NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

THE CLOUDY CRYSTAL BALL: DETECTING AND DISRUPTING HOMEGROWN VIOLENT EXTREMISM

by

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March 2018

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			*Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188*

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington, DC 20503.

1. AGENCY USE ONLY (*Leave blank*)	2. REPORT DATE March 2018	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's thesis	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE THE CLOUDY CRYSTAL BALL: DETECTING AND DISRUPTING HOMEGROWN VIOLENT EXTREMISM		5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) James Adam Pendley			
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000		8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A		10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	

11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government. IRB number ____N/A____.

12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.	12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE

13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)

Homegrown violent extremism (HVE) is unpredictable, but not completely absent of warning signs. This thesis evaluates how potential homegrown extremists can be identified before an attack occurs, and the use of preventive detention is considered for preempting violent acts. An evaluation of recent HVE incidents—including the Boston Marathon bombing, Charleston church shooting, San Bernardino shooting, Orlando Nightclub massacre, and Fort Lauderdale airport attack—reveals threat investigation gaps. Without a crystal ball, it is unlikely investigators could have predicted violence in these cases, but opportunities for improvement were found in hindsight. This thesis argues multidisciplinary teams (MDTs) and threat assessment tools can contribute to better outcomes in the future.

     Research in this thesis indicates MDTs using risk assessment instruments can add value to programs that attempt to identify individuals who are more likely to commit extremism-inspired violence, but these techniques lack the precision necessary to justify preventive detention. This thesis introduces and recommends the use of a trusted contact model to visualize how stakeholders in an MDT framework interact. This thesis also recommends a threat assessment matrix to prioritize intervention efforts. The threat assessment matrix aligns a person's radical belief system with evidence of violent behavior to manage potential risks.

14. SUBJECT TERMS homegrown violent extremism, radicalization, terrorism, preventive detention, multidisciplinary teams, threat assessment, risk management, counterterrorism, countering violent extremism, law enforcement, mental health, social work, community partnership	15. NUMBER OF PAGES 107
	16. PRICE CODE

17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU

NSN 7540-01-280-5500

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 2-89)
Prescribed by ANSI Std. 239-18

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**THE CLOUDY CRYSTAL BALL: DETECTING AND DISRUPTING
HOMEGROWN VIOLENT EXTREMISM**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES
(HOMELAND SECURITY AND DEFENSE)**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
March 2018**

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ABSTRACT

Homegrown violent extremism (HVE) is unpredictable, but not completely absent of warning signs. This thesis evaluates how potential homegrown extremists can be identified before an attack occurs, and the use of preventive detention is considered for preempting violent acts. An evaluation of recent HVE incidents—including the Boston Marathon bombing, Charleston church shooting, San Bernardino shooting, Orlando Nightclub massacre, and Fort Lauderdale airport attack—reveals threat investigation gaps. Without a crystal ball, it is unlikely investigators could have predicted violence in these cases, but opportunities for improvement were found in hindsight. This thesis argues multidisciplinary teams (MDTs) and threat assessment tools can contribute to better outcomes in the future.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CVE	countering violent extremism
DO	dangerous offender
ERG	Extremist Risk Guide
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Association
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
HCR	Historical Clinical Risk
HVE	homegrown violent extremism
ICCT	International Centre for Counter-Terrorism
JTTF	joint terrorism task force
LAPD	Los Angeles Police Department
LSI-R	Level of Service Inventory-Revised
MDT	multidisciplinary team
NCTC	National Counterterrorism Center
NSCITF	National Security Critical Issues Task Force
PCL-R	Psychopathy Checklist-Revised
RENEW	Recognizing Extremist Network Early Warnings
SAVRY	Structured Assessment of Violence Risk in Youth
SPJ	structured professional judgment
START	Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism
SVP	sexually violent predator
SVR	Sexual Violence Risk
TCM	trusted contact model
USSS	United States Secret Service
VERA	Violent Extremism Risk Assessment
WAVR	Workplace Assessment of Violence Risk
WORDE	World Organization for Resource Development and Education

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Some observers are critical that recent attacks related to homegrown violent extremism (HVE) in the United States have occurred because investigators had information about would-be perpetrators but missed warning signs of imminent violence. Others rightfully contend that absent a crystal ball, some violent attacks will occur despite the best efforts of law enforcement investigators. One of the worst massacres in modern American history occurred on June 12, 2016, when Omar Mateen entered an Orlando, Florida, nightclub and gunned down over 100 patrons, 49 of whom were killed. The Orlando incident has been cited as example of how warning signs are missed. The Federal Bureau of Investigation interviewed Mateen three times for potential ties to Islamic extremism.[1] This thesis evaluates the Orlando massacre and a sampling of similar incidents—the Boston Marathon bombing, Charleston church shooting, San Bernardino shooting, and Fort Lauderdale airport attack—when authorities knew of the perpetrator prior to the attack.

In recent years, considerable research has been conducted to understand how individual radicalization occurs and what techniques can be used to counter violent extremism from individuals or small groups rather than larger transnational terrorist organizations.[2] Relevant background information related to this thesis is included in a literature review comprised of four topics: preventive detention and enemy combatants; extremism and radicalized violence in the United States; countering violent extremism; and civil commitment.

Law enforcement must find probable cause for a crime before encroaching on the freedoms of a person who may or may not transition from radical rhetoric into violent action. This study considers how other stakeholders in the community, like experts in mental health, should be engaged as part of a multidisciplinary effort to detour individuals

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[1] Del Quentin Wilber, "The FBI Investigated the Orlando Mass Shooter for 10 Months—and Found Nothing. Here's Why," *Los Angeles Times*, July 14, 2016, http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-fbi-investigation-mateen-20160712-snap-story.html.

[2] Charles Kurzman, *Terrorism Cases Involving Muslim-Americans* (Chapel Hill, NC: Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security, 2015), http://kurzman.unc.edu/muslim-american-terrorism.

who are on a path toward HVE. With limited options available to law enforcement if no crime has occurred and the possibility that other community resources can help, this thesis sought to answer three important questions: How can potential homegrown violent extremists be more effectively identified before an attack takes place? Can the predictive framework of multidisciplinary team (MDT) evaluations be used to identify individuals who are more likely to commit extremism-inspired violence? Once these individuals are identified, should preventive civil detention be used to mandate participation in countering violent extremism (CVE) programs?

