their findings in correspondence to the narrative of 'spontaneous necessity': that officials developed CVE innovations spontaneously out of a necessary and clear-eyed reaction to an objectively changing security environment. Both reports respond to what are seen by them as emerging situations[64] and propose framings and preventative approaches that are bereft of influential antecedents or previous considerations. This discursive rendering allows later writers, such as Amsterdam-based scholar Floris Vermeulen, to reflect on how CVE began as "a rather clear-cut policy question" that later evolved into "a complex, multifaceted discussion about immigration, belonging, citizenship and the position of Muslim communities in Western societies" (Vermeulen, 2014, p. 291). A cursory examination of political developments in Dutch society in this period throws such an interpretation into question, suggesting in fact that the reverse is true: that the "discussion" over immigration, citizenship, and belonging in reference to the presence of Muslim diasporas *led to* the "policy question" of CVE. I will the remainder of this section to briefly explore this contradiction and why it matters.

It is firstly clear that in the Netherlands, as in many other European countries in the 1990s, public discourse began to reflect a sense of brewing 'crisis' over national identity and belonging. This was occurring in a context of prolonged economic malaise across Europe, the relaxation of border restrictions due to European continental integration, and perhaps most significantly, higher numbers of newcomers from North

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[64] I.e., that the Netherlands is "confronted with the creeping roots of a violent, radical Islamic movement in Dutch society" (Akerboom, 2003, p. 1).

African and Southwest Asian countries (Parsons & Smeeding, 2006). As both van Dijk (1993) and Bjørgo & Witte (1993) note, ethnic minorities, new immigrants and refugees became increasingly presented as the causes of cultural conflicts, as economic burdens, and as a source of crime and disorder in political correspondence and inflammatory news media coverage. The theme of national identity and Arab and Muslim communities reached a crescendo in the Netherlands after the 2002 assassination of Pim Fortuyn, a politician who gained a following due to his open expression of anti-immigrant and Islamophobic sentiments (Thurman, 2003). In the legal space, several laws were passed that curtailed citizenship eligibility for dual nationals, along with 'crimmigration' (Hartry, 2012) legislation that changed asylum procedures for applicants deemed a danger to public order or national security (Chergui & Oosterom-Staples, 2007). Chergui and Oosterom-Staples note that abusive vetting practices under the new asylum system garnered reproach by Human Rights Watch in 2003, and that the Dutch public discussion was largely muted over the gradual "social construction of asylum seekers as potential terrorists" (294). These authors further assess how the Dutch security and intelligence community seemed to instrumentalize the climate of heightened scrutiny and hostility toward ethnic minorities. Chergui and Oosterom-Staples argue that with the collapse of the Soviet Union, AIVD's predecessor agency BVD [Secret Intelligence Service] sought to "deploy the debate around the position of Muslims" as grounds for the continuation of their activities (2007, p. 293), noting BVD reports from the 1990s that expressed concern over the "'fundamentalisation' of Dutch society" and "undemocratic activities" among minorities (69-70). The ideational turn towards a 'Muslim' threat was hardly confined to the Netherlands, as writings by intellectual authorities in the West were propagating the sense that Muslim communities represented

a new source of violent enmity in the wake of the Cold War (e.g., Lewis, 1990; Esposito, 1992).

This (albeit brief) view of political climate around AIVD's reports supports my reversal of Vermeulen's above point, in that "multifaceted discussions" were already taking place on security, belonging, and Muslim and minority communities, and that this rather *created* the terms for how the counter-terrorism question would be formulated. Concerns over 'national identity' among ethno-majorities in places such as Netherlands and a growing fear of Muslims as an identity-cum-security threat provide the historical backdrop under which early CVE discourses emerged, i.e., 'radicalization' and the 'broad approach' outlined above. The terms of reference for this discussion did not emerge from *nowhere.* It is worth further pointing out how in this period, repeated alarms on the rise in violence *by* ethno-majority people *against* ethnic minorities in the Netherlands and across Europe (e.g., van Dijk 1993; van Donselaar, 1993; Kaplan & Bjørgo, 1998) [65] were largely ignored by the political and security establishment or were considered as "isolated and occasional" incidents rather than a problematic trend (Witte, 1993, pp. 144-145).[66] Research and policy responses to hate crimes and racist violence

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[65] Research from experts on racism, including a report by the Council of Europe, warned that racist violence and harassment against ethnic minorities, immigrants, and refugees was reaching alarming levels in the late 1980s and 1990s. In the Netherlands, a sharp increase of racist violence was reported in 1992, which included the firebombing of a mosque in Amersfoort; bomb attacks on 'immigrant targets' in The Hague in January-February 1992; and a series of racist assaults, including the severe beating of a Haitian man by five neo-Nazi skinheads (van Donselaar, 1993, p. 54-55). Other examples in Europe include the desecration of Jewish graves in Carpentras, France in 1990, violence against African street vendors in Florence, Italy, murders and arson attacks against Turkish people in Berlin and Schwandorf, Germany in 1985 and 1989, and racist attacks against asylum-seekers in Hoyerswerda and Rostock in 1992 (Oakley, 1992; Bjørgo & Witte, 1993).

[66] A notable example of this was the murder of a 15-year-old black person, Kerwin Duijnmeijer, in 1983 by a Nazi skinhead, in which the Amsterdam court ruled that there was no proof of racist motive or premeditation. This despite the offender having told police that he stabbed Kerwin because he was black, and that he would do it again (van Donselaar, 1993, p. 53).

by white majorities would not come into formal contact with CVE's development until later in the 2000s (see next chapter). Instead, the Dutch intelligence community appears to have seized upon the climate of hostility toward domestic Muslim populations to investigate the *possible* security threat posed by victimized ethnic minority and newcomer communities when a government review of counter-terrorism was ordered.

This context of the birth of the 'radicalization process' and 'broad approach' in Netherlands raises interest in how other societies (read, Canada) where similar anxieties over identity and belonging were animated by racialized newcomers and linked to security concerns (Pratt & Valverde, 2002; Krishnamurti, 2012) so readily imported CVE concepts when events marked as "homegrown terrorism" occurred on their soil. This is a subject that I will examine more closely in the next chapter. In the next two sections of this chapter, I examine how this new course of action for counter-terrorism laid out in the AIVD reports would be filled with empirical and practical content through research and policy experimentation occurring elsewhere around this time.

Pre-history 2: early models of the 'radicalization process'

As a new template for understanding and acting upon terrorism was emerging out of the Netherlands, parallel contributions were occurring in the United States by way of conceptual models that outline the steps individuals take to becoming a terrorist. These would later be described in trade literature as "models of the radicalization process" (e.g., Borum, 2011; King & Taylor, 2011), however, in three early models that I examine here, the word 'radicalization' does not yet appear.

The first of these models published is Randy Borum's "Terrorist Mind-set" in July 2003. Borum, a forensic psychologist and FBI consultant, examines how grievances

and vulnerabilities become transformed into extremist beliefs through a psycho-social process that occurs in four stages [fig. 2]. It begins with a person's identification of an "undesirable" condition or event in society ("it's not right"), which becomes framed as an injustice ("it's not fair"), leading to the targeting of a responsible out group ("it's your fault"), and a distancing/devaluation stage ("you're evil") where violence becomes justifiable (Borum, 2003). Borum cites how the model was designed to aid investigators and intelligence analysts for assessing behaviours, experiences, and activities of groups and individuals associated with extremist ideologies (p. 7). Less than a year later, political scientist Quintan Wiktorowicz presented a new model [fig. 3] at a Yale University conference on "The Roots of Islamic Radicalism". Wiktorowicz, an eventual White House advisor on CVE, combines insights from social psychology with social movement theory to outline the trajectory of joining a "radical Islamic movement" in four-stages. The first stage involves a *cognitive opening* – a concept later popularized in CVE – where a personal crisis shakes previously held beliefs and makes one receptive to new ideas. In the next stage, this crisis becomes directed toward *religious seeking*. The third stage involves *frame alignment*, where personal views become united with the "Islamist" worldview, leading to a final *socialization* stage where ideology and group solidarity hardens, and the individual is prepared to engage in risky behaviour (Wiktorowicz, 2004). A third early influential model is Fathali Moghaddam's "Staircase to Terrorism" published in *American Psychologist* in February 2005. Here Moghaddam depicts the "psychological processes leading to terrorism" in six stages or "floors" [fig. 4]. The *ground floor* shares commonality with the models by highlighting feelings of deprivation or unfair treatment. The individual moves to the *first floor* when finding a lack of options to redress this grievance, leading to a displacement of aggression toward

an outgroup (*second floor*), proceeding to morally justify terrorism by dehumanizing the outgroup (*third floor*), eventually leading to a final *fourth floor* that few ever reach, where "a categorical us-versus-them view" is solidified and the individual joins a terrorist organization (Moghaddam, 2005, p. 165).

The Process of Ideological Development

It's Not Right   It's Not Fair   It's Your Fault   You're Evil

Social and Economic Deprivation → Inequality and Resentment → Blame/Attribution → Generalizing/ Stereotyping / Dehumanizing/ Demonizing the Enemy (Cause)

Context   Comparison   Attribution   Reaction
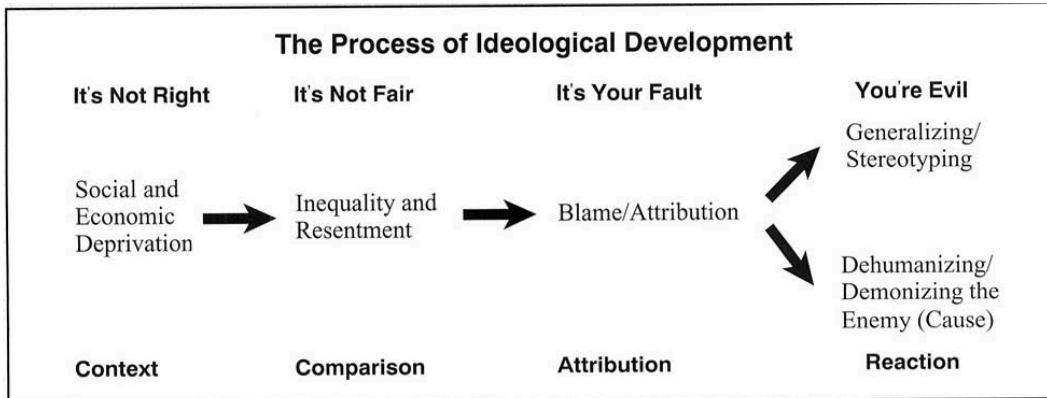
Fig. V – Borum's Four-Stage Model of the Terrorist Mindset
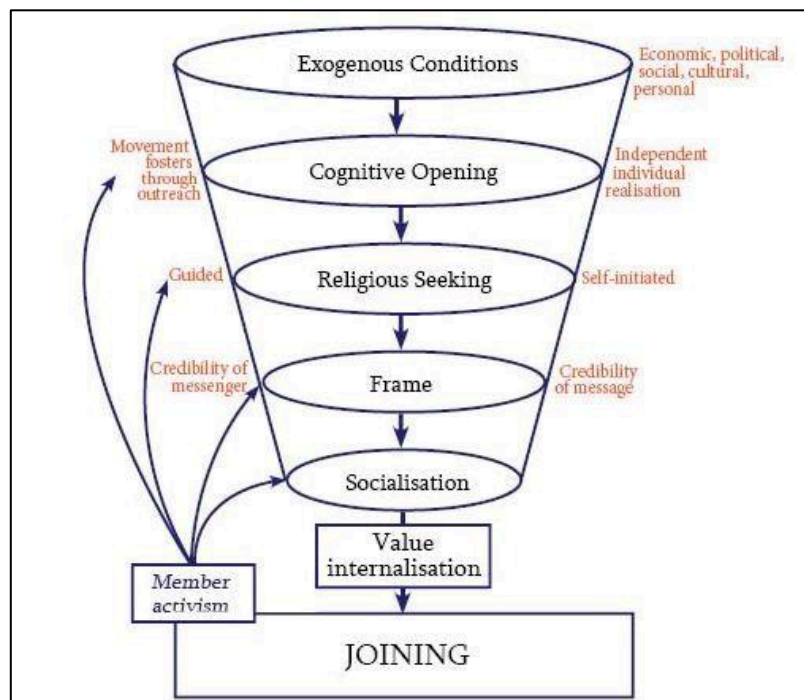
Fig. VI – Wiktorowicz's model "Joining the Cause" (printed in Schmid, 2013)

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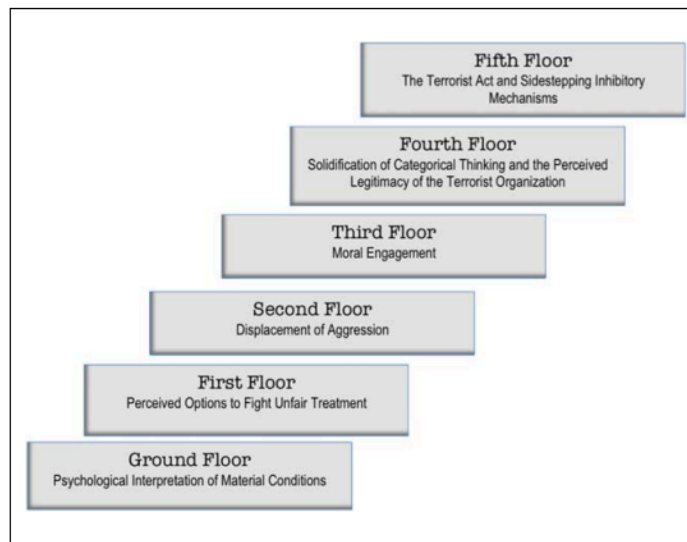
Fig. VII – Moghaddam's "Staircase to Terrorism" (printed in Borum, 2011)

The stage models by Borum, Wiktorowicz, and Moghaddam correspond in many ways

to the depiction of the 'radicalization' problem in the AIVD material, foregrounding how

issues of identity formation, grievance, and social belonging render Western Muslims

vulnerable to radical Islamist ideas, and *potentially,* to committing acts of terror in

Western countries. Like in AIVD (2002), the authors depict 'radicalization' (even if they

do not use this term) to proceed along a series of stages where 'rigid' forms of

categorical thinking take hold. The models also reinforce the view that reports of *jihadi*

recruitment of Westerners represent an identifiable trend rather than isolated or

dissimilar occurrences. As such, the process models further contribute to the case made

in Dutch circles for counter-terrorism to move toward 'pre-crime' interventions.[67] Their

unmistakable correlation notwithstanding, it is noteworthy that none of the authors of the

stage models refer to each other, nor to the AIVD material, leaving the impression that

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[67] Moghaddam was particularly evangelical that "prevention must come first" and saw it as short-sighted to focus only on eliminating individual terrorists "at the top of the staircase" (2005, pp. 167, 161).

each had developed independently.[68] Unlike the AIVD concepts, these stage models do refer to prior research, particularly the influence of studies on the psychology of social movements and civil violence in the 1960s and 1970s. This includes work by Ted Robert Gurr (1968; 1970) on relative depravation, Leonard Berkowitz (1962; 1989) on frustration-aggression theory, and Albert Bandura's theories on the social learning of aggression and mechanisms of moral disengagement (e.g., Bandura, 1962; Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996). Finally, the authors also apply insights from earlier process models on personality change related to religious conversion and the joining of millenarian cults (e.g., Richardson, 1985; Loftland & Stark, 1965). This interest in how cognitive and personality factors interact with external cues to influence movement/conflict participation acts as a link to these bodies of literature that otherwise stand decades apart.[69]

Part of the innovation in the models by Borum, Wiktorowicz, and Moghaddam is in adapting prior socio-psychological research on violence toward the more recent problem of 'Islamist terrorism'. The preceding authors (e.g., Gurr, Berkowicz, Bandura) had not discussed 'Islamism' nor considered the forms of civil violence they were examining as 'terrorism'. The other main innovation the authors undertook was to challenge post-9/11 discourse in which it was seen as 'politically incorrect' to discuss root causes of terrorism. This view had been bolstered by the ascendence of the 'new

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[68] A lot of CVE research and policy remains siloed. For instance, a model of the radicalization process in the Netherlands designed by Slootman & Tille (2006) and adopted by many CVE programs across Europe, cites neither Borum, Wiktorowicz nor Moghaddam as references despite containing many similarities to their models.

[69] Bandura is a lone example of a figure carrying over from the era of research on the psychology of social movements who collaborated with authors modelling the radicalization process, writing on selective moral disengagement in relation to terrorism in a book edited by Moghaddam (e.g., Bandura, 2004).

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terrorism thesis' in the late 1990s, where prominent terrorism studies authors began

arguing that forms of terrorist activity carried out in the name of Islam marked a sharp

distinction from terrorism in the past, and thus defied conventional explanations (e.g.,

Laqueur, 1998; Rapoport, 1999). The 'new terrorism' was seen as being rooted in

fanaticism rather than by legitimate political grievances, with acts that were more brutal

and indiscriminate. This also led to a view that Islamist terrorists, driven by "sheer

bloodlust" (Laqueur 1998, p. 51) were incapable of being reformed.[70] The sense that

stage model authors had about the unorthodox nature of their work is reflected in

Borum's piece. Writing in the FBI's *Law Enforcement Bulletin,* the author anticipates a

hostile audience, opening with a famous line from Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*:

"While nothing is easier than to denounce the evildoer, nothing is more difficult to

understand him" (2003, p. 7). Borum later justifies his exercise by invoking Sun Tzu's

military adage "know your enemy" and re-iterates that his objective is not to "excuse

terrorism but to comprehend and, thereby, prevent terrorism", which involves

acknowledging that "the motives of some involved are comprehensible" (2003, pp. 7-8).

The stage models by Borum, Moghaddam, and Wiktorowicz found a more

welcome audience than the authors perhaps anticipated. Critical security scholars note

how their illustration of the phases of 'radicalization' lent a governability and

knowability to terrorism, making terrorism amenable to problem-solving approaches by

rendering a linear narrative around its production (Heath-Kelly, 2013). As Kundnani

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[70] Kundnani writes of the 'new terrorism' discourse: "Terrorists and those perceived to be their ideological fellow travellers in Muslim communities were unreformable and no political or economic change could stem their hatred. Only overwhelming force would be successful against this new enemy" (2012, p. 4).

(2012) notes, the "possibility of an analytical framework" for detecting future terrorist violence was particularly appealing to security and law enforcement officials due to its tendency to turn causal focus away from broader social context toward "a cultural-psychological disposition" (pp., 8-9). This is a point that merits attention. As I established, the models here are rooted in psychological research, and prioritize understanding the subjective interpretation of beliefs behind terrorist actions (e.g., Moghaddam, 2005, p. 161). However, the models (particularly by Wiktorowicz and Moghaddam) also emphasize social processes, and all three models are rooted in a base level awareness of modern society as stratified, discriminatory, and unjust.

This is not how these models would be interpreted, however. Emphasis on *perceptions* of injustice and *displaced* aggression were mobilized at the expense of examining the roots of these dispositions, in turn moving understandings of terrorism further toward the individual psyche (Kundnani, 2012; Schmid, 2013).[71] This meant that some of the stage model authors' recommendations that transgressed these boundaries were notably not pursued. This includes Wiktorowicz's emphasis on combatting racism as a *cognitive opening* to extremism and Moghaddam's recommendation to improve "conditions on the ground floor" of the sociopolitical order, calling for "contextualized democracy" (improving social mobility and participation in decision making) as a long-term terrorism prevention policy (2005, p. 164).

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[71] In other words, the models attempt to buck the post-9/11 and 'new terrorism thesis' tread of seeing terrorism as beyond causal explanation, yet the models also perpetuate aspects of 'new terrorism' in their more narrow, individualized interpretation of the process leading to terrorism and tendency to downplay to deemphasize legitimate political grievances. This further paved the way for psychological as well as cultural and ideological explanations (Sweid, 2020, p. 76).

In sum, these early conceptual models of the pathway to becoming terrorist

provided a major substantive boost to the 'radicalization process'[72] proposed in Dutch

political and security correspondence while providing illustrations of how 'broad'

prevention approaches might intervene.[73] This despite the lack of a recorded relationship

between the two bodies of work, and the fact that neither Borum, Wiktorowicz, nor

Moghaddam engage with the term 'radicalization'.[74] Most early CVE policies in Europe

would nonetheless be built on variations of these stage models (van Heelsum &

Vermeulen, 2018). With the assistance of these models, the 'radicalization process'

became the central concept for understanding of terrorism and counter-terrorism

(Neumann, 2013) and models of 'radicalization' continue to, despite the efforts I

chronicle of practitioners trying to distance their work from it, remain integral to CVE

practice. The stage models by Borum, Wiktorowicz, and Moghaddam also helped push

psychological approaches to terrorism to the forefront of policy responses, which the

authors saw as challenging the orthodoxy around terrorism in the early years of the War

on Terror by seeking to understand terrorist motivations. I find this orientation of

terrorism prevention as a bold, taboo-breaking endeavour to persist in contemporary

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[72] As I covered previously, 'radicalization' did not exist as a stand-alone concept or topic prior to the mid-2000s. In previous research it appeared as a secondary term attached to other phenomena, was not tied to terrorism, privileged macro-structural and historical explanation, and contained mostly positive or agnostic connotations (e.g., Apter, 1971; Rush, 1972; della Porta, 1995).

[73] Another influential model from this time period that I have not covered belongs to Marc Sageman (2004) from his book *Understanding Terror Networks*. Sageman arrived at similar themes, i.e., social bonds within a 'radical milieu', progressive social isolation, and us/them differentiation. Sageman was influential in alerting policy makers to a "world-wide social movement" of Salafi jihad in the form of loosely structured, autonomously forming networks.

[74] As previously noted, there is also the anomalous example of Sprinzak's model of the radicalization of right-wing terrorists in 1995. Sprinzak uses the terminology of 'radicalization' and draws on similar research by Albert Bandura and Ted Robert Gurr, yet is not cited in the models by Borum, Moghaddam, and Wiktorowicz, despite obvious similarities.

CVE through the field's self-image of a progressive culture of innovation and experimentation. As I demonstrate later in Chapter 5, this mindset helps facilitate the 'enrollment' of non-traditional actors in the CVE imperative and is used to distinguish CVE against what is seen pejoratively as 'hard-edge' and 'reactionary' approaches in traditional counter-terrorism. In the next section I turn to another key episode in CVE's pre-history where these concepts and models would be applied in practice.

Pre-history 3: 'soft' counter-terrorism experiments are tried in the Muslim world

While these intelligence reports and phase models were being developed in the U.S.A. and Europe, similar concepts were being put in practice in strategies of 'soft counter-terrorism' in Muslim-majority countries including Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Malaysia. While the existence of these programs and their novelty is hardly unknown (e.g., El-Said, 2012; Gunaratna & Ali, 2009), their contribution to the development of countering violent extremism in the West is rarely acknowledged. I was only introduced to their existence late in my fieldwork during an interview with an informant (Karl) with longstanding field experience in Canada, who described these programs as "early CVE" and mentioned "paying great interest" to them when entering the field.

The broader context of these 'soft' counter-terrorism experiments was the U.S.-led War on Terror and invasion of Afghanistan, which resulted in the detainment of large numbers of al-Qaeda affiliated fighters in adjacent countries. The programs I discuss here such as Yemen's religious dialogue committee and Saudi Arabia's PRAC[75] strategy, developed in response to the detainee situation. They are often retroactively

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[75] PRAC stands for interconnected programs on prevention, rehabilitation, post-release care (Boucek, 2008).

described as 'de-radicalization' programs[76] (e.g., Barrett & Bokhari, 2008; Alsubaie, 2016) as their initial focus involved counselling and rehabilitation of the imprisoned detainees. Building off strategies used in Egypt with members from the al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya insurgency, efforts intended to persuade the detainees to renounce violence, including interpretations of Islam thought to promote violence (El-Said, 2018). This included facilitated dialogue with religious leaders and psychologists, leisure activities and art therapy, as well as efforts to support reintegration by providing employment opportunities and addressing social needs related to the participants' families (El-Said, 2018, p. 19). Subcommittees of psychologists, social scientists and social workers were established to evaluate mental capabilities and social factors that might be impeding participants' progress (Boucek, 2008, p. 12; Alsubaie, 2016, pp. 147-158).

The most sophisticated and comprehensive of these programs is the Prevention, Rehabilitation, and After-care Strategy (PRAC), undertaken by the Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Interior [SMI] following the May 2003 al-Qaeda bombings in Riyadh. Like the other programs, its initial focus was on counselling and rehabilitating newly imprisoned al-Qaeda operatives. However, preventative efforts soon moved outside the prison setting and into broader society. Multiple government ministries were harnessed for PRAC's rollout to provide training "on radicalization and extremist thought and behaviour" and resources for the creation of localized programs (Boucek, 2008, p. 5). Much of this centered around engaging the public on extremist ideologies through "information and awareness campaigns" including television programming (Alsubaie,

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[76] I argue that this is a *retroactive* description since 'deradicalization' was not commonly used in counter-terrorism nor anywhere else prior to 2005 (see google Ngam, 'deradicalization;deradicalisation' 1990-2019: - https://books.google.com/ngrams/).

2016, p. 153) and in government-sponsored lectures in mosques (Boucek, 2008, p. 6). Programs were setup in schools and colleges "to educate and warn students from a very early age about the dangers of extremism" (Boucek, p. 8). This included talks by visiting experts and pamphlets distributed to enlighten students' parents and families (ibid.). Other activities designed to deter youth radicalization included writing contests and art competitions, and in providing spare time alternatives through outdoor activities and sporting clubs (El-Said, 2018, p. 39; Boucek, 2008, p. 8).

These innovations under the PRAC strategy connect to and advance much of the thinking from the Dutch intelligence reports and U.S. 'radicalization' models. Consequently, they anticipate several beliefs and practices that became hallmarks of the CVE approach. This is seen in PRAC's focus on how 'extremist ideologies' as well as psychological and environmental factors drive involvement in terrorism. In the latter sense, PRAC takes the belief that changes in the person's life situation, such as family setting or employment prospects, can lead to disengagement with radical causes and/or violent means (Barrett and Bokhari, 2009, p. 172; Alsubaie, 2016, p. 147). PRAC's initiatives also expanded counter-terror activities into broader society and upstream toward the 'pre-crime' space. As Boucek (2008) points out, the primary audience for PRAC "is not extremists themselves, but the larger population that may sympathize with extremists [or] do not condemn the beliefs that lead to extremism" (p. 8). This resulted in efforts toward public engagement and awareness-building that are central in CVE primary prevention today as well as 'unconventional' measures such as art therapy and sporting activities which appeared as novel (and controversial) when tried CVE programing years later (e.g., Dyer, 2017). This concurrently led to an expansion in the

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types of actors who assume responsibility for counter-terrorism. The change in orientation is reflected in the Saudi government's declaration that the fight against terrorism is not just the responsibility of security agencies but of "everyone throughout society", requiring "a concerted effort by the entire state apparatus, from schools and mosques, to local and provincial administrations, the mass media, and social service providers and organizations" (Boucek, 2008, p. 6).

Perhaps the most significant way that the PRAC strategy foreshadowed CVE is in mobilizing a new depiction of the 'terrorist'. This change is captured in El-Said's description of PRAC, on how: "[a]t the core of the programme […] detainees are seen as 'misled' and in need of good advice, rather than criminals requiring punishment" (2018, p. 38). Later El-Said refers to the program participants being called "beneficiaries" (ibid).[77] This marks a sharp break from popular conceptions of al-Qaeda members and sympathizers at the time. In the view of PRAC, terrorists and potential terrorists are not immoral or unreformable as in 'new terrorism thesis' logic but are rather "misled". In turn they should not be thought of as "adversaries" to target as in War on Terror rhetoric (Benard, et al., 2011) but rather as the "beneficiaries" of interventions. This view aligns with, but also advances, the unorthodox/progressive path of the stage models authors who preached "understanding" yet still cast their subjects in the language of "evil" and "enemy" (e.g., Borum, 2003, p. 7; Moghaddam, 2005, p. 167).[78] This turn, from seeing

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[77] Barrett and Bokhari (2009) also describe the premise of the 'soft' exercises in counter-terrorism in the middle east as "that they must address an element of misguidance, offering a form of 're-education' based on a close examination of the narrative that the individual has accepted (p. 171).

[78] It is thus not a coincidence that the "progressive nature" of PRAC received criticism in more conservative quarters of Saudi Arabian society for being too "soft and untested" (Boucek, 2008, p. 18; Alsubaie, 2016, p. 149).

potential terrorists from 'unreformable adversaries' to 'misled beneficiaries', marks

another key development in CVE's emergence out from counter-terrorism. Indeed, the

wording in the PRAC strategy corresponds almost identically to a 2019 interview I

conducted with an informant based in Ottawa with longstanding experience in CVE and

counter-terrorism, who worded what distinguishes the two fields as follows:

> The difference in my mind […] is that counterterrorism work sees people who
> are vulnerable or involved in extremist groups as targets. And countering violent
> extremism work sees them as beneficiaries. Basically, really that's the
> distinction. It's like harm and help, fundamentally. And so, CT work would view
> them, really, as a threat and CVE work would see them as a potential person
> who we can help.

This change from 'adversary' to 'beneficiary' speaks to a culture of practice in the

PRAC program that connects to many hallmarks of CVE's intervention style. This

includes the importance of working with and supporting the families of the individuals;

the "communication style" in practitioner interventions, i.e., listening and engaging in

dialogue rather than lecturing (El-Said 2018, p. 18); encouraging tolerance, inclusion,

and shared understanding; fostering the participant's "trust" and using "compassion" and

a "drive to help" as prime motivations (Alsubaie, 2016; Boucek 2008, p. 12). However,

there are also some noteworthy differences between these experiments in 'soft' counter-

terrorism and later CVE. One involves the concentration of these early programs such as

PRAC had on prison rehabilitation of the already 'radicalized', though this may be more

of a difference in degree than in kind. Most modern CVE programs, including those in

Canada, do contain tertiary streams that involve deterring 'radicalized' individuals

including terrorism offenders, even if this is often a less frequent endeavour compared to

secondary and primary prevention initiatives (which are evident anyway in PRAC).

Perhaps the most striking difference between CVE and these earlier precedents concerns the language used to describe program aims. As cited in Boucek (2008), the Saudi government's goal with the PRAC strategy was stated overtly as to "solidify the legitimacy of the ruling order" and "eliminate violent opposition to the state" (p. 4). This was to be done through reinforcing the traditional Saudi interpretation of Islam. Later Boucek describes the Saudi government's twin mandate of the program as to educate "about the dangers of terrorism and aim to promote nationalism" (9). Blunt expressions such as these on aiming to uphold state sovereignty and government legitimacy, while hinted at in the Dutch correspondence and in Moghaddam (2005)[79], are nowhere to be found in the modern language of CVE.[80]

One way to interpret the distinction between the decidedly overt language in PRAC over preserving state legitimacy and its latter absence in CVE is to recall the geo-political context of mid-east 'soft counter-terrorism', setup ostensibly in a wartime setting. This justification has limitations however, for the *idea* of being 'at war' against radicalization and violent extremism appears to be another inheritance from these early programs into Western CVE. This is seen in political communication around the subject, where citizens are told to remain "vigilant" toward violent extremism (e.g., Canada, 2013, p. 23; 2015) and in the tendency for political leaders – as seen after the Theo van

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[79] As noted, AIVD's report from 2002 makes numerous references to the threat homegrown Islamists present to the "democratic legal order", while Moghaddam argues that policymakers should adopt a preventative approach to terrorism: "because the survival of the United States as a democratic superpower is at stake. This is not an exaggeration" (2005, p. 167).

[80] The stated aims of contemporary CVE strategies generally cached in nuanced messages around 'national security' and 'public safety' or in promoting 'national values' to help insulate Muslims communities from violent extremism An example of the latter is the UK's updated Prevent mandate in 2010 which supported nation building and 'muscular liberalism' as a bulwark to violent extremism (Poole, 2016).

Gogh assassination in Amsterdam and the 2014 shooting on Parliament Hill in Canada –

to state publicly that "war" had been declared on their countries (Demant & de Graaf,

2010; Citizen, 2015).[81] The war metaphor is also evident in the language of CVE

practice, as seen in the prevalence of military-themed terminology in *counter*-

radicalization, *countering* violent extremism, efforts to create *counter*-narratives, as well

as the description of the field and its work as a "space".[82]

      With this in mind, another way of interpreting the distinction in the language of

aims between early 'soft' counter-terrorism in the Muslim world and modern Western

CVE is to reconsider the remarkable similarity of their practices and underlying

discourses and ask *to what degree are the intentions to engineer support for state*

legitimacy absent or rather obfuscated in CVE today? Critical authors representing

Muslim communities have argued for some time that CVE acts as a technology for the

West to form "appropriate" and "non-threatening" Muslim political subjects (e.g.,

Qureshi, 2015; Ahmad, 2020). However, extending this to consider CVE as a wider tool

to address a 'crisis of state hegemony' (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke, & Roberts,

1978) is rarely discussed in the critical literature (apart from Skoczylis & Andrews,

2020). The question over to what extent CVE serves public safety and national security

interests versus other larger and less tangible purposes is *a broader overarching theme I*

work with, which as I will show, becomes heightened as CVE moves past its initial focus

on countering 'Islamist' non-state violence toward multiple forms of 'ideological' and

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[81] Such statements obscure the fact that the incidents were also interpreted to be 'lone-actor' events and that, in the Canadian case, the country's military forces had been stationed around Syria in combat against ISIS for at least three months prior to the incident on Parliament Hill.

[82] Both "counter/countering" and "space" are prevalent terms military science (e.g., counter-insurgency [COIN], counter-attack, counter-intelligence, counterguerrilla operations, and airspace, battlespace, national security space, space control, etc.). See Department of Defense (2021).

'religious' violent extremism, as stated in the new language adopted by Canada's security establishment (e.g. Canadian Security Intelligence Service, 2020).

In sum, the 'soft' counter-terrorism experiments in Muslim majority nations, particularly Saudi Arabia's PRAC strategy, provide a detailed blueprint for CVE practice, with some of CVE's more recent innovations only catching up to what was being tried circa 2003. The concern over 'radicalized' inmates *spreading* their belief systems to the other prisoners became grafted outward toward 'vulnerable' areas of Saudi society, and eventually, the population at-large, necessitating a multitude of preventative interventions. This mirrors the basic contours of CVE, which include identifying those with 'violent extremist ideology', intervening to persuade change in them, and stopping the 'spread' across the population, especially among those deemed vulnerable.

Their uncanny resemblances notwithstanding, I could not find any demonstrable links between 'soft counter-terrorism' in the middle-east and the later arrival of CVE in the West[83], other than an informant of mine mentioning being personally influenced by the former. Moreover, while the mid-east 'soft' strategies appear to advance many of the ideas from AVID intelligence and the stage models, there are again no links to be found between programs like PRAC and the developments happening out of Netherlands and the United States at the time. Literature on PRAC does refer to its "top-level" committee of "Western-educated social scientists, doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists, and

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[83] The only link that I could find is that the Saudi PRAC program influenced a similar program in Singapore, which eventually did reach the United States security establishment via personnel from it who acted as advisors for a prisoner de-radicalization program conducted by the U.S. military in Iraq (Boucek, 2008, p. 23).

statisticians who analyze terrorism" and employing speakers and materials "recommended by experts on extremism" (Boucek, 2008, pp. 5, 8). Who these Western-educated experts on terrorism and extremism are, and what connection they might have had to the Netherlands and United States, and later CVE, is not clear.

What is described instead is PRAC's "ad hoc" development from the prison setting to wider society. Alsuabie's (2016) interviews with Saudi officials indicate that PRAC "took shape, grew and evolved despite the absence of any specific blue print or best practice to leverage" (pp. 149, 148). It is stated that PRAC's focus on al-Qaeda's ideology originated out of the logistical challenges of properly classifying an "overwhelming" number of new prison detainees from the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan, with the decision made to classify detainees by determining levels of indoctrination. Concerns that the al-Qaeda detainees might recruit other members of the prison population led to further examining their belief systems, resulting in the decision to introduce counselling and dialogue with psychologists and religious clerics. These initiatives eventually "evolved beyond the prisoner and their families to target the whole of Saudi society" in a "parallel objective […] to *prevent* the [al-Qaeda] ideology from taking root within the kingdom" (Alsubaie, 2016, pp. 148-149 *original emphasis*). What we are left with (*again*) is a sense that Saudi Arabia's PRAC strategy was driven by 'spontaneous necessity', with the prison population serving as a form of 'lab experiment' that was then applied at-large by the Saudi Arabian government and then by western powers.

Further analysis and conclusion

> Micheline: And I get that you *know* now, where this has come from?
>
> Kris: I know about as much as anyone knows, which is that I don't know entirely.
>
> M: (laughs) Of course.

While CVE is thought to have begun out of Europe circa 2005, my survey of its 'pre-history' finds major contributing elements to be in place in the years prior. The reports by Dutch security service AIVD and proceedings in Dutch parliament between 2001 and 2003 place the idea of *radicalisering processen* preceding terrorism and re-envision counter-terrorism as a 'broad', multi-sector endeavour to prevent radicalization. AIVD's influence on later CVE action by the EU is documented (e.g., Coolsaet, 2016; Kundnani, 2012) however, little is known on what influenced the new paradigm they proposed. The stage models developed by Borum, Wiktorowicz and Moghaddam provide illustrations of the radicalization process described in Dutch intelligence (helping guide later CVE policies) despite there being no evidence that AIVD personnel nor the models' authors had any connection to or influence on each other. Lastly are the prescient innovations of 'soft' counter-terrorism introduced in areas of the Muslim world around this time, notably Saudi Arabia's PRAC strategy. These programs operationalized much of the thinking on display in the Dutch reports and radicalization models despite having no recorded connection to them, and moreover being described by officials involved as "ad hoc" experiments with no prior "blueprint" (Alsubaie, 2016).

Revisiting the concept of *template* I used in the first section of this chapter; I argue that the three above examples contribute to a framework for understanding and

governing the problem of terrorism that departs from previous practice and provides the groundwork for eventual CVE. This template can be summarized as follows:

- There is a radicalization process that precedes terrorism. This is driven by a combination of 'violent ideologies', psychological factors, and environmental circumstances.

- Counter-terrorism must move toward 'broad' prevention by detecting 'signals' of radicalization and building 'resilience' to belief systems that promote violence.

- Preventative counter-terrorism necessitates action from 'all of society', particularly psychologists and other human service professionals, 'moderate forces' in Muslim communities, and religion experts.

- Young Western Muslims, 'alienated' and 'in search of identity and belonging' are an emerging terrorism threat. They might be reached through counselling, family assistance, and in dialogue that opens them to 'correct' interpretations of political and religious doctrine.

- Terrorists and potential terrorist are not necessarily unreformable 'adversaries' but rather can be thought of as amenable 'beneficiaries' of counter-terror programming.

In this template, I argue, lie the *elementary principles of CVE,* the ensuing development of which, in its various permutations, can be seen as a fulfillment of these initial principles. The AIVD reports broadly outline the conceptual strokes of the 'problem' and necessary approach; the stage models illustrate these concepts for the purpose of preventative interventions, and the 'soft' counter-terrorism strategies demonstrate actions that fulfill these propositions. The three 'prehistory' episodes convey a remarkable synergy, despite lacking any formal links.