In order to answer these questions, the framework for MDTs in other programs related to criminal recidivism were evaluated to apply MDTs in a similar way to the evaluation of HVE threats. A series of generalized risk factors that aid the structured professional judgment (SPJ) of experts on an MDT were applied retroactively to the sampling of recent HVE cases selected for this thesis. Results from this study provided some qualitative support for the use of MDT threat evaluations to assess individual risk for HVE, but empirical evidence from other sources on the reliability of risk assessment instruments diminished support for the use of preventive detention in CVE.

Even though information related to how authorities investigated the sampling of cases in this thesis was limited because the full range of sources and methods that were used in real time are not readily available, this thesis does identify gaps in the HVE investigative process. Poor information sharing between government agencies, citizens failing to report suspicious activity, sole reliance on criminal investigation resources, not engaging other experts, and the lack of two-way communication between government officials and social service providers in the community are all argued to be weaknesses that can be ameliorated by engaging an MDT threat assessment process.

To visualize how a full range of stakeholders should interact in CVE efforts, this thesis introduces and recommends the use of a trusted contact model (TCM). The TCM is set on a wide base representing frequently used community resources. The TCM also illustrates less frequently applied levels of mental health treatment, local law enforcement intervention, and federal prosecution. All of these levels are connected by trust and

knowledge among the stakeholders involved combined with reciprocal referrals that can be made between the levels.

This thesis also introduces and recommends the use of a threat assessment matrix to prioritize intervention efforts. This matrix aligns a person's radical belief system with evidence of violent behavior to create a clear visual of which CVE techniques should be engaged at a particular point in the radicalization process. Circumstances related to a person's beliefs and behaviors change gradually over time, or suddenly after a triggering event. Since all community and government resources for CVE programs are limited, it is important to engage the right resource at the right time to improve efficiency and efficacy.

The threat assessment matrix is designed to provide a visual reminder that certain beliefs are protected by freedom of speech but may be changed through respectful dialog. Beliefs held by an individual can become radical in comparison to the rest of the community. Once radical beliefs are expressed, it is important for the community to proactively intervene in the individual's life to dissuade violent action. The threat assessment matrix is a visual reminder for the role government plays in the prosecution of criminal violence that occurs independently of a radical belief system and the vital role government plays in the disruption of terrorism borne out of a radical belief system that is combined with violent behavior.

The sampling of cases in this thesis was limited to the United States, but did include different types of radicalized violence. Wider data sets that include domestic and international incidents of HVE should be used in future research. Considerable research is also needed to evaluate the actual steps used in a de-radicalization process once an at-risk person is identified. Despite these limitations, MDT threat assessment models used in other circumstances and retrospective analysis of recent HVE incidents did provide qualitative support for the use of MDT threat assessments in the United States.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am honored to complete this thesis as part of an incredible academic program at the Naval Postgraduate School's Center for Homeland Defense and Security (CHDS). It has been fifteen years since the tragic events on September 11, 2001, and also fifteen years of work at CHDS to develop better leaders who respond to terrorism and other emergencies. I want to thank everyone who contributes to the success of such an important program. I also want to thank everyone in our cohort for some great memories.

No student completes this program alone; family and loved ones make sacrifices as well. I am grateful for the understanding of my parents, Miriam and Fred, for many hours that I spent doing course work instead of other family activities. I am especially thankful that my mother insisted that I take a typing class in the sixth grade instead of woodshop. In typing, I learned a skill that I have used my entire life—no more so than the thousands of words I have typed in this thesis. I am truly thankful for the support and encouragement from my husband, Ryan. The extra time he dedicated to taking care of our home gave me peace of mind to travel and focus on school. I also want to thank my high school mentor, Marilyn Olin, for imparting to me great foundational skills I learned in competitive speech and debate that certainly made CHDS challenges less daunting.

I am humbled and grateful for the support I have received from Director Ron Lendvay and Sheriff Mike Williams at the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office. I also have great appreciation for peers, bosses, and those working in my division who have all pulled extra weight when I have been absent or spent extra time on school. This thesis may have my name on it, but everyone I admire and appreciate is represented in these pages.

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I. INTRODUCTION

There is growing concern that individuals in the United States can become radicalized and pose a nearly indiscernible threat not realized until after a violent attack occurs.[1] Intelligence analysts, law enforcement officers, and public officials are obligated to establish protocols to detect warning signs of violent extremism or potential acts of terror. Once such a threat is identified, the ideal response is action that disrupts the threat before anyone is hurt. Federal, state, and local law enforcement efforts have certainly succeeded in stopping many attacks but too often news headlines are riddled with incidents that were not prevented: the Boston marathon bombing; the Charleston church shooting; the San Bernardino shooting; the Orlando nightclub massacre; and the Fort Lauderdale Airport attack. Without the benefit of a crystal ball, it is exceedingly difficult for law enforcement investigators to accurately differentiate individuals who are spouting angry rhetoric from those who are on the verge of extremism-inspired violence.

Once an attack has taken place, agencies responsible for investigating the crime have an incredible array of resources to establish a timeline, motive, and evidence for the prosecution of any surviving perpetrators. Criminal investigations often uncover warning signs that may have been overlooked. Moreover, in hindsight, some opportunities for intervention were not seized in time because the activity of the would-be perpetrators did not rise to a level of probable cause for a crime. Missed opportunities in the pre-crime space create a need for additional tools that detect and disrupt violent extremism before it occurs.

Existing criminal laws designed to combat terrorism and violent extremism are wide and varied. Many of these laws can establish probable cause for arresting terror suspects who exhibit evidence of conspiracy to commit an illegal act, provide material support to terrorism, or mobilize to commit an act of violence.[2] In addition to arrest and prosecution, response to terrorism and homegrown violent extremism (HVE) requires a

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[1] Kiran M. Sarma, "Risk Assessment and the Prevention of Radicalization from Nonviolence into Terrorism," *American Psychologist* 72, no. 3 (2017): 278, http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/amp0000121.

[2] David Cole, "Out of the Shadows: Preventive Detention, Suspected Terrorists, and War," *California Law Review* 97, no. 3 (2009): 695, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20677893.

method to evaluate the threat level of non-criminal but potentially dangerous individuals who become known to authorities prior to an attack.[3] Once identified, these individuals may be directed toward a growing list of national, state, and local resources that are engaged in countering violent extremism (CVE).

A.   PROBLEM STATEMENT

To effectively supplement the criminal justice system, pre-crime intervention tools must include methods to distinguish imminent threats from less likely threats in order to deploy limited CVE resources more efficiently. Engaging the right resource at the right time increases the likelihood that a CVE program can successfully disrupt an individual's dangerous transition from radical rhetoric to violent action.[4] In the United States, there is a high degree of liberty and free speech so it is especially difficult to distinguish protected freedom to think and speak radical ideals from imminent threats of violence. Multidisciplinary teams conducting individual threat assessments using empirically defined risk factors may be particularly useful for distinguishing a potential perpetrator's angry rhetoric from imminent violent action.

For years, the United States Secret Service (USSS) has applied research supporting the use of threat assessments in the pre-crime space. Given the frequent number of potential threats against protected persons and government facilities, the USSS embraces the use of threat assessments. A recent USSS National Threat Assessment Center report states:

> In the 1990s, the U.S. Secret Service pioneered the field of threat assessment. After conducting research on the targeting of public officials and public figures, we established a model for investigating threat cases. This model offered law enforcement and others with public safety concerns a systematic investigative approach to identify individuals who exhibit threatening, inappropriate, or concerning behavior, gather information to assess whether they pose a risk of harm, and identify the appropriate private and community resources to manage that risk. In January 2000, the U.S.

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[3] W. Payne Marks, "Integration of Behavioral Threat Management into Fusion Center Operations to Prevent Mass or Targeted Violence," (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2016), 35, https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=798875.

[4] John D. Cohen, "The Next Generation of Government CVE Strategies at Home: Expanding Opportunities for Intervention," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 668, no. 1 (2016): 124, https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716216669933.

Secret Service published a guide for law enforcement that outlined the basic elements of a threat assessment program and a threat assessment investigation, as well as considerations for assessing and managing persons of concern.[5]

Other assessment processes used in mental health and prison release programs have mechanisms to detain individuals who are deemed a threat to society. The assessment process used by the USSS and preventive detention frameworks from other types of programs may both contribute to a roadmap for policy issues related to CVE.

Any program that detains someone for reasons other than probable cause of a crime raises profound civil liberty concerns. However, the public expects officials to do something about a person who is on an obvious path to violent extremism even though the obvious indications are often viewed with the benefit of hindsight. Exploring a multidisciplinary team framework found in existing threat assessment models may provide a starting point for predictive evaluations that identify radicalized individuals who are most likely to commit acts of violence.

B.   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How can potential homegrown violent extremists be more effectively identified before an attack takes place? Can the predictive framework of multidisciplinary team evaluations be used to identify individuals who are more likely to commit extremism-inspired violence? Once these individuals are identified, should preventive civil detention be used to mandate participation in CVE programs?

These research questions formed the basis of a hypothesis for this thesis. Threat assessment processes are generally more effective than traditional law enforcement investigations in the pre-crime space, and multidisciplinary teams provide the best framework for effective risk assessments. Moreover, other applications of law allow for the detention of individuals deemed dangerous to society. The threat posed by HVE indicates a need for multidisciplinary threat assessments to identify individuals who pose

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[5] National Threat Assessment Center, *Attacks on Federal Government 2001–2013: Threat Assessment Considerations* (Washington, DC: U.S. Secret Service, 2015), 1, https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=788758.

a threat of violent attack. Once a dangerous person is identified, the government must engage methods for case management to prevent an attack, up to and including civil detention for mandated participation in a CVE program.

C.   PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

A common theme in terrorism studies is that those who commit violent attacks are rational actors driven by ideological purpose rather than mental illness; however, recent research suggests that up to 40 percent of lone wolf attackers have identifiable psychological problems.[6] Some terrorism studies rely on group dynamics theory while dismissing individual psychology to the point that many have argued violence committed by an insane person differs from terrorism.[7] Histories of childhood abuse, untreated substance abuse, and psychosocial problems are frequently reported in those identified as violent extremists, but violent extremism is not simply a mental health issue.[8] Nonetheless, some causal factors and many correlated factors relate mental health treatment to the vexing problem of HVE. Even with research evincing individual psychology as an important factor in HVE, only a few law enforcement agencies and community programs in the United States are connecting at-risk individuals with mental health professionals trained in threat assessments.[9]

A threat assessment or risk assessment seeks to review all relevant information about a person to determine whether he or she will participate in violent behavior in the near future.[10] The assessment of future risk is an emerging topic in the discussion of terrorism and violent extremism, but it is not new to the criminal justice system in general.

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[6] Stevan M. Weine et al., "Violent Extremism, Community-Based Violence Prevention, and Mental Health Professionals," *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 205, no. 1 (2017): 55, http://dx.doi.org/10.1097/NMD.0000000000000634.

[7] Emily Corner and Paul Gill, "A False Dichotomy? Mental Illness and Lone-Actor Terrorism," *Law and Human Behavior* 39, no. 1 (2015): 23, http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/lhb0000102.

[8] Weine et al., "Violent Extremism, Community-Based Violence Prevention, and Mental Health Professionals," 55.

[9] Weine et al., 55.

[10] Sarma, "Risk Assessment and the Prevention of Radicalization from Nonviolence into Terrorism," 278.

According to researchers from Carleton University, "Risk assessment has become a ubiquitous practice within the criminal justice system, especially during criminal proceedings such as preventative detention hearings. Sexually violent predator (SVP) statutes and dangerous offender (DO) legislation both allow for the indeterminate detention of offenders based on the perceived inevitability of violent or sexual offending."[11] Statutes that mandate criminal risk assessments typically require the use of a multidisciplinary team (MDT) comprising mental health professionals, criminal justice officials, victim advocates, and other public safety officers. The MDT must evaluate behavioral abnormalities that indicate a need for supervision and treatment.[12] Some CVE programs in the United States are starting to embrace the MDT concept to assess at-risk individuals for placement into community programs that offer support and follow-up.[13]

The purpose of the study in this thesis was to better understand known factors that can contribute to and detract from the reliability of MDT evaluations in the assessment of individual risk for HVE. This study also evaluated the use of preventive detention for mental health evaluation and continued detention after release from prison for certain offenses. Parallels between the use of an MDT threat assessment model in other situations and the potential use of an MDT threat assessment model in CVE programs were evaluated as a guide for prospective policy options.