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In making these claims, I am not arguing that CVE's *actual origins* are found in the 'pre-history' examples, but rather that they substantively indicate that the *paradigm* for CVE existed before the *problem* (i.e., 'homegrown terrorism' in Europe) did. As such, I problematize the assumption that CVE was a new and *spontaneous response* to given changes in the security environment. Contrary to accounts in the CVE literature and by experienced informants, counter-terror experts did not "discover" a new phenomenon circa 2004 that necessitated revising what they thought they knew about terrorism and devising new and bold practices. The contours of the *problem* that the terror incidents in Madrid, Amsterdam and London represented had already been envisioned elsewhere, complemented by illustrative models and innovative programming responses. Instead, statements from Saudi PRAC officials on their "ad hoc/no blueprint" innovations raise critical questions over 'spontaneous necessity' being a longer running explanatory theme in security governance.[84]

Turning back to the Netherlands case, in can be argued that political and security authorities did not pursue anticipated threats from domestic 'Muslim fundamentalists' out of spontaneous necessity but rather made a conscious decision in the 1990s and early 2000s to focus on their *potential* threat of violence. In doing so, they neglected warnings within ethnic minority communities that that racism among Netherlands' ethno-majority was becoming more overt and violent (e.g., Essed, 1991)[85] and other scholarship and reports calling for preventative measures on increasing racist violence (e.g., van

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[84] To challenge this fits with the discussion of performative security knowledge which, rather than reacting to the existence of risk, discursively produces the threats it claims to identify (e.g., Heath-Kelly, 2013; Amoore, 2013). I discuss this further on page 36.

[85] Philomena Essed invented the concept of 'everyday racism' to describe consistent and cumulative experiences of racial discrimination faced by Surinamese women in 1980s Dutch society.

Donselaar, 1993; Oakley, 1992). Instead, Dutch security authorities present a single case (the Kashmir deaths of Dutch Moroccans recruited by Islamists) as evidence of a "trend" that warrants a re-draw of counter-terrorism to protect Dutch citizens as well as "the Dutch democratic order" (AIVD, 2002, p. 5). Among the questions this decision by the Dutch security community raises on institutional racism and *orientalist* conceptions of cultural minorities in, it also represents a turn toward what Furedi (2008), Massumi (2015) and others cite as a *pre-emptive* or *possibilistic thinking* logic: i.e., basing actions on questions of a more speculative and anticipatory orientation rather than probabilities from the study of existing or previous evidence. This is well captured in AIVD's 2002 report, which omits the phenomenon of racist violence beyond a cryptic reference to "polarisation" [86], choosing instead to speculate that *jihadi* recruits will turn to deploying violence within European countries:

> A next stage *would* be reached if Muslims raised in the west are recruited,
> undergo their military and ideological training here and then considere [sic]
> Europe as a frontline, in other words, *if* they start commiting [sic] terrorist
> attacks here. The first signs of such a development are already becoming visible
> (AIVD, 2002, p. 27, *emphasis mine*).

Restating my earlier point, authorities chose to ignore the documented growing problem of racist violence by the ethno-majority to instead mobilize around the *possibility* of violence by ethnic minorities. Based on this reading, we see how the later events of Madrid, Amsterdam and London were interpreted through this already advancing framework, based on a "politics of possibility" (Amoore, 2013) that was in germination yet lacked a demonstrative case to mobilize around.

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[86] The reports attributes "polarisation" between Muslims and the Dutch ethno-majority to the presence of Islamic fundamentalists who "discourage the integration of citizens with a Muslim background" (2002, p. 28).

This invites broader theorizing on the 'loose ends' of my inquiry, particularly the timing of the 'pre-history' events I detail and their absence of known links. This is to posit that these changes to the counter-terrorism paradigm, happening in different places with little or no established connection, were *again,* not actions borne out of 'spontaneous necessity' but rather reflect the onset of a new 'operative logic' in security thinking and practice around the idea of *pre-emption.* Post-structuralist scholars locate this as a defining principle of security governance in the new millennium (e.g., McCulloch & Wilson, 2015). This logic is *performative* in that it "produces (discursively) the threats it claims to identify for the performance of governance, rather than as reacting to the existence of such risks" (Heath-Kelly, 2013, p. 408).[87] The logic of preemption operates from an ontological and epistemological position of "objective uncertainty", organizing around effects "that have yet to eventuate" beginning by "translating the imminent threat into a clear and present danger" (Massumi, 2015, pp. 6-7). The meaning and implications of CVE as a case of 'preemptive' security governance is something that I will reflect on more in chapter 5 of this dissertation.

Before turning to the next chapter, there is a final point from this analysis to consider: In the critical literature, Heath-Kelly and Kundnani argue that radicalization/CVE are an extension of the 'new terrorism thesis' discussed earlier. However, in the 'pre-history' CVE template that I present above, popular aspects of the 'new terrorism thesis' are both retained and also provocatively challenged. The idea that

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[87] The performative security knowledge of pre-emption arguably goes farther than the *discursive* production of threats, as in the cases of FBI sting operations against vulnerable Muslim individuals (Hamm & Spaaij, 2017), and examples of entrapment by undercover investigators security as ruled in the case of the B.C. legislature bombing plot in 2013 involving John Nuttall and Amanda Korody. Entrapment by RCMP was also alleged by the defense attorneys in the 'Toronto 18' bomb plot of 2006 and the arrest of Mohamed Hersi in 2014, which I discuss in the Introduction chapter.

the 'new terrorism' lacks a basis in legitimate political grievances is normalized such as in the belief operationalized in the PRAC strategy that improving one's immediate life situation or clearing up political and religious misinterpretations will lessen interest in terrorism and extremism. At the same time, terrorists and potential terrorists are not viewed here as 'unreformable', such as in the 'new terrorism thesis' discourse, but are rather re-envisioned as 'mis-led' and amenable 'beneficiaries' of counter-terror programming.

The significance of this cannot be understated. What might be said here is that a re-casting of the subject of counter-terrorism takes place in the emergence of the CVE paradigm that complicates the 'friend/adversary' or 'us/them' distinction that was prominent in the early part of the War on Terror (Benard et al., 2011). In the efforts of CVE, including the antecedents discussed in this chapter, toward understanding the ideological and psychological motivations of our "adversaries"[88], the target or *adversary* for counter-terrorism itself changes, evolving from 'violent extremists' as *people* toward 'violent extremism' as a violent belief system(s) and/or package of maladaptive mindsets, which (unlike tracking the actions of listed terrorist entities) can proliferate more insidiously, spreading like influenza among vulnerable populations, or given the perceived state of society and the human condition, "anyone" (e.g., Gurski, 2015). As I will demonstrate in subsequent chapters, this turn helps explain the rapidity in which CVE has transformed itself from a predominantly *jihadi-focus* towards countering forms of right-wing extremism, and how the paradigm manages to construct Western Muslims

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[88] In a chapter on U.S. detainee operations in Iraq, Benard et al. refer to Secretary of Defence Rumsfeld's leaked concerns over whether the U.S. is "winning or losing" the war on terror, which the authors argue: "highlighted a general need to understand the motivations of our adversaries" (2011, p. 77).

as "suspect communities" (permitting surveillance and interventions based on attitudes, appearance, behaviours etc.) while also professing to protect Muslim communities from violent extremism on the anti-immigrant, identitarian radical right.

Chapter 3: De- and re-centering the agency of the events of Madrid, Amsterdam, and London in CVE

Introduction

This chapter examines circumstances in Europe between 2004 and 2005 that contributed to the institutionalization of the CVE paradigm and its take-up globally. At the centre of this are three incidents – the Madrid train bombing in March 2004, the murder of filmmaker Theo van Gogh in Amsterdam in November 2004, and the '7/7' bombings in London in 2005. I begin by examining political communication and policy proposals introduced in the aftermath of these events by the European Union, the government of the Netherlands and United Kingdom. This represents a key turning point in CVE's history, where the ideas and practices evident in CVE's 'pre-history' (examined in Chapter 2) become institutionalized, resulting in the official take-up of 'radicalization' and the first ever Strategy for Combatting Radicalisation released by the EU at the end of 2005. This response, coupled with changes that made Europe's security infrastructure more collaborative and *anticipatory,* would pave the way for Western counter-terrorism to enter the 'pre-crime' space a year later via the introduction of CVE *proper* beginning with the Prevent Strategy in the UK (van Heelsum & Vermeulen, 2018). Furthermore, in the political response to the Madrid, Amsterdam and London incidents, a specific type of meaning was communicated about these events in which I locate an attempt by the EU to summon the existence of a *common European community,* seen through supposed threat faced by 'Islamic radicalization', who may be enlisted in the fight against it. This body politic was envisioned, in part, by drawing a boundary through European Muslim communities and deploying orientalist stereotypes of Muslim subversion of the West.

The depiction of 'Islamist radicalization' embodied in the incidents of Madrid, Amsterdam, and London as a threat extending beyond public safety to put Europe's democratic order and social fabric at risk re-opens questions regarding the function of CVE discourse as a tool for securing governing legitimacy in times of crisis.

Part II of this chapter changes course to consider the agency that the Madrid, Amsterdam and London incidents have in CVE within and beyond their constructed meaning in the political responses above. This involves examining the concept of *actant,* both in narratology as a storytelling device but also in actor-network theory as a non- or *extra*-human force that exerts an independent effect on states of affairs (Latour, 2005). This helps provide a conceptual understanding of the role that highly-publicized incidents of non-state violence (beginning with, but not exclusive to Madrid, Amsterdam and London) play in the history of CVE's development and its ongoing efforts to reproduce itself. While thus far I have contested the notion that CVE emerged out of *spontaneous necessity* to these incidents, here I nonetheless account for their significance as actants (both in their contingency and construction) that provided occasion for the CVE paradigm to be institutionalized in Europe and elsewhere, and whose reproduced meaning as concrete examples of 'radicalization' becomes attached to later events, working to stretch the problem through different points in time. Highly mediatized events such as Madrid, Amsterdam, and London have thus been crucial to the CVE paradigm's legitimacy and longevity, working to stabilize its presence on state political agendas as well as propel its growth into new problem areas.

Pt I – The response to Madrid, Amsterdam, London: a 'new' phenomenon arrives to Europe's shores

I begin by examining how the events of Madrid, Amsterdam, and London were taken up and instrumentalized within European policy circles, assigning them a meaning that legitimized changes to security policy and communicated themes of symbolic community. The events in question happened within a 16-month period in Europe between 2004 and 2005. The first of these was on March 11, 2004, when Madrid's commuter train system was hit by a series of coordinated bomb attacks, killing 193 people. While there was debate in Spain over the political motivations behind the attacks[89], authorities soon arrested a group of locals thought to have ties to al-Qaeda. The second incident occurred eight months later when Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh was murdered on a street in Amsterdam by Mohammed Bouyeri, reportedly in retaliation to van Gogh's controversial treatment of Islam in his film *Submission*. Dutch police quickly arrested Bouyeri, along with eight others described as being part of the 'Hofstad network', a "loosely connected group of young Dutch Muslims" thought to have associated with Bouyeri at "known jihadi meeting places" (Sageman 2008, p. 39; Vidino, 2007, p. 582). The third event occurred on July 7, 2005, when London's transit system was hit by a series of deadly bombings, an incident that became known by the shorthand '7/7'. The incident resulted in 54 deaths (including the bombers) and over 700 injured (Bean, Keränen, & Durfy, 2011). Authorities arrested three second-generation

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[89] The ruling Popular Party initially declared Basque ETA separatists responsible for the bombings, which led to a dispute among opposition parties and newspapers, with the Popular Party being accused of misleading the public and covering up contradictory evidence. The question over whether there was any ETA involvement has continued to hover over the incident in Spain (Canel, 2012; Fominaya, 2011).

British citizens of Pakistani descent, and a Jamaican-born British resident, who were thought to have met and intensified their beliefs through a youth club and bookshop associated with a mosque in Beeston, Nottinghamshire (e.g., Silber and Bhatt, 2007).

The incidents, as I have discussed, were represented to mark the arrival of a phenomenon of 'homegrown' terrorism to Europe's borders, opening a deadly new internal frontier in the West's 'War on Terrorism'. In this sense they are also the *founding* events that coincide with the official turn in counter-terrorism toward 'pre-crime' and the 'radicalization' process, leading to the growth and proliferation of CVE programs across Europe and beyond. In a later part of this chapter, I will theorize more generally on the role of these events in CVE. For now, I am constricting my analysis to the political and institutional response, which is part of their 'making' as events, and how this provides insights into CVE's present sociological purchase. In the section below, I examine how significance was inscribed (Jarvis, 2008) into the events of Madrid, Amsterdam and London in the political decisions, reports, and policy proposals that emanated out of Europe's security and political establishment. A series of actions were undertaken, beginning after the March 2004 Madrid bombing, that would lead to the institutionalization of CVE in Europe, with momentum built over a 19-month period punctuated by the Amsterdam and 7/7 attacks. The period would witness the take-up of the term 'radicalization' in EU policy circles, funding committed for research on 'radicalization', and changes to Europe's policing and security infrastructure, culminating in late 2005 with the announcement of an EU Strategy for Combatting Radicalisation and Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation, and the eventual rollout of CVE programs beginning in 2006. I also consider the deeper discursive features of

Europe's response, and the way it re-draws conceptions of European Muslim and European 'majority' communities in opposition to each other.

Madrid and the EU Declaration

While there were questions in Spain over the political motivations behind the Madrid train bombing, the response from Europe's security and intelligence community showed little ambiguity. The Madrid incident served to confirm previous speculation (e.g., AIVD, 2002; Akerboom, 2003) that young members of Muslim communities could radicalize and carry out attacks inside Europe autonomously, thus priming efforts for counter-terrorism to move toward preventing 'radicalization' within these communities. Each successive report or communication from the EU and key member states furthers the inquiry down this path, beginning in a "Declaration on combatting terrorism" released by European Union two weeks after the bombings. The themes that were driving political debate in Spain – on whether the bombings were motivated by Basque separatism or Spain's involvement in the War in Iraq (Canel & Sanders, 2010)– are not present in the EU declaration. In fact, there is no specific *content* assigned to the Madrid incident at all, other than it being "callous and cowardly" and "attacks the fundamental principles of the Union" (European Council, 2004, p. 2). The Declaration includes a new Plan of Action for combatting terrorism that emphasizes "solidarity and collective action" (Ibid, p. 2), committing Europe's member states to act jointly to prevent terrorist threats within their territories (19). The plan calls to coordinate counter-terror efforts between the member states and EU law enforcement agencies Europol and Eurojust, while also aiming to "strengthen cooperation with the US" and "deepen international consensus" on countering terrorism (13-15).

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The aim in the post-Madrid Plan of Action to harmonize internal security operations establish the parameters for Europe's counter-terrorism efforts to focus on 'radicalization', and for the later development and spread of CVE programs. Objectives 3 and 6 from the Plan of Action are particularly relevant in this regard. Objective 3 announces changes that move Europe's security apparatus toward a more *collaborative* and *anticipatory* approach. Aiming to boost the ability to "detect, investigate and prosecute terrorists and prevent terrorist attacks", the objective calls for better "mechanisms of cooperation" and "systematic collaboration" across police, security, and intelligence services (European Council, 2004, p. 10). State law enforcement agencies are urged to "cooperate with each other [and the Europol service] and exchange all information relevant to combatting terrorism as extensively as possible", with additional emphasis placed on "proactive" intelligence gathering (Ibid, pp. 6-7). These commitments reflect a broader dissolution of firewalls between national security and law enforcement agencies that had begun taking place around the subject of racialized immigrants in the years leading up to 9/11 (Bigo, 2002; Todd & Bloch, 2003) while foreshadowing the type of multi-agency collaboration necessary to execute CVE programming. In the case of CVE, this would result in multiagency (multinational) collaboration that expands beyond sectors of policing and security into (for example) education, heath, and social services provision.

Borrowing a term first used by the U.S. Nixon administration, the Plan of Action's reference to "proactive intelligence" implies a further removal of bureaucratic

divisions to facilitate information sharing,[90] while signalling a move towards a more *pre-emptive* approach to security (Massumi, 2015). Proactive intelligence is thought to alter the orientation of the intelligence field from the traditional consideration of "facts" toward dealing with "estimations", where practitioners try to anticipate developments that "may" occur and intervene "before the presumed threat materializes" (Achterbergh, 2005, 1379; Serra, 2008, p. 669. Jordi Serra (2008) writes that proactive intelligence becomes relevant when the adversary can no longer be "clearly defined […] recognized and delimited" or operates according to an "alien" value code that makes predicting behaviour difficult (pp. 666, 668). This would fit the emerging representation of the 'homegrown terror' problem of attackers that evade conventional security efforts due to their fluid organization and embeddedness in European ethnic minority communities (e.g., Sageman, 2008, p. 37). The aim of proactive intelligence conforms to the official narrative around the Madrid event, that its 'homegrown' nature has rendered the traditional intelligence approach "anachronistic", making proactive approaches a "logical outcome" of the new threat climate (Serra, 2008, p. 668). As I argue, neither proactive intelligence nor its rendering of the 'radicalization' threat was a logical outcome of the European events circa-2004, however, the appearance of "proactive intelligence" in the EU Declaration two weeks after Madrid indicates how political and security elites had begun to attach specific meanings to these events in their immediate aftermath.

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[90] The Nixon administration coined the term 'proactive intelligence' during its creation of the Drug Enforcement Agency, which coordinated cooperation between different branches of security and other regulatory bodies in its domestic and international efforts on the 'war on drugs' (Drug Enforcement Administration, 2003).

If Objective 3 from the Madrid Declaration marked the lurch of Europe's security and intelligence community toward collaborative pre-emption, Objective 6 sets the tone for its efforts to focus on 'radicalization' in Muslim communities. It calls for addressing "the factors that contribute to support for, and recruitment into, terrorism" (European Commission, 2004, p. 17). This includes investigating "links between extreme religious or political beliefs […] socio-economic and other factors", "building on work already undertaken in this area" and identifying "appropriate response measures" (Ibid, p. 17). No explicit reference is made to 'radicalization' or to European Muslims, however these subjects are inferred by its reference to "extreme religious or political beliefs" as factors leading to terrorism while mentioning the need for cross-cultural dialogue with "the Islamic world" (17). References to other political groups or religious, cultural or ethnic identities are notably absent.

Implementation updates to the Madrid Declaration Plan of Action began to use the word 'radicalization' repeatedly, starting with a May update by two EU working groups on terrorism.[91] This confidential report describes a 'radicalization process' preceding terrorism driven by "anger among Muslims" and exposure to "extremist ideological messages" (Coolsaet, 2016, p. 11). By October 2004, "violent radicalisation" is placed at the forefront of the new terrorism problem facing Europe, as seen in a Communication between the European Commission (the EU's executive arm) and European Parliament on "prevention, preparedness and response to terrorist attacks". The memo states:

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[91] The Council Working Group on Terrorism – International Aspects [COTER] and the Terrorism Working Group [TWG].

> "Opposing violent radicalisation within our societies and disrupting the
> conditions facilitating the recruitment of terrorists must be fundamental priorities
> in a strategy to prevent terrorism" (European Commission, 2004, p. 4).

In other words, intervening to prevent 'radicalization' (and the conditions behind it) is now endorsed by the continent's political elite as paramount to counter-terror. Interestingly, references made to 'radicalization' at this point do not include a definition. What is evident however are aspects of the previously discussed *template* proliferating around radicalization and its association with the idea of European Muslim communities being 'at-risk'. A report on terrorist activity released in the same month by the EU's 'law enforcement cooperation agency' Europol hits on similar themes as in AIVD (2002) and Akerboom (2003) of a "profile of well-educated Muslim students […] not previously known for involvement in radical Islamic circles […] who radicalise in Europe" (Europol, 2004, p. 30). The Europol report also singles out "Islamic associations or civic foundations" as potential places where radicalization occurs (Ibid, p. 39). Meanwhile, the European Commission's October Communication elaborates on how "the whole of society will need to participate in the definition and the development of new tools and new controls" for combatting radicalization (European Commission, 2004, p. 3). To this end, the Commission calls for further mainstreaming and consolidation of "police cooperation and judicial cooperation" (Ibid, p. 5) while also emphasizing "effective and integrated cooperation with the private sector" in the prevention and response to terrorist attacks (9, 4).

Amsterdam and 'moral panic'

With the EU's response to Madrid, the concept of 'radicalization' (albeit scantily defined) was now firmly on the radar of European governance, and its policing and

national security operations were primed for harmonized functions (within and across European countries) and to take a more anticipatory focus. Conditions were thus ripe for the CVE paradigm to become fully entrenched in public discourse, and eventually in policy, which it did in November 2004 following the murder of filmmaker Theo van Gogh in Amsterdam. What ensued in the Netherlands has been described as a 'moral panic' over radicalized Muslim youth (de Graaf, 2014) where existing public fears over Muslim migration and Dutch identity became further sutured to security and the spectre of violent conflict. A striking element about the van Gogh incident is how quickly media and politicians classified it as a case of 'radicalization'. Press reporting two days after the event featured the Netherlands' Deputy Prime Minister Gerrit Zalm stating, "the increase in radicalization is worse than we had thought" (Associated Press, 2004, para. 6). Public debate immediately moved to the other members of the Hofstad network and whether similar groups of radicalized Muslim youths existed in the country (de Graaf, 2014, p. 107). News media coverage of the van Gogh murder also drew upon radicalization's presumed factors, highlighting the issue of "large scale Muslim immigration" in the Netherlands (Simons, 2004, para. 2). A feature in UK's *The Guardian* five days after the incident entitled "The murder that shattered Holland's liberal dream", quotes residents of Amsterdam saying that it revealed "harsh truths" regarding the "failure" of immigrants from Muslim-majority countries to integrate, which the country's culture of "tolerance" had allegedly blocked from public discussion (Burke 2004, para. 4, 16).[92] The 'moral panic' is also reflected in the Dutch

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[92] The *Guardian* feature quotes a business associate of van Gogh's stating, "the country had lost its way […] In the UK you have a straighter way of dealing with immigration. Here, in the name of tolerance, a lot of difficult issues are never discussed" (Burke 2004, para. 16).

government's response, which immediately pledged to deport more than 25,000 illegal immigrants (despite the suspect, Mohammed Bouyeri, being born in the Netherlands) along with a proposed emergency law to allow authorities to revoke Dutch nationality to dual citizens suspected of terrorist activity (Burke, 2004; Associated Press, 2004). The government also announced compulsory Dutch language classes as well as lessons on Dutch culture for mosque prayer leaders.

The elevated concern over 'radicalization' after van Gogh is also reflected at the European Union level. At a December 2004 European Council meeting, EU heads of state, "reiterated its conviction" that the Union's response to terrorism "must address the root causes", namely, "radicalisation" (European Council, 2004b, p. 9). The Presidency Conclusions from the meeting promise to implement a long-term strategy to address radicalization while calling for "better exchange of information" and improved "practical and operational cooperation" between Europol, Member State police forces and other counter-terrorism services (Ibid, p. 9-10). The EU's quickening turn toward 'radicalization' in the wake of van Gogh was aided by the Netherlands holding the EU's rotating presidency, as well as the position of influence and authority on the subject that their AIVD intelligence service had attained (Coolsaet, 2016). AVID returned with a new report after van Gogh's murder that expanded upon several of its previous claims. The report is noted for containing the first-ever proper definition of 'radicalization', which is defined as "a person's (growing) willingness to pursue and/or support [far reaching changes in society] or his encouraging others to do so" (AIVD, 2004, pp. 13-14). The report elaborates that radicalization is "explicitly seen here as a (one-way) process" and notes the concept has "an obvious relationship with the term 'extremism'",

which it defines as "pushing to the ultimate consequences […] a phenomenon that considers the extreme acceptable or pursues the extremes in its aims and/or means" (Ibid: pp. 14, 15).[93] Terrorism is presented as "the ultimate consequence" of the radicalization process that must first be combatted by "[p]reventing, isolating or curbing radicalisation" (6).

AIVD's definition of 'radicalization', while written in neutral language, is nonetheless exclusively tied to 'radical Islam', the principal subject of the report. The depiction of 'radical Islam' offered by AIVD provides great insight into how the events of Madrid, Amsterdam et al. would be interpreted in Europe and implanted into CVE. In the report, 'radical Islam' is conceived as a complex threat to Europe's "democratic legal order" that ranges on a spectrum from *jihad* to *dawa*. *Dawa* is described as a "long-term strategy of continuous influencing based on extreme puritanical, intolerant and anti-Western ideas" (AIVD, 2004, p. 7 – see Fig. 4). By the AIVD's framing, acts of terrorism are only one of radicalization's potential manifestations. Additional focus is necessary on "non-violent types of threats […] more difficult to identify" including "covert" *dawa* activities taking place in Islamic missionary organizations, "a limited number of mosques", schools, and internet chat rooms (AVID, 2004, pp. 10, 39-40). According to AIVD, these activities can range from terrorism indoctrination to 'anti-integration' propaganda that encourages Muslims to develop "parallel and autonomous power structures" in Western societies (Ibid, pp. 10, 6, 32). The report speculates at length on this latter concern:

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[93] The report attempts to distinguish between the 'radicalism' of "some left-wing liberal parties and movements" in Europe, to which they assign a less negative connotation, starting that they are "certainly not 'Extremists'" (AIVD, 2004, p. 14).

"In the Netherlands some forms of covert Dawa, aiming at a clandestine infiltration of political and social institutions, are also conceivable, for example, attempts to infiltrate community-based organisations with the aim of monopolising them (thus obstructing the proper functioning of 'civil society'). But in the long run, more serious forms of such covert subversion are also conceivable, for example attempts by radical Islamic organisations to infiltrate local administration, the judicature et cetera, whilst concealing their actual objectives and loyalties" (AIVD, 2004, p. 41).

AIVD's estimation of Islamist radicalization's threat potential thus goes beyond the risk to public safety or its challenge to the monopoly on the use of force but into the very fabric of social relations as a conspiratorial project to unravel the norms of civic culture and foster animosity between social groups (e.g., AIVD, 2002, p. 17). By this rendering even successful examples of Muslim integration can be treated as suspect, as AIVD suggests that attempts by Muslims to "secur[e] a place of its own" in Dutch society through civil institutions can also mean places ae created where messages of *jihad* and *dawa* may be proffered, harbouring the potential to incite violence as well as subtler but equally dangerous forms of subversion (2004, p. 29).[94]

This assessment of radical Islam's overt and insidious dangers provides further justification for AVID's 'broad approach' to terrorism prevention, which is expanded upon in here over 19 recommended counter-measures. These recommendations serve as an important connecting point in CVE's history. Whether consciously or not, they bear the mark of much of the previous actions tried out in the Saudi Arabia PRAC strategy circa 2002[95], while offering a comprehensive preview of the CVE practices that would

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[94] AIVD's report states that efforts by Muslims to create their own civil society institutions "may, in principle […] have a positive effect" on integration, yet also "may lead to a weakening of the values and institutions […] which unite us" and "become a fertile breeding ground for violence" (2004, pp. 29-30).

[95] See chapter 2 for extensive description and analysis of PRAC, which I treat as an important antecedent to CVE.

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soon take hold across the West. AIVD's proposals call for broad engagement across social sectors including "national authorities, local administration, community-based organisations, and especially the moderate part of the Muslim community itself". The latter is to be offered "encouragement and support", "to voice different ideas and to help them develop a 'self-cleaning capacity'" (AIVD, 2004, pp. 44, 50). This is to be achieved through "sensibilization", building societal awareness through "continuously providing accurate information" as well as policy advice on radicalization (50, 55). It also includes creating 'counter-narratives' via the promotion of "competitive views" by government, media, academia to "stimulate a more moderate ideology to counterbalance" and "emasculate […] radical-Islamic ideological arguments" (50-51). The recommendations also forecast the role that schools would play in CVE, laying out "two distinct directions" that include "the identification of radicalisation and informing the competent authorities" and use of the curriculum to support "identity development" and "the internalisation of the Western democratic ideas on legal order" (51). In a nod to EU decisions that year, AIVD's report also calls for "intensified cooperation" between intelligence and security services, judicial authorities, and the police, including the "collective development and implementation of appropriate intervention strategies concerning terrorism and radicalisation processes" (54).

Vertical dimension of the democratic legal order

OVERT JIHAD

OVERT DAWA

8

Efforts to create anti-democratic views on the state by violent means.

Violent anti-democratic political Islam or violent radical Muslim nationalism

1

Efforts to create anti-democratic views on the state by non violent means.

Non-violent anti-democratic political Islam or non-violent radical Muslim nationalism

7

Pursuit of exclusivism and parallelism via overt violent activities.
Violent radical-Islamic puritanism

2

Overt propagation of exclusivism and parallelism
Non-violent radical-Islamic puritanism

Horizontal dimension of the democratic legal order

Secret encouragement of serious tensions among groups in society, wich may lead to violence.
Violent radical-Islamic puritanism
Violent Muslim nationalism

Covert propagation of exclusivism and parallelism using hidden agenda/ under false pretences.
Non-violent radical-Islamic puritanism

Covert attempts to undermine structures of democratic legal order.

Non-violent anti-democratic political Islam

3

6

Covert pursuit of subversion of democratic legal order.
Violent anti-democratic political Islam

COVERT JIHAD

COVERT DAWA

5 **4**

Fig. VIII – "Eight types of threat from radical Islam" (AIVD, 2004, p. 36)

In sum, by the close of 2004, European decision makers and key security agencies had widely adopted the idea of 'radicalization' as a process underpinning terrorism and as a lead concept for preventative intervention, having called for requisite changes to its security architecture to facilitate these efforts. These moves were anchored by the interpretation of the Madrid bombing and van Gogh murder as symptomatic of the problem of 'radicalization' among the European Muslim population. The idea of expanding counter-terrorism's remit toward preventative interventions within the Muslim-majority diasporas was now justified within security circles and the political class, and increasingly in popular media representations, with Muslim community

organizations flagged as sites where the amorphous problem of 'radicalization' might be occurring. To further demonstrate the *imperative* for these efforts, AIVD's report estimates that "[t]he capability in Dutch society to resist the threats from radical Islam is low" and that Muslim communities have so far "insufficiently been able to counterbalance the radicalising forces within their community" (2004, p. 46). This attribution of a 'deficit'[96] to Dutch Muslims on their presumed inability of to resist extremism would carry through to justify more modern CVE intervention schemes (e.g., Coppock & McGovern, 2014), and in recent years has arguably been extended to whole populations via the felt need by political and security elites to build community resilience to 'all types' of violent extremism (e.g., Ellis & Abdi, 2017; LaFree & Freilich, 2019).

London and '7/7': further saturation and institutionalization

The final lurch toward 'radicalization' and CVE policies would occur after another highly mediatized terrorism event in London. The July 7, 2005, bombing of London's transit system galvanized the sense that the 'War on Terror' had entered a new internal stage. This further concentrated state and media attention on European Muslim communities, contributing to radicalization's advance onto state security agendas. The '7/7' incident is argued to have worsened the already fraught relationship between

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[96] 'Deficit thinking' in education attributes shortcomings to endogenous deficiencies, tying the failures of racialized students to culture, race, biology, or language instead of systemic issues. 'Deficit thinking', through the categories of "vulnerable" and "at-risk" students, has been criticized for being affixed to marginalized groups and for having stigmatizing effects (Toldson, 2019). See Millett & Ahmad (2021) for further discussion on 'deficit thinking' in CVE.

Muslims and non-Muslims in Britain, boosting anti-Islam bias and furthering the securitization of British South Asian Muslim communities (Hussain & Bagguley, 2012).

Part of the incident's impact can be attributed to the high degree of international media attention it received, and its position in having occurred after the Madrid and Amsterdam incidents. Awan, Hoskins, & O'Loughlin (2011) note how news coverage of '7/7' employed the temporal frame of an 'extended present', placing the incident in a sequence of events that included Madrid and Amsterdam while foreshadowing a future of "similar or greater attacks to come" (p. 67). The authors note how this "series of apparently connected events became 'schemata' through which any new event, or imagined future events, could be interpreted" (69). The weaving of this 'schemata' was achieved largely through the idea of the 'radicalization process', which lent narrative coherence to these events (66). Awan, Hoskins, & O'Loughlin note that journalists turned toward the narrative of 'radicalization' to fill the vacuum during blanket coverage of the London incident, when a dearth of official information was available in its immediate aftermath. Journalists interviewed local people who reported "signs of radicalization" such as a turn to religious appearance and behaviour, with coverage drifting from the specific actions at hand to speculate on the existence of terrorist "sleeper cells" within British Muslim communities. Here the role of 'terrorism experts' was pertinent as "a resource […] to fill news space in the absence of hard information" (Miller & Mills, 2009, p. 414). Television news broadcasts in the UK and internationally featured security experts echoing claims resembling those in AIVD's 2004 report that authorities look for potential attackers with "no evidence of criminality or suspicion" who are otherwise "*behaving in a normal way* and *merging* with the rest of the Muslim

community" (Awan, Hoskins & O'Loughlin, 2011, pp. 79, 73). Public concern over 'self-radicalizing' individuals located (or "masquerading") within Muslim communities were further heightened due to the reported "normality" of the group arrested for the bombings (Ibid, p. 82), all of which were considered to have had "unremarkable backgrounds with secular upbringings" (Silber & Bhatt, 2007, p. 26).

The intensified public concern over 'radicalization' occurring in Muslim communities further justified the case for broad-scale preventative action. In the UK, plans to draft new anti-terror legislation began in the week following July 7. The result was the *Terrorism Act 2006,* which provided law enforcement with new powers to crack down on mosques suspected to be fomenting extremism, "bookshops and other disseminators of terrorist publications", while making it an offence to "encourage" and/or "glorify" terrorism (United Kingdom, 2006)*.* In keeping with the trend towards *anticipatory* measures, critics noted that the terrorism bill was less focused on prosecuting terrorist activities rather than criminalizing actions that *might* lead individuals to terrorism (e.g., Silva, 2017; The Guardian, 2009). The UK's response to the 7/7 incident later led to the development of the Prevent strategy in 2006, the first nationwide CVE program implemented in Europe.

The European Union enacted its own policy response to '7/7' in a trio of documents released between September and November 2005. This period also coincided with the UK's holding of the EU's rotating presidency.[97] The first of these documents is

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[97] The high level of coordination between the EU and UK government during this period is noted by both Coolsaet (2016) and Kundnani & Hayes (2018), where the UK government is believed to have influenced the EU to further concentrate its counter-terrorism plans on preventing 'radicalization'. An informant in my data highlighted the importance of contingency here, suggesting that "had the UK not held the EU presidency at this juncture, CVE may not have emerged the way that it did".

a September 21 Communication from the European Commission to the European

Parliament on "addressing the factors contributing to violent radicalisation". Much of

what it proposes fits with the European Commission's Madrid Declaration Plan of

Action and in the AIVD report released after the van Gogh murder. The Communication

is notable for its emphasis on devising "soft measures" that contribute "in an indirect

way" toward preventing radicalization (European Commission, 2005, p. 6). This is

exemplified by the proposal for education programs for "youngsters in their most

formative years". These aim at instilling Europe's "fundamental common values" such

as "cultural diversity and tolerance", which the report suggests will help "stem the

development of violently radical mindsets" (Ibid, p. 5). An emphasis on European values

and "active citizenship" is also evident in its proposal for a 'Citizens of Europe

program', which would seek ways to foster "intercultural dialogue" and "enhance mutual

understanding between European citizens", including funding for events that "celebrate

Europe's fundamental values and major achievements" (European Commission, 2005, p.

6). Additional soft measures are recommended for law enforcement, including the

creation of "[s]chemes which involve […] engaging more at the local level with youth"

(Ibid, p. 7). Also included in the Communication are "hard measures" that also echo the

Madrid Declaration and AIVD (2004), calling for better cooperation between Europol

and state-level policing and security agencies and citing the need for member states to

share "best practices" on fighting radicalization via EU structures (European

Commission, 2005, p. 8). This was coupled with the announcement of more funding for

research into the "motivational and desisting factors for violent radicalization", which

the report suggests would build on active studies taking place by "security services and

police forces within the Member States" (Ibid, pp. 8-9).

The bulk of these proposals were summarized two months later in the European

Union Strategy for Combatting Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terrorism, which was

released in tandem with a new EU Counter-Terrorism Strategy in late November 2005.

The strategies were developed by the European Council's Working Group on Terrorism,

comprised of senior officials from the interior ministries and security agencies of the

member states (Kundnani & Hayes, 2018, p. 18). The Strategy for Combatting

Radicalisation outlines a series of planned interventions across European schools,

community and religious institutions, in immigration policy, and over the world wide

web. Its first pillar concerns "disrupting the activities of the networks and individuals

who draw people into terrorism" (European Council, 2005, p. 3). Here it aims to "spot

such behaviours" associated with radicalization through community policing, monitoring

the internet and travel to conflict zones, and by "limiting the activities of those playing a

role in radicalisation" including in prisons, schools, and places of religious training and

worship (Ibid, p. 3). The strategy's second pillar connects to this in its objective to

"ensur[e] that voices of mainstream opinion prevail over those of extremism". This is

purported to involve empowering "moderate Muslim" voices to reject "distorted"

versions of Islam, while also providing training for foreign imams and "encouraging the

emergence of European imams" (Ibid, p. 4). The strategy also endeavours to "change the

perceptions of European and Western policies particularly among Muslim communities"

(4). A third pillar of the strategy looks to eliminate "structural factors supporting

radicalisation" by "promoting yet more vigorously security, justice, democracy and

opportunity for all" (European Council, 2005, p. 4). Notably, the strategy does not intend

to address these structural factors within Europe, but rather in Muslim-majority

countries, calling for initiatives abroad that promote good governance, human rights,

education, and economic prosperity.[98]

Another way that the EU's Strategy for Combatting Radicalisation builds on the

momentum of the policy responses since Madrid is in presenting an "all of society"

ethos for the prevention of terrorism. This principle is something I first addressed in the

previous chapter as being evident in AIVD's reporting prior to Madrid and in the 'pre-

CVE' experiments such as Saudi Arabia's PRAC strategy. In both the Strategy for

Combatting Radicalisation and the new Counter-Terrorism Strategy it is stated that:

> "Addressing this challenge [radicalisation and recruitment to terrorism] is
> beyond the power of governments alone. Al-Qa'ida and those inspired by them
> will only be defeated with the engagement of the public, and especially
> Muslims, in Europe and beyond" (European Council, 2005, p. 2; 2005b, p. 8).

By this remit it is stated that non-governmental groups across Europe ("communities,

religious authorities and other organisations") will be the "key to our success" in playing

"an active part in countering the rhetoric of the extremists and highlighting their criminal

acts" (European Council, 2005, p. 5).

A final element worth noting is the international role in counter-terrorism that is

envisioned for the EU and its member states. On top of a planned advisory role in

gathering and distributing "best practices" (European Council, 2005, p. 8), the strategies

call for EU governing bodies to work in conjunction with the United Nations, "other

international or regional organisations", and "key partner countries" including the United

States to "build the international consensus and promote international standards for

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[98] The report states that "Within the Union, most of these factors are not present, but within individual segments of the population they may apply and there may also be issues of identity in immigrant communities" (European Council, 2005, p. 4).

countering terrorism" and to "develop a global strategy" (European Council, 2005b, p.

7). These plans echo the Madrid Declaration from the previous year, which called for

closer cooperation with the United States, developing "international consensus" on

terrorism prevention, as well as a commitment (objective 7) to facilitate the counter-

terrorism capacity of "vulnerable Third countries" by mainstreaming counter-terrorism

objectives into external assistance programmes (European Council, 2004, pp. 13, 18).[99]

This positioning of the EU as a bridge between western countries and transnational

governing bodies anticipates the type of coordination that resulted in the globalization of

CVE programs a decade later, as seen in multilateral partnerships such as the Global

Counter Terrorism Forum (GCTF), Global Community and Engagement Resilience

Fund (GCERF), and the UN's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (Kundnani

& Hayes, 2018). The reference made in the Madrid Declaration to embedding counter-

radicalization into development assistance would also become a hallmark of Western

foreign policies over the next decade, providing another key means by which CVE

programs have proliferated internationally.

Summary and further analysis

Part I of this chapter examined how a policy response was built in Europe, beginning

immediately after the Madrid bombing and bolstered by the incidents in Amsterdam and

London, that expanded counter-terrorism efforts toward the problem of 'homegrown

Islamist radicalization'. The response harnessed the items discussed in Chapter 1 – the

concept of 'radicalization' introduced by the Dutch security service and ideas on pre-

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[99] Similar proposals were reciprocated by the United States government, beginning in a U.S.-EU
Declaration on Combatting Terrorism released in June 2004 (White House, 2004).

crime intervention employed in 'pre-CVE' experiments in the Middle East – along with measures taken to harmonize (and make more anticipatory) Europe's policing and intelligence operations. These measures anticipate the introduction of CVE programs across several of the European Union's member states a year later. Writing on these steps in December 2005, Rik Coolsaet commented how on the EU's counter-terrorism plan had entered "uncharted territory [...] boosting existing cooperation and furthering political integration to a degree nobody would have imagined some years earlier" (Coolsaet, 2005, p. 1).