D.   RESEARCH DESIGN

To facilitate this study, a sample of recent violent incidents in the United States was reviewed to identify potential gaps in the assessment process used to evaluate threat information known before the attacks. Recommendations of this study were formed by exploring what clues might have been seen if a full range of threat assessment tools had

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[11] Julie Blais and Adelle E. Forth, "Prosecution-Retained Versus Court-Appointed Experts: Comparing and Contrasting Risk Assessments Reports in Preventative Detention Hearings," *Law and Human Behavior* 38, no. 6 (2014): 531, http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/lhb0000082.

[12] Rahn Kennedy Bailey, "The Civil Commitment of Sexually Violent Predators: A Unique Texas Approach," *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law Online* 30, no. 4 (2002): 526, https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Rahn_Bailey/publication/10939928.

[13] Weine et al., "Violent Extremism, Community-Based Violence Prevention, and Mental Health Professionals," 55.

been applied to the individuals responsible for the Boston Marathon bombing, Charleston church shooting, San Bernardino shooting, Orlando nightclub massacre, and Fort Lauderdale airport attack.

For this study, more than one type of ideologically motivated attack was selected to ensure risk assessment criteria were applied in a meaningful way across different types of HVE. In the cases selected, the perpetrators were known or should have been known to authorities for suspicious behavior prior to the attack, but the pre-attack investigation lacked sufficient probable cause for arrest or prosecution. No other intervention was attempted or intervention failed which contributed to the public's sense that more should have been done. To limit the scope of this study, only cases that occurred in the United States were included.

This study applied the methods used by MDTs to evaluate individual risk of violence, supplemented by general risk factors that were distilled from several risk assessment instruments that have been established for years in other fields of study and are now emerging for use in CVE. Results from this study provided some qualitative support for the use of MDT threat evaluations to assess individual risk for HVE, but empirical evidence from other sources on the reliability of risk assessment instruments diminished support for the use of preventive detention in CVE.

In current literature, the path to radicalization or violent extremism is often described as wide and unpredictable. The MDT review process used in several existing programs purports to tackle unpredictable behavior despite the difficulties in doing so. If it is possible to find reliable mechanisms to predict future violent or criminal behavior in current MDT models, those responsible for CVE programming may be able to use some of the same mechanisms to better assess the threat level of potential homegrown violent extremists, especially those identified in the pre-crime space.

E.   LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years considerable research has been conducted to understand how individual radicalization occurs and what techniques can be used to counter violent extremism from individuals or small groups rather than larger transnational terrorist

organizations.[14] Much of the relevant research related to this thesis comprises four topics: preventive detention and enemy combatants, extremism and radicalized violence in the United States, countering violent extremism, and civil commitment.

1.   Preventive Detention and Enemy Combatants

Preventive detention is the confinement of an individual to stop an act of violence or to avert a crime that has not yet occurred.[15] On its face, preventive detention runs afoul of the common understanding of criminal justice in the United States. Legal scholars say prevention of crime and violence is achieved through deterrence and the threat of punishment, which is the just desert for a crime that has already been committed.[16] But several legally acceptable types of detention also support the preventive needs of the criminal justice system, military engagements and civil commitment. Examples include pre-trial detention, immigration holds for deportation, mental health evaluation and hospitalization, quarantine and isolation for public health threats, civil commitment for sexually violent predators, and the exercise of certain war powers.[17]

According to legal analysts Philip Heymann and Juliette Kayyem, due process protections for captives of war or other hostilities are minimal on the battlefield, stronger in other areas away from the battle, and especially stringent for any person captured inside the United States.[18] David Cole, a professor of law at Georgetown University, agrees, "The laws of war have long authorized the detention of those fighting for the enemy in a military conflict," although individual status determinations in a court or tribunal are usually

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[14] Charles Kurzman, *Terrorism Cases Involving Muslim-Americans* (Chapel Hill, NC: Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security, 2015), http://kurzman.unc.edu/muslim-american-terrorism.

[15] Paul S. Appelbaum, "The New Preventive Detention: Psychiatry's Problematic Responsibility for the Control of Violence," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 145, no. 77 (1988): 785, https://doi.org/10.1176/ajp.145.7.779.

[16] Tung Yin, "Ending the War on Terrorism One Terrorist at a Time: A Noncriminal Detention Model for Holding and Releasing Guantanamo Bay Detainees" *Harvard Journal of Law & Public Policy* 29 (2005): 165, http://www.law.harvard.edu/students/orgs/jlpp/Vol29_No1_Yin.pdf.

[17] Stephanie Cooper Blum, *The Necessary Evil of Preventive Detention in the War on Terror: A Plan for a More Moderate and Sustainable Solution* (New York: Cambria Press, 2008), 87.

[18] Philip B. Heymann and Juliette N. Kayyem, *Protecting Liberty in an Age of Terror* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2005), 42.

required.[19] It is also important to note war powers are normally reserved for actual armed conflict, not rhetorical wars such as the "war on poverty" or the "war on drugs."[20]

In the aftermath of 9/11, the use of executive power related to combatants was stretched beyond its limits. The military-scale attacks on U.S. soil provided a rationale for the broad power and authority claimed by President Bush to fight the "war on terrorism."[21] In response to this war, President Bush and his staff stitched together a variety of powers through executive orders and created the term "enemy combatant," which was meaningless as a matter of law at the time.[22] Cynthia Brown and other writers critical of the Bush Administration analyzed the detention of nearly 1,200 citizens and non-citizens (mostly Arabs and Muslims) who were held incommunicado without criminal charges in response to 9/11.[23] Brown acknowledges that the arrests made within days of 9/11 were influenced by the chaos and fear surrounding the scope of these unprecedented terrorist attacks, but she asserts doing so through overreach of presidential war powers is dangerous.

Legal scholar Benjamin Wittes offers a more tempered view. He says the court has already balanced the application of war powers "between the claims of liberty and the claims of military necessity."[24] Matthew Waxman echoes Wittes' tempered view when he asserts the consequences of military force that kills innocents in the collateral damage of

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[19] Cole, "Out of the Shadows," 701.

[20] Yin, "Ending the War on Terrorism One Terrorist at a Time," 191.

[21] Heymann and Kayyem, *Protecting Liberty in an Age of Terror*, 2.

[22] Blum, *The Necessary Evil of Preventive Detention in the War on Terror*, 28. The term "enemy combatant" was used in a 1942 case regarding the status of captured German spies but the Supreme Court was simply deciding which court should hear the case not the meaning of the term.

[23] Cynthia Brown, ed., *Lost Liberties: Ashcroft and the Assault on Personal Freedom* (New York: The New Press, 2003). In this volume of essays, Aryeh Neier says "within hours of the collapse of the World Trade Center and the destruction of a portion of the Pentagon, most of us knew that civil liberties would be under attack," 1. David Cole laments the loss of "basic freedoms" for many people during this time, 32. Kate Martin cautions "secret arbitrary detentions—as many dictatorships have learned—can only make us more vulnerable," 90. Kenneth Roth admonishes, "the Bush Administration's tendency to ignore human rights in fighting terrorism is not only disturbing on its own terms, it is dangerously counterproductive," 238.

[24] Benjamin Wittes, "Judicial Baby-Splitting," in *Terrorism, the Laws of War, and the Constitution*, ed. Peter Berkowitz (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press Publication, 2005), 116. Wittes reviewed two Supreme Court cases: In *Hamdi v. Rumsfeld*, the court ruled the government had the power to detain enemy combatants but they must be afforded due process and in *Rasul v. Bush*, the court decided jurisdiction for detainees held in Guantanamo Bay.

war cannot be reversed but an innocent who is detained in error can be released.[25] Moreover, public support for protective measures after 9/11 has been strong even at the expense of some civil liberties. In a set of surveys immediately following 9/11, respondents indicated a high level of support for the indefinite detention of non-citizens who were somehow guilty by association with the terrorists. However, within just a few years that support started to wane.[26] Darren Davis, who led the survey research, reasons that the public started to realize it is possible for expansive preventive detention laws borne out of war powers to be used against citizens and innocents, not just terrorists.[27]

2. Extremism and Radicalized Violence in the United States

The topic of extremism and radicalized violence has become a prolific subject of literature in terrorism studies and in the application of criminal and civil law.[28] Frequent news stories depict individuals who are determined to kill Americans based on religious ideology, but the homegrown threat of violence from other types of extremism must be considered as well.[29] Potential motivations for extremist violence vary, and researchers have ascribed different reasons for radicalization.

Katarzyna Jasko and others posit an individual's need for recognition or "quest for significance" as a motivating factor to commit radicalized violence.[30] Peter Bergen, on the other hand, investigates cases of radicalization in the United States and blames the

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[25] Matthew C. Waxman, "Detention as Targeting: Standards of Certainty and Detention of Suspected Terrorists," *Columbia Law Review* 108 (October 2008): 1395, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40041788.

[26] Darren W. Davis, *Negative Liberty: Public Opinion and the Terrorist Attacks on America* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2007), 118.

[27] Davis, *Negative Liberty*, 119.

[28] Judith Tinnes, "Bibliography: Homegrown Terrorism and Radicalisation," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9, no. 6 (2015), http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/viewFile/476/935. This bibliography lists over 500 sources related to homegrown terrorism and radicalization.

[29] William Parkin et al., *Threats of Violent Islamist and Far-right Extremism: What Does the Research Say?* (Washington, DC: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, 2017), http://www.start.umd.edu/news/threats-violent-islamist-and-far-right-extremism-what-does-research-say.

[30] Katarzyna Jasko, Gary LaFree, and Arie Kruglanski, "Quest for Significance and Violent Extremism: The Case of Domestic Radicalization," *Political Psychology* 38, no. 5 (2017): 816, https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12376.

anonymous and pervasive influence of the Internet.[31] RAND analyst Brian Jenkins points out there is no single personality type for violent extremist nor is there a single pathway toward radicalization, and he found evidence that some individuals were drawn into a plot simply by a happenstance meeting or introduction.[32] No matter the method of influence, researchers agree that individual radicalization in the United States has caused law enforcement to transition from crime-solving models to terrorism prevention.[33] The nature of today's threat requires a preventive approach in domestic intelligence.[34]

The Internet is replete with angry rhetoric, but for reasons that are not fully understood some of these angry individuals go on to commit violence while many others do not.[35] Terrorism analyst Peter Neumann asserts the dichotomy between violent rhetoric and violent action results from the separation of cognitive and behavioral radicalization.[36] This distinction is important because considerable research has focused only on cognitive radicalization and the idea that the cognitively radicalized will also become behaviorally violent is not that clear.[37] Neumann emphasizes the importance of recognizing that most terror suspects are not dedicated ideologues and many potential suspects do not fully embrace the history, purpose, or cognitive reasoning that supports an adopted cause.[38] Stated plainly by Brian Jenkins, "It is possible to be dumb and dangerous."[39]

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[31] Peter L Bergen, *United States of Jihad: Investigating America's Homegrown Terrorists* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2016), 262.

[32] Brian Michael Jenkins, *Would-be Warriors: Incidents of Jihadist Terrorist Radicalization in the United States Since September 11, 2001,* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2010), 9.

[33] Bergen, *United States of Jihad*, 262.

[34] Jenkins, *Would-be Warriors,* 9.

[35] Jasko, "Quest for Significance," 816. Jasko and colleagues mention examples such as the Oslo, Norway camp shooter Anders Brevik, the Boston Marathon bombers, and Omar Mateen from the Pulse (Orlando, FL) massacre as notable examples of individuals who found significance in their actions, but their path to violence is still not fully explained using common behavioral models.

[36] Peter R. Neumann, "The Trouble With Radicalization," *International Affairs* 89 (2013): 873, https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2346.12049.

[37] Neumann, "The Trouble With Radicalization," 873.

[38] Neumann, "The Trouble With Radicalization," 882.

[39] Jenkins, *Would-be Warriors*, 6.

3. Countering Violent Extremism

After the Boston Marathon bombing, several authorities focused attention on how to interrupt the terrorist development cycle.[40] Some research focused on the foreign fighter effect—citizens leaving their home country to join a terrorist group in another country—but experts in the United States have seen relatively few U.S. citizens travelling to join the fight.[41] A bigger concern in the United States seems to be HVE, and a number of CVE programs were started or updated after the Boston Marathon attack.[42] Joumana Silyan-Saba and Alejandro Beutel, members of the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), explain:

> At its core, countering violent extremism, or CVE, is an approach to preventing ideologically motivated violence utilizing policies and practices that go *beyond* surveilling, arresting, and prosecuting potential suspects of violent extremism. As a result, both the "toolset" and the range of actors is expanded to include social services, education, faith-based institutions, mental health, and others operating in the social domain to create positive alternatives for individuals and families.[43]

Clearly, some researchers believe that it is possible to intervene against homegrown extremism if potential responses include mental health, social services, and community-based programs.