In Part II of this chapter, I will examine more closely the incidents in Madrid, Amsterdam, and London as catalysts to CVE's development and continuity. For now, it is enough to note how the measures enacted by the EU and the governments of the Netherlands and United Kingdom, as key features of the political response, assigned a particular meaning to Madrid, Amsterdam, and London that was important to the 'making' of these incidents into paradigm-shaping events in counter-terrorism.[100] In the remainder of this section, I examine briefly some of the discursive features accompanying the above policy responses and communication. This yields insight into what ideas and concerns were at play in the minds of state planners at CVE's 'genesis', thus opening questions as to possible ulterior societal functions embedded in its construction at the time.

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[100] It is worth noting that in Spain, the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE) elected to power days after the Madrid bombing did not follow suit with a campaign to stop 'Islamist radicalization'. Instead, it focused on the enforcement of existing laws against violent behaviour, "cross-cultural dialogue and understanding", while stressing the need to keep security and social integration as separate government priorities (van Heelsum & Vermeulen, 2018, p. 169)

In the book *What Is an Event?*, Robin Wagner-Pacifici highlights three forms of

representation that work to make some events appear as epochal "ruptures" in everyday

life (Wagner-Pacifici, 2017). These forms include *performatives* that constitute the event

– 'declaring', 'convincing', 'persuading' – and construct new political identities and

relationships; *demonstratives* that dictate the event's spatial and temporal grounds

('now/then', 'near/far', 'inside/outside', 'us/them'); and *representatives,* which mobilize

these forms to label the incident "as an event of a particular kind" (Wagner-Pacifici,

2017, p. 25). These 'speech acts' (Austin, 1975) work together to shape and mobilize

events by communicating their meaning. Wagner-Pacifici notes how in moments of

violence and war, the interplay of performatives, demonstratives, and representations can

be "elemental" in how nation-states reorient their vision, commitments, and sense of

collective identity (2017, pp. 31-32).

In the case of the policies and communications examined above, a variety of

performative, demonstrative and representative speech acts about Madrid, Amsterdam

and London are present. These forms are packaged along with what Wagner-Pacifici

identifies as the "felicity conditions" necessary for event-making speech acts to be

successful (2017, p. 21), meaning the authority of the speaker (i.e., European Council,

UK government, AIVD) and the corresponding uptake of messaging by social agents.

The latter development is evidenced by the news media's quick adoption of

'radicalization' as an explanatory device beginning after the van Gogh murder. In the

documents I examine, performatives, demonstratives, and representatives often overlap

in single statements, such as in the introductory paragraph of the EU Declaration on

Combatting Terrorism released two weeks after the Madrid bombing:

> The callous and cowardly attacks served as a terrible reminder of the threat posed by terrorism to our society. Acts of terrorism are attacks against the values on which the Union is founded.

> The threat of terrorism affects us all. A terrorist act against one country concerns the international community as a whole. There will be neither weakness nor compromise of any kind when dealing with terrorists. No country in the world can consider itself immune. Terrorism will only be defeated by solidarity and collective action (European Council, 2004, p. 1).

Here, a *representation* of the Madrid incident is offered as a "callous" and "cowardly" act of terror that goes against the values of the EU. A *performative* function exists where the incident serves as a "reminder of the threat posed by terrorism", framing it in the 'extended present' dynamic posed by Awan, Hoskins & O'Loughlin (2011). This communicates the incident as necessitating redoubled efforts, which the remainder of the document outlines. Coupled with this is a *demonstrative* function, which re-orients the Madrid bombing as a concern for all of Europe and its international allies (as opposed to the domain of Spanish internal affairs or Spanish foreign policy, where debate in that country over the incident had been centered) while serving to define terror as illegitimate within European geographical space.

In the documents that succeeded the Madrid Declaration, performatives, demonstratives, and representatives cohere to place the Madrid bombing in concert with the van Gogh murder in Amsterdam and the '7/7' attack London as indicative of a turn in the dynamics of the 'War on Terror' toward a new, internal, and more diffuse problem of 'radicalization', which puts the very fabric of European societies at risk and necessitates an "all of society" response. As Coolsaet and others rightly acknowledge, the response to these events represents a benchmark in the history of counter-terrorism in the West. While the concepts and practices were not necessarily 'new', their embrace in

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EU policy circles at this time pushed counter-terrorism (and with it the broader agenda of security) beyond the tools of intelligence and law enforcement to become a broader societal objective – institutionalizing what had been proposed in reports by AIVD prior to these events.

It is within this discursive framing of counter-terrorism as an "all of society" endeavour (first broached in Chapter 2) that I wish to close my analysis. Referencing the aftermath of 9/11, Wagner-Pacifici writes that in these "discursive moments" nation-states can reorient their sense of time and space, as well as generate symbolic community by reaffirming, creating, or altering certain "genealogies of kinship" (2017, pp. 31-32, 25). This is a point borne out in critical analyses of the temporal construction of 9/11 (e.g., Jarvis, 2008; Toros, 2017), where it is shown how the Bush administration's response framed the event not only as a moment of discontinuity but as an attack on the American "way of life". According to Lee Jarvis, this established a "mythically singular, coherent, and homogenous" American populace as part of the event's structural and normative coherence, who were called "to recognise and share in their collective identity" through 9/11 and the subsequent 'War on Terror' (Jarvis, 2008, pp. 250, 257).

I argue that similar narratives on identity and community-making are present in Europe's response to Madrid, Amsterdam and London. This is firstly present in *demonstrative* speech acts where a 'hero/villain' opposition pairing is deployed.[101] Through this, the sense of a durable, coherent European 'body politic' is rendered in

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[101] As I explain in Part II of this chapter, the concept of an 'actant' in literary theory denotes patterns of behaviour in the structure of storytelling, often taking the form of binary opposition pairings such as hero/villain, subject/object, helper/opponent, victim/assailant (Hébert & Tabler, 2019).

opposition to a minority that espouses 'Islamist' values and represents an existential

threat to the former. In this construction, clear orientalist tropes are evoked of Muslim

communities presenting a type of "fifth column" threat that wishes to undo European

societies from within (Kundnani, 2008; also see Said, 1978; 1981; Richardson, 2004).[102]

This theme is most candidly portrayed in AIVD's 2004 report on 'radical Islam' being a

"multiform threat" to European order, coupled with the suggestion that successful

Muslim integration might actually provide cover for the clandestine subversion of

European society. The proposals by the EU and UK do not depict Muslims in such an

overtly orientalist fashion, yet they adopt AIVD's concept of 'radicalization' along with

its recommended 'soft' interventions across Muslim communities, targeting mosques,

the training of imams, "misuse of the non-profit sector", "radical bookstores", and

Muslim youth in schools (e.g., European Council, 2004b, p 21; United Kingdom, 2006).

The emphasis in these plans on monitoring Muslim civic and cultural institutions means

that the "moderate Muslims" which Europe's Strategy for Combatting Radicalisation

seeks to empower are not excluded from the risk profile. Due to the diffuse nature of the

perceived threat of Islamist radicalization, none rise above scrutiny. The rendering of the

"good Muslim" (Karim, 2002) as both a CVE ally and 'violent extremism' risk will

come into fuller view in Chapter 5 on the participation of racialized minorities in

contemporary CVE programming. For now, it is enough to emphasize how the

messaging in plans brought forth by the EU, UK, and Dutch governments in response to

Madrid etc. conform to later critiques on CVE's contribution to the surveillance and

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[102] Edward Said found popular representations of Muslims in the West to contain the lurking image of "the menace of *jihad* […] a fear that the Muslims (or Arabs) will take over the world" (1978, p. 287).

securitization of Western Muslims and aiding in their construction as a "suspect community" (e.g., Hussain & Bagguley, 2012; Pantazis & Pemberton, 2009).

Equally significant for my study is what these documents appearing at CVE's genesis point construct on the 'hero' side of the 'hero/villain' pairing, i.e., against the backdrop of 'suspect' European Muslims. Here, I argue, the idea of an existing European majority bloc is presented, united through shared values of democracy, "cultural diversity", "tolerance", and the renunciation of terrorism and its underlying beliefs. In the European political communication I examine, it is this *imagined* pan-European community (Anderson, 1983) who are envisioned to lead the fight against 'Islamist' radicalization in a new all-of-society endeavour.[103] In line with the observations of Jarvis (2008) on U.S. society in 9/11 and the 'War on Terror', I view the creation (and protection) of this *imagined* pan-European social bloc as part of the 'official' meaning inscribed to the events in Madrid, Amsterdam and London. Its presence, and secured future existence, are at the base of the package of counter-terrorism and 'radicalization' measures introduced in response to the incidents.

This leads to two preliminary observations. The <u>first</u> being how the boundary of this prospective European community becomes drawn *through* European Muslim communities in the material examined. It is a fuzzy line (due to the instable construction of the "good Muslim") that nonetheless functions to weld the idea of a moderate Muslim majority to the common vision and values of *Europeanness*. The <u>second</u> observation

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[103] Benedict Anderson's concept of *imagined community* refers to nation-states but might equally apply to European Union citizenship building. Anderson argues how the survival of nation-states relies on continually invoking an abstract communal identity in the minds of its members. Bean, Keränen, & Durfy (2011) have discussed specifically how the UK government made sense of the '7/7' bombings through the concept of "the imagined community of the nation" (p. 428).

involves how this united European community is continually *hailed* through the planned

counter-terrorism responses.[104] Again, this is most overt in Dutch security reporting,

which enlists "those having an interest in the continued existence of the democratic legal

order" in the fight against Islamist radicalization, designating that "society at large is, in

fact, an interested party" (AIVD, 2004, p. 44). Even so, the *hailing* is also present at the

EU governance level, in proposed counter-terror measures that empower "moderate

Muslim" voices and other non-governmental groups (European Council, 2005b, p. 3),

allocate funds to "celebrate Europe's cultural diversity and achievements" (European

Council, 2005a, p. 6), transmit "European values" to student populations, and aide the

development of "European imams" (Ibid, p. 4). These measures, beyond the anti-

radicalization purchase they might have, also attempt to reify an idea of Europeanness,

and with it, arguably, a claim to EU governing legitimacy. It is important to recognize in

these documents that if a *need* is implied on the part of authorities to reify a common

European identity, or to secure governing legitimacy, this is not associated with factors

endogenous to European societies nor its political system. This is exemplified by the

Strategy for Combatting Radicalisation's commitment to address the presumed structural

factors behind 'radicalization' in third party (i.e., 'Muslim') countries rather than in

Europe. When analysis of Europe's 'radicalization' problem does turn inward, it takes on

the perception that part of it has to do with Europe's values and political actions being

misconstrued or communicated improperly. This is evident in the new EU Counter-

Terrorism Strategy's call to "develop a media and communication strategy to explain

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[104] 'Hailing' is in reference to Althusser's process of interpellation where subjects internalize
dominant values and recognize their own identities within them. See Dider Fassin (2013, pp. 1-2) for
an updated application of this concept in relation to the policing of racialized populations in Europe.

better EU policies" and to "ensure that voices of mainstream opinion prevail over those of extremism" (European Commission, 2005b, pp. 8-9).

In sum, a closer examination of Europe's response to Madrid, Amsterdam and London finds the *making* of, or *quest,* for a common European body politic as a feature of the performative and demonstrative representations of these events. This is to see how the counter-terrorism innovations introduced served as a vehicle to articulate a common idea of Europeanness against the threatening backdrop of 'Islamist radicalization'. The scope of my research does not extend to exploring in detail the political-historical conjuncture in Europe at the time; however, I would argue that the 'summoning' of this community in the documents examined must be placed in the context of widening public dissatisfaction with European integration on multiple fronts. On one hand, there was growing displeasure expressed by ethno-majority 'liberal elites' over the fate of Europe's identity and values in light of migration and multiculturalism (e.g. Scheffer, 2000; Cohen, 2007; Hitchens, 2007 – Fig. 5) which increasingly began to solidify around the threat to Europe of 'Islamism' (Sayyid, 1997; Kundnani, 2008).[105] On the other hand, there were less publicly vocalized but materially grounded animosities among racial and religious minorities over their subordinate position in European societies and over European foreign policy decisions in South Asia and the Middle East (e.g., Essed 1990). These grievances took a more palpable form in the October-November 2005 riots in the suburbs of Paris and other French cities.[106] A third element

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[105] Salman Sayyid writes how the idea of 'Islamic fundamentalism' creates cultural anxiety in the West like in Cold War 'red scares', suggesting a rejection of the current world order and of the West "as a model of political, economic, cultural and intellectual development" (1997, pp. 3-5).

[106] The riots have been interpreted as a manifestation of the systemic disadvantage and police mistreatment of French residents of African descent (e.g., Canet, Pech, & Stewart, 2015).

involved tensions related to the partial dissolution of national polities and nation-state

sovereignty due to European continental integration. This, it was argued as far back as

1993, was leading to the onset of a 'Fortress Europe' mentality, meaning that as Europe

began to harmonize political administration, including the removal of inter-state border

controls, a pan-European identity began to solidify through racist and Islamophobic

metaphors of non-white immigration-as-invasion (e.g., Bjørgo & Witte, 1993; van Dijk,

1993).[107] These tensions over intra-European integration became punctuated by

animosity over the 2004 admission of eastern European countries into the EU and the

eventual rejection of the European Constitution in 2005 after unsuccessful referendums

in France and the Netherlands.

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[107] On this, Teun van Dijk wrote: "In view of the unification of the European Community (EC) in 1993, minority policies and restrictions on immigration become harsher each day. The ideological legitimation of these policies and practices leaves little doubt about the ways people with a different color or culture are being viewed by white politicians in power, and about the position of minorities in the future united fortress of Europe [...] European leaders are involved in preparing or implementing treaties, such as the half-secret Schengen Treaty, which are mainly designed to keep refugees and especially non-Europeans, that is, people of color, out of their unified fortress." (1993, pp. 1-3).

VANITY FAIR

Londonistan Calling

The London neighborhood of the author's youth, Finsbury Park, is now one of the breeding grounds for a new phenomenon: the British jihadist. How did a nation move from cricket and fish-and-chips to burkas and shoe-bombers in a single generation?

BY **CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS**
MAY 2, 2007

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T hey say that the past is another country, but let me tell you that it's much more unsettling to find that the present has become another country, too. In my lost youth I lived in Finsbury Park, a shabby area

Fig. IX – Christopher Hitchens' article in *Vanity Fair* as a typical European liberal response to the perceived threat of 'Islamism' on modern enlightenment values

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Out of this context re-emerges a question that I posed near the end of Chapter 2 related to CVE's social function as well as stated versus unstated aims of CVE policies.[108] I asked to what degree are intentions to engineer support for state legitimacy and neutralize opposition absent or rather merely obfuscated in CVE today? Based on the material examined in this chapter, it would appear that part of the *anticipatory* security-based statecraft in Europe's response to Madrid, Amsterdam, and London was to pre-empt a crisis of governing legitimacy, as seen in the absence of a cohesive 'body politic' for the project of European integration.[109] Thus, through the CVE response, an attempt was made to foster a cohesive, *consenting* pan-European community, envisioned as deployable in the fight against the common threat of 'Islamist radicalization'. This came at a point where the EU's own legitimacy and identity was critically at stake. On this matter, critical security scholars note how in the early-mid 2000s the EU aimed to bolster its status as a political actor via counter-terrorism, 'Europeanizing' the threat of Islamic terrorism in pursuit of greater policy objectives (e.g., Hassan, 2010; Baker-Beall, 2016).[110] In a similar vein to my analysis, Christopher Baker-Beall demonstrates how counter-terrorism has been an important site for the articulation of an "EU sense of self" (2016, p. 42), i.e., projecting via counter-terrorism policy what the Union *stands for* and

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[108] I noted how the Saudi Arabian government's goal with PRAC strategy circa 2002-3 was to "solidify the legitimacy of the ruling order", "promote nationalism" and "eliminate violent opposition" (Boucek, 2008, pp. 4, 9) and the absence of such language around CVE in the West.

[109] Didier Bigo discusses how "the metaphor of the body politic" is central to the concept of Western state sovereignty. (2002, p. 67). The Westphalian idea of a state derives its authority through the idea of a *demos.* This also naturally engenders depictions of outsiders as "a danger to the homogeneity of the state, the society, and the polity" (Ibid).

[110] Argomaniz, Bures & Kaunert (2016) note that the EU moved from "a position of almost total irrelevance" to an "increasingly active" participant in counter-terrorism after the attacks in New York, Madrid, and London (p. 6). They also tie the EU's emergence as a counter-terror actor to its interest in "policy entrepreneaurship" and in weakening member states' "attachment to national sovereighty" (p. 9).

what counts as legitimate activity. Here, Baker-Beall also notes the reliance on the "terrorist other" in EU identity-making, through which its self-conception as 'open', 'democratic' 'multicultural', and 'free' is "constituted, differentiated and (re)produced" as being under threat (p. 174).

These arguments from European critical security scholars support my query into the ulterior functions at play in the EU's take-up of 'radicalization'. They also suggest how EU policy proposals to tackle 'radicalization' can be read alongside concurrent efforts by the EU to grant itself sovereign powers (e.g., Kaunert, 2005) where significant moments such as the signing of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe in June 2004 and the Constitution's failure to be ratified in national referendums in 2005 overlay the time-period I examine. In sum, the EU was arguably embarking upon acquiring a kind of *supranational* sovereignty (Kaunert, 2005) while it was asserting itself (and defining its governing identity and the pan-European community it sought to represent) through efforts to address 'radicalization'. I will explore some of these insights in succeeding chapters on the evolving focus of the CVE field and its practitioner network. My analysis here suggests that different functions, ideas, or intentions were being conceived or at least intervening in the political embrace of the CVE paradigm at this point it time which ought to be pursued in critical analyses of contemporary CVE initiatives.

Part II – Reconsidering the centricity of Madrid, Amsterdam, and London in CVE

Thus far, I have examined how the incidents in Madrid, Amsterdam and London were interpreted and instrumentalized in EU policy circles in 2004-2005, which established the grounds for CVE's emergence. In this section I consider the greater importance of

these events to CVE's development. To do so, I will first reiterate (and expand on) the political construction (and re-construction) of these incidents in the constitution of CVE. This is to acknowledge several things, beginning with how Madrid, Amsterdam and London – despite their differing contexts and lack of formal ties[111] – became linked together by politicians, journalists and security experts as examples of an underlying phenomenon of 'radicalization' in Europe's Muslim communities (e.g., AIVD, 2004; Omand, 2005; Silber & Bhatt, 2007). This representation helped catapult the 'radicalization' concept upwards through "official" and "political" channels of state security agendas (Sedgwick, 2010)[112], inspiring a coordinated response by the EU and partner governments that mobilized the paradigm into what would eventually become a transnational field of Countering Violent Extremism. The representation of Madrid, Amsterdam and London would also serve to link future events as examples of the spread of the ongoing problem, causing states to re-affirm the need to focus on CVE while marking changes in the field's areas of focus.

I then attempt to understand the catalytic impact of Madrid, Amsterdam, and London beyond elite-constructed representations, which helps understand (at the more

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[111] There are no formal links existing between these events other than the belief that the perpetrators underwent an autonomous process of 'radicalization' influenced by 'Islamist' ideology. Further inconsistencies arise within each case. Reinares (2014) notes that the "archetype" of the Madrid bombings as the work of an "independent local cell of self-recruited leaderless terrorists" has been disproved by evidence showing the facilitating hand played by al-Qaeda senior leadership (p. 29). Later evidence also refuted the belief that the London '7/7' attacks were carried out without any aid or assistance from outside terror groups, thus putting its 'homegrown' status in question (Crone & Harrow, 2011). Meanwhile, the van Gogh murder could be interpreted as a non-terrorist offence since the victim was not a 'third party'. Nonetheless, media coverage highlighted the political motivations behind van Gogh's murder and a note left by Bouyeri that was thought to intend to have a chilling effect over Dutch society with respect to publicly disparaging Islam.

[112] Sedgwick (2010) explains radicalization's movement from the "official level" to the "political level" as meaning that the priority for politicians and law enforcement officials extends from "taking appropriate measures" to being "seen to be taking appropriate measures" (p. 485).

granular level of my later fieldwork) the precarious and uneven growth of the CVE field

and paradigm. Doing so involves returning to (and complicating) my thesis from the

previous chapter, where I took issue with the widely conveyed notion that the emergence

of CVE emerged was caused by (i.e., out of *spontaneous necessity*) the incidents of

Madrid, Amsterdam and London. Here, I retain my position while illustrating the

importance of the Madrid, Amsterdam and London incidents as unpredictable

occurrences that hold an agency of their own. This is to state that paradigms like CVE

become shaped by the contingency of real events, whose meaning exceeds their

representation by human actors such as journalists, politicians, and other privileged

authorities. To comprehend this, it is necessary to engage with literature on the social

construction of events and different perspectives on the role of *actants* in the creation of

social phenomena (e.g., Greimas, 1966; Sewell, 1996; Latour, 2005; Wagner-Pacifici,

2017).

Madrid, Amsterdam, and London as 'CVE events'

To build on my argument in Part I of this chapter, I firstly consider the Madrid,

Amsterdam, and London incidents as socially produced 'events'. Robin Wagner-

Pacifici's research on the sociology of events analyzes how certain happenings are made

into history-altering *events* that produce new schemas of understanding, constituting and

reconstituting social and political identities (Wagner-Pacifici, 2010, p. 1382). The

author's work, along with others in this vein (e.g., Sewell, 1996) examine how events

such as September 11 attacks and the French Revolution come to have historical and

transformative meaning. For Wagner-Pacifici, the turning of an incident into a historical

event requires "enormous effort on the parts of myriad social agents and forces"

(Wagner-Pacifici, 2017, p. 11). As noted in the previous section, the author draws on J.L. Austin's speech act theory to detail the variety of performative, demonstrative, and representational acts that cohere to shape and communicate an incident's meaning. Wagner-Pacifici writes how these semiotic systems work to establish spatial and temporal boundaries around an incident, reconfiguring "our senses of the reasonable and possible paths, orientations, alignments, and senses of belonging and solidarity" (2017, p. 25). It follows then that performative, demonstrative, and representational efforts, as seen in political statements, legal decisions, news reporting, and film re-enactments around an incident, should be considered as much a part of the event's *matter* (and consequently its social and political purchase) as the concrete actions pertaining to the incident. By this logic, event making is also an ongoing process that is shaped by competing social actors over time. Events are thus never 'settled' and can be re-made. Wagner-Pacifici gives the example of memorials as a representative act that can extend an event's importance through time as well as open it to re-interpretation. The meaning of an event thus tends to evolve and 'forgotten' events can always be resurrected. Some incidents do not cohere as historical events as some campaigns at event-making are less successful than others.

There is much to consider here from the perspective of terrorism and counter-terrorism. Firstly, it is evident that not all terrorism incidents become paradigm-shifting events, and that achieving this involves more than the number of casualties or dramatic nature of the incident (though this can help).[113] In some cases, *non-incidents* come to

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[113] Numerous examples exist of similar terrorism incidents becoming events versus being non-events. In Canada, the 2004 arrest of Momin Khawaja on terrorism charges overseas was a *non-event* (it did not receive high media saturation (at the time), broad plans of action were not proposed, it was not thought to mark a rupture in time). Conversely, the 2014 detaining of students from Montréal's

serve as important events, i.e., 'foiled plots' such as the 2006 Toronto 18 plot and the

2006 Forest Gate raid in the UK have been important to the construction of the

'homegrown terrorism/radicalization' problem in Canada and England. It is also true that

some *non-events* become *events* posthumously. In Canada, this includes the 2004 Momin

Khawaja affair and the 1985 Air India bombing, which are now immortalized as

principal examples of 'homegrown terrorism' in Canada (Chakraborty, 2012).[114] These

examples confirm Wagner-Pacifici's point that performative and representational acts

around a terrorism incident (political statements, media coverage, language and

definitions used) matter as much to the *content* of the event as the actions of the

purported terrorists. Connectedly, the privileged role that *elites* (Entman, 2003) within

media and political spheres play in the constitution of terrorism incidents as

era/paradigm-changing events must be highlighted, as well as how this works to

mobilize support for social agenda items.[115] The paradigmatic example of this continues

to be the 9/11 attacks and their thematization by the U.S. Bush administration to gain

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College de Maisonneuve on suspicions of wanting to participate in the ISIS conflict can be
considered an *event.* It served as a breaking point leading to commitments on CVE and it continues to
be referenced on the issue of violent extremism in Canada. A similar case can be made in the United
States between incidents such as the 1994 Brooklyn Bridge shooting and 1997 Empire State Building
shooting (as *non-events*) versus the 2009 Fort Hood shooting (as *event*).

[114] Chakraborty notes how the 1985 bombing of Air India Flight 182 has been reappraised by
political authorities as "Canada's 9/11" in the context of fears over 'homegrown terrorism', noting
that public memorials to it were installed in Toronto, Vancouver, Ottawa, and Montréal between
2005 and 2011.

[115] The corollary to this point is exemplified by the decades-long struggle to have violence
perpetrated out of racism, misogyny and homophobia achieve 'terrorism event' status and for
corresponding state responses to be introduced (e.g., Hamm, 1994). In the 1990s, attempts were made
to turn 'April 19' (i.e., the 1995 bombing of an Oklahoma City federal building) into a paradigm-
changing event that would necessitate government action on the prevention of right-wing terrorism.
However, it would only be in the later-2010s that the now matured CVE field began consciously
shifting toward countering right-wing violence in the wake of the 2017 Charlottesville 'Unite the
Right' rally and the 2019 mosque shootings in Christchurch, which did reach *terrorism event* status.

political authority for the 'war on terrorism' and its pre-emptive military strikes (Jarvis, 2008; Massumi, 2015).

Moving to the specific relationship between the Madrid, Amsterdam, and London incidents and CVE, the above analysis highlights how integral their construction as transformative events is to the field's emergence as well as its and ongoing legitimacy. The latter is evident in the degree to which CVE activity is tethered around such high-profile events. Akin to the activities of a fire department during an emergency, it is within the 'event time' of a highly publicized terrorist incident that the multiple dormant functions of a CVE entity achieve fruition. Multiple informants in my data refer to the inundation of calls they receive in the aftermath of terrorism incidents: from schools reporting concerns about students or requesting education workshops for teachers and students; from journalists to asking for expert sources for news stories; from victims and victimized communities reaching out for support and explanations; and typically, a flood of calls by members of the public seeking advice regarding friends and family members.[116] These latter calls tend to match the *type* of radicalization in the media spotlight, with my CVE practitioners reporting that the 2015 Paris attacks elicited a spike in calls over possible 'jihadists' including many 'false-positive' referrals to CVE agencies based on stereotypes and misunderstandings.[117] Consequently, after the 2018 Toronto van attack, more calls regarding concerns over 'incels' were received.

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[116] Also see CBC News (2015, 18 November) "Montreal anti-radicalization centre handling more calls since Paris attacks" (https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/anti-radicalization-paris-attacks-1.3325163)

[117] This was brought up my practitioners handling case referrals at two different CVE entities. Spoke Adrianna, a case manager: "we realized with the cases we had, people were very confused with ethnic traits and radicalization, for instance 'my son converted to Islam and is not eating pork … and he's grown a beard'. It's not significant and it's not the problem."

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It is also typically within the mediatized interval of terrorism events that state-level decisions occur that determine the long-term fate of CVE. This is evident in Canada when CSIS decided to reallocate resources toward countering "ethno-nationalist" violent extremism after the 2019 mosque attack in Christchurch, New Zealand. In these ostensible 'growth periods', new government funding for CVE tends to be released, with sectors tangential to the counter-terrorism world often obtaining funds for projects. Consequently, many of my informant practitioners found themselves entering CVE, or finding their careers intersecting with CVE, during these times, such as a university professor who was asked by the government to administer a school-based CVE-based project, or an Imam agreeing to cooperate with municipal police, after the 2015 Collège de Maisonneuve 'foreign fighter' affair (see Chapter 4). The reverse scenario is also true. CVE practitioners I interviewed expressed frustration over the difficulty in convincing government to continue funding for existing projects or to support new initiatives during lulls in the news cycle. During these times, reasons such as budgetary constraints, questions over potential drawbacks or whether CVE "really works" can take on more prominence and inhibit action. Practitioners also reported interactions during these periods with funders who questioned whether the problem still existed.[118]

This leads to understanding how events such as Madrid, Amsterdam and London, based on their socialized production, facilitate CVE activity by lending credibility to the problems of 'radicalization' and 'violent extremism' underpinning CVE, which are

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[118] In two separate cases in 2019 (prior to the Christchurch shootings), practitioners used the phrase "it's so 2015" to describe the government's attitude toward 'radicalization', meaning that the issue was thought to have passed after the 2014 Parliament Hill shooting, Paris attacks, and concerns over ISIS foreign fighters.

noted for their conceptual fuzziness (e.g., Sedgwick, 2010; Neumann, 2013). As Awan, Hoskins & O'Loughlin (2011) reason, 'radicalization' can only tangibly be understood "through working back from the final act". They continue as such:

> "It is only at the time of the identification of suspects of planned or actual terrorist attacks or […] when bomb plotters are prosecuted, that news discourse or indeed policymakers are available to sidestep the significant unknowns and unknowables of radicalisation. This may seem initially an obvious point to make, *but it is precisely because the process of radicalisation in this context can only be successfully defined in relation to a violent act or attempted violent act.* In this way, the ultimate and only definitive measure of someone having been radicalised - actual attempts at violence - sets a very high threshold for its attainment and labelling" (2011, p. 91 *emphasis mine*).

This observation puts in sharp relief the way that events such as Madrid, Amsterdam and London are regularly invoked across literature and materials on CVE as proof of the existence of the otherwise inscrutable problem at its base.[119] In other words, CVE practitioners, in order to explain and promote awareness of radicalization and violent extremism, must resort to a highly publicized 'event' and retroactively suggest that a process of 'radicalization' preceded it. A practitioner involved in CVE training sessions for CPN-PREV put this into words, commenting in late 2019 how the notoriety of the 'incel' van attack in Toronto and the mosque shooting in Christchurch had make it easier to communicate to public audiences the idea of 'violent extremism' as being a multivariate phenomenon:

> In giving training, I can analyze in the reactions of the audience how the topic evolves with the times, and I see that people are now more and more aware of

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[119] In lieu of a providing a list of examples, I will state that I have not come across a study on CVE and radicalization, nor material produced by a CVE entity that did not refer to either the main three incidents of discussion (Madrid etc.) or to a later incident that fell under this frame, i.e., 2015 Paris attacks, 2019 Christchurch mosque shooting, etc. as examples to highlight the existence of the phenomenon. In academic literature, events are often referenced in the abstract or in the opening paragraph of the piece (e.g., Rottweiler & Gill, 2022; Silber & Bhatt, 2007).

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the fact that radicalization is not only Islamic. So we don't have to convince them about that anymore. Three years ago it was not like that. We really had to demystify that 'it's not only about Daesh…' But now people are more aware of right-wing extremism.

I will elaborate later the other ways that the CVE field generates and maintains legitimacy, but for now it stands to recognize the centrality of high-profile terrorism events to the endeavour, and consequently, to acknowledge that the paradigm only began to achieve a policy agenda foothold in Europe once an incident occurred (e.g., Madrid) that could be meaningfully constructed as a 'radicalization' event.

A final point on how high-profile events influence CVE concerns the ways that their construction act upon and manipulate time. Wagner-Pacifici notes how events can take on "discrete" forms signalling moments of rupture, but they can also embody "continuous" forms resonating with other events to constitute the extension of an era or phenomenon (2017, p. 62-3, 6; 2010, p. 1383). This is a point well reflected on with respect to 9/11's temporal construction (e.g., Jarvis, 2008; Toros, 2017) but also merits attention to how Madrid, Amsterdam and London not only signalled rupture but were bound together and extended through time to represent a creeping 'Islamist radicalization' problem in the West (e.g., Silber and Bhatt 2007; Sageman, 2008). This is supported by Awan, Hoskins and O'Loughlin's observation that news coverage portrayed the London '7/7' bombings in an "extended present", where the past and future become represented as "extensions of the ongoing crisis" (2011: 67). This is to say that the London bombings were presented as part of a sequence that began with Madrid and Amsterdam, which also foreshadowed a future where similar or greater attacks are "inevitable". A similar effect was found in my study of representations of 'homegrown' terrorism in Canada (e.g., Millett, 2020), where events like the 2014

Parliament Hill attack took on both 'discrete' and 'continuous' properties, marking a rupture from a previous era of peace and security in the country while also marking the continuation and expansion of the homegrown 'radicalization' phenomenon that originated with Madrid.

This speaks to the ongoing 'life' of the Madrid, Amsterdam and London events and their catalytic effects, influencing how latter events would be portrayed as denoting the extension, growth, and permutation of the violent extremism 'problem'. The period of my ethnographic fieldwork bears out this analysis. It began in the shadow of incidents (e.g., Parliament Hill 2014, Collège de Maisonneuve 2014-15, Paris 2015) that were interpreted through the meaning of Madrid, Amsterdam, and London to suggest the presence of a "a violent radical current of Islam", catalyzing new government-led activity on CVE (e.g., Gouvernement du Québec, 2015, p. 7).[120] It was also a period that marked the CVE paradigm's expansion toward forms of right-wing extremism and hate incidents, based on incidents of 'far-right' and 'incel' based violence (Toronto van attack, Christchurch mosque shooting) which also became seen through the prism of 'radicalization'/'violent extremism'. This, in turn, afforded CVE actors to obtain more resources and an expanded mandate (i.e., through Public Safety 'Community Resilience Fund' grants) to tackle 'right-wing extremism' and hate incidents, which includes

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[120] The introduction to the Plan d'action La radicalisation au Québec calls for rapid and targeted intervention against "un courant radical violent de l'Islam", citing the terrorist events at Parliament Hill and Saint-Jean-sure-Richelieu, and the departure of young Quebecers to join Islamist groups in Syria and Iraq (Gouvernement du Québec, 2015, p. 7).

attempts to adapt elements of the existing paradigm tailored around 'Islamist extremism' to this new area of focus.[121]

In sum, the centrality of *events* (by Wager-Pacifici's definition) in CVE research and practice, as well as the cycle of related activity that occurs around them, speaks to their integral relationship to the field and paradigm. By this logic, it is worth acknowledging how CVE practitioners, in their evocation of 'events' in a variety of CVE practices, are thus (rather than responding out of *spontaneous* necessity) actively involved in the performative, demonstrative and representative acts that make (and re-make) these events. 'CVE events', as I have suggested, produce legitimacy for the field and the problematization at its base. Indeed, re-representations of Madrid, Amsterdam, and London have worked to connect an increasingly varied set of events together as part of the 'radicalization' and 'violent extremism' phenomenon, in turn marking moments of expansion and mutation in CVE's focus. However, this explanation does not go far enough to account for the agency of CVE events in the field's development, including the effect on CVE of lulls in high profile incidents in the news cycle. In the next section, I will turn more pointedly to the question of the agency that these events possess beyond their social and political construction.

The Madrid, Amsterdam, and London events as *actants*

Having argued that high-profile 'events' are central to CVE practice, a question surfaces over how exactly events exert this agency. Are incidents such as Madrid, Amsterdam

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[121] See Lowrie (2022) "Montreal anti-radicalization centre shifts focus from jihadism to far-right violence", *Global News.* The article mistakenly suggests that the focus of the CPRLV has recently shifted to 'right-wing extremism', whereas my research locates this happening earlier on, with older members maintaining that the centre always intended to focus on multiple types of violent extremism.

and London mere vessels for powerful pre-established interests to construct and instrumentalize, as has been indicated regarding 9/11 (e.g., Jarvis, 2008; Entman, 2003), or do they also exert an independent effect? The concept of *actant* intervenes productively in this debate. Actants are firstly conceived in narratology as patterns of behaviour integral to the structure of storytelling (e.g., Greimas, 1966). They aide in the generation of problems that are to be overcome, often taking the form of binary opposition pairings such as hero/villain, subject/object, helper/opponent, victim/assailant. Actants can correspond to the role of a specific character or characters but may also manifest in non-anthropomorphic beings and inanimate objects (Hébert & Tabler, 2019). It is in this latter sense that actant has been adopted in actor-network theory (ANT) to conceptualize the role played by non-human entities in transforming the social world. Bruno Latour (2005, p. 71) writes that an actant is "*any thing* that does modify a state of affairs" while noting that actants do not necessarily "determine the action". I will discuss the literary application of actant before examining how this becomes complicated in the ANT rendition.

The use of actant in narrative theory supports the idea of events like Madrid, Amsterdam and London being central to the construction (*by human actors*) of the 'radicalization' problem underpinning CVE and the concomitant tendency in CVE to continually re-invoke such events. It also suggests the 'actantiality' of these events at a deeper level in terms of underlying themes that become communicated through 'opposition pairings'. In the representation of Madrid etc., there is a definite subject/object pairing, i.e., a 'homegrown terrorism' or 'radicalization' *subject* which is directed toward Western society (*object*), coupled with a helper/opponent pairing in the

'Islamist' ideology that enables 'radicalization' versus the values of Western society thought to act as a bulwark.[122] A hero/victim pairing overlies this that operates on a more symbolic level. On one hand, this represents a package of ideas – democracy, "tolerance", civilized politics (from where the EU and member states draw legitimacy) as the embattled "hero" versus an *oriental* villain/assailant that puts European order and social values at risk. This dynamic is captured most fully in AIVD's 2004 report released after Theo van Gogh's murder, where 'radical Islam' is depicted as a multivariate threat to Europe's social fabric and "democratic order". This perspective of actant reinforces how incidents like Madrid, Amsterdam, and London, through their social construction, serve as vehicles for powerful priorities to be put forth. This often occurs through the employment of vague symbolic language such as "security" and "democracy", which is effective in mobilizing support and neutralizing dissent for social agenda items (Witte, 1994, p. 96; Cobb & Elder, 1971).

This narratological understanding of actant supports my argument on the catalytic importance to CVE of events like Madrid, Amsterdam, and London. However, in this take-up, for something to be an actant there still an implied author who has created it. This is to view Madrid, Amsterdam, and London incidents as actants in the context of a story written by an author, i.e., European governments, journalists, security agencies. It does not capture the idea that the events themselves have agency apart from human interpretation and meaning making. This is where the ANT definition of actant intervenes. The ANT position on events is induced by the analogy of the chemical

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[122] See Elizabeth Poole (2016) on efforts by the David Cameron government to address violent extremism by promoting an integration doctrine of "muscular liberalism" and for teaching "British values" to all students (Poole, 2016).

reaction in a laboratory that unintentionally modifies a substance, bringing forth new and unexpected arrangements.[123] This suggests that paradigm-shifting events exert their own effect on the world by their occurrence, or at least acknowledges that their contribution exceeds (and can sometimes defy) the efforts of elites to define them.

At first blush, this approach to events-as-actants appears to contradict my previous analysis, as it seemingly condones the official discourse around CVE I have been critiquing, where the paradigm is seen as a *spontaneous* and *necessary* response to 'new' and 'unanticipated' events. This position, where Madrid etc. are the ostensible *cause* of CVE, denies both the way that these incidents were constructed and linked together by elites as constitutive of a new 'radicalization' phenomenon, as well as how similar types of incidents from previous eras, and/or ones thought to be unrelated to Islam and Muslims, did not garner this portrayal.[124] The material on the sociology of events by Sewell and Wagner-Pacifici does offers a way out of this impasse – allowing one to parse through the socially constructed, yet autonomous power of the event on human affairs. In William Sewell's theory of events, the author problematizes the dominant role events are given by narrative historians, calling attention instead to how "underlying social and cultural structures" govern social change (1996, p. 842). At the same time, Sewell considers historical events to be more than the culmination of structural processes, possessing the ability to initiate change on their own and transform social relations in "unforeseen directions" (Ibid, p. 843). Robin Wagner-Pacifici's work

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[123] Examples of this analogy include the addition of vinegar to baking soda, causing the latter to "behave in ways that it otherwise would not have behaved", or a surprising result in a lab experiment, which modifies everything around the experiment (see Bryant, 2011 "A brief remark on actants", larvalsubjects.wordpress.com).

[124] See my previous mention of the 1994 Brooklyn Bridge shooting and 1997 Empire State Building shooting, 'April 19' Oklahoma City bombing in 1995.

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supports this by privileging socially constructed representations as a crucial part of an event's *substance* while recognizing how events "are also always a surprise" (2017, p. x). This duality is described as such:

> "[E]vents are made through the efforts of gestures and speech that give them shape; through the performance of boundary making that includes and excludes participants; through the representation of identities that are recognized or ignored. Directions are chosen, identities are challenged and cast, cases for taking action are put forward […]. But [...] events are unpredictable [...] No one party, it seems, controls the course of events" (Wagner-Pacifici, 2017, p. 2).

It is within this nuanced stance that I aim to position the importance of events like Madrid, Amsterdam, and London to CVE. This is to consider how events have an 'actantiality' that can transcend structure (for Sewell they transform structures) and the performative and demonstrative speech acts assigned to them. Considering the effect of events on CVE in this regard broaches longstanding theoretical debates on whether historical phenomena are products of conscious intention by individuals or of processes that transcend individuals, whether their development is one of "logical necessity" or "of chance or pure contingency" (Bourdieu, 2014, pp. 95, 92).[125] A recent example is in debates over the development of neoliberal governing logic as being a product of the capture of the policy-making process by pro-market elites versus being a product of a risk-oriented epistemology particular to the contemporary political order (e.g., Konings, 2016; Slobodian, 2018).

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[125] Bourdieu calls for avoiding the temptation to think of historical objects "in a logic that opposes pure contingency to necessity". He states: "being a historian or a sociologist means realizing that you are dealing with logics that escape this alternative, both in their existing state and in their genesis […] The sociologist or historian who approaches the social world would do what he does more completely if he knew that what he had as his object was a provisional state, neither random nor necessary […]. When the historian studies a statement of Guizot in the Chamber of Deputies, he is dealing with something conjunctural, accidental, a 'happening' that is basically devoid of interest" (2014, pp. 92-93).

Bringing this debate into the history of terrorism and counter-terrorism, there is, on one hand, the security establishment ontology of 'spontaneous necessity' that I take issue with, where the CVE's history follows the narrative of *"we continue to adapt and evolve in response to emerging threats"*.[126] Threats arrive pre-manufactured, embodied in the events I have covered, which have a given objective meaning (i.e., that Madrid, Amsterdam and London are cases of 'radicalization') and political and security authorities must respond to the unplanned without any blueprint. 'Spontaneous necessity' in many senses conforms to Bourdieu's understanding of bureaucratic logics: "logics according to which social agents and social institutions operate that can be called soft, fuzzy", which it is the objective of the sociologist to interrogate (2014, p. 89).[127] On the other hand, there is a tradition of critical scholarship that views the growth of terrorism expertise and counter-terror practice since the 1970s as a product of a "nexus" of elite interests across state sectors, academia, security thinktanks, and the military industrial lobby, which serve to maintain western geo-political dominance and legitimize punitive state apparatuses (e.g., Herman & O'Sullivan, 1989; Burnett & Whyte, 2005; Miller & Mills, 2009).[128] "Events" from this perspective are incidents cherry-picked and constructed by powerful elite interests as a means of realizing self-serving political

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[126] This is from a statement made by Canada's Minister of Defence, Anita Anand on 20 June 2022 in announcing funding to upgrade continental defence systems: "NORAD has continually adapted and evolved in response to new threats" (Brewster, 2022, para. 3).

[127] Bourdieu distinguishes bureaucratic, practical logics from "logical logics" without making a value judgement on either. The point holds to what I discuss in Chapter 5 on the types of discourses prevalent among CVE practitioners that help facilitate CVE activity and manages the aspirations of a diverse collection of actors working together in the field.

[128] Miller and Mills (2009) discuss how "an 'invisible college' of experts operates as a nexus of interests connecting academia with military, intelligence and government agencies, with the security industry and the media." They describe the group as more or less "ideologically committed and practically engaged in supporting Western state power" (pp. 414-415).

agendas. The most prominent example of this is 9/11 and the U.S. government decision

to invade Iraq, but scholars in this vein also point to dissident uprisings in Central

America in the Fall of 1986 which the U.S. Reagan administration used as a pretext for

armed intervention under the pose of "combatting terrorism" (e.g., Chomsky, 1988).

However, there is a lesser explored third way present in Lisa Stampnitzky's (2013)

history of terrorism expertise *Disciplining Terror*. Here, terrorism is depicted as an

instable social construction whose popular take-up was not "a simple reflection of

concrete events" (Stampnitzky, 2013, p. 24). Indeed, the author shows how events that

would now be considered "terrorism" did not receive this label prior to the 1970s. At the

same time, Stampnitzky argues for terrorism to be seen as more than a "rhetorical

creation" by state and ruling class authority, instead locating the emergence of terrorism

expertise as "the outcome of a confluence of new events, new experts, and new practices

of knowledge and governance" (Ibid, p. 5). The author actually positions an *event,* the

1972 Munich massacre, as the starting point of her analysis, an incident through which

Stampnitzky argues that the concept of terrorism "began to take shape as a problem in

the public sphere and as an object of expert knowledge" (p. 23). The Munich incident,

Stampnitzky notes, was "not purely novel", however part of its agency pertained to the

degree of global media coverage it received, which led to innovations by actors of non-

state violence in terms of creating a media spectacle to garner attention to political

struggles (2013, p. 24-25). The power of the Munich event would result in later events

not previous considered as terrorism (e.g., airplane hijackings) to now fall under this

category.

There are merits to this 'middle' approach, both in how Stampnitzky conceptualizes terrorism events as having agency to create societal ruptures by their own volition, while fluidly accounting for the terrorism studies field's rise as a confluence of the relationship between events, experts and techniques. This allows for exploration of the sometimes "accidental" qualities of CVE's rise and expansion, which is highlighted in some of my interviews with experienced practitioners. Here it is suggested that the concepts of CVE and 'radicalization', for all their vagueness and ambiguity (Sedgwick, 2010; Neumann, 2013) nonetheless "work" as a common sense frame for multiple audiences, resulting in an alignment of different interests that spur the development of the field. Here is how Marc, a research director for a Québec-based CVE entity described this:

> There's sometimes this conspiratorial view of radicalization [...]. Having seen that from the inside personally, I'm much more in favour of the view that it was kind of accidental. It became such a trendy paradigm because it summarized a lot, one concept that was making sense of a lot of stuff. The reason why the field has emerged was not due to a specific agenda, but a conjunction of, of different agendas.

Stampnitzky's approach calls for events like Madrid etc. to be viewed in their uniqueness as actants without succumbing to the logic of *spontaneous necessity,* This is consider Madrid's impact as having been the most deadly terrorist attack in Europe since the 1980s, as well as the first to occur (as both Amsterdam and London would) in a '24 hour news' era which maximized its public exposure and allowed for the permeation of 'radicalization' discourse. This departs slightly from my past analyses (e.g., Millett

2020: 29-32)[129], in that I am considering how truly novel features around certain CVE events co-exist with problematic official constructions of their 'newness' to result in changes to the way societies experience practices of counter-terrorism.

Summary and discussion

In this section I have endeavoured to theorize how 'CVE events' such as the Madrid train bombing, the murder of Theo van Gogh in Amsterdam, and the '7/7' attacks in London were agentic in the growth and development of the CVE paradigm. After considering the importance of their social construction as 'paradigm-changing events' to the coherence and legitimacy of the CVE problematic, I settled on the concept of *actant* which, based on its use in narratology and actor-network theory, imparts that events such as Madrid etc. can *contain* actants, mobilizing (human-constructed) narratives that support CVE's legitimacy and growth, as well as *be* actants that exert an independent agency over the creation of the phenomenon. My positioning of these incidents in CVE's growth and development thus must work in the space between actants as independent agents that alter social reality (taken to the farthest length in official discourse of the Madrid etc. incidents) and actants as a component in the social construction of reality (a direction taken in power-centric critical analyses). In connection, I outline how my study must accommodate structural as well as more fluid critiques that account for 'accidents' and the elements of surprise in the history of social phenomena. Perhaps my reading of the of Madrid, Amsterdam, and London events as actants in CVE fits a different

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[129] In my previous study of 'homegrown' terrorism in Canada, I emphasized how events were constructed by media, political and academic elites to create the misperception of being "new", which among other things, contributes to a constructed national identity that omits violence from its history.

definition given by Bruno Latour, where he describes the "actor" in ANT as "what is made to act by many others", and later, as "not the source of an action but the moving target of a vast array of entities swarming toward it (2005, p. 46).

I acknowledge that my de- and re-centring of the events of Madrid, Amsterdam, and London in this chapter risks reproducing an error identified by Toros (2017) on how critical analyses of the representations surrounding 9/11 nonetheless reproduce the hegemonic effects of its construction, which has been narrativized chronologically as the *cause* of the War on Terror while suggesting that 9/11 itself has no cause. Consequently, Toros, along with other critical authors (e.g., Zeyfus, 2003), implores readers to "forget 9/11". For my research, what this section has sought to indicate is that the CVE field's birth and longevity appears tightly bound to highly publicized (re-)representations of (ostensibly unpredictable) incidents of lone-actor or small group-led violence. I acknowledge the counterproductive discursive effects this produces, i.e., the idea that these events gave birth to CVE out of *spontaneous necessity*, yet I reaffirm how the 'story' of the development of CVE is heavily based on the contingency of these events occurring, beginning with the institutionalization of the CVE paradigm and construction of the field during and after the events of Madrid, Amsterdam, and London. These events become made and re-made in the work carried out by CVE entities, and their representation carries over when 'new' events occur (i.e., Paris, Parliament Hill, T.O. van attack, Christchurch) that can reasonably be folded into the construction of the phenomenon. When events *don't* happen, the CVE field can sputter, contract, or look toward new areas of concentration.

There are two other important developments circa 2004-5 in my analysis of

CVE's genesis that I will close by covering. The <u>first</u> involves a commitment made

between the European Commission, European Parliament, and the European Council in

a September 2005 communication to establish an Expert Network "for the sharing of

research and policy ideas" on radicalization (European Commission, 2005, p. 8). The

composition of this Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation [EGVR] bears reflection. Its

17 members were mainly populated by established terrorism scholars associated with the

RAND Corporation and the CSTPV at the University of St. Andrews (e.g., Coolsaet,

Alex Schmid, Magnus Ranstorp), but it also included Donatella della Porta, a leading

scholar in processual analyses of social movements, and U.S. based scholar John

Horgan, who along with Randy Borum and Fathali Moghaddam had popularized

psychological models of 'radicalization' (e.g., Horgan, 2004). Aside from the evident co-

mingling of older terrorism scholars with a new breed examining 'radicalization', what

is noteworthy about the EGVR's composition is the additional presence of Norwegian

anthropologist Tore Bjørgo, who specialized in the study radical right-wing groups in

Europe and, as I noted in Chapter 2, was part of a group of experts in the 1990s whose

work highlighting the existence of a 'racist violence' problem was soundly ignored by

most of Europe's political and security establishment. CVE and 'radicalization' would

continue to focus on Muslim communities and 'Islamification' for some time after the

formation of the Expert Group in 2006, yet Bjørgo's presence on it foreshadows the

paradigm's eventual shift to countering 'right-wing extremism' and 'hate behaviours' a

decade later. Perhaps of greater importance is in how Bjørgo's inclusion connected the

nascent 'Islamist radicalization' template to a far more substantive base of literature that

had been developing in the 1990s on right-wing terrorism and racist violence (e.g.,

Bjørgo & Witte, 1993; Hamm, 1994; Bowling, 1998; Kaplan & Bjørgo, 1998). Scholars

in this area had already devised notions of a 'radicalization process' prior to AIVD's

mention of it (e.g., Sprinzak, 1991; 1995; Hamm, 1994b) and had even devised

programming in some Scandinavian countries designed to prevent entry into, and

facilitate exit from, radical right-wing movements (e.g., Bjørgo, 2002). The degree to

which this work – which diverged sharply from 'orthodox' terrorism studies in its view

on the beneficence of Western societies[130] – might have influenced later 'radicalization'

research and CVE strategies has yet to be studied.

 The EGVR did not produce any policy outcomes and was disbanded shortly after

submitting its report *Radicalisation Processes Leading to Acts of Terrorism* to the

European Commission in 2008.[131] Despite not playing a direct role in the spread of CVE

programming across Europe[132], the EGVR holds discursive importance in furthering the

legitimacy of 'radicalization/violent radicalization' as an object of governance and social

mobilization. It also facilitated the development of a network of expertise on CVE, as

many members of the Expert Group became key thought leaders that moved the field of

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[130] The 1990s work by Tore Bjørgo and Mark S. Hamm locates the problem of right-wing and racist violence with western societies seen to be structurally racist and unequal, whose economy, politics and culture are compromised democractially in their control by large multinational corporations (e.g., Hamm, 1994, p. xiv; Bjørgo & Witte, 1993, p. 10)

[131] The EGVR report began by contesting the terminology of 'violent radicalisation', noting its problematic relationship to the term 'radicalism' as "an expression of legitimate political thought [which] challenges the legitimacy of established norms and policies but it does not, in itself, lead to violence" (EGVR, 2008, p. 5).

[132] The same could be said of the broader machinations at the EU level that I cover in this chapter, which are moments of significant discursive importance to CVE as opposed to having a direct contribution to its linear development. Kaunert (2010) notes the characterization of the EU as a "paper tiger" counter-terrorism actor, which has nonetheless influenced co-operation among member states. The 2005 EU Strategy for Combatting Radicalisation was not concretely implemented, however, its image was transferred to the UK's counter-terror plan following the London bombings and later became realized as CVE in the Prevent Strategy.

terrorism studies toward the question of 'radicalization', and whose impact on the direction of CVE are felt to this day, as exemplified by a later expert group created by the European Commission, the Radicalisation Awareness Network, which has since 2011 acted as a platform for sharing best practices in CVE.

The second development from the 2004-5 period I wish to raise is also a matter of discursive importance. This concerns a meeting in the Spring of 2005 between United States special forces and intelligence directors and allied country representatives, where it was decided to retitle the 'global war on terrorism' as the 'struggle against violent extremism' (Fox, 2005). While the intended change did not take hold in popular rhetoric, it helped initiate the eventual widespread use of 'violent extremism' as an accompanying term to 'radicalization'[133] and 'terrorism'. Consequently, the first iteration of the UK's Prevent Strategy adopted this terminology, with the establishment of the 'Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund' in October 2006. As suggested by Peter Romaniuk (2015, p. 7), the popular take-up of CVE/PVE has served as a catalyst for the field's particular style of growth and expansion, in that the elasticity of the term 'violent extremism' has allowed it to both subsume notions of terrorism and radicalization and expand the imperative beyond their confines by attaching it to other forms of non-state violence.

Conclusion

In this chapter I attempt to conceptualize the importance of the 'homegrown' terrorism incidents in Madrid, Amsterdam and London in the making of CVE. I began by

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[133] Violent extremism is often used as a synonym for 'radicalization' or is seen as an outcome of 'radicalization', and/or an ingredient *in* 'radicalization', as discussed in Chapter 1.

examining the political uptake of these events in EU, UK, and Dutch political

correspondence in 2004 and 2005, which led to the institutionalization of anti-

'radicalization' strategies within a newly strengthened, harmonized, and *anticipatory*

pan-European security climate. I argue that part of the constructed meaning of the

Madrid, Amsterdam, and London events in the documents examined entails the attempt

to render a common *European community* in support of continental integration efforts*,*

which is drawn at the expense of (and arguably through) Muslim diaspora communities

by way of the spectre of 'Islamist radicalization'. The attempted construction of this new

social bloc in support of common European values occurred during a time of widening

dissensus over the project of continental integration. This harkens the previous chapter's

findings on how 'pre-CVE' practices overtly supported solidifying the legitimacy of the

ruling order and the elimination of state opposition (e.g., Saudi Arabia's PRAC strategy

– Boucek, 2008). This calls for understanding how CVE, in its past and present, might

work to address ulterior social functions during times of hegemonic instability.

I then moved to the consider the agency incidents like Madrid, Amsterdam, and

London have on CVE both through and beyond their socially constructed nature, raising

different understandings of the concept of 'actant'. This is to consider how events like

Madrid, Amsterdam, and London as *actants* have a large and independent role in the

CVE field and paradigm's reproduction. As 'concrete examples' of the problem CVE

seeks to address, the presence of these events (and others like the 2014 Parliament Hill

attack and the 2019 Christchurch shootings) in the news are necessary to CVE's

continued legitimacy among policymakers and the general public.

It would be over a decade after the events in Madrid, Amsterdam, and London

that CVE arrived in Canada via the federal government's *National Strategy on*

Countering Radicalization to Violence. However, the developments in Europe clearly

influenced Canadian policing and security officials, laying the groundwork for its

eventual implementation. This began in 2005 with the Canadian Security and

Intelligence Service (CSIS) report "Paths to Radicalisation of Home-grown Islamic

extremists in Canada".[134] This was followed by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of

Police's 'Counter-Radicalization Study Group', which travelled to the UK in 2008 to

study the Prevent Strategy. Further research would ensue (e.g., RCMP, 2009)

complimented by small-scale CVE training initiatives for security personnel and front-

line policing (Monaghan & Molnar, 2016).

Ultimately, it was a similar confluence of *actant events* in Canada (mediated

through interpretations of Madrid, Amsterdam, and London) that led to coordinated

government action on CVE. The events include the Parliament Hill shooting on October

22, 2014, and a vehicle attack incident in St-Jean-sur-Richelieu the day prior, which

resulted in the murder of a Canadian corporal and warrant officer by individuals believed

to be 'radicalized' to Islamist violent extremism. These were considered as the first

successful acts of 'homegrown terrorism' on Canadian soil (Millett, 2020). The third

'event' involved the discovery of young Canadians fighting alongside ISIS in Syria. This

'foreign fighter' issue was punctuated by news coverage of a succession of students from

Montréal's Collège de Maisonneuve leaving for Syria between 2014-15. Out of these

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[134] The CSIS report curiously adopts the European spelling of 'radicalisation'. Exact links to the work occurring in Europe at the time cannot be made, as the report remains under security clearance protection. Reference to it is made in a 2011 report by CSIS that was made public by ATIP request by journalist Colin Freeze.

events ensued a 'moral panic' over the radicalization of Canadian youth from Muslim

backgrounds similar to what occurred in Britain and the Netherlands circa-2005, leading

to government measures operationalizing the same language as the previous CVE policy

on detecting the early 'signs' of 'radicalization', all-of-society cooperation, and on the

need to foster social cohesion/inclusion of Muslim Canadians (e.g., Gouvernement du

Québec, 2015; Government of Canada, 2018).[135] Also evident in the Canadian context of

CVE's introduction were the publicly-expressed tensions around national identity and

multiculturalism that appeared in the backdrop of CVE's prior genesis in Europe, where

the question over the social integration of Canadian Muslims (or perceived lack thereof)

figured prominently (Kazemipur, 2014). The proceeding chapters turn toward examining

more fully the contemporary Canadian CVE scene.

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[135] For more information on these programs see pp. 8-14 of Chapter 1 and also Millett & Ahmad (2021).

Chapter 4: The CVE Practitioner – archetypes and pathways into the field

> "It was entirely by accident, and it had a life of its own […] like some kind of weird TV series that I got stuck in and it never ended."
>
> –Roberta, independent CVE practitioner, Alberta

In this chapter, I focus specifically on *how* the practitioners from my fieldwork became involved in CVE, based on the experiences communicated to me during interviews and participant observation. While so much focus in the CVE literature is on the 'radicalization process' and the pathways people take to becoming 'violent extremists', here I argue that we can learn more about this subject by turning the question away from the targets (or 'beneficiaries') of CVE and toward the people implementing it. Who does this work? How did they become involved in it? How do they reflect on its meaning?

These questions facilitate the inquiry in this chapter and offer a prelude to what I will explore in Chapter 5 on how CVE practitioners come to align their own goals and interests, i.e., *enroll,* in the broader CVE imperative. In this chapter, I begin by discussing how to define a *CVE practitioner* including its breadth and limitations. This is followed by a description of my methodology and key concepts used, along with a review of the scholarly literature that my study builds upon. I then present my main findings which are organized in two parts. Part I of the findings provides a description of some key *CVE practitioner archetypes* that I encountered during my study. I construct four basic archetypes that connect to common backgrounds, social identities, and philosophical orientations toward the problem of terrorism/violent extremism among by interview base. This provides a snapshot (from the vantagepoint of my fieldwork) of the

types of individuals carrying out work in CVE today. In Part II, I examine the pathways that my practitioners took. Two primary themes that emerged was (1) the sense that a majority of interviewees "found themselves" in CVE rather than having made any purposive effort, and (2) on the complexities that occurred once practitioners were confronted with the science (concepts, literature and practices) around CVE, which often did not occur until after being hired into the field.

Several questions emerge from these findings. This includes on how CVE's turn toward addressing forms of right-wing extremism has altered the composition of the people who conduct counter-terrorism, and on whether CVE practitioners can successfully relate to the problem of violent extremism or the plight of the 'radicalized/radicalizing' individuals they work with. My findings also speak to how CVE becomes connected to other types of social problems, further diversifying the field of counter-terrorism while extending the responsibility of counter-terrorism throughout more domains of society. In some respects, this is merely a realization of CVE's initial remit, which as noted in Chapter 2, in its *in-utero* phase sought to transform counter-terrorism into an "all of society" endeavour.

Definitions and methodology: The CVE Practitioner: an imprecise signifier

This chapter centres on the fieldwork that I undertook between 2018 and 2020, particularly the semi-structured interviews I conducted with 45 individuals working in CVE in the Canadian context. I describe these individuals as "CVE practitioners" similar as in studies by Lehane (2018), El-Amraoui & Ducol (2019)[136], and Schulten (2022).

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[136] El-Amraoui & Ducol use the term "P/CVE practitioner", an acronym intended to describe "a global category of prevention and countering violent extremism initiatives" (2019, p. 192).

However, the term is at best, an imprecise signifier since it is difficult to draw boundaries around who constitutes a "CVE practitioner" along with what constitutes CVE work. Since its formation, CVE has implored that the *whole of society* coalesces in terrorism prevention through intervening the so-called 'pre-crime' space. Great efforts have been made to train human services professionals thought to have frequent contact with individuals "at earlier stages of radicalization" (Government of Canada, 2018, p. 34) to incorporate detection and prevention into their missions. This has been most formalized in the UK, where since 2015 the Prevent Duty has legally mandated health and social services professionals to identify and refer individuals showing signs of radicalization and called for educators to build student resilience to radicalization through curriculum learning (Busher & Jerome, 2020). My data points to similar developments in Canada, as my interviewees spoke extensively on designing and delivering CVE training modules for a broad range of human services personnel (which on occasion I took part in among parents and other interested members of the public). This is particularly true in Québec where the government's 2015 CVE action plan introduced a mandate to sensitize teachers and school administrators on radicalization to violence. Canada's 2018 *National Strategy on Countering Radicalization* also contained the pledge to build the capacity of "nurses, school counsellors, psychologists, social workers, youth workers, parole and probation officers" to "assess cases of radicalization to violence and intervene effectively" (Government of Canada, 2018, p. 34).

The breadth of these efforts serves to illustrate the challenge in defining who counts as a CVE practitioner, since *anyone* employed in the helping professions[137] could

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[137] As defined by the American Psychological Association, helping professions are "occupations that provide health and education services to individuals and groups, including occupations in the fields of

be envisioned as one through the eyes of CVE trainers and the state. For my study, 'CVE practitioner' serves as an umbrella term for distinct sets of participants. This firstly includes CVE practitioners *proper,* in individuals that are employed by CVE-specific organizations such as the CPRLV or fulfill a CVE mandate within partnering organizations. My interviewees also include what I term "outside professionals". Examples include human services personnel (i.e., psychologists, health and social service professionals, educators), civil servants, charitable sector employees as well as private sector actors who have either been trained on CVE or had a CVE element added to their regular job portfolio. Included in this are police officers, community leaders and religious figures who have been impelled toward participating in CVE through multidisciplinary 'hub' models. These models have been implemented in several Canadian cities, which bring representatives across multiple sectors together as 'partners at the table' to build community resilience to violent extremism and to assess at-risk individuals' needs (McCoy, Jones, & Hastings, 2021; Bhayani & Thompson, 2016).

Due to the wide range of potentially qualified participants, there was a necessity to form some limits around inclusion in my study. For outside professionals, inclusion was limited to participants who had a sustained immersion in CVE for at least 2 years, and whose work in CVE connected to major CVE organizations and projects operating in the country. My efforts to build a participant base through snowball sampling (Handcock & Gile, 2011) elicited confusion at times from the recipients over the CVE practitioner label, and in some cases, rejection. In one instance, a potential informant highly touted by three separate contacts of mine declined participation in my study on

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psychology, psychiatry, counseling, medicine, nursing, social work, physical and occupational therapy, teaching, and education" (https://dictionary.apa.org/helping-professions).

grounds that their work "does not intersect with CVE". In the end, participants expressed

differing attitudes toward the CVE practitioner label, with some welcoming it and others

being astonished when receiving it.[138] There was additional ambiguity over determining

who is a CVE practitioner *in Canada* due to CVE's globally networked composition. My

reference to practitioners "working in the Canadian context" signifies this tension, as my

interview set includes individuals stationed in the United States and United Kingdom

who participate in projects funded by the Government of Canada that focus on violent

extremism in Canada. Likewise, there were Canadian practitioners I had interviewed

who had cooperated on CVE endeavours in places such as Germany and Lebanon.

Finally, it must be acknowledged that my sample of 45 CVE practitioners is in no way

representative of the views and experiences of the majority of people employed in CVE

in Canada. However, the participants interviewed provide a comprehensive portrait of

CVE field in Canada in terms of the range of positions it covers at the interstices of

different social sectors. Below I add depth to this portrait by grouping my interviewees

into dominant *archetype* personas, which intends to aid in illustrating the practitioner

experience in CVE in Canada.

Conceptual framework and methods

As outlined in Chapter 1, my study is influenced by methodological interpretivism,

which attempts to induce meaning through empirical data via qualitative research

methods. The findings for this chapter draw on my participant observation experiences

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[138] One of my interviewees, Saif, noted their surprise at being announced as a "deradicalization practitioner" by Public Safety Canada at a conference where they were serving as a Muslim community representative: "This was the first time I started being called a practitioner. I was like, "I'm not anything in this area… I work with young Muslims and I do religious education".

in the CVE field but are primarily based on the semi-structured interviews I undertook

with 45 CVE practitioners between 2018-2020. This included interviews with 6 UK-

based practitioners and 2 US-based practitioners who work on Canadian CVE projects

remotely. As in the previous chapters of this dissertation, the interviewees quoted have

been assigned a pseudonym (except for one interviewee who permitted their name to be

published). Other identifying information, such as the name of CVE project and place of

employment, has also been omitted in order to reduce participant identification. More

information on this is provided in the Methodology section of the Chapter 1

introduction.

My interviews employed open-ended questions that focus on CVE practitioner

backgrounds, what prompted them to become involved, and how they reflect on the

meaning of their work. My aim was to get a sense of *who* the CVE practitioner is, *what*

motivates them, and *how* they make sense of their work. Sample questions included:

> • Describe what your work involves (position, current responsibilities and projects).
>
> • What was your work and training background prior to this? How were you recruited by the organization?
>
> • What attracted your interest to the issue of radicalization/violent extremism? What were your initial impressions?
>
> • What do you enjoy about this work currently? What successes have you had so far? What are some of the challenges you have faced?
>
> • What are some of the main lessons you have learned (i.e., through community outreach, training, or program delivery)? What has surprised you, or struck you as interesting in terms of public responses?

The interview data was analyzed via a qualitative thematic content analysis approach

(Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006), an inductive method for

deriving meaning by analyzing patterns in a data set. A conceptual framework was built

through examining the relationships between recurring themes that appeared across the

interviews, based on an iterative coding process that I outline in Chapter 1. This led to

the emergence of two central themes surrounding practitioners' *pathways* into CVE and

on the question how they became *enrolled* (Callon & Law, 1982) in the CVE cause,

which I concentrate on in the next chapter.

My findings in this chapter address a well-established gap that exists in critical

and orthodox studies on counter-terrorism regarding the lack of qualitative, field-based

research (Silke, 2008; Borum, 2011). Within CVE there is a lack of data on the ground-

level experiences of practitioners involved (Ponsot, Autixier, & Madriaza, 2018). As it

stands, only a few studies examine from a critical lens the position of practitioners in

CVE through qualitative interviews (e.g., Stanley, Guru, & Coppock, 2017; Lewis,

2020; Younis & Jadhav, 2019; 2020; Winter, Heath-Kelly, & Kaleem, 2022; Bastani &

Gazzotti, 2022). These studies, apart from Bastani & Gazzotti, focus on the UK Prevent

Duty and raise important questions on CVE's securitization of social services

professions as well as ways that individuals in the helping professions accommodate as

well as challenge CVE obligations. Apart from Lewis (2020), these studies also limit

their engagement to "outside practitioners" and do not interview creators, trainers and

implementors working for CVE-specific organizations.[139] A major study of CVE

practitioners *proper* was undertaken in 2017 by the Montréal-based International Centre

for the Prevention of Crime, which conducted semi-structured interviews with 90

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[139] This is not because CVE organizations do not exist in the UK but rather reflects how CVE is a
state-led enterprise in the UK through Prevent, compared with other countries in Europe, as well as
Canada and the United States, where a more 'arms-length' approach has resulted in CVE entities that
navigate the interstices of state and civil society, e.g., CPRLV, OPV.

individuals involved in primary and secondary prevention initiatives across 27 countries (Ponsot, Autixier & Madriaza, 2018). This study yields many important insights on the challenges and dilemmas that CVE practitioners face in their work, however its findings are oriented toward a professional audience, focusing on practitioner recommendations for the successful implementation of CVE programs. This is also the case in a study by Lehane (2018) which highlights many of the day-to-day challenges that CVE practitioners face, albeit framed for a security sector audience. My chapter interacts with and builds on the findings from these nascent qualitative studies, bridging insights from practitioners both 'inside' and 'outside' CVE to contribute to understanding over what a CVE practitioner *is,* while centering *their* reflections on the problems, challenges, and opportunities associated with this work, and how it relates to the broader meaning and function of CVE in our societies.

The presentation of my findings includes an additional step not undertaken in any of the above-mentioned literature. This involves the 4 *practitioner archetypes* I constructed, which are based on specific character traits that emerged from my fieldwork related to interviewees' trajectories and common experiences, orientations toward CVE work, and social and political identities. These archetypes are influenced by the method of *composite narratives* (Willis, 2019) where data is drawn from multiple individuals interviewed to create a single fictionalized story arc. This method of presenting research has been successfully employed in critical studies of race and criminalization in Canada (e.g., Samuels-Wortley, 2021), offering rich situated accounts while providing an additional degree of anonymity to participants. In a previous draft of this chapter, I attempted to present all findings via composite narratives based on my practitioner

archetypes. However, in the end I have split the approach, devoting a section to

describing the *archetypes* followed by a section on practitioner *pathways* that only

loosely adheres to the archetypes. Part of my decision to do this was to avoid

oversimplifying practitioners' experiences, and to allow their responses to retain their

individuality rather than be incorporated into a fictionalized story arc along with others'

responses. It was also a difficult exercise to determine *which* practitioners to include in

each story arc, since several of my informants could justifiably be placed in multiple

'archetypes'. Finally, the composite narrative formula proved ill-suited to the challenge

of writing up findings from 13 of my informants from racialized and Muslim

backgrounds. It was important to avoid generalizing their experiences, while also

accounting for how their responses to some of my interview questions were distinctly

different compared to non-racialized respondents. As I will discuss, this speaks to the

unique position of racialized and Muslim practitioners in a CVE field that has for most

of its history centered on the supposed terrorism risk presented by Muslim communities

(and which exists and connects to a broader policing and national security apparatus that

has traditionally disproportionally targeted and harmed black and brown bodies (Razack,

2008). The type of responses I received from racialized and Muslim-identifying

interviewees highlights how practitioners become actively *raced* in CVE. Since its

inception, CVE projects have sought to recruit racial and ethnic minorities as "key

figures", i.e., influential, socially engaged individuals from 'hard-to-reach', 'at-risk'

communities thought to lend credibility to CVE efforts and improve ties with

community members (Vermeulen, 2014). "Key figures" can include youth workers,

police officers, teachers, and members of cultural and religious institutions who are in a

position of to organize efforts to increase community awareness and resilience and serve

as the "eyes and ears" of government (Ibid, p. 145). I did not make the racialized 'key figure' a CVE practitioner archetype, as racialized and Muslim practitioners rather populate the other archetypes presented. However, it will be shown (both here and in the next chapter) how racialized CVE practitioners found themselves in positions resembling that of the 'key figure' along with the tensions, dilemmas as well as agencies that accompany the role.

Findings pt. 1 – CVE practitioner archetypes

The four archetypes presented in this section are based on an overarching distinction between *traditional actors* and *non-traditional actors* in CVE, with the latter category containing three subtypes. This diverges from other studies (e.g., Ponsot, Autixier & Madriaza, 2018; Winter et al., 2022; Schulten, 2022) that categorize practitioners based on their specific duties in CVE, whether it be research, interventions, training, or community outreach. These practice-based distinctions proved unsuitable since many of my interviewees expressed undertaking several of these tasks concurrently. Instead, I became struck by the types of orientations, trajectories, and social and political identities that emerged and clustered as I conducted my interviews, as well as how they differed from the 'expected' mould of a counter-terrorism agent.[140]

This finding was encapsulated midway through my fieldwork in a conversation with a Québec-based practitioner, Joëlle, who described herself as a "non-traditional actor" in CVE. She referred to her background in Anthropology and mentioned that CVE

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[140] I articulate this through the 'traditional practitioner' archetype who is predominantly white, male, with experience in either security, intelligence or policing sectors, and a 'normative' orientation toward terrorism.

"was not what I intended to do". She also considered herself among "a lot of people who kind of *find* themselves doing this". This description of the "non-traditional" actor helped to verbalize a trend that I was seeing among a significant portion of my interviewees whose age, background training, political views, or unorthodox trajectory into the field, did not fit my initial preconceptions and moreover raised the question over how their interests and orientations align with the CVE imperative. On the other hand, this group was juxtaposed with a more 'traditional' set of interviewees who were predominately older, white and male, with training and experience in security, intelligence or policing sectors, who possessed more conventional views around counter-terrorism. In the space below, I will outline some of the key defining differences between *traditional* and *non-traditional* practitioners and the limitations of this distinction, before articulating the three sub-types of 'non-traditional' practitioner that I identify.

Archetype 1: the traditional practitioner

> "I began studying violent extremism before it became a big thing"
>   -Wayne, CVE researcher, British Columbia

As described above, the *traditional practitioner* tended to skew older (age 35 and above), was predominantly white and male, and tended to occupy senior-level positions in CVE. Like most of my interviewees, they were highly educated, holding graduate degrees, albeit from disciplinary backgrounds closely tied to the counter-terror establishment such as International Relations, Criminology, and Psychology. This differs from *non-traditional practitioners* who while highly educated, typically did not have any prior training or professional experience in counter-terrorism prior to entering CVE.

Two other factors distinguishing the traditional practitioner was their earlier point of entry into the CVE field and normative, or orthodox, orientation toward the problem of terrorism and its geo-political context. In terms of point of entry, traditional practitioners typically had entered CVE a decade earlier than 'non-traditionals'. This is personified by Karl, a senior level public servant, who described himself as a "9/11 bandwagon jumper", becoming interested in counter-terror issues around when the 'radicalization' and 'violent extremism' concepts were first surfacing. All but three of the traditional practitioners I interviewed were involved in counter-terrorism and national security circles dating back to (or preceding) this first wave of interest in 'radicalization' in the 2000s. Several of these interviewees mentioned having been involved in the Kanishka Project, a counter-terrorism research fund operated by the Department of Public Safety from 2011-2014, and noted its formative influence on their trajectory in CVE. Even if they were new to CVE, traditional practitioners nonetheless tended to have a comprehensive knowledge of counter-terrorism policy history in Canada as well as a birds-eye view of the turn towards 'radicalization' and the development of a CVE field in Canada. As mentioned, I was aided by the insights gained from these interviews for the historicizing approach taken in the previous two chapters of this dissertation.

In regard to the 'normative/orthodox' attitude that I observed, this is to say that traditional practitioners were more apt to accept at face-value the imperative and social good of counter-terrorism, as well as that coherence of the problem (i.e., 'Islamic extremism'). This 'normative' attitude seemed to relate to the timing of their entry into CVE. A connection to this was explicitly made during an interview with Egan, a

practitioner from a military intelligence background, who spoke on how his introduction

to the 'radicalization' literature in the 2000s occurred at a point "when people still had

confidence in how the sector was working and the discipline [of counter-terrorism] was

working". 'Normative' orientations notwithstanding, traditional practitioners were not

any less *critical* of CVE's framing of counter-terrorism and the contents of the paradigm.

In fact, the *consistent degree of critique across my interview base* is a general finding

from my study. For traditional practitioners, criticism tended to concentrate on the

practical efficacy of CVE measures, which in some cases led to skepticism over the

degree of added value CVE is providing to counter-terrorism. The criticism that counter-

terrorism (especially CVE practice) can take on stigmatizing, Islamophobic qualities

(e.g., Winter et al., 2022) was treated as more of a negative externality to be managed

rather than a *raison* for discontinuing or radically transforming the work.[141] As I will

explore further in the next chapter, despite their extensive security/counter-terror field

experience and normative orientation, traditional practitioners were in some senses no

more 'enrolled' in the CVE cause than practitioners from more diverse backgrounds,

even if the reasons for this differ.

Archetype 2: Non-traditional practitioners (3 subtypes)

Borrowed from its reference in my fieldwork, I present three archetypes that fall under

the overarching construction of the *non-traditional actor* in CVE.[142] Interviewees in

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[141] Traditional practitioners (e.g., Marc, Karl) pointed laudably to early examples in the CVE literature, such as the RCMP's 2009 report *Radicalization: a guide for the perplexed,* which in their estimation presented the problem of violent extremism in its proper context as extending beyond Islam and Muslims.

[142] I would later encounter the term 'non-traditional security actor' in Bastani and Gazzotti's ethnographic research on CVE projects in the UK and Morocco, where they expanded the term to include "individuals and organisations that are coopted in the implementation of CVE policies,

these categories differed from the traditional practitioner archetype in ways connecting to age, background training and experience, political orientation, as well as social, ethnic, racial, and gender subjectivities. With a median entry year of 2017, the non-traditional practitioners I interviewed became involved in CVE around the time that a *second wave* of interest in 'radicalization' occurred related to the ISIS conflict in Syria and the presence of western "foreign fighters".[143] This would soon be followed by the renewed interest in right-wing terrorism and extremism.

Non-traditional actors would comprise the majority of persons interviewed (28 non-traditional versus 12 traditional interviewees, and 5 interviewees left unclassified). The lopsided number of 'non-traditional' interviewees could be interpreted as a limitation in my methodology, either as a reflection of non-purposive, 'snowball' sampling, or an effect of schedule constraints inhibiting my ability to gain interviews with some high level CVE officials (who might qualify as "traditional"). The larger amount of 'non-traditionals' may also reflect CVE field's broader course of development and impact on society. I will wade into these latter questions, and the available literature surrounding them, in a section following the archetype descriptions.