4. Civil Commitment

Civil commitment authority derived from local or state law typically involves confining individuals on the basis of some level of dangerousness coupled with the person's diminished capacity or a mental defect. The legal authority to detain dangerous

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[40] Matthew Levitt, ed., *From the Boston Marathon to the Islamic State: Countering Violent Extremism* (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2015), 4, http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/from-the-boston-marathon-to-the-islamic-state-countering-violent-extremism.

[41] Brian Michael Jenkins, *Stray Dogs and Virtual Armies: Radicalization and Recruitment to Jihadist Terrorism in the United States Since 9/11,* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2011), 1.

[42] Levitt, *From the Boston Marathon to the Islamic State*, 5.

[43] Joumana Silyan-Saba and Alejandro Beutel, *CVE Field Principles for Local Government Agencies* (Washington, DC: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, 2016), http://www.start.umd.edu/news/cve-field-principles-local-government-agencies.

persons is popular among the public and politicians.[44] However, according to David Cole the Supreme Court "has struck down preventive-detention laws that are triggered by proof of dangerousness alone [and] as a Constitutional matter, preventive detention should be tolerated only in those rare circumstances where dangerous behavior cannot be addressed through the criminal justice system."[45] The most common form of preventive detention is the involuntary commitment of the mentally ill for immediate treatment to prevent harm to self or others.

Psychiatry professionals Dinah Miller, Annette Hanson, and Pete Earley writing in the book *Committed: The Battle over Involuntary Psychiatric Care* summarize local law enforcement's role in evaluating the mentally ill:

> The police are often the starting point for involuntary psychiatric treatments. If any person, either with or without a psychiatric problem, is violent or threatening violence, the police may be called. Police officers who arrive at such a scene have a number of choices. They can assess the situation, help the individual to calm down, and then leave the scene. If a crime has been committed, they can arrest the individual and take him or her to jail. Finally, if police officers believe that a person has a mental illness and is dangerous…they can take that person [for a] psychiatric evaluation. The person in question does not have to have committed a crime to be subject to an [evaluation]. The police officer, who may well have had no training in mental health issues, needs to believe that the person is both mentally ill and represents a danger to himself or others.[46]

This type of law enforcement intervention dates back to the 1960s and its use at the local level is common and readily supported by many—but not without controversy.[47]

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[44] Stephen J. Morse, "Blame and Danger: An Essay on Preventive Detention," *Boston University Law Review* 76 (1996): 115, deposited at Penn Law Faculty Scholarship Repository, http://scholarship.law.upenn.edu/faculty_scholarship/798.

[45] Cole, "Out of the Shadows," 698.

[46] Dinah Miller, Annette Hanson, and Pete Earley, *Committed: The Battle Over Involuntary Psychiatric Care* (Maryland: JHU Press, 2016), loc. 1461 of 5572, Kindle.

[47] James A. Holstein, *Court-ordered Insanity: Interpretive Practice and Involuntary Commitment* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, Inc., 1993), 3–4.

What is emerging in the literature on the subject of mental illness commitments is how this process can be applied or modified to confront the growing concerns about HVE.[48] Another civil commitment scheme involves the confinement of sexual predators who can be held almost indefinitely because they are deemed dangerous to society based on loosely defined mental abnormalities that at least one legal scholar admonishes against adopting for use in the "war on terror."[49]

5.   Summary

The preferred model for criminal justice in the United States is arrest and punishment for a crime already committed. In limited circumstances, it is permissible and necessary to detain a person for preventive purposes. Preventive detention is objectionable to many, but within acceptable boundaries for others. Detaining suspects known for supporting terrorism is often within acceptable boundaries. Recent studies are starting to examine other types of extremism and radicalized violence. There is no common pathway to violent extremism, which makes CVE more complex. Another common form of preventive detention worth considering is civil detention based on perceived dangerousness combined with a mental defect, but some caution against using this mechanism in the war on terror. Nonetheless, there is space in current HVE/CVE fields of study for a rigorous review of detection and intervention methods.

This thesis reviews current methods and opportunities for improvement in the threat assessment process used to evaluate individual risk for HVE. Chapter II examines how HVE is investigated by law enforcement in the United States and how a sample of high profile violent attacks reveals gaps in the investigation process. In Chapter III, the use of multidisciplinary teams and risk assessment tools are reviewed as a method for evaluating individuals who may pose an imminent threat. Chapter IV describes how a

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[48] John D. Milby, "Preempting Mass Murder: Improving Law Enforcement Risk Assessments of Persons with Mental Illness," (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2015); Miller, *Committed*. Milby and Miller both present research on the use of mental health threat assessments to prevent mass shootings and critique the idea of forcing psychiatric treatment to prevent mass murders.

[49] Eric S. Janus, *Failure to Protect: America's Sexual Predator Laws and the Rise of the Preventive State*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 2006), 95. Janus lambasts the idea of poorly constructed sexual predator laws being used as a roadmap in "the push for radical prevention to combat terrorism."

multidisciplinary team process using validated risk assessment tools can be applied in the field to investigate potential HVE cases in the future and Chapter V provides discussion and recommendations yielded from this study.

II.   INVESTIGATING THE THREAT OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM

The fight against homegrown violent extremism (HVE) differs from other types of counterterrorism. The well-coordinated attack on the United States by a foreign terrorist organization on 9/11 transformed the prevention of terrorism from a national concern in the year 2000 to *the* national concern after 2001.[50] Over the next 15 years, national counterterrorism strategy changed from being solely focused on large al-Qaeda type organizations that were weakened after the response to 9/11 and started to incorporate serious concerns about HVE. High ranking U.S. officials started alerting to less sophisticated attacks and the evolving threat of homegrown extremism.[51]

Despite a shift in focus, the United States has been slow to incorporate the unique nature of violent extremism into a coherent countering violent extremism (CVE) strategy. A special report prepared by the National Security Critical Issues Task Force (NSCITF), published by Georgetown University in October 2016, attributes part of the problem to a lack of agreeable definitions for CVE and failure to distinguish CVE from other types of counterterrorism as primary issues.[52] The report suggests:

> Another central challenge is the fact that CVE activities aim to alter the nearly unknowable in dissimilar groups and individuals. At its core, violent extremism is the beliefs, feelings, and behaviors that individuals or groups use to justify violence to achieve political goals. While behaviors are observable, it is intensely difficult to identify beliefs or feelings that will cause future violent behavior. Further, violent radicalization occurs in the extremes of the political spectrum, and includes both secular and religious movements…the myriad challenges associated with recognizing a violent

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[50] Charles Kurzman, Ahsan Kamal, and Hajar Yazdiha, "Ideology and Threat Assessment: Law Enforcement Evaluation of Muslim and Right-Wing Extremism," *Socius* 3 (2017): 2, https://doi.org/10.1177/2378023117704771.