Archetype 2a: the outside professional

> "I am a social worker, but sometimes I don't really feel like it anymore"
> --Rebecca, CVE project co-manager, Alberta

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although they mainly operate as providers of social services rather than security (unlike traditional security providers, like the police and army)" (2022, p. 521).

[143] I consider the 'first wave' of interest to have occurred in the mid-2000s after the 'homegrown terror' incidents in Europe, as articulated in Chapter 2. It is in the years following this that my traditional practitioner interviewees typically entered the field.

Thirteen of my interviewees qualified as *outside professionals.* This is to say that their primary area of work is not in countering violent extremism, but most often in 'helping professions' that include teaching education, social work, youth counselling, psychotherapy, art therapy, police services, and family services. The outside professionals I interviewed also included religious and cultural community leaders, as well as parents connected to the issue, who operate independently or are cross-affiliated with different CVE projects and entities. Some outside professionals are now employed in a full-time CVE specific role while others "wear two hats" as they attempt to incorporate CVE-related responsibilities into their existing duties. The outside professionals tended to be more involved with 'secondary prevention', i.e., interventions and psycho-social support to individuals believed to be radicalizing or at-risk of radicalization. The outside professionals I interviewed were closer in age to the 'traditional practitioners', often having had lengthy careers in their respective fields prior to CVE.

The presence of the 'outside professional' has not gone unnoticed in the CVE literature, where they are sometimes referred to as "front-line" or "grass-roots" practitioners (e.g., Government of Canada 2018, p. 21; Lehane, 2018) due to the belief that their occupations involve regular face-to-face contact with potentially radicalized/radicalizing individuals and key friends and family members.[144] As noted, both federally in Canada and in Québec there is a stated priority to bring these

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[144] This is stated in Canada's *National Strategy on Countering Radicalization to Violence* as such: "Individuals at earlier stages of radicalization, as well as those acutely at risk will often have interactions with front-line workers and practitioners (e.g., nurses, school counsellors, psychologists, social workers, youth workers, parole and probation officers) at some point along their pathway to violence. It is important that those workers and practitioners are equipped to recognize risks and intervene" (Government of Canada, 2018, p. 35).

professionals further into the CVE space through training efforts, which aligns with the more formalized mandates for human service professionals in the UK under the Prevent Duty. Despite these stated efforts, many of the outside professionals that I interviewed had not received formal training, with their introduction to the concepts and practices of CVE largely occurring "on the project" (e.g., Rebecca interview, Alberta). The common experiences that ensued for these interviewees connect to emerging findings on how practitioners draw on their own skills and background training to cope with a lack of knowledge and/or absence of accepted wisdom on how to do CVE (e.g., Ponsot, Autixier & Madriaza, 2018; Lehane, 2018). Repeatedly, outside practitioners I interviewed spoke of their initial apprehension in CVE, feeling that they had "no clue" (Rebecca), before determining that they "already have the tools" due to perceived similarities between dealing with radicalized youth and practices in their own professions.

The position of the outside professional has also been a subject in critical literature on CVE, leading to a debate over how CVE initiatives problematically align traditional notions of safeguarding clients in the human services professions with the objectives of pre-emptive counter-terror work, securitizing social service provision and eroding clinician-client bonds of trust (e.g., Busher, Choudhury, & Thomas, 2019; Heath-Kelly & Strausz, 2019). Here and in chapter 5, I will pursue this line of analysis. Outside practitioners interviewed, particularly in youth and social services, identified the common link of "security" existing between their background professions and terrorism prevention with different attitudes expressed over the appropriateness or corrosive effects of this alignment via CVE.

<u>Archetype 2b: the 'former'</u>

> "There needs to be somebody who has actual experience. And this could be any area […] if you're trying to fix the issue of addiction, you can't just look at it from an analytical perspective. You have to have that experiential kind of take on it."
>
> --Martha, 'former extremist' CVE practitioner

During my fieldwork I interviewed 4 'former violent extremists' working in CVE and met several others at CVE training sessions and at community engagement events. Colloquially referred to in the field as 'formers', they are the only category in my archetypes with a body of academic literature dedicated to understanding their place in CVE (e.g., Schewe & Koehler, 2021; Scrivens, Venkatesh, Bérubé, & Gaudette, 2022). A working definition of 'former' was provided for me during one interview as "someone who took part in or was part of a violent, politically motivated group or ideology" who has since "disengaged from violence" and undergone "an ideological shift in how they perceive the world" (Steven, November 2019). The 'formers' I interviewed suggested how it is only recently that their involvement in CVE has become politically acceptable. They noted that they still face opposition and attitudes of distrust among some colleagues, which are greatly magnified for former 'Islamist' extremists.[145]

Today, 'formers' serve numerous functions in CVE (Scrivens et al., 2022) and run successful organizations such as Life After Hate in the U.S. and the multinational Against Violent Extremism (AVE) network. The 'formers' that I interviewed were affiliated with multiple Canadian CVE entities and sometimes worked independently,

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[145] This was evidenced during my fieldwork via the damaging press coverage the Montréal-based Center for the Prevention of Radicalization Leading to Violence (CPRLV) received over employing the services of a young couple (Sabrine Djermane and El Mahdi Jamali) who were investigated (and eventually acquitted) on terrorism charges (Woods, 2018). In contrast, the CPRLV's employment of known former neo-Nazi, Maxime Fiset, received positive media exposure.

taking on a broad range of roles that include acting as consultants on the design of CVE programs, managing their own CVE projects, and conducting direct interventions with radicalized/radicalizing individuals. In terms of education, 3 of the 4 'formers' held post-graduate degrees, however, unlike interviewees in the other practitioner categories, 'formers' had obtained (or were still obtaining) these degrees later in life, typically after having left radical movements and begun working in CVE. Another distinguishing factor for the 'formers' I interviewed was their heavy involvement in public speaking and engagement efforts. Each of them was very comfortable being interviewed for my study and they cited having extensive experience with speaking to media on terrorism-related matters. Indeed, some 'formers' have become well-known media personalities in Canada and internationally. This includes Maxime Fiset (not interviewed), a former founding member of a neo-Nazi organization in Québec who has done work for Montréal's CPRLV, and Rashad Ali (not interviewed), a former member of the pro-caliphate Hizb ut-Tahrir organization who has consulted on British counter-radicalization legislation and had his personal story featured in *GQ* magazine. Of the 'formers' I interviewed; one had published a memoir while another was the subject of a television documentary on a major Canadian network.

With their growing role in CVE programming and public-facing endeavours, the 'former' label has evident caché, even if it comes with controversy. For a CVE field still aiming to secure its legitimacy among decision-makers and the public, the figure of the 'former' contains value in that their personal narrative concretizes the idea of a 'radicalization process' preceding terrorism while suggesting proof that it can be successfully intervened in. I have witnessed 'formers' attest to this during public talks,

where they present their pathway into violent extremism in a manner corresponding to the typical stages of the radicalization models (e.g., Moghaddam, 2005) while also suggesting how beneficial the CVE resources that exist today would have been to them during this process.[146] The presence of 'formers' also addresses a crisis in CVE and counter-terrorism more broadly concerning *who* qualifies as an expert and *what* constitutes expertise (e.g., Herman & O'Sullivan, 1989; Burnett & Whyte, 2005; Stampnitzky, 2013). As described by Eliza Hategan (a former member of the white-supremacist Heritage Front) during a 2018 talk I attended, 'formers' are "firsthand witnesses to the psychological process to extremism". The advantage of this "experiential" knowledge was also identified by the 'formers' I interviewed, some of whom expressed their frustration with the superficiality of terrorism and radicalization research.[147] At the same time, they expressed concerns over the opportunities being afforded to 'formers' in CVE who had not "paid their dues". The "personal and professional growth" deemed necessary to participate in CVE included education, volunteering with denigrated minority communities, and an appropriate period of "self-healing and introspection". Martha, a former white supremacist based in the U.S., remarked pointedly that:

> There are 'formers' coming out of the woodwork but do not have proper
> standards, where its, 'hey, I'm no longer an asshole, so you should send me out

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[146] During one public talk in 2018, a former 'right wing extremist' discussed how his pathway into neo-Nazism was connected to his "search for an identity" – a common denominator in most of the radicalization stage models – while adding later how the resources and awareness campaigns that exist today would have helped him when he was getting involved in the movement.

[147] One 'former' I interviewed (Steven) decried "so-called experts of radicalization [who] don't have any experience outside of a library". Another (Martha) commented on the field being saturated by research conducted by "one-time passers-by", adding how the experiential grounding that 'formers' have is "crucial".

speaking and to do media interviews'. I mean, people are just pulling shit out of their asses […] it's not healthy and not good.

Gary, a 'former' also based in the U.S. stated that "ethical standards do not exist for this space yet", citing that "many people are working […] who are unqualified, who have no supervision, no accountability". This issue was also taken up by Steven, who, like the others, questioned the motivations of some 'formers' working in the field. Steven argued that some individuals "that call themselves former extremists" were exploiting the category for their own personal gain.[148] Consequently, the 'formers' I interviewed tended to distance themselves from the label, while acknowledging how difficult this is due to how deeply their personal narratives are interwoven in their public-facing and day-to-day CVE duties. Most preferred to simply call themselves "practitioners". They noted how success in CVE requires more than personal experience and would refer to the training they had undertaken in fields such as Criminology and Social Work to broaden their relevant expertise. As put evocatively by Martha:

> "There's so much more to me than just being a former. If that was taken off my resume, it wouldn't change much. I have extensive experience in this area. I'm educated. I have college degrees. I've done a lot of what I consider paying dues. I'm very far from who I was two decades ago. The way I feel about it is if someone calls me a former or not, I really don't care."

In sum, 'formers' are non-traditional actors who stand out from my other practitioner archetypes due to their personal experiences in violent and racial movements, their later-stage education, and the public notoriety that their identity carries. Unlike interviewees in my other categories, 'formers' often had experiences in the criminal justice system,

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[148] It is worth noting that CVE practitioners I spoke to who were not former extremists did not speak this way about 'formers', though many questioned the purity of the motivations of people more generally in the field. I discuss this later in this chapter.

including serving prison time, and had more acute experiences with debilitating social issues such as poverty and substance abuse. I have suggested that their perceived *closeness* to problems associated with 'violent extremism' addresses certain challenges faced by the CVE field, which I will elaborate on further toward the end of this chapter.

Archetype 2c: the "young activist professional"

> "I consider myself to be very radical, the difference is I use it in a pro-social way"
> --Isabella, CVE community engagement,
> Québec

The final archetype I employ is more elusive yet corresponds closest to the picture of the 'non-traditional' actor I envisioned when first hearing the term during my encounter with Joëlle.[149] The commonalities that define this group of include their 'youth'[150] and early-stage career arc. Practitioners in this category had recently completed or were in the process of completing graduate university degrees, and their position in CVE was often their first professional job. This group tended to also be more diverse in terms of gender and ethnicity, a point I will return to at the end of this section. What stood out most among this group is both their unconventional journey into CVE and unconventional orientation to the problem and politics of radicalization/violent extremism.

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[149] To update a previous point, my understanding here goes beyond Bastani and Gazzotti's (2022) depiction of *all* practitioners in non-security professions being 'non-traditional security actors'. For me, 'non-traditionality' extends to how differing attitudes, opinions, aims, and identities are fit into counter-terrorism and security work via CVE.

[150] By this, I mean individuals aged 25-35. The fact that no one in this category are actual *youth* (aged 15-25) was pointed out to me bluntly by an informant classifying as Generation Z. The informant expressed concerns that youth have little to no presence in the field, a problem made worse by the fact that radicalization and violent extremism are commonly seen as a 'youth problem' and the bulk of CVE programming is often directed at young people (Samira, March 2020).

Like 'outside professionals', the participants in this category did not come from an anti-terrorism or national security background, however this was more pointed since the 'young activist professional' was typically hired directly to work on CVE projects by CVE organizations. Moreover, the practitioners in this category tended to not hold any especial interest in countering terrorism. The principal interests of 'young activist professionals' instead revolved around social justice and equity issues that were sometimes at-odds, or only strategically coincided, with the CVE imperative. As I will address later under the theme of 'enrollment', these practitioners often sought to pursue these societal interests *through* their job duties in CVE.

The contradictions that stem from the young activist professional's subject position were most explicit in cases where more radical activists and advocates cooperate in CVE. A case in point involved Dillon Black (not-interviewed), a non-binary feminist and LGBTQ+ rights activist whose work on preventing sexual and gender-based violence drew the attention of state counter-terror efforts against 'right-wing extremism'. This led Dillon to be appointed to Public Safety's National Expert Committee on Countering Radicalization to Violence in 2018. When I heard Dillon speak at a 2019 CVE conference in Montréal, their speech marked a stark departure from the other panelists. Dillon began by acknowledging our presence on "the unceded territories and lands of the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation" and then, in a manner more common to the dictates of Critical Terrorism Studies, Black situated (and de-exceptionalized) violent extremism by placing it within relevant forms of state and structural violence, stating:

> I think it is important to recognize that there is a history of violence in this
> country […] there are currently over 12 hundred missing and murdered

Indigenous women in Canada, so we can't talk about violence unless we're really recognizing our own implication in that violence throughout history.

Black continued by challenging the typical framing of violent extremists as "outlier[s] to the rest of the society", noting that "we all grow up in systems that are violent so inevitably we might be using that violence against each other". Black supplemented this by mentioning Canada's recent history of Indian residential schools, the transatlantic slave trade, and other legacies of settler colonization.

The presentation by Dillon Black exemplified the more subtle forms of non-alignment with the CVE imperative I was witnessing in the 'young activist professionals' I interviewed. The interviewees in this category often displayed a disinterest in learning the science behind CVE and tended to amend project guidelines to suit their own interests.[151] This evokes what Therese O'Toole et al. (2016) have called "contested practice". Writing in the context of the UK Prevent Strategy, the authors describe how CVE actors at the local level reject, challenge, modify or qualify their cooperation with state-developed policies (O'Toole, Meer, DeHanas, Jones, & Modood, 2016, p. 172). As I will discuss further in Chapter 5, for 'young activist professionals' this ranged from conscious decisions to avoid using the terminology of CVE in their day-to-day work to improvisations that instrumentalize CVE funding to carry out projects more tailored to their specific areas of interest (e.g., fighting Islamophobia, promoting diversity and social inclusion) and in gearing outcomes toward local community needs (e.g., developing victim supports for hate crimes). While all

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[151] As stated by one of my interviewees (Alessia): "I do not at all consider myself an expert in radicalization. Because for me, as I see the phenomenon, I don't even want that expertise. Because as soon as I become the expert, I start to put a label on something that is very tricky to be labelled, so I'm afraid to know too much about this subject (laughter)".

practitioners in the archetypes were markedly critical of certain aspects of CVE, it was

people in this 'young activist professional' category who tended to be most generally

critical of the idea. For some, it was the turn in CVE toward addressing right-wing

extremism that revised their negative impression of the field and/or created opportunities

that led to CVE participation through initiatives against RWE. By conjoining "activist"

and "professional" in the title of this archetype, I am trying to introduce the tension, or at

least duality, for participants in CVE who have strong political commitments around

social issues yet are also embarking on a professional career that both runs up against

and in some cases seemingly affords the opportunity pursue these agendas. The tensions

and dissonance that derive from this became punctuated at times during my interviews,

which I will elaborate on later.

Meanings and limitations

The 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' CVE practitioner archetypes presented in this

section are constructions and arranging my interviewees into the categories was neither a

simple nor clear-cut exercise. Several practitioners could have been placed in multiple

archetypes and I left 5 interviewees out of the categories entirely. For racialized and

Muslim-identifying CVE practitioners, I decide to use the existing categories rather than

attempt to communicate their experiences through the construction of an additional "key

figures" archetype. Nonetheless, I will discuss here and in the next chapter the distinct

challenges, concerns, motivations, and successes imparted to me by racialized

informants.

There is the remaining question of what added value or meaning these archetypes

bring to my study. How do they help us understand the CVE practitioner experience or

the broader function of the paradigm? Firstly, it is clear, based on the diversity of archetypes in my study, that CVE's initial promise to make counter-terrorism an 'all-of-society' effort has become realized in some respects, both in the Canadian scene and elsewhere. Another argument I presented at a roundtable with CVE personnel, where I suggested that the large number of 'non-traditional' actors was a product of the field's turn toward countering right-wing extremism and hate incidents. This received opposition from some panel members. Daniel, an experienced researcher in the field, noted how the 'non-traditional' actors I referred to were already involved in CVE "when it was still all about jihadism". This is true, especially in the UK, where the Prevent Strategy's inaugural phase focused on empowering Muslim community-based groups, i.e., 'key figures', to roll out programming in targeted localities (Kundnani & Hayes, 2018). The involvement of 'outside professionals' also preceded the pivot to RWE, seen in both Prevent's circa-2010 turn towards broad monitoring of human services recipients in Britain (Heath-Kelly, 2017) as well as the Government of Québec's action plan for training outside professionals (which was initially in response to concerns over Islamist foreign fighters). One could take this argument further to acknowledge how CVE strategies dating back to the Saudi Arabia PRAC strategy in 2003 involved equipping 'non-traditional' actors in community and public welfare in terrorism prevention.

Another researcher on this panel countered Daniel's claim by suggesting that CVE's turn to RWE had at least accelerated the facilitation of non-traditional actors in CVE, a position that perhaps best suits my findings. Several of my interviewees (particularly 'young activist professionals') communicated how they specifically joined CVE because of its turn to RWE. This was either due to CVE participation seeming

more ethically palatable by no longer focusing exclusively on 'Islamist extremism' or because CVE efforts against RWE led to the recruitment of people working on issues related to racism, Islamophobia, LGBT+ and sexual violence and discrimination. In terms of 'formers', most of them working in the field today are ex-'right wing extremists', and in my estimation, it is not a coincidence that their increasing participation and notoriety has dovetailed with CVE's turn toward right-wing extremism. To return to a discussion I began in Chapter 2, it is possible that Western publics are not yet ready to accept 'extremists' from non-RWE backgrounds under CVE's doctrine as *misled*, *reformable, beneficiaries* of counter-terrorism (rather than the dominant 'new terrorism thesis' depiction as *fanatic, unreformable, adversarial targets*).[152] Steven, a former right-wing extremist, addressed this plainly during our interviews, saying that Canadians "are scared of former ISIS and al-Qaeda members". He added that, "as a white person, it seems like there's more credibility for me… but why? I know plenty of former jihadists, I don't see a difference. They are former extremists."

Continuing with 'formers', there are other ways beyond the RWE turn to comprehend their position in CVE. This includes the points I alluded to earlier around problem legitimation and dilemmas over expertise. A final point I would like to present concerns the theme of *distance.* Here I am arguing that practitioners across the other archetypes are varyingly distanced from the 'problem' of radicalization/violent extremism as well as the lived realities and social positions of the 'beneficiaries' they

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[152] As noted, 'formers' from non-RWE backgrounds are reported to face more issues in the field around trust, and CVE organizations that hire them receive more scrutiny. One 'former' I interviewed, Gary, cited terrorism legislation as a barrier to employing more non right-wing 'formers' in CVE, noting that existing laws make it especially difficult to reach out to former 'Islamist' extremists.

counsel. This could be read in a productive way, akin to a sense of perspective. However, I mean it to describe a problematic *unrelatability* that serves as a challenge to the practitioners and the remit of the CVE field at large.

This issue emerged unprompted during interviews where CVE practitioners felt both mystified and disturbed by the thinking of some of their clients. This was particularly true for 'outside professionals' involved in secondary interventions. Meredith, a youth services professional, describes being "horrified" by clients' views: "You think 'why do they think that?', but this is radicalization. It's all the thinking behind it". Keith, a social work and mental health clinician, described listening to clients' rhetoric as one of the job's main challenges, describing the contents of CVE interventions as "over and above" his previous counseling experiences. He made the following comparison between his former and present work:

> "Oh, [previously] someone might be sort of misogynistic, but for them it's kind of like more fundamental, like… 'why do I keep losing my job?' or 'I feel I've been harassed', that sort of thing. Whereas this [CVE] is kind of like, um, this is over and above… (long pause) It's kind of hard to imagine. It's like, "wow… *really?*" [incredulous]. I mean, that's why working in a team is great. We often work in pairs. It might be the social worker and the psychologist just to sort of share the load. I think that that helps. To be left alone, someone working on their own in this sort of thing, you know, is rough sometimes."[153]

Here Keith suggests that working on CVE interventions in pairs helps to ease the emotional burden of this work: "We debrief, and that's good". Geneviève, also involved in psycho-social CVE interventions in Québec, similarly described the harms associated with the work and the importance of a team dynamic for support.

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[153] Later in the interview Keith stated that he felt that the concerns underlying the difficult rhetoric expressed by his intervention clients were "legitimate".

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> "It's not easy for someone like me to sit in front of a guy that tells you a woman should stay in the home… that the white race is superior, that homosexuality is a sin or immoral […] All these things can be hurtful, but the job is to welcome these ideas and not put a limit on them".

Some practitioners also recognized how their social position created distance that removed them from the lived realities of the clients they work with. While diverse by other means, the most participants I interviewed hailed from a similar educational background. 24 of 45 interviewees held master's degrees at the time of the interviews with an additional 7 holding doctorates. This puts these interviewees in the minority 8.2 percent of Canadians who hold a master's degree and the 1 percent of doctorates (Friesen, 2022). Of the remaining 14 of my interviewees who did not hold a graduate degree, many had nonetheless forged successful careers with high-ranking positions in national security, police services, or as established clinicians in health and social services. It goes without saying that none of the practitioners I interviewed had ever received nor directly benefited from any of the CVE methods they were practicing (*which is compounded by the fact that much of what is being attempted in CVE is experimental or borrowed from adjacent fields*). This includes 'young activist professionals' who, despite the talk of being radical had not experienced being targeted by the state for espousing problematic views.

The sense that a white-collar *habitus*[154] among CVE practitioners constrains their ability the carry out this work was recognized during one interview with Adriana, a manager of CVE intervention programs:

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[154] Habitus as defined as a person's set of attitudes and dispositions (malleable or not) acquired within a particular social position or cultural milieu (Reed-Danahay, 2015; Bourdieu, 1984).

> I come from academia. I love academia. But when I arrived here I realized 'oh my god'… you know? It's not helpful. I mean it's helping me to structure a lot of things, but… no my PhD is not making a difference (laughs).

Adrianna continued by stating that she felt she could relate to the recipients of CVE interventions by seeing around her own socialization:

> I was always interested in outsiders. I grew up in Mexico and saw a lot of social inequalities. I was in a very privileged community and I always was like 'there's something about this I'm uncomfortable with'. I felt like these guys! [the radicalized]. The difference is that I became a sociologist.[155]

It is in this light, I argue, that the larger significance of the 'former' in CVE can be viewed. The 'former' ostensibly bridges the social distance between the CVE practitioner community and the recipients of CVE. Not only do 'formers' have a professed closeness to the ideation of violent extremists but also the life experiences of being from a different class background. The 'formers' I interviewed had acute experiences with several of the so-called 'vulnerability factors' thought to contribute to 'radicalization' including joblessness, drug addiction, social deviance, and incarceration. This is juxtaposed in some interviews (e.g., Steven) where 'formers' chide 'traditional practitioners' as estimable knowledge holders "who've never seen the outside of a library". The question remains, however, whether the 'formers' I met, whose tenure in violent radical movements largely ended in the 1990s, can effectively relate to the thought processes and lived realities of young people currently interested in pursuing violence toward political ends. When I posed this question to a 'former' (Gary) I received a response emblematic to the common justification given for extending the

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[155] Adrianna immediately qualified this statement by adding that she strives to not allow any sense of personal relatability to influence how she leads a CVE intervention.

CVE paradigm beyond 'Islamism', that there are "similar trajectories, vulnerabilities, and psychological dynamics" at play among would-be extremists today and when he was involved in the movement. Whether or not this is true remains to be seen. It does serve as a reminder how CVE's underlying concepts of 'radicalization' and 'violent extremism' become strained not only through their application to multiple differing ideological and geo-political contexts, but also in being stretched backwards through time to explain political phenomena that occurred before their creation (e.g., Berger, 2018).

In this discussion of practitioner *distance,* I am finally drawn back to CVE's efforts to recruit racialized and Muslim individuals as 'key figures'. They too are intended to bridge this distance (via race, ethnicity, culture as well as class) between the insular, socially advantaged composition of the CVE practitioner community and the ostensible recipients of their work, the so-called "hard to reach communities" as popularly described in the CVE literature (e.g., Vermeulen & Visser, 2021).[156] The vexed position that this places some of my Muslim and racial minority interviewees will be explored further in the next chapter as well as the following section on practitioners' journeys into CVE.

Findings pt. 2 – Pathways: *finding oneself in CVE*

When my interviews turned to asking the participants how they became involved in CVE, a surprising commonality emerged. While every individual's 'origin story' was unique, they also contained a sentiment similar to Joëlle's earlier description of how

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[156] Vermeulen & Visser describe this as "groups that are sometimes difficult for municipalities and regular institutions to reach (2018, p. 144).

people "kind of find themselves doing this". Despite CVE managers speaking of being

"flooded" with applications (e.g., Marc, Martha) none of the practitioners I interviewed

seemed to have made any purposive effort to enter the CVE field. Interviewees instead

talked about entering CVE "by chance" (Micheline, Elyanne) such as through contacts

from academic or professional networks, or a counter-terrorism university course taken

"on a vague whim" where "one thing led to another" resulting in consulting on research

and being asked to partner on a CVE grant application (Don).

"I stumbled into this work", explained Bashar, whose efforts on tracking hate

crimes and racial discrimination led him to be hired as a consultant on multiple CVE

projects. CVE was an unexpected turn in his career, which he attributes to the "apparatus

shifting toward right-wing extremism". As Bashar explains, the aim of his work coming

out of university was to *challenge* CVE and radicalization, particularly from the

perspective of Muslim Canadians. Bashar got involved with raising awareness around

the neglected issue of anti-Muslim hate crimes, while also producing visual media that

aimed to provide Muslim Canadians with a voice on how they have been depicted in

counter-terror discourses. Bashar explains his own personal stake in these matters:

> "After 9/11, this narrative started to come out, and you kept hearing it, kind of
> this mantra from like the RCMP, you know, 'we need to start focusing on young
> Canadian Muslim men, who are alienated and becoming radicalized…'. And I'm
> just kind of like ... as someone who's grown up in Canada, in the demographic
> that's being labeled now, looking at my friends, and going 'What the hell are
> they talking about? What is this narrative, that's being, to be frank, pushed down
> the throats of the public?'
>
> So that really got me interested in doing research in the area of, you know, 'okay
> so let's challenge this narrative'. We're hearing all these negative narratives
> about Muslim people in Canada, 'let's get a camera, let's get Muslim people to
> tell their own story.'"

What emerged from this passage turned into a key sub-theme among my participants, in that the work Bashar had been doing outside the sphere of counter-terrorism *eventually became CVE*. Like in the case of Dillon Black mentioned above, Bashar's efforts against hate crimes and Islamophobia would eventually bring him into the sphere of CVE as the paradigm shifted toward right-wing extremism, and in turn, anti-Muslim Canadian violence, stereotyping, and discrimination. This led to Bashar being asked to consult on local CVE programs in Alberta, and eventually, agreeing to assist federal efforts through the Canada Centre, RCMP, and CSIS.

Two of the 'formers' I interviewed also pursued a line of work that became CVE. Both Martha and Gary independently described their years spent "paying their dues" after departing radical groups, where they involved themselves in raising public awareness over hate issues and counselling and assistance to rehabilitate others leaving the movement. As Martha explains, "CVE wasn't really a thing yet", and she reports carrying out this work for nearly a decade before she started fielding questions related to 'radicalization' and 'violent extremism'. Both Gary and Martha became fully immersed in CVE in 2011, when they were invited to the Google Ideas "Summit Against Violent Extremism" in Ireland. It was at this conference that they began to be recognized as 'former extremists' and soon began cooperating on CVE projects through the contacts that they made.[157] Martha remarked how the conference "was the first time I was in an environment that was very heavily focused on violent extremism. After attending, it was

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[157] Martha suggests that the 2011 Google Ideas Summit was the catalyst that led to the birth of the term 'former' and the eventual participation of 'formers' in CVE.

diving head-first, crash course into this area (laughs) […] and over the past 8 years or so it's been learning as I go".

'Traditional practitioners' I interviewed also often *found* themselves in CVE due to the field ostensibly being built around their security sector posts in the 2000s and 2010s. For some (e.g., Francis), this meant needing time outside of work to become acquainted with the new concepts being applied in their field (see below). Others such as Marc, a doctorate holder in political science, would be compelled by new opportunities presented through CVE, needing also to adapt his expertise to the CVE paradigm. Marc explained how he did not engage with the lexicon of 'radicalization' or 'violent extremism' in his PhD research on social movement violence, but after giving a conference presentation in Québec in 2014, he was asked by an attendee to brief local police on his work. Six months later he would be asked to help create an anti-radicalization program from the ground up. Marc was one of several traditional practitioners who cited the Department of Public Safety's Kanishka Project as being formative in aligning their career paths with CVE. Marc states that, prior to the 2010s, there was "only 5 or 6 guys working on violent extremism" in Canada "and they weren't really talking to each other". He notes how this changed in 2011 when the federal government under Prime Minister Stephen Harper launched Kanishka. Marc touts how this helped build a network of Canadian CVE experts through its research grants and by connecting recipients with international experts on 'radicalization' and 'violent extremism'.[158] Egan, whose previous work was in military intelligence and defence

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[158] Marc was amused by the irony of Kanishka having been established under Stephen Harper's government, noting how when Harper famously stated in 2013 that it was "not a time to commit sociology" on terrorism attacks, his own government had been "pouring money into social science

contracting, also called Kanishka "hugely… massively valuable". He noted how it was through a Kanishka grant that he collaborated with individuals working on CVE in Europe, leading him to be asked to run the Canadian wing of a CVE start-up years later. Wayne, a longstanding terrorism researcher and collaborator with the RCMP's national security teams, also cited how his pathway to CVE came through a Kanishka research grant, which moved him into the CVE publishing space and led to advising several CVE projects across Canada.

The theme of "CVE coming to you" was perhaps most applicable for 'outside professionals'. Their professional trajectories in fields such as social work, mental health, education, youth services, transcultural psychiatry, and religious leadership would eventually, in different ways, intersect with the CVE imperative. This either led to the introduction of aspects of CVE into their regular jobs or (akin to Bashar above) having their existing duties become framed as CVE. This includes Meredith, a long-time practitioner in at-risk youth programming, who became solicited to form partnerships with CVE projects after Québec's government action plan *La radicalisation au Québec* was put in place in 2015. This led to her participation in numerous CVE interventions and public engagements around primary prevention. Geneviève, a public sector mental health clinician, witnessed the launch of a CVE psycho-social team for on the same floor as her occupation. Geneviève was asked to assist with this team 1 day a week. Soon her regular job hours were curtailed and her hours on the psycho-social project increased, leading to her full-time placement on the CVE team later that year. For Rebecca, who co-manages a municipal CVE project in Alberta, her work experience in community

research for two or three years already". Marc suggested that "even the people inside Public Safety were baffled" and left wondering if Harper actually knew "he was funding it by the millions".

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development and as a frontline social worker led to her appointment on the multi-agency project. Acknowledging this transition, Rebecca quipped with laugher "I am a social worker, but sometimes I don't really feel like it anymore".

In a couple of cases, CVE's interaction with the outside professional's regular work took on more exceptional characteristics. "All of this is a big life accident" remarked Jérôme Champagne (who gave permission to use his actual name). A political science professor at Le *Collège de Maisonneuve* in Montréal, Jérôme's school had been the subject to controversy after a group of students attempted to depart for Syria to join ISIS in 2014. Jérôme's decision to discuss the issue in his classes led him unwittingly into making a CVE intervention during school hours. As Jérôme explains:

> A lot of teachers were reluctant to speak about [the student departures] but not me because I'm kind of a spontaneous guy (laughs). So I began to speak about this matter with my students. I showed them the documentary about a British journalist kidnapped by ISIS, "Inside Mosul", and asked them 'do you understand what is fact and what is propaganda?' And we had a lot of discussion about this matter.

> After one of the classes, a female student came to me and told me "I'm really messed up, I'm leaving in 2 days for ISIS, with a lot of my friends. I don't know if it's a good idea now, after the discussion we had". It was one-on-one, she waited for all the students to leave. So she told me that, and it wasn't my plan at all… She told me she didn't know if it was a good or bad idea. Obviously, I told her not to go. After that I went to my school board […] I don't know exactly what the sequence of events were after that, but I think they called the police and they [the students] were intercepted at the airport.

Jérôme was soon asked to reduce his teaching schedule to administer a CVE program inside the college, funded under the newly introduced Québec action plan. He did this while also establishing his own daily 'hallway' discussion hour with students. Jérôme described how, much to his surprise, he was soon elevated to the status of 'expert' within CVE, receiving requests to build CVE training modules for human service professionals,

consult on CVE research reports, and to speak at counter-terrorism conferences internationally. Jérôme expressed feeling "imposter syndrome" over being treated as "some kind of expert on violent extremism", adding that "all I do is talk with kids".

Another exceptional case of "finding oneself in CVE" involves Yousuf, an Imam at a mosque where some youth attendees had successfully travelled to Syria to participate in the ISIS conflict. Yousuf describes how the incident presented the mosque with an immediate series of problems. Initial questions like "how on earth did [the youth] end up going down this line?" were joined with concerns over a drop in mosque attendance and donations. "Media were presenting us as a breeding ground for terrorism", Yousuf remarked, which put both the future of the mosque and his position at risk. The mosque was starting to be vandalized regularly, while local police, RCMP and CSIS began interviewing him about multiple people associated with the mosque who were under suspicion of 'radicalization'.

"Something had to be done", recalls Yousuf. He soon created a youth mentor group through the mosque that focused on issues related to Islamic jurisprudence. "It was not a CVE program" Yousuf maintained, "but those who wanted to have framed it as a CVE initiative". He also identified the need to develop support services to prepare families of suspected youth for the "scrutiny, securitization, and backlash" they will receive from "media, politicians, the non-Muslim community and police". Yousuf would become further immersed in CVE at this time by agreeing to consult with local police on their design of a CVE initiative. He justified this noting how "there was a lot of pressure on police to create a solution" to the cases of children leaving for Syria. This begat a side

career as a consultant and collaborator on numerous CVE projects in Canada and internationally on top of his existing role as an Imam.

A final CVE journey worth examining was also the most personal for the practitioner, as it involves a parent whose child left for Syria to join ISIS in 2013. "It was entirely by accident, and it had a life of its own" is how Roberta describes the path toward her "second job" as a CVE practitioner. After learning about her child's whereabouts, Roberta discovered that there were no support services in place for people in her position nor tools for understanding what had happened. At this point, Canada's CVE field was still in the initial 'Kanishka' phase, and neither a national strategy had been developed nor had principal Canadian CVE entities such as OPV, Calgary Redirect or Montréal's CPRLV been formed. Roberta describes her attempts to talk to psychologists, police officers and other state representatives were not helpful: "They thought I was nuts. They would either hang up on me or not return my call or email." The problem became compounded once her child's story reached the news, leading Roberta to feel stigmatized by the state as "a mother of a terrorist". Roberta's quest for support eventually led her to a CVE entity in Europe, who assisted her with her son's case and helped connect her with other families of Western children who joined ISIS. "This is so much bigger than what anybody's letting on", Roberta realized, "there's a whole world out there of people going through the same thing".

From here, Roberta's ascension in CVE was rapid, buoyed by her new contacts in Europe and a determination to help others, along with growing requests for her time from other CVE entities and news media. As of the 2019 interview, Roberta was fully immersed in CVE as an independent practitioner (she described it as a "one man show")

helping co-found a number of CVE-related entities along with a heavy schedule of public speaking engagements, school visits, training sessions, interventions, and counselling services for families. "It's like living two completely different lives", she comments, comparing her CVE practitioner role to her regular job and circle of friends: "it's like some kind of weird TV series that I got stuck in and it never ended."

Encountering the CVE paradigm

Part of my interviewees' experience 'finding themselves in CVE' includes their encounter and immersion with the science and terminology around CVE, including the concepts of 'radicalization' and 'violent extremism'. It was very common for interviewees to have first learned about these concepts only after being tasked with CVE work.

"When did I first hear about it? When I'd been hired here, when I started", responded Micheline, a CVE project coordinator in Montréal. "Before that, no idea. Terrorism yes, but violent radicalization no." Rebecca, the Alberta-based social worker turned CVE project co-manager, responded in kind when asked about when her introduction to CVE's concepts occurred:

> On the project. I mean I obviously follow media and you hear about what you hear about. But this was never something that I worked with, never something that was on my radar. It was the first time for me. I then had to dive myself into many conferences to learn, because I just… [laughs] had no clue.

These *on-the-job* encounters with the CVE paradigm include the previously mentioned examples of 'formers' like Martha and Gary, who had long been involved in counseling individuals in radical and violent movements "before CVE was a thing". Gary recalls how he had invented his own terms for the experiences he went through before learning

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about 'radicalization' and 'violent extremism': "I did not know that there was terminology for that. I had made up names for it (laughter), but I'm like 'oh, there's actually a term for that'". Traditional practitioners also described the on-the-job adaptation of their existing expertise around terrorism and national security toward the new lexicon of CVE. In some cases, this meant "diving in" to the literature and attending conferences in their spare time, similar to the passage from Rebecca (and earlier by Martha). For Francis, a programs officer with Public Safety Canada, the growing CVE aspect of his regular duties necessitated research outside of work, leading him to eventually earn a terrorism studies certificate from the University of St. Andrews.

In other cases, the sense of practitioners being 'left to their own devices' to learn CVE spoke to a problematic willingness by authorities to send personnel into the CVE space underprepared. This was how Navinder, a municipal police constable in Alberta, conveyed his experience of being tasked by his superiors with conducting a CVE awareness workshop with local Somali community members. I asked Navinder what kind of training or awareness on CVE he and the other officers had at that point:

> None. The only thing was whatever I was able to find online, research articles
> that I had studied.

Navinder was compelled to undertake his own research after being asked to train officers on his force on CVE, having found the educational materials (created by the RCMP) he had been given "outdated". This resulted in significant time spent out of work hours assessing the voluminous available material on CVE. Navinder recalls the challenge he faced:

> I took a scan, as much as I could, of CVE programs in New York, Boston,
> Minneapolis, the RCMP's First Responder Terrorism Awareness Program…

I went through a lot of literature. For one year, Kris… I started dreaming
about these things [laughter]. I went through tons of case studies, and then,
'how do I condense it for police officers?'

Navinder's research efforts would pay off when they became adopted as training

materials by the RCMP in their CTIO counter-terrorism training courses as well as by as

CPN-PREV for their training of human services practitioners on CVE across Canada.

For Navinder, who initially encountered CVE though an interest in finding supports for

victims of intimate partner violence, his efforts would see him appointed by his

department to help design a strategy for CVE training and public engagement in his

municipality. He was also asked to advise Public Safety's National Security

Transparency Advisory Group. Despite these successes, Navinder remained critical of

the cavalier way that the CVE file had been assigned to him, and as of our final meeting,

had resigned from his CVE position. He spoke of increasing clashes with police and city

managers who wished to "trumpet their leadership" while having "zero understanding of

this topic".

The impressions that my other interviewees had of their on-the-job encounter

with CVE's concepts varied greatly. The 'formers' I interviewed had numerous

criticisms of the research on CVE (*see footnote 12*), including the high amount of output

on the topic "that doesn't say anything new" (Martha). And yet, 'formers' saw the merits

of 'radicalization' and 'violent extremism' as offering tools to help them make sense of

their pasts. This, as mentioned, was evident during public events when 'formers'

presented their personal histories through the terminology and conventions of these

concepts, and it also came up in the interviews. Gary reflected that he had gone through

a 'radicalization process' while in prison in the 1990s, and felt he "absolutely" identified

with the term 'violent extremist' to describe himself then, adding:

> I had an ideology deeply rooted at one point, and I was escalating quite
> quickly […] acting on it and recruiting others. I committed crimes after I
> walked out of prison that I now know could easily have been federal hate
> crimes.

A similar experience was shared by Roberta. The concepts in CVE aided in "trying to

put the pieces together" regarding her child's predicament in Syria, as did the support

she received from CVE entities in Europe at a point where Canada's security and health

sector representatives "thought I was nuts". This compelled Roberta to work to make

CVE programming available to more Canadian families. At the same time, Roberta

disapproved of the direction the CVE field was heading, suggesting that "it's become an

industry now" and that motivations to secure pockets of government funding had

supplanted an initial desire to help "the people that are being involved and being

impacted". She continues:

> It's gone the other way because it's become sexy. People want a big part of it.
> And families that are struggling or going through emotional turmoil, all that
> gets forgotten about. [CVE] has to come from the right place. And it's not
> necessarily, and people are getting hurt because of it.[159]

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[159] Roberta was not the only person who described CVE as "sexy" and "an industry" in less than positive terms. Stated Bashar: "you have a lot of people who want to be involved in the work because it's sexy. When I started getting more familiar with the CVE handle the amount of people on LinkedIn I noticed that say, 'Hey, you know what I'm a CRV or a prevent expert or whatever', and I'm like, 'holy shit, there's so many people around'. And I'll be frank with you. I see some of the folks here that are doing the prevent and resiliency work and I'm like, 'what qualification did you have to even get onto this table?'. Bashar also referred to knowledge of Navinder's above-mentioned resignation, stating of Navinder: "He's phenomenal, and they broke him […] He's the kind of guy you want doing this work because he has a genuine, sincere interest. And that why he got pissed off".

Other impressions of the CVE paradigm encounter came from 'outside professionals', who highlighted the connections (of lack there of) between CVE initiatives and their human services professions. Meredith observed a direct link between her duties in youth services and CVE that preceded the formation of this paradigm. I asked Meredith at what point the issue of 'radicalization' had appeared in her prior work:

> At the beginning […] When I was in youth services, the people that you're meeting are disconnected from society. They feel like nobody understands them, they feel like they're alone. It's not getting to the act [of terrorism] but it's the beginning of that. And if they meet someone that talks about radicalization, they could easily slip down that path.

In equating the vulnerabilities of 'at-risk' youth with those contemplating terrorist violence, Meredith observed how youth services and CVE share the idea of operating within a 'pre-crime' space. This led her to state:

> We were doing counter-radicalization before the terminology existed […] we didn't say its prevention de la radicalization, but we start by understanding the youth that we meet, their needs and vulnerabilities, and say 'we will help you get to your goals'.

In Meredith's view, 'radicalization' and 'countering violent extremism' provided names for practices and ways of thinking that had been broadly employed in youth services for decades. For other 'outside professionals', the links between CVE and their traditional occupations were not as clear. Whereas Meredith felt that the issue of radicalization was always present, at least three practitioners from social work and mental health services backgrounds (Keith, Geneviève, Rebecca) disagreed that 'radicalization' had been a factor in their prior work. My interview with Rebecca nonetheless did hit on some connections, first by making the link that both social work and CVE centre around notions of "security", stating that:

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> [E]verything you do in social work, even in clinical work, is about safety
> either directly or indirectly … you are always focusing on the safety of the
> individual, right? So now [with CVE] I'm just looking at it as more of a
> macro practice, in regards to safety and how that affects communities.

'Outside professionals' such as Meredith and Rebecca also noted how the connections between CVE and their traditional line of work allowed them to successfully navigate new duties in this space through drawing on past experiences and training. Rebecca specifically referred to how her background knowledge on youth street gangs helped her understand CVE's concepts. The sense that people in human services "already have the tools" to handle CVE cases is something that was stressed by multiple interviewees involved in the training of human services personnel (Navinder, Micheline, Marc), and is an item broadly identified in other studies on how practitioners ought to navigate challenges associated in carrying out CVE (e.g., Ponsot, Autixier & Madriaza, 2018; Lehane, 2018).[160]

Having acknowledged the apparent connections, practitioners were often muted or agnostic over whether it was *good* that their line of work had intersected with CVE. This includes whether or not CVE had contributed to the securitization of their sector as has been discussed in other studies of CVE (e.g., Ragazzi, 2017; Ahmad, 2020). Rebecca was candid in describing how a risk of 'radicalization' was not something she previously noticed or was concerned about during her time as a social worker. She also noted her skepticism about CVE when first being brought on to the project, referring to telling her

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[160] This observation did not extend to questioning whether CVE is even necessary (since outside practitioners already "have the tools"). It was only in traditional practitioner interviews where reference was made to questions on whether CVE brought added value to counter-terror. Interviewees in this vein sometimes noted the opinions of some security industry veterans who would rather have all counter-terror efforts return to the confines of traditional national security channels.

managers: "Really? This is what we are going to focus our money on? Cause we could

put it into mental health". Rebecca then suggested that this impression was partially due

to being "not well versed" on CVE. This led me to allude to a previous statement she

had made in the interview about her city being "vastly under-resourced" to meet the

social services needs of the population. When I asked Rebecca whether her CVE project

ought to be seen as addressing these needs, she responded diplomatically:

> I'm not going to add my personal views into this conversation. But if the
> [project] can go out into the community, educate people, bring them together,
> make them feel heard and maybe direct them to supports that they need, those
> are wins… regardless.

In two final cases, *astonishment* was the accompanying impression interviewees had of

their encounter with CVE concepts*,* in that the practitioners found themselves in CVE

somewhat unwittingly. Both examples involved young, Muslim-identifying

practitioners. In the first case, my interviewee imparted being hired by a CVE entity to

coordinate research and public awareness before realizing it was a CVE position.

"I was honestly just looking for a job, putting in my resumes everywhere", states

Jasmine. She had recently completed a degree in peace and conflict studies, and "came

across a posting for this position and it wasn't necessarily clear as to what it was. The

title was community coordinator, or something. It referred to community engagement,

which I had a lot of experience in."

During the job interview, Jasmine's read on the position did not improve. She

describes being surprised when the panel asked what her "understanding of violent

extremism is". She noted that a constable was there in uniform, "so I was like, okay,

something about this has to do with police". Despite the uncertainty, Jasmine describes "walking out of the interview happy":

> I felt good about it, they felt good about it […] but I think even leaving the interview, I didn't know what I had applied for. I knew I had done well… in whatever this was. I think it even wasn't clear to them what the community engagement was going to be.

Jasmine began to learn that the position involved CVE after agreeing to do some research part-time for the project on community engagement practices.

> At this point, I knew it was conceptually about CVE because I was looking into the Prevent program in the UK and different CVE related things. When my contract was up, they offered me the full-time community engagement coordinator position, and that's when I really got all the information. I read the MOU, what the genesis of it was, why the [police] were at the table.

Jasmine described being a "little wary […] as a Muslim working in this field" when realizing the job was in CVE: "I'd say, okay, let me see how this goes". However, she became "relieved" once she met all the project partners, feeling like the team was making efforts not to single out the Muslim community. "Everyone was luckily in a phase of learning", reflected Jasmine, "they were all trying to understand what the issue was".

The second case of astonishment involved a practitioner's unexpected immersion into CVE through being invited to a conference in Edmonton called "Partnering-in-Practice: Preventing Social Polarization". Samira and other members of her Toronto-based youth advocacy non-profit received the invitation and, intrigued by the subject of social polarization, decided to attend. The "Partnering-in-Practice" conference, held in November 2018, was a veritable 'who's who' of CVE. It was co-hosted by two of

Canada's major CVE organizations, the OPV and CPN-PREV, along with TSAS, and

with additional funding from Public Safety Canada. The conference united many of

Canada's main players in CVE (e.g., Cecile Rousseau, Ghayda Hassan, John McCoy,

Brett Kubicek) with well-connected counter-terrorism experts and pundits (Lorne

Dawson, Phil Gurski) and prominent figures internationally (Bart Schuurman, Daveed

Gartenstein-Ross, Shannon Harris-Hogan). However, Samira was not aware that this

conference was about CVE, and spoke of only fully realizing this on her second day

there:

> I was oblivious. We knew that it was about social polarization, but I was not
> aware that the main topic would be radicalization and violent extremism. I also
> asked others [youth participants] there and they also had the same response.

Samira referred to a pre-conference orientation session held for the youth participants by

CPN-PREV, noting that:

> [The facilitator] did bring up a little about violent extremism but nothing specific…
> not specific enough or not clear enough to be like 'we're actually talking about it'.
> By the time [redacted] spoke, we had a pretty good idea of what was going on.

Samira was encouraged by the organizers to apply for a Public Safety grant that was

being advertised at the conference, which her organization ended up receiving to carry

out CVE workshops in socially disadvantaged Toronto neighbourhoods. She nonetheless

continued to have bitter feelings around the way her organization was invited to the

conference, which in her estimation did not meaningfully address social polarization. In

the end, Samira rationalized the episode as an example of the routine and at-times

purposely vague scrutiny that young people of colour receive from the state:

I'm still trying to figure out why… were they targeting youth to be there? Someone mentioned how it's kind of like manipulating people to be there in a very subtle way. You see the correlation between how racialized and immigrant people have always been treated, or how young people have been treated in the system. We're constantly being targeted, to do things that we don't want to… manipulated to believe things.

Discussion and conclusion

The theme of practitioners 'finding themselves' in CVE raises numerous questions regarding the nature of the field's development and expansion in both Canada and internationally. Certain practitioners' pathways directly relate to the field's incorporation of problems associated with 'right-wing extremism'. For 'formers' such as Gary and Martha, and 'young activist professionals' such as Bashar, their professional and extra-curricular commitments *became* CVE practices once the paradigm was extended to RWE, causing them to become recognized within the CVE space. Similarly, 'outside professionals' found themselves in CVE as a by-product of the field's concomitant extension into different social sectors such as social work, mental health services and education. As I note, some practitioners were brought into this space unknowingly, and the practice of consciously avoiding the terminology of CVE and 'radicalization' was reported by multiple interviewees.[161] The perceived benefits of avoiding CVE terminology to gain public buy-in or to recruit racial minority 'key figures' is something I will discuss later in the next chapter.

Embedded in the practitioner pathways is how CVE connects counter-terrorism to new and different social problem spaces – seeming contorting itself to resemble

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[161] On this, the 'traditional practitioner' Wayne quipped that "a sure way to clear a room is to mention violent extremism".

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aspects of what a greater number of professionals in broader society do. 'Outside practitioners' noted the connections that exist between CVE and their traditional professions, noting how their background knowledge helped prepare them for CVE. In other cases, a practitioner's interest in transcultural psychiatry (Alessia, Micheline), intimate partner violence (Navinder, Dillon), and racial discrimination (Bashar) contributed to their encounter with CVE. These findings point to how developments in CVE have turned terrorism into a societal problem that is amenable to the thinking and practices of clinicians in psychology and other public support services. This is obvious when considering the meaning of *primary, secondary* and *tertiary prevention,* terms that have become central to CVE practice. These, along with the sub-concepts of *protective* and *vulnerability factors* have been appropriated directly from psychology, where they have had long histories in efforts to treat individuals at risk of developing mental, social, and behavioral disorders (Spaulding & Balch, 1983). The seeming collision of psychological and counter-terror discourses via CVE raises the proposition by Durodie (2016) that concerns over CVE's securitization of society be joined by considering how its interaction with the culture of human services and helping professions is in fact working to "therapeutize security".[162] The prospect and implications of this I will address in the dissertation's final chapter. For now, it is worth observing how certain fields, as they become adjacent to CVE, begin to cross-pollinate with the CVE imperative, leading to new challenges and opportunities, and questions over how securitizing logics become enmeshed into everyday life. The practitioner pathways I

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[162] Durodie references a "therapeutic culture" having emerged and shaped the field of education, which might impact "the outlooks and actions of those working in related security arenas" due to the partnerships that have developed through CVE (2016, p. 22).

have examined also indicate how CVE has extended *responsibility* for counter-terrorism across an increasing number of societal domains (e.g. Millett & Ahmad, 2021). As the breadth of my interviewees attests, it is not only social workers and psychologists, but also teachers, religious and community leaders, as well as parents that begin to share in this responsibility.

A final observation on my practitioners' journey of 'finding oneself' in CVE is to point out the contribution of the CVE space's own self-expansion. This is highlighted by the repeated references to conferences as places where practitioners were introduced and further immersed into CVE. The idea of counter-terrorism having a self-perpetuating expansion was first raised by Lustick (2006) who observed that the U.S. War on Terror's growth relied on a self-powering dynamic as a rubric through which an ever increasing array of social sectors and interests rearticulate their agendas and demands to garner money and public attention. In a different light, Bastani & Gazzotti (2022) propose that the CVE field possesses an inherent propensity for expansion into new areas of public life based on Foucault's understanding of a security apparatus's "constant tendency to expand" as well as on how pre-emptive logics (Massumi, 2007) necessitate an ever-expanding domain of work. My research would also suggest that the CVE network itself, global in its scale, funnels individuals toward its imperative through conferences and other opportunities through the 'network effects' (Srnicek, 2017) that it creates.

Chapter 5 – Enrolling in the CVE imperative

"So, on June 20, one week from today, we'll be launching a call for applications, and we invite all of our people committed to positive change between the ages of 13 and 35 to apply."

With this, the assembled audience at Montréal's Place Dupuis Council Chamber began to applaud the two young speakers at the podium. The call for applications they were launching was for a new, youth engagement-focused initiative by Montréal's Centre for the Prevention of Radicalization Leading to Violence [CPRLV] in partnership with UNESCO's Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development [MGIEP]. The presenters explained how the project would recruit and assist young leaders with "community-centered projects" and awareness-raising campaigns. The CPRLV and MGIEP would work with the youth selected, offering skills training and to setup events to achieve "international outreach". The podium presenters elaborated on the project's objectives and ethos:

> The goal is to mobilize young leaders as agents of change, to promote skills and capacities that foster resilience and the development of critical thinking, and to highlight the importance of acts of kindness for the prevention of violent extremism […] We want to provide a complete, independent, fun and engaging path to demonstrate that acts of kindness are not trivial… that selfless acts are valued, and also that this makes a difference to sustainable development goals.

The presenters mentioned that participants would be tasked with "mobilizing at least 100 actors from their communities to carry out acts of kindness" to be documented in short films hosted on CPRLV and MGIEP's platforms. As I sat among the attendees, I observed how the project seemed to be connecting discourses on youth empowerment, education, and "acts of kindness" as a means to address violent extremism as well as achieve UNESCO's sustainable development goals. Less clear to me was how these

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discourses and objectives fit together: What was the relationship between anti-terrorism and sustainable development? How does "critical thinking" and "kindness" factor in addressing the causes of terrorism? Why was UNESCO's Gandhi Institute envisioned as having a role in CVE?

These questions continue to lack definitive answers. However, what I demonstrate in this chapter is how the confluence of differing partnerships and objectives in examples like CPRLV-UNESCO speak to how practitioners become *enrolled* into the cause of countering violent extremism as well as CVE's relationship and impact on broader society. In doing this, I am operating on the premise that the open-ended, ambiguous, and at times *speculative* quality of CVE's practices afford a large cross-section of individuals – with differing and at times competing motivations – to *enroll* in the CVE cause (by various means and at differing registers). This is to say that the practitioners I encountered across the *archetypes* outlined in the previous chapter found multiple ways to align their principles and outside social and political interests with job duties in CVE. As I will demonstrate, a rather noticeable distinction was found for practitioners from Muslim backgrounds in terms of the extent of their enrollment and underlying motivations and justifications. This is something that I will explore the implications of in detail.

The chapter is structured as follows. I begin with a brief explanation on my use of the concept of 'enrollment'. It might be taken as given that many Canadians would be interested in preventing terrorism attacks. However, as my study has highlighted, the matter of enrolling in CVE is complicated by the myriad problems raised both in the critical literature and within the field itself over its science and methods, its inability to

demonstrate effectiveness, and well-documented deleterious consequences of CVE practices for Muslim diaspora members in Western countries. The practitioners I interviewed were consciously aware of these drawbacks while engaging in the CVE space. The section following this describes my findings on the types of motivations that practitioners express for carrying out their jobs in CVE. How do they locate themselves, their principles, interests, and identities in the CVE imperative? Practitioners tended to locate a desire to 'make a difference' in society as key to enrolling in CVE work, which tended to sit apart from the purported aim of preventing terrorism. The next section deviates to discuss the specific conditions of enrollment to CVE for the 10 practitioners I interviewed from Muslim backgrounds. While not wishing to generalize their experiences, I came to understand the specific experience of their enrollment though the oft-repeated phrase *if you're not at the table, you're on the menu.* The phrase joins a dilemma of involvement with a sense of obligation to participate constructively in a field that continues to disproportionately target their communities. I outline some of the successes that Muslim-identifying practitioners communicated in improvising the CVE imperative toward beneficial aims mixed with the concerns that remained over partnerships between security actors and Muslim communities they continue to surveil.

My overarching question in this chapter inverts another of counter-terrorism's dominant questions, put simply during an interview with a 'traditional' practitioner associated with the SHIFT project in British Columbia as: "Why do they do it? What makes these people engage in terrorism?"[163] Akin to the previous chapter on 'pathways

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[163] The practitioner described this as "the longstanding question that has animated terrorism studies". They continued by suggesting that the concept of the 'radicalization process' has subtly shifted *why do they do it* "in a more individuated way", adding that "nobody says that root causes don't matter now, but as a focal point, it is sidelined as secondary to individual motivations and decision-making".

into CVE' I turn the *why do they do it* question back on the people involved in the field: *what makes practitioner engage in counter terrorism through CVE?* In my examination I employ similar practitioner archetypes as outlined in the previous chapter, while also considering the enrollment of social actors more broadly, including private and civil society organizations as exemplified by UNESCO's MGIEP, and others I encountered during my fieldwork. To re-state my aims, the benefit of examining actors' enrollment in CVE is that it provides another means for comprehending the type of object they are enrolling into – what CVE is and what type of purchase it has in contemporary societies like Canada. My discussion and conclusion section further explores the societal implications of CVE's speculative open-endedness, and how both powerful entities and actors on the ground in CVE seek to exploit the paradigm in ways that blur distinctions between the opposing interests in the field, potentially reorchestrating how social change is brought about.

Understanding CVE participation through *enrollment*

As stated in the introduction of this dissertation, my study employs mid-level concepts for thinking through research problems and interpreting data (Amit, 2015). In this chapter, I work with the concept of 'enrollment', introduced in science and technology studies by authors in the actor-network theory [ANT] tradition (e.g., Latour, 2005). In ANT's theory of social action, networks are formed through attempts by actors to provisionally 'enroll' one another, often by aligning and transforming the imputed interests of the actors involved. The successful linkage of other actors' interests is a determining factor in whether schemes and entities grow big or remain small, "why some succeed while others fail" (Callon & Law, 1982, p. 621). ANT theorists further

suggest that through these enrollments, actors "enforce contingent forms of social order" on themselves and others (Ibid, p. 615). Callon and Law continue:

> The theory of enrolment is concerned with the ways in which provisional order is proposed, and sometimes achieved […] one of the ways in which such enrolment is attempted is via the category of interests. Actors great and small try to persuade by telling one another that 'it is in your interests to. . .'. What are they doing when they so attempt to map and transform interests? Our view is that they are trying to impose order on a part of the social world. They are trying to build a version of social structure (1982, p. 622).

By engaging with the concept of 'enrollment', I aim to understand how practitioners in CVE come to identify themselves (and their principles, interests and aims) in the cause of countering radicalization and violent extremism, their extent and variation of enrollment, and places/junctures where enrollment fails to take hold. Enrollment bears a resemblance to Althusser's concept of *interpellation* that I referred to in Chapter 3. There I argued that the mobilization of 'radicalization' discourse by European governments in the mid-2000s could be seen to internalize, via counter-terrorism responses, the dominant values of the European Union in its subjects and *hail* the solidarity of an imagined 'European community'. There are similar mechanisms of identification and interest alignment at play in 'enrollment', however its basis in ANT diverges sharply (and is perhaps incommensurable with) Althusser's Marxian structuralism. For instance, Althusser proposes *interpellation* to indicate how dominant classes exert power over individuals through ideological identification, "recruiting" and "transforming" individuals into subjects, to ensure that they submit to the rules of the established order (Althusser, 1971, p. 174). The concept of 'enrollment' carries no implicit assumptions on the nature of power relations (the inherent or stable possession of power by some over others) nor of "established order". I do not intend to privilege

ANT's position on social power over Althusser's, but for the purposes of my inquiry the concept of enrollment allows for a more fluid interpretation of my interviewees' involvement in CVE, emphasizing provisional, tenuous, and continually negotiated arrangements. In my fieldwork, enrollment comes in different shapes and registers, with reasons for CVE participation ranging from being fully enrolled in the West's idea of a 'War on Terror' to those critical of prevailing geo-political arrangements, who hope by their involvement to mitigate counter-terrorism's deleterious impacts. Some practitioners expressed a personal attachment to the issue, while others simply find it "an interesting problem". Ambivalence regarding CVE, its science, methods and impacts if not the broader aims of the paradigm, were consistently expressed across my dataset.

My use of enrollment in CVE builds off a UK study by Stanley, Guru & Coppock (2017) of the involvement of social work professionals in CVE. Their auto-ethnographic examination revealed how CVE mandates under the Prevent strategy enroll actors by seeking to reimagine social work within networks of security, equivocating "counter terrorism and child rescue discourses" (p. 485). The authors highlight how CVE discourses complicate the ethical and human practice of social work. Similar insights are pursued in this chapter, albeit with more of a focus on how individuals from a wide range of social positions come to see themselves in CVE. I use 'enrollment' to explore the degrees of reflexivity and ambivalence expressed by participants toward the CVE mission and their respective positions in it, as well as to consider how CVE sustains and legitimizes itself as an item on political agendas by transforming its remit to provisionally align with interests and aims of state actors and other funders.

<u>So why do they do it?</u>

It is first worth acknowledging the intuitive pull that a cause like countering violent extremism possesses. Preventing violence, particularly terroristic forms, can easily be presented as an intrinsic social good. From this general perspective, the question of why people would engage in CVE becomes simplified to the point of redundance. Yet, as my study has emphasized, the criticisms against CVE have been widespread and continuous. Both within and outside of the literature on CVE, problems have been identified with the science behind CVE, particularly the bedrock concept of 'radicalization' (e.g., Sedgwick, 2010), the efficacy of CVE programs, as well as their documented tendency to reinforce negative stereotypes against Muslim diaspora communities, adding surveillance and social scrutiny that impacts identity expression and political agency (Awan, Hoskins, & O'Loughlin, 2011; Lynch, 2013; Qureshi, 2015).

The CVE practitioners that I interviewed were aware of these critiques and possessed many of their own.[164] In terms of its research and framing, practitioners I met with questioned CVE's theoretical grounding and methodological limitations, the lack of reliable data backing their work, and on elements that are missed or elided through the CVE frame. Reference to the "science" behind CVE sometimes elicited mockery, with one informant describing the scientific literature as "brutal" (Catherine – Ottawa). Interviewees took issue with the stage models of radicalization, particularly Silber & Bhatt's well-known *NYPD Model of Jihadization,* which it was argued can create more

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[164] I draw heavily in this section from internal focus group research that I conducted (and was remunerated for) on behalf of a CVE agency in Canada, who gave me permission to use the findings in my research.

bias regarding immigrant communities and extremism (Navinder – Edmonton).[165]

'Former extremist' practitioners decried CVE research by "so-called experts [who] don't

have any experience outside of a library" (Steven) and of the field being saturated by

"superficial" research from "one-time passers-by" (Martha). Other informants such as

Alessia (Montréal) felt that their work benefited from staying purposely uninformed

about the literature on CVE.

This led to practitioners questioning how CVE frames the problem of terrorism,

including critiques of behaviouralist 'indicators' approaches adopted from policing that

work from retrospective data,[166] with practitioners frequently decrying that "there is no

checklist" for determining radicalization. Conversely, other practitioners (e.g., Karl,

senior civil servant, Ottawa) argued that CVE was borrowing too heavily from the

"public health model", and that this approach led to the mistaken framing of political and

social issues through a psychological lens (e.g., Adrianna).[167] My interview with a long-

time terrorism studies expert associated with the SHIFT project, noted how the focus on

'radicalization' shifted terrorism prevention toward "individual motivations and

decision-making" and away from "root causes". They added why this framing is

problematic:

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[165] In one humorous exchange, a CVE manager in Alberta (Don) described how in their training and engagement sessions "we'll put three models up on a screen, note that all of them are different, none of them are good, and then like flip before someone can take a picture of it".

[166] As was expressed during one workshop I attended on the problem of "lagging indicators" of radicalization: "our data is not forward thinking at all, it's always in the context of what has been".

[167] This concern was described by Adrianna in a pointed hypothetical: "So, if I give you an example of the FARCs in Colombia, radicalized people engaged in a movement, fighting for a cause. Could you imagine working with the comandante in a clinical approach? No… (laughter) You don't sit down with Timochenko as a psychologist with that kind of authority – 'how can I help you? can you tell me about your feelings?' – and start to work on his emotions, family history. Radicalization is not a mental health issue. It's a social problem."

> "Anything that avoids thinking about social structural, root cause things is problematic insofar as it results in a never-ending game of whack-a-mole. If you're not dealing with broader background factors, then you're always going to be trying to deal with the next round of where the radicalization is coming from".

The practitioner critiques naturally extended to asking what added value CVE was bringing to counter-terrorism, and whether its programs are really effective. Karl questioned whether CVE primary prevention initiatives are a good use of federal money, referring to the "problem of targeting whole populations when the actual net [of potential terrorists] is so small". The issue was also raised on CVE's inability to tangibly prove its methods prevent terrorism. Lisa, a UK-based practitioner working on CVE in Canada, flatly stated: "how do you measure success when the premise is so flawed to begin with?" Karl spoke of being tired of stakeholders asking him "does CVE work?" and having to respond: "I don't have the data". He noted the problem of counteracting data from the UK showing violence committed by people who had been in CVE interventions and surmised that "maybe [CVE] does work for a whole bunch of people. But we don't have that data". These concerns were responded to at the 'frontline' level, where practitioners acknowledged that prevention initiatives lack "observable outcomes to track" (Catherine) and that practitioners "do not have access to the whole picture" to know if their interventions work. A practitioner with OPV in Alberta commented further, describing how an intervention client "could sit with our team and be very convincing, making all these behavioural changes that seem like they're working. But what they're doing in their time apart from us, we have no insight into". Concerning the challenges of implementing CVE, ground-level practitioners questioned some of CVE's 'solutions' such as the idea of 'critical thinking' as a panacea. As put by Isabella: "who

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am I to give *you* critical thinking skills? Who says I have the critical thinking skills you need?" Other practical challenges included the difficulty of obtaining consent from clients' families for interventions and on the state funding relationship, in that project-based government grants provide neither the support nor the flexibility to get projects successfully afloat, and whose terminal structure resulted in a lot of "one-and-done" initiatives where inroads and momentum toward CVE's shortfalls are never built on.

Finally in this brief survey of practitioner critiques were the ethical concerns over CVE and its societal impacts. This again highlighted the trouble with CVE program evaluations, leading to questions over their ethical motivations, which can stray toward being a means "of justifying your own existence and funding." This introduced the moral hazard of "mislabeling people or providing services to people who don't really fit [but] might generate an important output in terms of just being a number". There was also general awareness among my interview base of the negative impacts CVE has had, and can continue to have, for Muslim communities. This extended to the sensitivity over risks with securitizing certain communities, stigma that can be attached to having been involved in a CVE program, and the assorted challenges in dealing with an Islamophobic broader public. Practitioners noted experiencing false referrals of Muslim individuals to CVE entities based on misinformed stereotypes, and dilemmas on how to publicly raise issues of CVE in ways that "do not incite fear into the community so they don't look at their local protestors as violent radicals" (Jasmine, Alberta).[168] As I will cover, many CVE practitioners rather saw their public-facing role as debunking stereotypes about terrorism, radicalization, and its presumed association with Islam and Muslims.

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[168] Meredith, a Québec-based 'outside professional', expressed concern that the public attention being put in CVE was "increasing undue anxiety in the public".

I will refer to additional internal criticisms of CVE conveyed by my practitioner interviewees, where relevant. Central to my argument here is how, despite their consensus criticism over CVE's research and framing, reflexive ambiguity over whether it works, and conviction over its potentially damaging effects, the practitioners I interviewed nonetheless found ways to enroll in the CVE cause. Lehane (2018), in a qualitative study with CVE "grassroots" practitioners in North America and Europe, cites "frustration" as a preeminent attitude expressed by interviewees due to a lack of support from state actors and negative effects from CVE policies and discourses. While the concerns Lehane's participants identified were also conveyed by my interviewees, "frustration" was not (despite notable exceptions detailed below) a defining attitude. Rather, my interviewees tended to blend their concerns, criticisms, reservations and dilemmas within an overall culture of positivity or (reflexive) hopefulness toward their work. In the following section, I begin to explore the reasons for this, beginning with an analysis on what motivates practitioners to work in the CVE field.

Findings I – Motivations for enrollment in CVE

> "[I]t's the human part that really drives me. Because what a lot of us have been doing was seeing how we could make someone's life better, helping them to aim for something more. And that's what we're doing, either training social workers, giving interventions, or in violence prevention workshops. What do we need to have in mind to get people to want something else than violence? Connecting with them beyond this to go somewhere that's safer for him and for the community".
>
> -Valerie (Montréal)

In surveying the motivations practitioners expressed for participating in CVE, two items stood out. The first was of radicalization and violent extremism being "an interesting problem", and the second (reflected in the passage above by Valerie) was the idea that

CVE presents the opportunity to "make a difference" in peoples' lives. I will explore

each of these themes before examining how they became complicated by the responses

of interviewees from racialized and Muslim backgrounds, who cite distinct and at times

countervailing motivations for participating in CVE.

An 'interesting problem'

A significant portion of my participants cited motivation for being involved in CVE was

due to it being "an interesting problem". This sense of 'interest' corresponded with and

attached to several other themes, one being the practitioner's sense of removal or

detachment from the issue. This harkens to my previous point on there being a problem

of social and mental *distance* between the CVE practitioner class and the problem of

'violent extremism', as well as the clientele they work with. This sense of *detached*

interest was expressed in a variety of ways. Francis, a 'traditional practitioner' in

Canada's security sector noted how he preferred CVE work over some of his other

duties, calling it "an interesting file, compared to some of our files which can be a little

bit boring". Don, also a 'traditional' practitioner in Alberta, describes his motivation for

joining the field in an almost cavalier way:

> I thought it was like a cool, complex problem that had a bunch of different
> parties involved in solving it. So… no sort of direct attachment to this, I just
> kinda thought it was sort of one of those interesting problems.

A similar disposition was expressed by Keith, an 'outside professional', when describing

being asked by a former colleague in mental health services to join their CVE psycho-

social intervention team:

> [T]hey were looking for people for the team and asked me 'are you interested?'
> And I'm like, 'it sounds fascinating [laughs] Why not?' And you know, I'd sort

of been to some of their consults in the past. So, I thought 'oh it'd be interesting'. And it really is fascinating.

Other 'outside professionals' found their new duties in CVE "fascinating" regarding working with 'radicalized' or 'radicalizing' people. Adrianna described being engrossed by the personal exchanges that occur between practitioner and client during secondary prevention interventions:

> There are times that they really open up and engaging with them is… wow… not what people might think. They can be super intelligent, they can speak about history and politics, they have high moral standards.[169]

Others also found this human element of CVE to be engaging. Ayesha, a specialist in interventions with a psychology background, described the experience of a new referral to her centre as "the best part of this job […] it's very thrilling [laughter]. You never know what to expect. You never know how the situation will unfold". Geneviève, who made the move from social work to CVE, concurred, finding CVE interventions "interesting" as well as the task of training police and human service professionals on CVE.[170] Others motivated by the human element of CVE communicated their sense of curiosity regarding the clients, particularly around the theme of violence. Valerie, who otherwise associated her interest in CVE with a dislike of "staying in the office" talked

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[169] Adrianna commented on the challenge of the radicalized/radicalizing clients being erudite: "And that makes it difficult. How do you work with people like that? You can't just put them in a hospital… and give them pills. It's not a criminal… even if it's criminal."

[170] On interventions, Geneviève said "it's been interesting to see what's happening in the wide sense of society and how history and the social environment impacts the individual." On conducting CVE trainings, she commented that "it is interesting to see how people are able to change their perception, like on the danger of Islamic terrorism. Often the first thing we hear [from trainees on the topic of radicalization] especially if it's a training outside of Montréal is 'we don't have that problem here, it's in Montréal with the immigrants of course'".

about her "fascination" in working with people who have or are willing to commit

violence to achieve an aim:

> People laugh when I say this but what interests me is the violence […] It is so
> interesting because you get to understand, or try to understand, why people use
> violence as a method. And what fuels me more is that it's normal people. Like,
> they're terrorists or extremists, but when you meet these people, their stories are
> like… pretty normal. They're highly engaged people, and I think that's where I
> connect with them.

Maude, who specializes in CVE training as well as research and communication, also

cited a "fascination with violence" as a motivation: "to be honest, everything about

violence is captivating for me... I love it because I don't understand it [laughs], so I'm

interested in it."[171] In sum, part of the interest practitioners held in the human element of

CVE links back to their detachment from the problem, in not being able to 'understand'

why clients resort to violent means to address their grievances.

Another way that "interest" played a motivating factor was through the idea of

continuous learning. Part of what Geneviève found "stimulating" about CVE

interventions "is that we keep learning". This referred both to her newness to the

position as well as CVE being a *young* field where consensus best practices have yet to

be settled (Ponsot, Autixier, & Madriaza, 2018). Her colleague in interventions, Keith,

also described his CVE participation as a "rich learning environment" that "challenged"

his perspectives on social work. This theme was also raised in interviews with

'traditional practitioners' who held years of counter-terrorism knowledge and experience

but found opportunities to create and innovate during CVE's early stages in Canada.

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[171] Maude noted how her interest in CVE became markedly less distant after her romantic partner,
who she described as being "radicalized in the far left", was arrested and imprisoned. For Maude, this
incident only furthered her enrollment in the CVE discourse, suggesting how the 'radicalization'
concept "was giving me answers to something I was trying to figure out alone".

Karl, who was involved in the creation of the Department of Public Safety's CVE strategy, conveyed his enthusiasm for starting something new, *on the fly*:

> "It's been great. It's been an interesting project to create… we've been flying the plane while building it. It's rare that you get an opportunity in government to create something like this".

Marc, a CVE research lead in Québec, also found openings in the field's early stages to craft the paradigm around his interests in addressing non-*jihadist* forms of political violence and western attitudes of Islamophobia. He described radicalization as "an interesting concept, but with a lot of pitfalls and stuff that I didn't like". The CVE project he was asked to build allowed him to "change what I didn't like, from the inside", finding that 'radicalization' "could be useful if we frame it the right way […] putting what I really believe into it and what we want the framework to be".

The idea of CVE being 'interesting' also related to how it connected to practitioners' existing of interests outside of terrorism. This was evident multiple times in my data. For Ayesha, it was the psychology-based principles behind CVE interventions. She was interested in becoming a practicing psychologist, and coming out of her MA, opportunities in CVE provided her with the best prospect: "I wanted to get my hands on some kind of groundwork, and when I saw that [redacted] were hiring students for internships I applied and got in". Three of my interviewees talked about how a link made between their background interest in trans-cultural psychiatry led to their engagement in CVE[172], while another cited how her interest was piqued by a definition of radicalization as being a product of social suffering. This allowed her to connect the

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[172] In the above example of Keith, he mentioned how the colleague who asked him to join the CVE psycho-social intervention team "knew I had an interest in the transcultural issue, and so she thought I might be interested in radicalization".

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issue to her previous academic research on mixed marriage family conflict in the Balkans:

> "Of course, it finally made sense, you know? I was able to build a bridge between my interest in the Balkans, and the way I see them as political processes, and what we're doing here now in Québec".

For Elyanne, a partner with RAPS in Québec, it was a connection to art therapy and social inclusion that led to her interest in CVE. Her employer, an art museum, had teamed with a CVE organization in her city to produce community art projects in low-income neighbourhoods. The opportunity allowed Elyanne to achieve, through CVE, a long-held objective to make the museum more inclusive by successfully reaching out to underserved communities:

> We organized a visit… there were like 30 kids, the moms and fathers. I was like 'ohh shit, this is great'. We had an art-based activity, kids running all over the place, then we had a snack, it was great [...] They were excited to know that their work would be hung in the museum [...] It was significant to them, making the museum a part of their life, and it puts the museum in a more humble place.

Elyanne noted that her museum planned to keep the CVE partnership due to perceived alignment of values. She added how the museum is typically "submerged by all sorts of demands […] but we maintain the ones that are pertinent to our values, diversity, inclusion, health, well-being". The final examples of interest alignment demonstrate the catalytic impact of CVE's move toward countering 'right-wing extremism', picking up on the theme the Marc raised earlier on Islamophobia. This point was raised directly (and unprovoked) in my interview with Erica, a specialist in CVE program evaluations and school outreach initiatives, on the alignment between combatting Islamophobia with practicing CVE: "My interest personally and professionally in violent radicalization is very much tied to my interest in Islamophobia", Erica explained. She added how she was

initially critical of the CVE discourse "because to me, it was like, so intrinsically Islamophobic", but a "shift in CVE's lens" created an opportunity for her to conduct workshops on Islamophobia and social cohesion in Québec schools. "And that's why I'm here now", Erica remarked, "this is what I want to do. This is what I believe in".

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To summarize this section, the comments on CVE being an "interesting problem" relate both to the CVE practitioner's 'distanced' position from 'violent extremism' as well as how the CVE paradigm's open-ended construction facilitates the *transfer* of practitioners' pre-existing interests onto the field. This conforms to Callon and Law's theory that actor enrollment involves the successful translation of social interests, "catching" or "funneling" general interests so that they "are identified, attracted and transformed in such a way that other actors […] become provisionally 'enrolled' in the scheme of the authors, and fall into line" (1982, p. 619). The cases of interest alignment in my data point to the continued salience of long running themes in the CVE discourse – i.e., 'trans-cultural' factors and promoting social inclusion – as a means for recruiting practitioners from diverse fields today. It also suggests that newer discourses, such as practicing visual arts as means to dissuade 'violent extremism', create new opportunities for enrollment.

Most of all, CVE's move towards countering 'right-wing extremism' has afforded the paradigm with additional opportunities to align and transfer practitioners' outside interests. This includes the above-mentioned examples of combatting Islamophobia as well as examples covered in the previous chapter related to practitioners 'finding themselves' in CVE due to efforts against gender-based violence and hate crimes. What is additionally evident is how CVE's 'RWE turn' bolsters enrollment by

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helping to assuage prior concerns about the paradigm being biased and discriminatory toward Muslim populations. Elyanne remarked on how the turn to right-wing extremism "breaks the perceived link between Islamism and radicalization", while Marc described how his comfort level improved when his director explained that his job would focus on "radicalization and violent extremism of all kinds". Marc added: "I was like, 'ah, I've no issue then because I really believe in that'". Marc also highlighted a common conception (that helps justify enrollment) that CVE had moved past an initial problematic phase by expanding toward right-wing extremism, noting how the UK Prevent Strategy had successfully rectified the "mistakes" it had made in being "biased towards the Muslim community" by moving to "address all forms of extremism". Recapping the point made earlier by Erica, who was "highly critical of that whole violent radicalization discourse because it was so intrinsically Islamophobic", she felt that "the discourse shift is healthy." Erica added:

> I am less critical of it now, and I think that with [her employer] and the other key actors working on radicalization, our understanding of the issue is quite… I don't like the word *advanced*, but like is more balanced.

In sum, the turn to right-wing extremism led to the sense that improvement had taken place in CVE. This aided enrollment in the cause and facilitated a broader and more diverse tree of interest alignment. As I will cover later in this chapter, the right-wing turn also allows CVE (and by way of it, broader security governance) a larger and less rigidly defined remit to act upon society. For now, I move to a second key theme on CVE practitioner motivation.