[51] Kurzman, "Ideology and Threat Assessment," 2.

[52] Jonathan Challgren et al., *Countering Violent Extremism: Applying the Public Health Model* (Washington, DC: Georgetown Security Studies Review, 2016), 5, http://georgetownsecuritystudiesreview.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/NSCITF-Report-on-Countering-Violent-Extremism.pdf.

extremist make CVE activities challenging to calibrate, concentrate, and prioritize.[53]

One distinction in the definition of violent extremism provided in the NSCITF report that is echoed in other studies is that extremist violence is perpetrated to achieve political goals.

Political motive differentiates extremist violence from other types of criminal violence and mass shootings. But it is also important to recognize that hate or revenge against a particular group may be considered politically motivated and fall within the definition of violent extremism.[54] In the analysis of HVE and CVE in this thesis, many terms overlap and blend into a common idea that radicalization is a process by which a person's political ideas or strongly held beliefs become extreme in comparison to other members in society. A person may then use violence to further a radical belief. Radical belief systems are not unique to one type of ideology, and the radicalization process can differ from person to person. Moreover, the process can occur methodically over time in some individuals or rapidly among others.[55]

This chapter examines the current process used by law enforcement and other government agencies to investigate and interrupt violent extremism. In exploring this process, law enforcement investigations into HVE are compared to other types of criminal violence. A debate between two subject matter experts concerning FBI investigations is used to illustrate how HVE investigations are supported by some and criticized by others.

The bulk of this chapter is a review of some recent cases to understand what was known about potential attackers at the time and how investigators were criticized for not doing more to prevent a violent incident. After looking at the small sampling of cases, this chapter concludes with a description of gaps identified in the investigative process that may

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[53] Challgren, *Countering Violent Extremism*.

[54] Jason-Leigh Striegher, "Violent-extremism: An Examination of a Definitional Dilemma" (paper presented at The Proceedings of the 8th Australian Security and Intelligence Conference, Perth, Western Australia, November 2015), http://ro.ecu.edu.au/asi/47/.

[55] Peter R. Neumann, *Preventing Violent Radicalization in America* (Washington, DC: Bipartisan Policy Center, 2011), 16, http://bipartisanpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/default/files/NSPG.pdf.

be improved through the use of multidisciplinary threat assessment teams that are discussed in the next chapter.

A.   LAW ENFORCEMENT INVESTIGATIONS OF HVE

Federal, state, and local law enforcement officials are already in the business of detecting and responding to violent extremism because they are engaged in preventing and investigating violent crime. For example, the United States is plagued by gun violence related to gang and criminal activity. This type of violence is particularly difficult to predict. Police departments work hard to avert new cases of gun violence through strong community policing and then by quickly investigating crimes that do occur to bring criminals to justice, but police rarely get an opportunity to intervene before the crime happens because warning signs of criminal violence are seldom broadcast by the perpetrator in advance. Politically motivated violent extremists on the other hand have been known to emit signals that foreshadow violence.

Violent extremism, like any crime, will never be completely eliminated but not for lack of trying. In the United States, the Department of Homeland Security maintains a CVE strategy in the Office of Community Partnerships. The United States also has an extensive system of fusion centers and a network of Joint Terrorism Task Forces (JTTF) coordinated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). In 2013 alone, the FBI reported that it had prevented nearly 150 shootings and violent attacks.[56] Only a portion of the mass shootings prevented was related to violent extremism, but the efforts of the FBI's Behavioral Analysis Unit were rightfully praised nonetheless. Additionally, state and local police agencies have a bevy of training material available to recognize the signs of homegrown extremism along with guidance for community partnerships to assist in the reporting and management of suspicious activity to reduce radicalization to violence.[57]

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[56] "FBI: We've Prevented 148 Shootings, Attacks this Year," CBS News, December 16, 2013, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/fbi-weve-prevented-148-shootings-attacks-this-year/.

[57] "The Role of Community Policing in Homeland Security and Preventing Radicalization to Violence," International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), accessed October 14, 2017, http://www.theiacp.org/CounteringViolentExtremism. The IACP maintains "a clearinghouse of resources for law enforcement agencies related to countering radicalization to violence and the use of community policing strategies to do so."

Despite the best efforts of law enforcement, some observers believe more could be done. Contributors to the *New York Times* recently debated for and against changes to the FBI's threat assessment process. Paul Rosenzweig started the discussion with an acknowledgement that "much of what law enforcement is doing already is working. Numbers vary and are dependent on definitions, but something on the order of 90 terrorist incidents have occurred in the United States since 9/11—and fewer than 15 of them have been successful…the vast majority were foiled by law enforcement before the terrorists came close to causing injury."[58] Rosenzweig continued that despite the FBI's success record in most cases, some preliminary investigations are hampered by a strict six-month time limit on investigations that do not generate enough evidence of a crime. He believes this limit is not consistent with the way today's radical extremists mature into violence:

> We need to change our investigative rules to accommodate the new reality, which if it can be characterized, mostly involves the long-term process of slow domestic radicalization followed by a relatively quick ramp-up from dissatisfaction to violent action. This suggests that we need to revisit the F.B.I.'s domestic investigation guidelines. They are drafted, in large part, to reflect public concern with F.B.I. abuse and overreaching — and as such they put significant limits on F.B.I. activity. But the limits imposed no longer match the reality of the need.[59]

Rosenzweig's observation is a valid one, but allowing more time for an investigation is only part of the answer. If one repeatedly uses the same tools for a task that remains unfinished, more time will not help.

As a counterpoint to Rosenzweig's argument, Faiza Patel expressed concern that open-ended investigations will not do much to prevent violence but will keep thousands of Americans under surveillance in contrast to U.S. Constitutional freedoms:

> Keeping files open…will only further burden a system that is already under pressure from too much information, most of it irrelevant…In a recent two-year period, the F.B.I. opened 82,325 assessments, of which roughly 4 percent justified further investigation. Only a very few resulted in prosecutions (fortunately, terrorism remains rare in the United States,

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58 Paul Rosenzweig, "Allow Early Investigations to be More Open-Ended," *New York Times*, September 22, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2016/09/22/can-the-fbi-do-more-to-investigate-suspected-extremists-3.