The desire to 'make a difference'

The above responses segue into a second principal motivation given by my participants for being in CVE, in their stated *desire to make a difference in peoples' lives.* Some practitioners who initially cited their (detached) interest in the topic describe this latter feeling after embarking in CVE work. Don, who had seen CVE as a "cool, complex problem" later recognized the "opportunity to work with people and give them help in a micro way". Keith, who had also expressed detached interest, cited that a necessary attitude for the job is to "have a bit of hope that maybe we can make some sort of difference here", adding that "otherwise I suppose I wouldn't do it".

This sentiment was repeated almost verbatim by other practitioners. Maude stated how, despite her reservations, CVE has a place "because I really believe that it helps people, and I would not do this work if I was not convinced of that". Valerie responded similarly, stating: "I mean I wouldn't be working at [her organization] anymore if I thought this was not working". She then, as highlighted in the quotation above, drove the point of how her team was focused on: "seeing how we could make someone's life better… having them to aim for something more." It is evident from these statements that the grounded, almost reflexive sense of hopefulness mentioned earlier as a dominant attitude of my CVE participants was tied to the sense that practitioners had opportunities through their work to improve peoples' lives.

So, how does CVE 'make a difference' in peoples' lives? Here it is important to both look at interviewee responses as well as the types of events and activities CVE organizations put on that might perpetuate this sentiment. 'Making a difference' was first observed to occur during the one-on-one interventions with presumed 'radicalized' or

'radicalizing' clients. At a base level, the people I interviewed involved in CVE interventions felt that these efforts were making a difference for the clients. This brings up the point raised by a practitioner in Chapter 2, on CVE being different than counter-terrorism in that it views who it works with as "beneficiaries" rather than "targets". The practitioner [Egan] expanded on this:

> [W]e see vulnerable people as beneficiaries […] you're willing to take measures and treat a person who you want to benefit in a way that very different than you would someone who's considered a threat.

This view became illustrated by interviewees involved in secondary prevention initiatives, who did not see themselves necessarily as agents of national security but rather in a more therapeutic role, helping the radicalizing/radicalized get their lives on track. While *success* remains an elusive and unquantifiable aspect of CVE, practitioners spoke of "seeing changes" qualitatively through their interventions in terms of their clients having less rigid or discriminatory views, or with improved mental health and social outcomes: "We've seen people in our program move from point A to point B and now they're somewhere else in their life", remarked an interventions practitioner from the CPRLV. "It's something you can't evaluate but it's something that you can witness".[173] A practitioner with RAPS psych-social intervention team gave specific examples of the encouraging changes they were seeing with clients:

> "[W]e have people who were 12 hours a day at the computer, working on their ideology, who are now back in school, or having a social network and other interests. So the ideology might be present but is definitely taking up less space… that's what we're aiming for".

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[173] Another practitioner from the CPRLV concurred, stating that: "we've seen the most amazing changes in people here […] and when you see the things I have seen, you realize the importance of this work. That's why I work here. It keeps me going".

A fellow member of the RAPS team added to these examples of intervention success, citing instances where "the person has found other things" such as a new job or developed "an interest in something else". The practitioner also lauded points of progress such as when clients could begin to reflect on, and feel comfortable sharing, possible reasons for becoming involved in 'violent extremism':

> "Just the fact that they're for the very first time talking about it, like… 'this is what happened with my family… and my school was, you know, I was bullied, and then I got depressed, but I never talked with anyone about this'. So, for them to start to make sense, I think in any therapeutic sort of relationship-like process, that's your initial step."

My interview with Adrianna and Ayesha, who work as a CVE intervention team, built on and summarized the positive changes they were seining in their clients, describing it as a "process of social rehabilitation", allowing the client to better participate in the world around them:

> Adrianna: You work with the risk factors, the ideology starts to soften. The communicative rigidity starts to open and you start to see changes… After one year, maybe now his veil is white. He starts to shake hands and looks you in the eye. Maybe her scarf's not this way but she's putting it that way she's experimenting, she's opened up.
>
> Ayesha: Or where before they would never talk to someone who wasn't Muslim, they actually did and noticed that it's not that big of a deal.
>
> Adrianna: So, you see the little changes, … the person who started very hard, not having anything to do with the world, then at a certain point you see them….
>
> Ayesha: …taking part in the world.
>
> Adrianna: Taking part in that world. The grievances are there, sure [said in unison], but they're dealing with them differently in a more pro-social way. And then you see also the more objective examples of changes… he's doing better at school and talking more about his future long term and short-term prospects.

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In this 'rehabilitation of the individual' through CVE intervention, efforts extend from

making the client act less discriminatory toward others while also dislodging the effects

of broader public discrimination that the client has faced. This topic came up regarding

individuals who had been falsely referred to CVE programs by school or security

authorities due to a misinterpretation based on racist stereotypes. A RAPS psycho-social

intervention team member described these instances:

> When the team started, we got a lot of referrals that were a misunderstanding of
> the situation with misconceptions about religion and other things. For example,
> we had referrals from schools that thought a young Muslim boy with behavioural
> problems could be a potential terrorist. So, it is important to deconstruct those
> views and also try to take care of the pain it would cause to a teenager or the
> family that's been falsely accused of something.

The team member noted how critical their intervention was in "preventing someone from

being radicalized [..] because if they feel they are being treated unjustly, which we saw,

it's a risk factor in the long run". The team member notes that mis-referrals on non-

racialized youth also did occur, and in those cases, the team was able to successfully

identify and treat actual underlying problems:

> In some cases of people that were referred as national security threats, when we
> got involved we realized that they were very poor and socially isolated, they
> were not eating, they had tons of reasons not to feel good, and by just correcting
> all those things, by putting things in place, all of a sudden, the ideology's still
> there but its taking a lot less space because they have a social network, they can
> eat, they can be clean, they can have the social support that they needed. All of a
> sudden, this group that gives them a meaning is less important.

In this respect, many involved saw difference-making through CVE as occupying a

"bridging role" in connecting vulnerable people to appropriate social service supports.

This was highlighted during a discussion with a practitioner involved in the setup of

Ottawa's MERIT CVE program (multiagency early risk intervention table), who noted how the program treated "radicalized people as vulnerable people, not criminal people". This, the practitioner stated, led to a great deal of research and communication on how to "hand-pick the agencies best to work with" and "try to figure out the programs that the people need". In my interview with Don in Alberta, he reflected on the intervention cases he had dealt with so far, remarking that "[t]here were more issues related to basic needs than I would have anticipated". He added how it is "easier to help with that stuff", noting the benefits for reducing the risk of 'radicalization' by arranging clients to talk to a counsellor, adding "if we reduce these risk factors across social problems, and we increase protective factors, this person will sort of be in a better place." Similar efforts were also described by practitioners employed at Moonshot CVE, a UK-based company working on projects pertaining to Canada, who's online 're-direct' program uses AI technology to interrupt individuals searching for 'extremist content'. This task, a Moonshot practitioner noted, includes "connecting those vulnerable to radicalization and violent extremism with people who can help". The employees I talked to find a positive correlation between individuals searching for far-right content who took up links to mental health services provided by Moonshot.

For these practitioners, the 'bridging' function greatly added to their satisfaction in working in CVE. Moonshot employees called their online 're-direct' efforts "an exciting area of work". A practitioner from OPV described how "playing the bridging role has been cool", noting also how their organization was able to assist a non-profit outside CVE whose grant funding had elapsed, and loaned out its in-house psychologist for outside appointments. They added, with candour, that:

It's moments like that that I feel a little less bad for having money to do CVE, because we were able to help people dealing with more significant problems.

For one of the practitioners I interviewed with the SHIFT program in BC, the bridging aspect was the primary reason for their enrollment in CVE, which the practitioner had previously admonished for not properly addressing the "broader background factors" of violent extremism. "We are the front door", is how the practitioner enthusiastically described SHIFT, explaining how the model – based on the multiagency situation table akin to Ottawa MERIT – does not provide actual services, but rather works at "identifying persons in need" and helping connect them to appropriate social service providers.[174]

It is evident then, that the opportunity to work with 'radicalized' people through interventions, connecting them to other social supports, and seeing improvements in their dispositions, thought processes, and social prospects all contributed to the motivating factor of *making a difference*. Practitioners also extended this motivation for CVE participation beyond client interactions and toward broader impacts in the public realm. Here my practitioners discussed the types of changes they were able to affect though CVE training sessions with police and other human service professionals, as well as in broader primary prevention and awareness-raising initiatives in schools, cultural communities and with the public at large.

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[174] The practitioner noted how Shift's approach was adapted from the *situation table* model of crime prevention used in Surrey, BC, where members of law enforcement meet regularly with community agencies and social service providers to identify individuals with "criminogenic needs" and attach them to services to address their needs. The use of the situation table model in CVE was not unanimously approved of by my participants, including one representative from Ottawa MERIT.

Practitioners interviewed were particularly enthusiastic over their "myth-busting" successes (Catherine, Ottawa), breaking down the racist, discriminatory, and misinformed views that participants in the training and awareness sessions had about terrorism and radicalization. "When we train, it's not only spreading content, but it's changing, you know, ways of seeing life, stereotypes", remarked Micheline on her experiences. Jérôme caustically described his role in CVE training as "explaining to people who don't know a thing about Islam what's going on in the world." He added that "they learn about these things on the internet, television, newspapers […] they have a lot of preconceptions about what's going on". Practitioners involved in the training of school teachers on CVE awareness noted that they first had to address the "close-minded" views of the teaching staff. "We have it in mind that we want to train them [the teachers] for the students, but then we see that between teachers it's a problem", remarked Valerie, on conducting CVE training in schools. Multiple practitioners from different organizations described the myths and stereotypes participants held around Islam, speaking of uncomfortable training scenes where derogatory comments were made in front of North African or South Asian colleagues. Erica, one of several practitioners I spoke to whose focus involves creating more inclusive forms of national identity, cited the importance "to go in areas where there's little diversity, to challenge stereotypes and misinformation". She added: "we don't just talk about race, it's intersectional", and referred to "difficult conversations" about antisemitism, homosexuality and "the role of religion toward homosexuality", resistance toward the Hijab, "mixed views on immigration", "nationalist ideas that are based on fear […] it was quite confronting sometimes".

What Erica and others expressed here is how, similar to in CVE interventions, practitioners saw positive changes in terms of attitude and opinions of participants during the training and awareness sessions. "It's interesting to see how often people are able to change their perception", remarked Genevieve, referring to stereotypes of Islam and Muslims that social workers, psychologists, and educators held, and how participants at the beginning of the trainings tended to associate 'radicalization' with immigrant communities. In this sense, Genevieve saw training as proactive opportunity to combat Islamophobia. Jérôme added that on CVE training: "the main successes that I really had […] was to connect with some people, and really change their way of thinking, a little bit, and open their minds about these kinds of issues". Maude spoke of "seeing the concrete fruits of our work" during her CVE organization's school awareness visits, "sharing knowledge, deconstructing stereotypes, talking about the situation on the ground with people who are not all that informed about it. It's really encouraging". Micheline found that "our trainings were really able to change biases, and their way of handling situations" referring to KAP [knowledge, attitudes, perceptions] forms given to participants that measure behavioural change.

In a field where proof of success is elusive, some practitioners thus found concrete evidence of change, at least in that the recipients of CVE training and awareness sessions emerged with more nuanced and less discriminatory views. "I got a lot of data from what I did", noted another practitioner who used a scale measuring ethnocentrism: "my results suggest that the workshops were having an impact, particularly in areas where there was very little religious and cultural diversity". The evaluation data, which the practitioner used for school awareness visits in Québec, "showed the highest change" in places outside of Montréal, "which were at the lowest at

the beginning in terms of diversity [but] after the workshop it was almost as high as the

ones [schools in Montréal] at the start". This practitioner also referred to positive

feedback by participants in the closing evaluation, giving the example of a student

response saying: "I really liked this workshop because it made me know my identity

more and make me proud to be Moroccan and Québécois". This result was not

something the practitioner had anticipated out of the workshop but was nonetheless

pleased to find.

These efforts at measurement reflect how much the CVE practitioners wanted to

in some way see (and find meaning in) the social impact of the work. Furthering this

sense of *enrollment* was the idea practitioners had that their CVE training and awareness

sessions were creating a safe and respectful environment (which otherwise did not exist)

for people to share and work through their misinformed, and potentially racist and

prejudiced views. This was highlighted specifically in the Québec context and the tense

political atmosphere around cultural and religious minorities, including the rise in anti-

Muslim sentiments since the Québec government introduced its Charter of Values on

"secularism and religious neutrality" and the more recent Bill 21 prohibiting the wearing

of 'religious symbols' for certain public employees.[175][176] Valerie discussed how these

topics came up during CVE trainings with human services professionals "because they

don't have a place to talk about it elsewhere". Erica also noted this finding, commenting

how during teacher training and classroom visits became a venue for addressing these

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[175] Bill-21 bans religious symbols for public sector employees. In practice, the bill targets Muslim women by denying them the right to wear the hijab in public sector jobs, thus also leading to their furthered marginalization in society.

[176] Evidence of the rise in anti-Muslim discrimination in Québec can be found in survey data examined in Environics (2016) and Wilkins-Laflamme (2018).

difficult-to-raise subjects such as on "the reasons why a woman would wear a hijab",

Islam's relationship with homosexuality, and factors related to immigration and

Québec's national identity:

> "People were asking questions. And we can see, in the society and atmosphere
> that we have right now especially since the Charter of Values in 2013 I feel that
> no one can speak up. So, creating spaces to address these issues, I think it's
> helping… because on social media it's really crazy …it's like it's not a human
> being on the other side. So I hope that at least we are creating some small spaces
> to address these issues and questions people have in a respectful way, and I hope
> that it [CVE] will migrate to that vocation".

Erica completed her thought by suggesting that CVE efforts could evolve to play a

stronger role in alleviating this tension. Others hit on this too, specifically framing CVE

primary prevention as "a place that is secure to express all sorts of things" (Elyanne),

whose *raison* is to "open space and create safe spaces for dialogue" (Isabella). The latter

interviewee noted how public discussions in community-based primary prevention "can

get pretty unfiltered" with "debates about identity and free speech", while stressing the

importance of "open dialogue practices that create opportunity for critical reflection" as

a bulwark against violent extremism. The import of these reflective activities in school

classrooms was also stressed, in that the feedback gained suggested that "kids didn't

really have a forum to talk about plural identities and feelings of belonging" (Erica). As I

covered in a previous paper (Millett & Ahmad, 2021) CVE practitioners felt that their

awareness-raising in schools was addressing a critical shortfall in the social studies

curriculum concerning critical thinking and digital literacy. This is reflected in the many

curricula supplements that Canadian CVE organizations (e.g., CPRLV, Project

Someone, RAPS) have developed which include downloadable lesson plans on

information literacy and for facilitating pluralistic dialogue on controversial subjects.

Erica viewed the CVE modules she gave as "taking the load off the teacher". Erica further opined:

> [I]n an ideal world we don't need outsiders to come and make the students question their world in a critical way […] if schools did what they're supposed to be doing […] we wouldn't need primary prevention activities.

In sum, many practitioners found ways to enroll in the CVE imperative through their positive interactions with individuals during one-on-one interventions and in the public through training and primary prevention events. In these efforts, practitioners were able to align *through CVE* their outside interests in contributing to a less racist and discriminatory society, with CVE efforts providing space to critically deconstruct damaging stereotypes about racial, cultural, religious and sexual minorities and foster greater senses of social cohesion and belonging. Multiple practitioners citied their work as in line with community-based organizations that "bring people together" and "work for the betterment of society". It is clear from my research that CVE organizations in Canada actively facilitate the sense of alignment between the CVE imperative and social equity goals. My participant observation witnessed CVE practitioners either developing or supporting efforts ranging from "anti-racist" youth sports leagues, toolkits for police to end social and racial profiling, community art projects and entertainment products that included school plays, a stand-up comedy event, board games and comic books, to numerous youth and citizen engagement efforts such as the promotion of youth-led social initiatives such by the CPRLV and MGEIP discussed at the beginning of this chapter.

The sense of enrollment through perceiving CVE as a vehicle for social good was not universal, however. In the next section I will discuss how as my research wore on, it

became clear that a majority of Muslim identifying practitioners in this space had alternative reasons for enrollment that cut against the beneficent portrayal of the paradigm in these responses.

Findings II – The enrollment of Muslim-identifying practitioners: "If you're not at the table you're on the menu"

> I had conversations with a lot of different people. They said, 'you know what? if
> you don't do it, someone else will and there won't be that level of care'.
> [Yousuf] had said this before and it stuck with me, 'if you're not at the table,
> you're on the menu'. It kept ringing in my head.

The above passage was communicated to me by Warsame, an 'outside professional' working in CVE interventions, as we sat during a break in the proceedings of the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) in Montréal. Warsame was describing his thought process for accepting an offer to conduct CVE interventions for an Ontario-based non-profit. As the passage indicates, he conversed with family members and confidants over his reservations, referring specifically to some poignant advice by another of my informants Yousuf, who was already in CVE at the time, who remarked: "if you're not at the table, you're on the menu". It was not the only time that I heard this phrase mentioned, and I came to understand how it signifies the experiences of racialized and Muslim-identifying people working in CVE, their understanding of the field's trajectory and impacts, and the specific character and terms of their enrollment in it. As I found, *if you're not at the table, you're on the menu* implies both a dilemma and a suggested course of action, beginning with an awareness that racialized minorities are in fact on CVE's "menu", coupled with an initial desire by the person not to participate in this scheme. This is joined with a competing motivation *to participate* based on a sense of

responsibility, which sometimes is conveyed as an obligation to act on behalf of their communities in a field that continues to disproportionately target them. *If you're not at the table, you're on the menu* finally connotes an inevitability, or a resignation, that CVE will continue to proliferate and that it might be best to participate in it constructively. In the paragraphs below I will unpack these items with examples from my interview data on the distinct enrollment of the 10 Muslim-identifying practitioners in CVE that I interviewed.

One of the first characteristics expressed by interviewees was their recognition of the *need* for their services in CVE. As mentioned in the previous chapter, most participants from my wider interview base "found themselves in CVE" rather than proactively entering it. This was particularly true for Muslim-identifying members, which I also previously mentioned were sometimes recruited into CVE unwittingly. Once they had encountered CVE *proper,* they quickly saw a glaring need for their input, which for some began with a recognition that few racial or ethnic minorities were working in the field.

"I started looking around and realizing that there's very few Muslims who work with Muslims on the frontlines that are talking to government and law enforcement about policy", remarked Saif, after having attended a few meetings among federal security personnel. He thus recognized the need "for my views in this debate as well". Jasmine described this as a "dilemma", citing both the desire to not "continue in the stigmatization of your community" coupled with the problem of there being "not a lot of Muslims in this field". In the cases of both practitioners, it led to a desire to hold institutions accountable through their CVE participation. In another case, Samira saw an

express need to be involved after having attended a CVE conference under the guise that it was on 'social polarization'. Her realization occurred when conference discussion turned to a person Samira was connected to who had attempted to leave for Syria:

> *"I could feel what his family went through, what he went through. So I guess hearing those stories made me realize the need for our voices […] I don't want to say the word 'defend ourselves' but if we don't basically speak for ourselves no one is going to do it. How much this field is white male-driven is kind of crazy [...] people are talking about us without even hearing us".*

A similar sentiment was expressed by Ayesha on the responsibility "as a Canadian Muslim" to participate, which Ayesha directed to the problematic scenario of a Muslim youth being placed in a CVE intervention with a practitioner who "doesn't look like them" and, akin to my discussion on CVE practitioner-CVE client 'distance', might not understand or relate to their worldviews and life circumstances. Ayesha thus described her motivations as such:

> So, for me it's also personal […] I understand why people like me would easily think that they don't fit in the society [and] get to the point where they decide to leave their family, the people they love the most, their lives, to go to a third world country… where there's a war. I can understand how they got there although I didn't. So, I want people to know that they have the alternative. Because there are people like me who didn't get there although they do understand it.

The turn in CVE toward preventing right-wing 'violent extremism', which ostensibly aims to *protect* Muslim and racialized minorities, also exposed a need for the input and advice from members of these communities. Bashar addressed this with some incredulity, talking about a consultation he had with Public Safety's Canada Centre, "looking around the room" and realizing "*I* had to give the presentation on right-wing extremism because no one else they had was focusing on that". This reiterates the

previous interviewee's point on "the need for their input" in a field dominated by non-Muslims, yet ostensibly directed at Muslims, which in the example raised by Bashar extends from potential discrimination to a lack of knowledge by authorities on how to protect Muslim communities from other forms of 'violent extremism'.

For Muslim-identifying interviewees, recognition of their need in CVE was followed by *soul-searching* over whether to become involved. Practitioners described phone conversations with friends, family, and other racialized members in the field to discuss their reservations. Warsame recalls asking himself if he was merely participating in a scheme "for the state to manage Muslim communities". Mahir expressed resignation over how CVE has served "as a way that we talk about Muslims without saying 'Muslims'". Saif described his reservations over how CVE participation would affect his existing relationships in the Muslim community, and questioned the intents and alignment of the group soliciting his involvement, Public Safety Canada:

> I thought to myself, 'do I really want to do this?' Cause this is going to get me mired in a lot of mud. I'm used to doing all my work very publicly and transparently, and this would require I thought, flying under the radar, speaking to people in ways where I couldn't be fully open about everything I was doing.

> I was just thinking that Public Safety… it feels like it's in Orwellian language, right? I didn't know exactly how policy transfers from government to the police, or to the intelligence community, but I knew Public Safety provides a lot of leadership around terrorism policy and radicalization and de-radicalization and all that kind of stuff, and RCMP and CSIS are under them technically. I knew that I wasn't comfortable with the relationship, in that triad. I wasn't even thinking about corrections or border security or the other players in this… military defence.

For these practitioners, the decision to enter CVE often boiled down to a felt obligation to represent their communities in this sphere, similar to the reasoning Warsame described above as "if you don't do it, someone else will and there won't be that level of

care". Bashar described his reasoning for cooperating with policing and security authorities on CVE in similar terms: "I have what I think is a strong foundation of understanding in this area […] and I'd much rather it come from me than some cop who just got assigned to this portfolio and is just kind of playing on their own biases". Here, others (Mahir) cited concern over the "negative feedback cycle" CVE reinforces, "where people feel more alienated because they are being isolated and picked upon".[177] Warsame accepted an offer to conduct CVE interventions on the reasoning that he could, above others, contribute to making it a less stigmatizing experience for recipients involved. He commented on the stigma that is attached to an individual on the receiving end of a CVE intervention:

> Once you get that label that 'this person is involved in a… we'll call it, de-radicalization program', that's stigmatizing in itself. If no one knows anything else about you, they know you're involved in that, so the assumptions come in bunches.

Before accepting, Warsame also conveyed something that was reiterated by other interviewees, in terms of having a self-made criteria for participating. "I don't want to do a Muslim program", Warsame recalls telling his organization, "I want it to be tailored to a wide range of ideologies". Similarly, Saif described how when he "bit the bullet" to cooperate with federal authorities, he added several conditions on his engagement:

> I told myself if I am going to get involved I'm gonna do several things. One is I'm not going to go beyond the scope of advising. If a CSIS guy wants me to look at a picture, and identify a person, I'm not going to do that. I won't assist RCMP with an investigation. I would only talk about strategy and try to intervene in ways that pushed them [CSIS and RCMP] to take a broader picture,

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[177] For Mahir, this was expressed in the context of families whose children had been identified by the Canadian state as potential 'extremist travellers'. His involvement in CVE began when his organization was called upon to assist these families.

> de-stigmatizing and de-criminalizing certain things. And I said to them 'I'm
> gonna resign if things turn into something be different than you're telling me
> coming in'.

> I thought another thing is I have to not get paid for anything. I would only talk to
> them [CSIS, RCMP] during work hours and I'm not going to talk about any of
> the youth I'm working with. I just tried to make their job very uncomfortable
> and was like 'every conversation we have I'm going to talk about white
> supremacist extremist violence'.

Saif also attached a condition of "non-confidentiality" in that he would report everything

from his discussions with Public Safety, CSIS and RCMP back to the Muslim

community organization that he worked with.

In sum, for the Muslim-identifying practitioners I interviewed, enrollment in

CVE was a more complicated and laborious affair, with little of the detached 'interest'

expressed by some of my non-Muslim interviewees. Instead, it was very much a

personal matter, where after soul searching over their reservations, the practitioners were

motivated by the reasoning that it was better to be 'at the table' participating in the CVE

space rather than 'on the menu'. I will discuss later the ways that the binary distinction

implied in this analogy became complicated once the practitioners entered the

workspace.

Enrolling 'on the job': added responsibilities and improvisation

The motivations and qualifications Muslim-identifying practitioners cited behind their

enrollment followed them into the daily work, leading to additional dilemmas, self-

imposed tasks, and responsibilities. For Warsame, his desire to "not participate in a

Muslim program" was challenged in the day-to-day business of CVE, where most

referrals to his program continue to be for "religious-based extremism". He instead finds

purpose by using his background to mitigate the unconscious biases of his colleagues. This includes checking-in on team members and outside researchers and policymakers he comes into contact to ensure "they are taking the same care that others are operating in this space".[178] Saif discussed his internal motivations for consulting with policing and security agencies similarly: "Maybe it's going to fall on deaf ears, but if I'm being invited into these conversations I see myself as having a responsibility to at least try to tell the people who are shaping policy that I have a problem with the way things have been going". In the case of another practitioner, their involvement extended toward voluntarily developing better-informed materials on "women and violent extremism" for the RCMP's CTIO counter-terrorism training program after finding their materials "outdated" and potentially spreading false information about Canadian minorities.

It was thus apparent that, as ethnic minority representatives in the CVE space, the heightened sense of responsibility these practitioners had extended from their *specific job duties, leading to additional, sometimes tacit tasks.* This includes informing and educating their colleagues within CVE by breaking down stereotypes on terrorism and minorities (something Bashar referred to specifically as creating "counter-narratives"), educating their communities on CVE programs, holding policing and security agencies accountable by challenging their 'blindspots' (such as their tendency to focus disproportionally on Islamism), and mitigating the potential harms associated for community members who are recipients of CVE. The sense that racialized and Muslim participants take on additional tacit roles in this space was recognized by some white

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[178] Bashar also cited the importance of this aspect in CVE: "This is the biggest thing. You need to have constant checking of the biases for your frontline members who are doing this work. And you need to have it not only just from an awareness piece, it needs to be done in your processes."

CVE practitioners. A member of the Alberta's Organization for the Prevention of Violence discussed how they sought the aid of a leader in the local Somali community when starting-up OPV, who "helped us service our biases and try to avoid getting caught to them at the outset." The practitioner noted that this meant that "the very valid critiques of counter-terrorism were sort of baked-in from the founding" adding how he felt like this contributed to why his organization "haven't had any strong negative reactions" from community members.

It is also worth considering how the extended responsibilities and felt obligations of Muslim-identifying practitioners led to practices that stood apart and were perhaps at cross-purposes with their CVE mandates. This was noted by a couple of practitioners (Mahir, Yousuf) whose involvement concentrated on protecting Muslims *from* CVE and its surrounding public discourses. As mentioned in a previous footnote, Mahir found himself in CVE when the Muslim community services organization he works for was called to assist parents whose child had been detained on allegations of going to Turkey to participate as an "extremist traveller". This, in Mahir's words, moved CVE from "being kind of an abstract thought to something that touches my work and impacts my life and the community I serve".[179] Mahir thus cited his objective in CVE as less related to fighting terrorism and rather "as a support for people who have been ensnared somehow by that broad CVE net […] who might be in the crosshairs of a media, law enforcement and a global political issue." Practically this meant working to prepare

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[179] In stating this, Mahir also referred to his concern over a double standard in Canada's treatment of 'child soldiers' in comparison to how the state and media treated Omar Khadr: "It's the same basic facts, you know, you're a 15-year-old kid in a conflict zone who grew up in unfortunate circumstances, drawn into conflict he didn't have control over. The only difference is the politics surrounding it because you are a different shade of brown."

Muslim community institutions for the needs (mental, social, psychological, spiritual) that 'foreign fighter/extremist traveller' returnees from Syria and their family require.

When I surmised to Yousef that his work in CVE seemed more focused on safeguarding Muslim communities from the negative surrounding attention, he responded "of course". After the Syrian 'foreign fighter' issue hit the news, Yousuf found himself inhabiting multiple roles, primarily out of necessity. This ranged from starting a youth mentoring group at his mosque (which he bristled at it being labelled CVE[180]), acting as a consultant to a CVE program that the city was establishing, to speaking to media to defend the Muslim community and preparing local Muslims, including families of children who had left for Syria, for the enveloping "scrutiny, securitization, backlash" from the broader society. Relating it to the more present topic of foreign fighter/extremist traveller 'returnees', Yousuf expanded on the need to prepare Muslim communities, as well as the media on how to handle the issue:

> The Muslim community will face challenges with media, challenges with politicians, non-Muslim community members, police… what can we do to better prepare them? How do we ensure that they feel safe? And to the non-Muslim community, it needs to be communicated 'look, we're dealing with this issue and you have nothing to be afraid of". Mosque members need training on how to speak to the media. Journalists need guidelines on how to cover stories related to terrorism and trauma, how to differentiate radicalization from normal youth behaviour.

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[180] Yousef was explicit that his youth mentoring work on Islamic jurisprudence through his mosque was not about CVE "but helping young people navigate through life", though he acknowledges that it has been framed as CVE and presented by the Canadian state as an example of a successful CVE project. Yousuf went further to maintain that the youth from his mosque were not radicalized prior to leaving for Syria. He explained that their situation "was primarily of political grievances": "it wasn't a case of radicalization at the time, but once they got there [joining ISIS] radicalization happens then. Before this it's bad decisions over a civil war. But nobody ever saw it like that".

These comments reflect one way that racialized practitioners successfully negotiated their additional self-imposed responsibilities in *improvising* their mandates, finding pockets of agency within their projects (and a field in general) still mired in a start-up phase. This includes Navinder's pro-bono design of new slides for the CTIO counter-terror training course and his expressed satisfaction when the RCMP decided to accept the material and use it in future sessions. Jasmine describes how she successfully campaigned for her city's CVE project to change its focus after consultations with ethnic minority communities "repeatedly brought up concerns about hate crimes". After discussing this feedback with project managers, Jasmine was able to alter the project to be "a leveraging arm" for the lack of formalized support for victims of hate crimes, lessening its emphasis on "what to do about the potentially radicalized person, and make more focus on the victim".

In some cases, successful improvisations involved using the CVE paradigm as an *instrument* for other purposes. This was something that I witnessed cultural and community-based organizations do on several occasions, obtaining CVE funding for events that focus on deeper socio-economic issues and grievances. In these cases, 'radicalization' and 'violent extremism' were either seldom addressed or brought up only to be criticized, with its 'elephant in the room' status denoted by the presence of a couple of RCMP or Public Safety personnel in the audience.[181] This practice of

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[181] In one pertinent example, I attended a conference in Ontario on 'youth resilience' to radicalization put on by an ethnic minority community services organization. Several of my informants from different parts of the country were there, including members of RCMP and Public Safety. At this conference, 'radicalization' and 'violent extremism' were rarely discussed (there were a couple of presenters who began by saying "I want to talk to you today about youth radicalization" but never actually got back to the subject) and instead the presentations and discussions turned toward systemic discrimination, community poverty rates, youth unemployment, changing the culture of policing,

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instrumentalizing CVE was acknowledged by non-racialized practitioners as prevalent in the wider non-profit and civil society sphere, where organizations seek possible connections to CVE within their mandates and tailor proposal outcomes to radicalization prevention as an opportunity to attract government attention toward their causes and gain funding.[182] As a long-time director of a Montréal-based youth services organization put it to me:

> Radicalization is à la mode. If you want to develop something, you need to take into consideration … what are the objectives of the politicians? If you want to be heard, you need to talk their own language, to their objectives. If you present something that they don't care about, they will for sure push away your project.

An interviewee from an Ontario non-profit undertaking CVE intervention concurred, citing funding precarity as one of the reasons why they applied to a Public Safety community resilience fund call for proposals: "non-profits are looking at opportunities to keep their work alive. This is often how they get into it [CVE], 'how are we going to find the next funding source?'". Yousuf spoke on this as well, using a fictional example of starting an afterschool program: "if it's under CVE, you get funding. If it's not, people don't bat an eyelash". Yousuf continued with pointed criticism, referring to afterschool example as well as his own youth mentoring work, that "these are social services we should be providing in the first place […] now we create this pseudo-problem that doesn't exist so we can tackle it in order to receive funding".

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government cuts to social programs, and a panel I was involved in where conference participants confronted journalists on how their community is presented in terrorism coverage.

[182] An Alberta-based outside professional in social services framed it as such: "Because it was such a hot topic with Public Safety 3 years ago, they were throwing out grants left, right, and centre on this. When you're putting that out there, people are going to take it [laughs], right? You need money and you can really kind of align it [CVE] with your mental health and other societal issues per say."

The view that CVE tackles "a pseudo-problem that doesn't exist" was not explicitly shared by other racialized and Muslim-identifying practitioners, yet several followed a similar line of instrumentalizing the paradigm as means to secure benefits to their communities. Bashar, talked about this delicate balance at the personal level, suggesting that he "exploited" his racialized identity when being solicited by CSIS, RCMP and municipal police agencies on CVE. This, Bashar indicated, gained him "access points to different areas in the criminal justice system" to learn how they were targeting and portraying Muslim communities. He continued:

> I'll be frank with you because of my identity, I think I was able to exploit that, but also be exploited. Because here you have me in meetings with CSIS, in meetings with RCMP, in meetings with [local police service] all because they're trying to understand an issue, and 'hey, this person who also fits that demographic, well let's, let's get him into all these topics.' So you know I was exploited but I also took advantage of that.

Saif described two projects he participated in with Muslim non-profit organizations where they negotiated the use of CVE-related funding from the federal government to pursue community-oriented goals. The first project sought to bring young Canadian Muslims together to promote civic engagement and strengthen identities. Saif notes that "we weren't really thinking about radicalization or 'what to do about terrorism' or anything like that". However, a potential government funder asked if they could "build [CVE] into it". His organization decided, in Saif's words, to "twist the language around" and focus on how "radicals are good for our society [in that] they promote justice […] addressing the roots of a problem and fighting for progressive social change". Saif recalls how their project approach would focus on "peaceful radicalization, 'we are going to radicalize everybody to strengthen civil society' and if people want to see that

as de-radicalization, let them think what they want". When the project concluded, Saif expressed "a sigh of relief" in that they had managed to successfully bridge the CVE component with their desired outcomes:

> I loved it. I got to meet with young Muslims in schools across the country, mentor them, and work in favour of their interests. When we wrapped of this project I breathed a sigh of relief. We kept up our agreement with the federal government to address it [radicalization] in some way, we turned it into what we wanted it to be, which was about civic engagement, and radicalizing people into civic engagement (laughter).

Saif describes how his organization drew on CVE funding for a second time in order to keep the project running. This was due to a lack of alternative means of funding and a "language" in the CVE call for proposals that appeared malleable for their interests:

> We looked around and saw there was something at Public Safety called the Community Resilience fund. [Saif's organization] was very uncomfortable with applying to it but it seemed to be the only kind of thing that we could do something national with young Muslims and something related to community building and community development. The resilience language was… ambiguous [laughter] so we thought 'ok, we can maybe work it in our favour again'.

Saif recalls being surprised that their project was accepted. "It was nothing about radicalization or preventing it or anything", he remarked, noting that it rather sought to prepare students "for the kind of dramatic societal changes that are happening on multiple fronts", such as covering economic precarity, gun violence and climate change.

In sum, racialized and Muslim-identifying practitioners tended to have distinct experiences, orientations, and outcomes in CVE, with their enrollment being typified through the phrase "if you're not at the table, you're on the menu". Interviewees discussed their initial reservations about joining CVE and their conditional, qualified participation, which led to additional self-assumed tasks and responsibilities. In some

cases, racialized and Muslim-identifying practitioners resorted to improvising within CVE to protect Muslim communities from its stigmatizing aspects as well as actively instrumentalize the paradigm to secure community benefits that they had originally been seeking outside of CVE. In this latter sense, racialized and Muslim-identifying practitioners shared similarities with my non-practitioner interview base of positively aligning their CVE work with their broader social interests.

It is noteworthy that my data found Canadian Muslims actively participating in CVE, in many cases being solicited by policing and security agencies, at the same time as a different arm of the state (e.g., the Canada Revenue Agency) was holding Muslim-led organizations to heightened levels of scrutiny under the purview of CVE, disproportionately selecting them for audit and sometimes deregistration on suspicions of "terrorism financing" and promoting 'radicalization' (Emon & Hasan, 2021). This places current Canadian Muslim civil society within an unresolved paradox dating back to the earliest stages of the CVE paradigm (as covered in chapters 2 and 3) where Muslim communities are viewed as both a source of 'radicalization' and a key partner in its prevention. Reports dating back to 2004-05 by the EU, UK, and Dutch AIVD security service had portrayed Muslim civil society in *orientalist* terms as covertly manipulating non-profit rules to spread "radical Islam" and undermine "democratic order" (e.g., AIVD, 2004; European Council, 2005). At the same time, those reports also planned to utilize the 'moderate' Muslim community in its nascent counter-radicalization efforts, which became realized in the first iteration of UK Prevent strategy in 2007. My data indicates that a tension persists based on the consensus understanding in CVE that *social cohesion* is ultimately the best antidote against 'radicalization' coupled with an

inexorable unease when the outcome of this is realized in the form of robust Muslim-oriented civic institutions.

Based on this paradox, it is unsurprising that a couple of the Muslim-identifying individuals I interviewed felt that they were still *on the menu* in CVE despite being (or perhaps because of being) *at the table*. Saif described how state authorities needed to "deconflict him" after it became apparent that conversations he was having with an RCMP community liaison officer were overheard by CSIS.[183] Yousef described how his identity as a Imam did not absolve him as a risk factor in the eyes of the state, despite his cooperation with security authorities and the success in his own CVE efforts. This became apparent when he found himself flagged as a potential catalyst for 'radicalization' amid cooperating with the RCMP and CSIS on their investigations of 'extremist travellers' associated with his mosque.[184] "I realized you're damned if you do, damned if you don't", reflected Yousef caustically. "You're working with them but they're still targeting you […] it's like, what are you doing?". Yousef pointed out the Canadain security apparatus' treatment of Muslim co-collaborators with suspicion sews distrust and "further divides the Muslim community" by creating distrust in Muslim organizations that cooperate in CVE.

The deeper implications of Canadian Muslims being both 'at the table' and 'on the menu' in CVE were drawn out by Bashar. He noted how the backside of Muslim

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[183] Saif continued: "At a certain about I told them [RCMP] 'you know every time I have a conversation with you guys, almost like, within a few days CSIS contacts me and says 'hey, do you want to meet-up, and just catch-up?'' And at a point, when it happened more than twice, or a third time, someone higher-up in the RCMP said 'we need to de-conflict him' or used some technical term and I think they went to find out 'is CSIS spying on us too?'

[184] Yousef: "I'm like, 'look all my public lectures are online. You can listen to all of them.' They didn't find anything. So law enforcement was happy at the end, or at least I thought they were".

engagement in CVE legitimizes the enhanced security state surveillance of their communities, a fact which is only bolstered by CVE's right-wing turn and the notion that security authorities must now also protect Muslim communities *from* violent extremism. The conflation of these roles was something that Bashar reported to be trying, in vain, to point out to security authorities as being problematic:

> So they have to do everything. And it's like, the same team that is going to mosques and saying, 'we're here to keep you safe', a variation of that team is also the ones surveilling them, right? And so, then we had these conversations with CSIS where they say: 'we want to do more community outreach'. I'm like, 'awesome, but what is the purpose of this outreach? Is it to actually engage with the communities? Or is it to engage with these communities to help you get sources? Not so awesome.' And they couldn't get that around their head because, well, 'our mandate is this…'. Well, 'then your mandate is not to be involved in community engagement at the end of the day, right?' Because they don't match. But it's one of those things where you will notice there's just a lot of headless chickens running around in so many different areas with no real purpose or plan.

It is clear then, as Fahad Ahmad (2020) writes, that community partnerships in CVE between the state and Muslim representatives are neither benign nor on equal power footing. Efforts toward impacting CVE positively came with the side risks of further contributing to the securitization of their communities as well as being seen as a potential risk themselves. Taking this into consideration, Muslim-identifying practitioners tended to preach patience. "I'm not cynical", remarked Yousef. "I do believe that most people [in CVE] have their hearts in the right places. Countries have agendas, and people are being pressured to do certain things." He added how he felt that "public criticism tends to get people ousted right away", preferring to opt for "gradual change" through advising CVE actors in private: "That's where the long run fight is. Being patient, speaking to people behind the scenes. Conveying my understanding, which hopefully is more logical, will win their minds over."

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Discussion and conclusion - "we're all on the same team"

> Elyanne: "What did they find out through all this prevention work through the arts? I don't know. Has it made for healthier communities? More peaceful links? I don't know that.
>
> K: It's what gets interesting about this work, it gets hard to say whether this is really counter-radicalization work or not. It seems like it could just not be about that at all.
>
> Elyanne: c'est ca!"

This chapter has focused on the *enrollment* of practitioners into the CVE cause, examining the different ways that my interviewees were able to align their own interests and goals to that of CVE's. My research found that most practitioners carried apprehensions about entering the CVE field.[185] Once in it, they tended to be sensitive to CVE's potentially negative impacts and expressed skepticism about its ability to achieve what it purports to do, i.e., successfully pre-empt or intervene in the 'radicalization' process to prevent terrorism. Nevertheless, the practitioners I interviewed found ways to enroll in the CVE cause, primarily by tying the work to bigger goals around what they want to do in the world. This meant working through CVE to fight racism and discrimination in the broader society, and promote social inclusion, such as in training and awareness sessions with human service professionals and the broader public. Practitioners conveyed a sense that "space" was needed for the public to share and work through their misled, discriminatory preconceptions of others, and that CVE was serving this end in a society where no such space exists.

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[185] Interestingly, a practitioner I interviewed with Moonshot CVE in the UK cited her worry at the time over having conveyed several reservations about CVE during the job interview, later discovering through her managers that they did not hire candidates who *didn't* express reservations.

The practices that fostered interest alignment were, in several cases, only tangentially connected to CVE, such as work toward bridging vulnerable people to appropriate social supports, and descriptions by 'outside professionals' of non-profit organizations pursuing their missions by aligning it to CVE objectives through Public Safety grants. Sometimes the practices undertaken by interviewees seemed so apart from the CVE imperative (such as in the primary prevention, awareness-building space) that practitioners reported eschewing the language around radicalization and violent extremism entirely.[186] I distinguished the reflexive, conditional, and always-negotiated enrollment of Muslim-identifying practitioners through the symbolism of the oft-communicated phrase 'if you're not at the table, you're on the menu'. Their experiences did unite with non-racialized practitioners in using their participation in CVE as a vehicle to address broader advocacy aims, however they often sought to affect these changes *inside* rather than *through* CVE. Efforts at making security authorities "uncomfortable" (Saif), checking the biases of colleagues, and involving themselves personally in CVE intervention space were all based on a sense that CVE, as well as Canada's security industry is inherently Islamophobic, that they disproportionately and unwarrantedly target Muslim and ethnic minority populations while turning a blindspot to 'right-wing extremism'. In other cases, Muslim-identifying practitioners also

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[186] Tendencies to avoid the terminology of CVE have been reported in other studies (e.g., Romaniuk 2015; Ponsot, Autixier, & Madriaza, 2018). An example from my data comes from Erica, who stated that her team avoided using the terminology around radicalization and violent extremism when conducting workshops in schools, seeing it as unnecessary or directed attention away from the broader purpose: "We refused to use the word radicalization. We were all on the same page about this, that it was just not necessary. Schools would have assumed that we only wanted to work with people from Muslim backgrounds. It was just so tied to that, so were we like 'nah', you know? We want to promote inclusion and a cohesive society".

instrumentalized, improvised, and "exploited" CVE as a means to further outside

community goals. For some, however, these gains often came at a price. These

practitioners felt that participation does not immunize themselves from scrutiny and risks

further legitimizing the presence of CVE in their communities, a fact compounded by the

field's efforts to protect racialized minorities from violent extremism on the far-right.

Despite Muslim practitioners' campaigns for authorities to take RWE more seriously, it

is worth pointing out that most were largely skeptical that CVE's move toward the far-

right would effectively make their communities safer. Bashar noted how CVE against

right-wing extremism provides an added pretext for the security state to intervene in

Muslim communities, leading to a problematic blurring of objectives between detection

of radicalization risks and protecting communities from radicalization.[187] A

spokesperson for a Muslim social services organization acknowledged that security

interventions directed at countering far-right violence have been welcomed by Muslim

communities who are victims of such violence, before questioning the viability of this

stance:

> There is an immediate gut response of like 'oh, it's not about us' and you
> breathe a sigh of relief. And when you look at the rise of hate crimes, there can
> certainly be a perspective of 'we need CVE against the right to protect
> ourselves'. But I think there's a risk for the Muslim community falling into
> perpetuating the problem that was perpetuated upon us… There's a real need to
> take a step back and say: 'Is this right? Are we really thinking about this
> problem in a way that's emblematic of our tradition, and that's going to
> contribute something?' I think what we've done in CVE hasn't been very
> effective, hasn't produced many results, and if anything, it's sent us backwards
> in many ways.

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[187] This is also highlighted in a story from 2018 on university-based Muslim Student Associations
receiving calls from RCMP and CSIS looking for information on potential cases of radicalized
students while at the same time asking for information on hate-crimes against Muslim students (Al-
Hassoun, 2018).

Returning to the concept of enrollment, many of the practices that fostered interest alignment for my interviewees were often distant and at times seemingly at cross-purposes with the CVE imperative. This raises the prospect of what scholars in the UK have described as "contested practice" at the local level of CVE, where actors subtly resist, modify or qualify their cooperation with state-developed policies (e.g., O'Toole et al, 2016; Busher & Jerome, 2020). Certainly, my data shows examples where practitioners challenge and resist aspects of their CVE mandate, including examples in Québec where actors saw their role as directly challenging the state in countering the effects of divisive laws passed such as Bill 21.

These points notwithstanding, I would instead invite what transpired in my data to be considered as *disconnected* or *conflicting practice*: rather than contesting or resisting the CVE imperative, the actions signify how vacuous and all-encompassing this imperative has become (or in some ways always has been). In Peter Romaniuk's 2015 study of the global CVE field, the author distinguished *CVE-specific* measures, which aim to "suppress violent extremism in a direct, targeted fashion", from *CVE-relevant* measures "thought to [indirectly] impact violent extremism in some way" (Romaniuk, 2015, p. 9). My data supports the dominant presence of the latter over the former in the CVE field today. This position could be attributed to the relative infancy of CVE in Canada, where programs designed to conduct CVE interventions had yet to gain consistent referrals[188] or rather to the noted obstacles I faced in gaining research access to secondary prevention spaces. However, I think that the tendency toward CVE-relevant

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[188] Bashar referred to situations in his consultations with Public Safety where the department is "assuming that intervention work is happening" yet programs funded to do so were still trying to establish themselves in communities and had no formal mechanism for referrals. He cited the OPV's Evolve Program as an example.

measures is a more prominent feature that speaks to what Romaniuk later identifies as the "elusiveness of knowledge" on the problem of 'radicalization' and 'violent extremism' (2015, p. 12). Here I adapt an earlier statement on evaluations from the UK-based practitioner Lisa to ask how can CVE take 'direct' action if there is no consensus over what underlies the problem?

It is through this frame that I initially interpreted 'CVE-relevant' events such as the CPRLV-MGEIP partnership mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Initiatives purporting to fight violent extremism through promoting "youth community projects" and "acts of kindness" seemed like speculative arrows in a field without conclusive backing science. To me, funded actors were intimating that "we don't really know how to spot or prevent radicalization" and using the breadth and ambiguity of the CVE imperative to demonstrate that they are doing something *positive* with their grants, making a connection (no matter how esoteric) to the problem of radicalization. Later I would understand how speculative CVE ventures (including others like CVE soccer leagues and fashion blogs) are a key feature of contemporary security practice which has increasingly embraced economic expertise, particularly from financial governance, as a means to act upon uncertain futures (Amoore, 2013; Massumi, 2015; Konings, 2016).[189]

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[189] Amoore draws from Foucault to state how economic rationality is founded on the "unknowability of the totality" and is "always and inescapably concerned with the unfolding of future possibilities" (2013, pp. 5-6). For Massumi, uncertainty acts as the catalyst of pre-emption – a threat both unknowable and "in-determinately in potential" – that spawns ever increasing pre-emptive actions. He later ties this to the economic logic of speculation (derivatives, credit-default swaps) in financialized capitalism (2015, pp. 103, 242). Writing specifically on financial governance, Konings pursues a similar line of thought through Foucault and Francois Ewald to view speculation as "the constitutive orientation of the modern subject" – a concern over the uncertainty of the future and compulsion to act to safeguard its future necessitates proactively speculative investments (2016, p. 271).

From the vantage point of my data, a primacy of speculative, 'CVE-relevant' over 'CVE-specific' actions hardly appeared to be a dilemma to the actors involved. The notable exception to this were a few 'traditional practitioners' in higher levels of government who struggled to justify primary prevention projects of dubious or unclear import to governing authorities. Otherwise, the wide window of activity thought to count as CVE seems to accommodate multiple competing interests, contributing to the general disposition of reflexive positivity I found the bulk of my interviewees to have about their work. For practitioners on the ground, the belief that "CVE is whatever you want it to be" (Cameron, UK)[190] promoted diverse forms of enrollment, generating room for improvisation to pursue their own social interests through the work – from 'making a difference' through CVE to protecting vulnerable communities *from* CVE. CVE's open-endedness in some cases helped facilitate the belief (whether true or not) for hires that they were continuing or rekindling a prior career path or area of field interest in jumping over to CVE (e.g., Elyanne, Micheline). For CVE organizations and their leadership, CVE's elusive core and broad range of speculative endeavours aids in recruiting 'non-traditional practitioners', i.e., social activists and racialized 'key figures', by aligning participation in CVE with equity and social justice goals. It also helps organizations promote their work in ways to attract buy-in among communities thought to be 'vulnerable' to radicalization – such as emphasizing that they counter 'hate' (implying an interest in identifying white, right-wing perpetrators) or 'social polarization' as

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[190] This interviewee did not view the concept of CVE being "whatever you want it to be" entirely positively, noting it allowed the paradigm to be abused for "peoples' own agendas" and led to "lazy thinking" and a proliferation of untested strategies, citing examples of FBI screening people for mental health needs, and a proposal in a middle eastern country to "promote motherhood" to prevent violent extremism.

opposed to 'violent extremism' (still largely associated with Islam and Muslims).[191]

CVE organizations thus too benefit from its elusiveness and have a vested interest in

avoiding its terminology. This was something that interviewees noted in the previous

chapter on being initially unwittingly recruited into CVE. Their instrumentalization of its

elusiveness was later personally impressed upon me in 2020 when I was asked to

complete a "Social Polarization Questionnaire" distributed through Concordia

University's Graduate Students Association. The questionnaire was instead constructed

as a barometer for the potential of 'radicalization' among the student populace, with

questions that measured vulnerability factors to radicalization, levels of sympathy

towards radical causes, and willingness to use violence.[192]

This leads to the takeaway that CVE enrollment entails a *blurring of distinctions*

(of roles, ends, social identities, and actors in power relations) which extends also to the

societal outcomes of the field's practices. This is evident in Muslim-identifying

practitioners' standpoint of feeling both 'at the table' and 'on the menu', and the success

of CVE entities and actors on the ground in co-opting the paradigm to serve disparate

interests. A case can also be made that *blurring distinctions* goes to the heart of CVE

practice, where CVE interventions effort to deconstruct 'back-and-white' and 'us and

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[191] The OPV has branded itself on its new website as "devoted to understanding and preventing hate-motivated violence". Previously, as of 2018, "hate" was not featured in their byline, which was rather described as being focused on preventing violent extremism and "radicalization-to-violence" (July 2018 screen capture – preventviolence.ca).

[192] The questions in the survey sought data on students' religion and belief system, whether they were born outside of Canada, types of discrimination experienced, amount of time spent on social media, and whether they support the use of violence to support a cause. This diverged from the stated objective of the survey in the covering email, written by the survey's designers, RAPS and UNESCO-PREV chair, which cites the objective to "inform prevention and intervention initiatives to value all forms of diversity and promote social equity and justice in universities." The covering email does not disclose that the *type* of "intervention" and "prevention" programs it will be informing are CVE-based and it makes no reference to terrorism, radicalization or violent extremism.

them' thinking to help clients accept a greater plurality of views ("to encourage them to see colours" – Isabella).

In a more outward-facing sense, the *blurring of distinctions* illustrates CVE's growth and overlap with other publicly defined social problems and social service practices. The borders between counter-terrorism and other types of prevention and civic engagement work are thinned to the point where it becomes unclear where CVE practice starts and ends (or as covered in the previous chapter, *who* a CVE practitioner is). Some of the problematic implications of this were drawn out by my interviewees, such as by Bashar, who noted how CVE's move toward countering right-wing extremism conflates the task of detecting potentially radicalized members of minority communities with the task of protecting them from radicalized violence, and does so in a way that facilitates an increased security-based presence in these communities. This raises additional questions on how CVE's continued expansion affects the security and social freedom of racial, cultural, sexual, and political minorities and the practice of social dissent more broadly.

It is evident from my data that CVE fosters new and unusual alliances between policing and security actors, minority community organizations, and activists working toward progressive social causes. Specifically, CVE initiatives tend to place security actors in close proximity with representatives of minority and marginalized communities (e.g., LGBTIQ, Indigenous, Black, Muslim-identifying) who have a fraught history with Canada's policing and security establishment (Razack, 2008; Dhamoon & Abu-Laban, 2009; Kinsman, 2012; Maynard, 2017). As I witnessed in my fieldwork, the CVE imperative leads to examples where racialized women and sexual minorities share public speaking stages with former neo-Nazis, and Indigenous activists give speeches on white

supremacy in Canada's institutions and the Prime Minister's "complicity in genocide" in front of high ranking members of RCMP and Public Safety.[193] In these expressions of CVE, conflicting messages become entangled: A recommendation to read the anti-colonial writings of Frantz Fanon is interspersed with the message that violent radicals need to be "rehumanized" and their motives can be reduced to "the crisis of searching for an identity". An acknowledgement of Canada's illegitimate control of First Nations land comes parcelled with the encouragement for "all actors in public, private, and civic sectors to mobilize and collaborate with as much synchronicity as possible" with state agencies to proactively address signs of 'radicalization'.[194] One way that CVE manages this dissonance in messaging[195] and its unorthodox partnerships between the security state, activists and vulnerable minorities is through a pervading sense, repeated at different times in my fieldwork that "*we're all on the same team*": I first heard this expression during a public talk by a Somali community leader to describe their relationship with police, and later it was said by a 'former' during a CVE practitioner focus group to equate the work of Public Safety and "helping communities and people". The examples imply a commonality between the actions of security agencies and general societal betterment, and the sense of shared purpose held by academics, social service professionals, activists, minority publics, and the security state in preventing incidents of

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[193] One of these members in audience, an RCMP investigator, spoke of wishing "to hide in a dark corner" during this talk.

[194] The examples in this paragraph are drawn from two events I attended. One was a conference on tackling right-wing extremism put on by CPN-PREV in Montréal in June 2019. The other a conference in Toronto on 'youth resiliency' from February 2020.

[195] It might also be said that CVE operates *through* this dissonance in messaging.

radicalized violence – an object that would seem to smooth over all other considerations.[196]

To close this chapter, it is worth reflecting on the outside implications of how CVE aides a sense of 'same-teamness' between competing forces in society, which is done in part by uniting (through reducing, amplifying, and ostracizing the potentially violent tendencies of) all status quo-challenging social and political movements. This seems to accord a position of ostensible *neutrality* to policing and national security operations vis à vis social change and conflict, while also affording it additional ground to intervene and participate in these processes. The meaning of this comes into sharper relief when reflecting on CVE's embrace of youth-led social activism, as seen at the beginning of this chapter in the example of the CPRLV-UNESCO MGEIP partnership, which sought to intervene and encourage the efforts of young 'change-makers'. The recruiting and aiding of youth in affecting social change is something being perpetuated across the CVE spectrum by large entities such as the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, who attract sponsorship from large corporations to create toolkits to guide "those interested in developing and running social good campaigns" [fig 1].[197]

It is therefore apparent that while 'non-traditional' actors on the ground level of CVE continue to steer and subvert the field toward broader social justice goals, CVE

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[196] This was an item that numerous practitioners struggled over, particularly those who held radical activist goals yet adhered to the CVE's premise that *violence is never an appropriate means to affect social change*. Saif cited "violence prevention" as a key binding point for his participation in consulting police and security authorities on CVE: "I can talk to them about a myriad of issues I have with what they're doing, but where are we going to find common ground? Well, we all believe in violence prevention. We know most of the laws that relate to violence prevention, are constitutionally, on pretty solid ground. It's in the implementation where we have some issues".

[197] On the ISD website, it states funding support for the project came from Facebook, Google, Microsoft, and Twitter, as part of their founding of the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism.

itself in involved in a similar attempt to present its work in this language while arguably orchestrating the contents and direction of social activism. Callon and Law describe enrollment occurring through "successfully redefining other actors' interests", social negotiations involving "translations, in which different claims, substances or processes are equated with one another" (1982, pp. 619-620). Callon and Law continue to suggest that through this process "what is in fact unlike is treated as if it were identical" (Ibid). It stands to consider then how CVE's attempts to orchestrate social change among activist communities and direct grievances toward "pro-social ends" might be, to use the words of Anand Giridharadas, redefining "what kinds of change are acceptable" and "the discourse we have about change"[198], pre-emptively regulating societal dissent that moves focus away from inequities and obfuscates the responsibility of powerful actors in the crises facing the world today.

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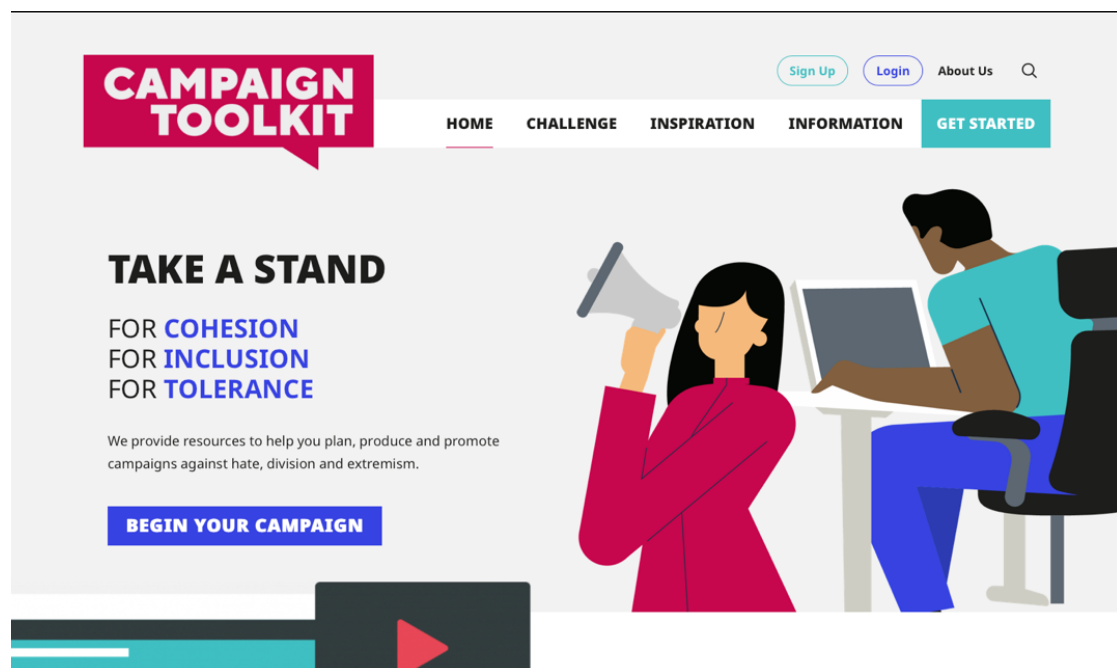
[198] Anand Giridharadas, public talk at Samara Centre for Democracy, Toronto, aired on CBC Radio *Ideas,* 27 January 2020.
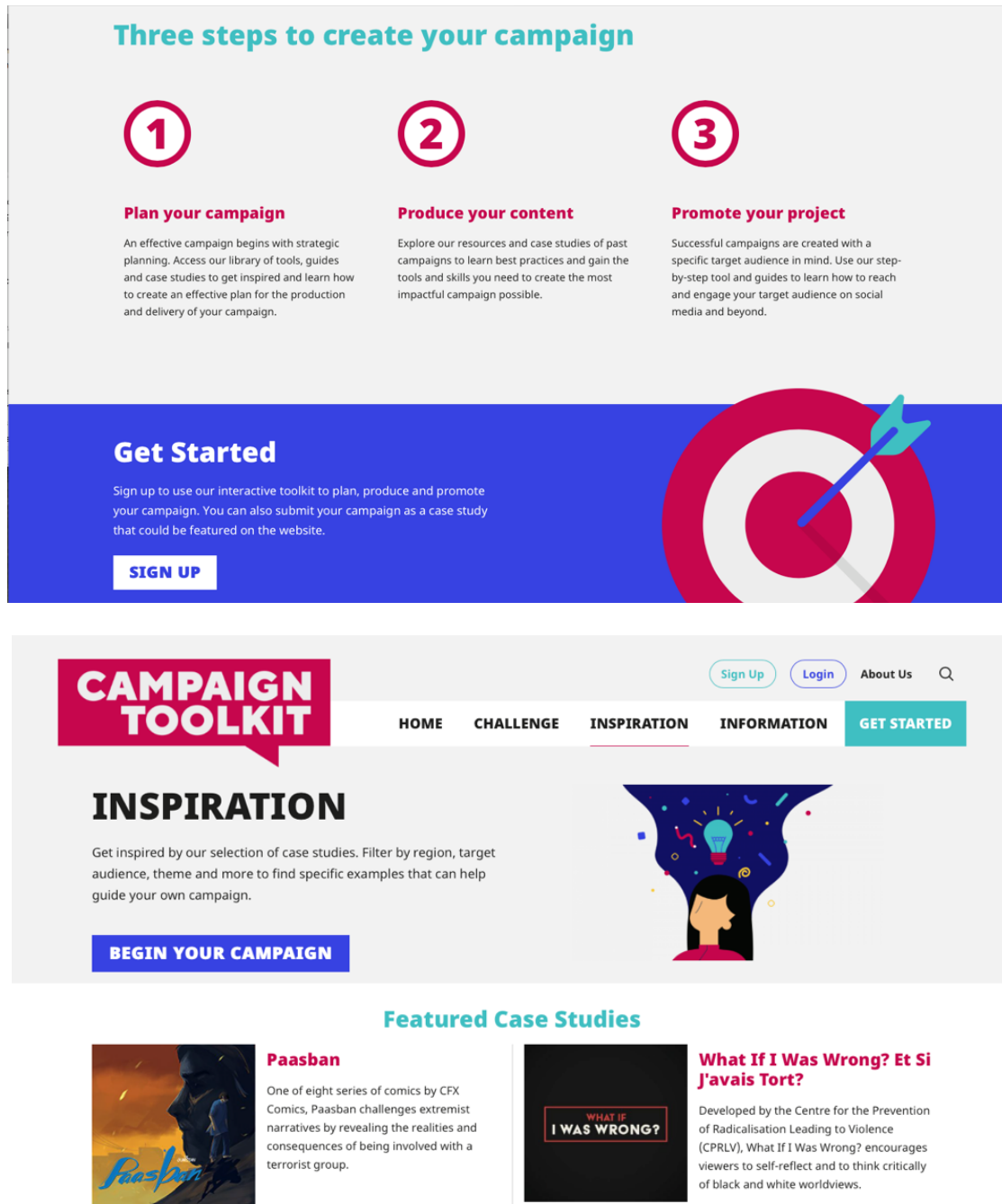
Fig. X – ISD campaign toolkit (obtained from ISD website campaigntookit.org - 12 September 2019).

Chapter 6: Conclusion – Countering violent extremism in radical times

At the beginning of my dissertation, I outlined four broad research objectives. This was (1) to determine what CVE *is* from what it is not; (2) how to understand its contemporary presence and expansion in light of sustained critique; (3) to consider the societal function and effects CVE has beyond its stated remit to prevent terrorism, and; (4) to pursue these questions ethnographically through examining *what* a CVE practitioner is, *who* does this work, and how they reflect on the meaning of it. In this conclusion chapter I reflect on what the findings of the intervening chapters offer to these questions. This will serve to highlight areas for further research.

On the <u>first</u> overarching question – *what is CVE?* – I noted at the outset the challenges associated in conceiving it as a research object. In the Introduction Prescript I surmised that CVE behaves as a *paradigm,* which has produced a *field* that behaves like a network, which its practitioners commonly refer to as a *space.* These meanings of CVE are overlayed by a moral-social *imperative* that stretches beyond the field/network of practice's confines leading to partnerships and cross-pollination with a variety of sectors, problem spaces, and other societal imperatives*.*

My research findings suggest that *what CVE is,* and how its different meanings operate, has only become more complex as the object evolves and enters new problem spaces (i.e., 'right-wing extremism', incel violence). This was highlighted in Chapter 5 when examining how practitioners enroll in CVE. Here the open-endedness of CVE was apparent, with borders between counter-terrorism and other types of prevention and civic engagement work thinned to the point where it becomes unclear where CVE practice starts and ends (or as covered in Chapter 4, *who* a CVE practitioner is). Moreover, it was

evident that CVE's intangibility became operationalized by entities and actors at various

levels, backgrounds, and motivations. Actors mobilize uncertainty over what CVE is to

recruit employees, gain community buy-in, and obtain funding from states. Meanwhile

states employ CVE to promote 'social cohesion' and shore their governing legitimacy.

This operationalization of uncertainty largely occurs parallel to the efforts of CVE to

legitimize itself as a needed field attached to a legitimate social problem (i.e.,

'radicalization' and 'violent extremism').

It is thus my position that CVE's indeterminacy, including over what is

'radicalization' and 'violent extremism', is part of the paradigm's social purchase, in that

indeterminacy facilitates take-up across societal domains. At the same time, one might

draw the conclusion from my findings that CVE has advanced in too many directions to

draw credible boundaries around it, never mind distill into a sociological object of study.

Here, my findings from Chapter 2 on CVE's 'pre-history' come into service. In that

chapter I indicate how, located in early sketches of 'radicalization' in Dutch security

correspondence and in the prisoner rehabilitation strategies attempted in Saudi Arabia

was a *template,* or *set of elementary principles* from which the otherwise variegated

contours of CVE's growth can be traced and made sense of. For instance, it was in these

antecedent schemes and proposals that the concept of a 'radicalization' process was

placed at the beginning of terrorism; prevention initiatives were directed toward pre-

emptive intervention; terrorists or would-be terrorists were envisioned in a more

'pastoral' sense (Martin 2014) as beneficiaries rather than un-reformable adversaries;

and a 'broad approach' to counter-terrorism was conceived as being a 'whole of society'

effort, warranting psycho-social care and public education and awareness to address

vulnerable individuals in populations at-large (e.g. Boucek, 2008; AIVD, 2002). This puts the statement shared in my Introduction by my practitioner informant, Warsame, in a different light, who wondered in 2019 what was "driving" CVE "to start just eating up everything else", that the "prevention space is now looking wider and wider" incorporating things that "normally would not have been considered CVE or PVE" such as "basketball" and "hockey". While it is true that developments in CVE connect to the uncertainty and intangibility at its own core, its open-ended and at times seemingly contradictory growth can be understood as an extension of these base forms from its (ostensibly) disconnected 'pre-history'. Further research into *where these inaugural forms came from* in a Foucauldian genealogical vein would likely yield greater insights into rendering more legibly *what CVE is* and the type of current, and future societal implications it possesses.

The second overarching question I presented at the outset was on understanding the meaning of CVE's contemporary presence, durability, and expansion in face of critiques. The first way that I responded was to critically interrogate the common explanation for CVE's contemporary presence in the 'orthodox' literature as being a product of *spontaneous necessity* (e.g., Crone and Harrow, 2011; Coolsaet, 2016). This suggests that CVE arose as a spontaneous and necessary response to the emergence of Islamist 'radicalization' in the West and has continued to develop to keep pace with the evolving threat. I found a similar logic present in the 'pre-history' antecedents, with research on Saudi Arabia's PRAC strategy showing that its implementers viewed its creation as primarily "ad hoc" experiments with no prior "blueprint" (Alsubaie, 2016). I problematized this depiction, which appears to be a common way for the security

establishment to explain new innovations in its practice. I show that the basic elements of CVE (mentioned above) were largely in place prior to the 'homegrown terror' events of 2004-5 in Europe, and that conscious political decisions were made to focus on the potential threat from European Muslim populations rather than documented concerns over racist and far-right violence in the 1990s. To further critique the idea of CVE as a spontaneous/necessary response to objective threats is to consider it as an exemplar of a 'performative', as opposed to 'reactionary' logic in security. In extending the practice of counter-terrorism forward to the "potential future terrorist" CVE renders it possible to take actions in the present to govern and secure "unknowable futures" (Martin, 2014, pp. 62, 75).[199] It thus permits counter-terror actions to exist in perpetuity unrelated to, for instance, the apprehension of suspected terrorists or conviction of perpetrators.

This leads to a final thought on CVE's persistence and expansion in the face of criticism, in that its importance to modern governance transcends any proven ability to prevent terrorism, or is at least decoupled from it. This is to recall a discussion from Martjn Konings on the immutability of neoliberal financial governance in the wake of the 2007-8 financial crisis. Konings gives the example of banks (which might be analogous to CVE in the world of counter-terror). The systemic importance of banks, Konings argues, "has less to do with what it knows or sees than with what it is known or seen as", deriving its authority from the ability to be recognized "as a reliable point of orientation in an uncertain world" (2016, pp. 276, 274). In Konings' language, CVE and

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[199] Heath-Kelly argues for 'radicalization' to be seen as "performative security knowledge" as "a discourse that actually produces (discursively) the threats it claims to identify for the performance of governance, rather than as reacting to the existence of such risks" (2013, p. 408). Massumi, in discussing preemption as an operative logic, relevantly states that: "Preemption does not idly pose these problems concerning the nature of time, perception, action, and decision: it operationalizes them. It weaponizes them. Paradoxically […] in a way that in productive (2015, p. vii).

its entities and practices persist, like banks do, as this "stable point of reference" which processes "of ongoing mutual anticipation endogenously come to revolve around" (p. 273). In CVE, this evokes how news media outlets regularly sought members of my practitioner interview base to serve as expert sources in stories on terrorism and 'radicalization'. It matters less whether CVE entities (or banks for that matter) 'get it right' rather than that they *exist* in the way Konings described and *continue to speculate* in societies increasingly preoccupied with security in an unknowable future.[200] In this rendering, the *actual* goal of CVE, as stated by Moonshot CVE to "disturb and ultimately end violent extremism", rather serves as a 'regulatory horizon' that "forever recedes as we approach and so forever demands a renewed commitment to speculation" (Konings, 2016, p. 271).[201]

Considering CVE's presence and expansion from this perspective leads to the third guiding question for my research, on *what social function* CVE serves. In addressing this question I sought to draw out some implicit arguments on CVE having an ulterior social function that I found present in the existing critical scholarship. I noted the sense in the literature and from my interviews that CVE serves to give the *impression* that terrorism is preventable. This led to questions over how CVE serves as a lever to restore public confidence in governments. Further work might consider how the state-

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[200] This links back to discussion in Chapter 5 on the speculative, at times seemingly aimless quality of some primary prevention activities I witnessed. There were other examples in my data of leaders in CVE, including state funders, who criticized CVE projects for "not taking risks" (Karl). Elsewhere the benefit was cited of CVE organizations outside of the state, like the social enterprise Moonshot CVE, for it being easier to 'take risks' and innovate in their strategies.

[201] Konings observes this regulatory horizon in capitalism in the enigma of 'market neutrality' ("out of reach as a matter of principal") and in the risk-based logic of neoliberal financial governance, which contains the motivating (yet unattainable) imaginary "that we may move through risk beyond risk — that, if we play our cards right, we may provide our lives with neutral, non-speculative foundations" (2016, pp. 271-272).

civil society partnerships of CVE in Canada and elsewhere also promote the impression of a broader 'ruling class' working together to make the society safer. In the realm of policing and security, it has been studied by Monaghan (2022) and others how racialized depictions of Islam in counter-terror become instrumentalized to bolster the symbolic legitimacy of these agencies, and my findings suggest CVE's contribution to this end. However, studies have yet to consider ways that the threat of far-right violence may also be utilized in this vein, i.e., to bolster support for securitarian politics and refurbish the "increasingly fragile and contested" image of the policing and security apparatus (Monaghan, 2022, p. 22). This calls for study examining the contemporary political representation of 'right-wing extremist' threats as well as critical reinterpretation of the complicated dynamics, past and present, between state security forces and radical right-wing movements such as in Canada. I also noted critics who argue that CVE has serves as a technology for fostering 'non-threatening' Muslim subjectivities. Based on my observation of CVE's adaptation of existing practices toward 'multiple types' of 'violent extremism' it stands to question to what degree CVE also works to create 'non-threatening' subjects writ large, in service of preserving status-quo power imbalances through the *raison* of keeping publics safe.

It is thus noted in my Introduction how the intuition I developed during my fieldwork – on CVE's function to maintain state hegemony and status-quo power relations – began to appear as an incontrovertible fact as my fieldwork progressed. The status of this 'thesis' is nonetheless compromised due to the persistent uncertainty over what CVE *is,* never mind whether it behaves similarly or not across different political and social contexts. These are areas for further study. What my research found however,

were examples in different locations and periods of time where CVE was pressed to promote national values and identity and to secure the legitimacy of statecraft. This I alluded to in Chapter 3 in the context of European continental integration circa-2005. Here, I found CVE to act as a vehicle for promoting the EU governance project, in summoning the idea of a common European community whose existence is threatened (not by the widely decried deleterious impacts of the EU governance project but by the prospect of 'homegrown Islamist extremism') and thus must unite in pan-European counter-radicalization efforts. In Chapter 2, I argued that the language around CVE's stated aims has softened since its 'pre-history' in Saudi Arabia where its role in preserving state hegemony was overt. Instead, vague and more nuanced messages around 'public safety', 'social cohesion' or the aforementioned promotion of national values tends to dominate. Yet my research calls attention toward to remarkable similarity of discourses and practices in early 'soft' counter-terrorism efforts such as Saudi Arabia's PRAC and current Western CVE. This compels asking *to what degree are the intentions to engineer support for state legitimacy absent or rather obfuscated in CVE today?* The possibility of considering CVE as a wider tool to address a present 'crisis of state hegemony' (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke, & Roberts, 1978) becomes heightened as CVE moves past its initial focus on countering 'Islamist' non-state violence toward multiple forms of 'ideological' and 'religious' violent extremism, as stated in the new language adopted by Canada's security establishment (Crosby, 2021).

The <u>final</u> overarching question in my study pertained to the ground-level experiences of the practitioners I encountered in CVE, which served an important methodological means of addressing the above questions. CVE practitioners reported "finding themselves" in this field rather than having made purposive efforts, a finding

which spoke to the rapid expansion of the CVE imperative (if not the paradigm and field of practice) across Canadian society. CVE practitioners were mainly aware of the criticisms levelled against their work and possessed many of their own. Yet, my research found that they 'enrolled' in the CVE purpose due to the diversity of tasks available to them in CVE, which facilitated the translation of practitioners' outside interests into CVE objectives. This was aided in no small part by the paradigm's shift toward countering 'right-wing extremism', which afforded practitioners previously wary of CVE's undue focus on Islam and Muslims opportunities to address racism, discrimination, and indeed, Islamophobia in public-facing work activities. The sense that CVE's open-endedness provided diverse conditions for enrollment led to positive attitudes by practitioners towards their jobs, however there were evident downsides. Muslim-identifying practitioners also found purpose in CVE through representing their communities in a security industry that was hostile toward their communities. This sentiment was typified by the noted phrase expressed among Muslim-identifying practitioners that "if you're not at the table, you're on the menu". Ultimately, these practitioners reported examples of feeling both 'at the table' and 'on the menu' in CVE. This calls for further critical attention on the paradigm's expansion toward countering forms of right-wing extremism, which while ostensibly done for the benefit of Muslim communities as a safeguard measure, adds pretext for their furthered securitization – a point raised by Muslim-identifying CVE practitioners who were advising the security state on these matters.

The turn in CVE towards RWE and the multi-agency composition its programs led to instances where radical social activists and advocates from minority and

marginalized communities were ostensibly placed in a position of cooperation with officials from CSIS, Public Safety, RCMP and municipal police forces. This was particularly true as CVE engaged in an increasing amount of anti-hate issues. These instances from my fieldwork call for further study on how CVE projects potentially *securitize social justice,* i.e., ways that social justice and anti-oppression movements become securitized through CVE, as well as how policing and security establishments co-opt social justice rhetoric through CVE to appeal as progressive, modern and tolerant. Commenters have reflected upon how the pre-text of 'counter-radicalization' has justified a "pervasive system of surveillance" against Muslim communities in the West (Monaghan & Molnar, 2016). In the context of CVE expanding mandate, this system of surveillance is arguably being extended to incorporate other perceived risks to the norms and values of the liberal social order at a time when consensus over its continuation appears to be on increasingly narrow turf.

This raises a final point near the end of Chapter 5 where I consider how CVE 'blurs' distinctions, fostering a sense that its actors from divergent backgrounds, identities, aims and orientations are 'on the same team' in their shared commitment to preventing violence. This, as I noted, raises the prospect (requiring further study) that CVE works to '*change* change' (à la Anand Giridharadas) conflating efforts toward fundamental social change with superficial types of 'pro-social' activism that campaigns from Montréal's CPRLV and the ISD in the UK seek to promote. This suggests an additional pre-emptive function in CVE of regulating societal dissent to move focus away from structural inequities. The sense that participants in CVE across society are 'on the same team' finally speaks to the need to critically interrogate meanings of

violence within the CVE paradigm, an important endeavour that has not been adequately addressed in my study. It is enough to cite Walter Benjamin's conception of the "founding violence" that underwrites the legality of the nation-state (Benjamin, 1978) and the relative absence of understanding the multiplicitious ways that violence persists in our societies, a blindspot in CVE and within the concept of terrorism writ large.

There are two final 'missing pieces' in my study that garner further reflection. Despite my own teaching and graduate study background in Canadian and Indigenous studies, there has been little analysis of Canadian society in this dissertation on *CVE in Canada.* This includes questions on how CVE resonates with the specific contours of Canadian society and its history of social relations, and how CVE is rendered differentially (in its administration, composition, social impacts and function). These questions remain to be pursued. Stanley, Guru & Coppock (2017) raised how measures under the Prevent strategy in the UK resonate with colonial era politics. It stands to be considered how CVE's social function takes different shapes in societies such as Canada where the process of settler colonization remains an enduring structure. Finally, this dissertation has dealt little with one of CVE's most prominent buzzwords, that being 'resilience', envisioned as a key ingredient in the prevention of 'radicalization' and 'violent extremism'. Further work must look at what the deployment of 'resilience' portends for what is at stake politically in the growing dominance of 'resilience thinking' (Chandler, Grove, & Wakefield, 2020; Halperin, 2020) as a means of experimental 'ecological' state governance models to control uncertain futures.

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