59 Paul Rosenzweig, "Allow Early Investigations to be More Open-Ended."

accounting for a few dozen out of 14,000 murders per year). Nor should thousands of Americans be kept indefinitely under government watch when they are not suspected of wrongdoing, particularly based on vague notions of "extremism." The First Amendment protects all speech because the founders understood how easy it is subvert democracy by branding dissenting voices as unacceptable.[60]

Patel goes on to argue, "There is no profile of someone who becomes a terrorist or checklist of indicators. Things that seem relevant after someone has committed an act of violence — e.g., anger over government policies or increasing religiosity — are simply not uncommon."[61] Patel's assumption that FBI investigations must lead to criminal charges overlooks community partnerships that steer certain non-criminal persons of concern away from radicalization, and checklists for indicators of violence have been studied extensively for use in assessing terrorism and HVE.[62]

B. LESSONS LEARNED FROM A SAMPLING OF PREVIOUS INCIDENTS

Generally speaking, organizations benefit from reviewing the process used to investigate a previous incident to make improvements and implement lessons learned to achieve better outcomes in the future. In particular, law enforcement agencies frequently use after action reviews to identify opportunities for improvement.[63] To that end and for the purpose of this thesis, it was important to review a small sampling of cases in which an attack was not prevented. The purpose of this review was to identify the information gathering process that was used to assess the potential threat of the individual perpetrators, not the decision that was made with that information. In each of these cases, there was window of opportunity between some known information about a potential threat from a

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[60] Faiza Patel, "More Surveillance Doesn't Mean Greater Safety," *New York Times*, September 22, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2016/09/22/can-the-fbi-do-more-to-investigate-suspected-extremists-3.

[61] Patel, "More Surveillance Doesn't Mean Greater Safety."

[62] Marks, "Integration of Behavioral Threat Management into Fusion Center Operations to Prevent Mass or Targeted Violence;" Milby, "Preempting Mass Murder." In addition to the research found in this thesis, recent thesis work from graduates of the Center for Homeland Defense and Security at the Naval Postgraduate School also details the role of assessment checklists to evaluate potential threats of violence.

[63] Melissa Nussbaum, "Assessing Resilience: How Plans, Strategies, and After Action Reports Can Improve Our Understanding of Organizational Preparedness," (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2016). https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=796507.

suspect and the attack itself when decisions were made to estimate the imminent threat or risk of violence.

1.   Boston Marathon Bombing

On April 10, 2014, the Inspectors General for the Intelligence Community, Central Intelligence Agency, Department of Justice, and Department of Homeland Security released an unclassified summary of a 168-page report on the sharing of intelligence information concerning Tamerlan Tsarnaev and his mother, Zubeidat.[64] Tamerlan and his brother Dzhokhar Tsarnaev were the primary suspects in the April 15, 2013, bombing that killed three people and injured hundreds more at the finish line of the Boston Marathon. Tamerlan was killed in the subsequent police response and Dzhokhar is currently on death row in a federal prison.

The summary of the Boston Marathon investigation compiled from information available to the intelligence community in the decade before the bombing is one of the most comprehensive such reports available for an HVE attack. The report focuses on the chronology of events that created usable intelligence information, how that information was shared, and some key recommendations for improvement.[65] Between 2002 and 2003, the entire Tsarnaev family immigrated to the United States from Kyrgyzstan. Within a few years, parents Anzor and Zubeidat, brothers Tamerlan and Dzhokhar and sisters Bella and Ailina all became Lawful Permanent Residents of the United States. In March 2011, Tamerlan and Zubeidat came to the attention of the FBI based on information received from Russian intelligence.[66]

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[64] Office of Inspector General, *Unclassified Summary of Information Handling and Sharing Prior to the April 15, 2013 Boston Marathon Bombings*, (Washington, DC: Department of Homeland Security, 2014), 3, https://www.oig.dhs.gov/assets/Mgmt/2014/OIG_Bos_Marathon_Bom_Rev_Apr14.pdf.

[65] Office of Inspector General, *Unclassified Summary of Information Handling and Sharing Prior to the April 15, 2013 Boston Marathon Bombings*, 1.

[66] Office of Inspector General, *Unclassified Summary of Information Handling and Sharing Prior to the April 15, 2013 Boston Marathon Bombings*.

Using the Russian tip information, an FBI special agent from the Boston Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) started looking into Tamerlan's activities. He spoke with some of Tamerlan's acquaintances and checked several government databases that could reveal links to other cases. He asked a Border Patrol agent assigned to the same JTTF to enter Tamerlan into a travel and immigration information-sharing platform. The FBI agent also observed Tamerlan's residence and other locations for suspicious activity. But the investigative summary goes on to question why the agent assigned to the case did not contact local law enforcement or check the mosque that Tamerlan attended.[67] Moreover, the agent did not speak with Tamerlan's wife, his former girlfriend, or his friends and associates. The FBI closed the assessment on June 24, 2011 without making any connection between Tamerlan and terrorism. Correspondence between the FBI Boston office and the legal attaché in Russia continued but did not generate any new information.[68]

In September 2011, a nearly identical tip from Russia was provided to the CIA. Subsequently, the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) reviewed Tamerlan's case again but still did not find any direct links to terrorism; nonetheless the NCTC added Tamerlan's information to several government watch-lists.[69] Tamerlan traveled to and from Russia in 2012 and although his name was highlighted during his entry back into the United States, the original case agent was not notified. FBI officials interviewed for the report could not agree if Tamerlan's travel should have created more concerns and the original case agent said he would not have done anything more even if he had been informed about Tamerlan's travel.[70]

The unclassified summary of information sharing goes into greater detail than described here, but ultimately the panel of inspectors did not find any cause for widespread

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[67] Office of Inspector General, *Unclassified Summary of Information Handling and Sharing Prior to the April 15, 2013 Boston Marathon Bombings*, 8.

[68] Office of Inspector General, *Unclassified Summary of Information Handling and Sharing Prior to the April 15, 2013 Boston Marathon Bombings*, 3.

[69] Office of Inspector General, *Unclassified Summary of Information Handling and Sharing Prior to the April 15, 2013 Boston Marathon Bombings*, 1.

[70] Office of Inspector General, *Unclassified Summary of Information Handling and Sharing Prior to the April 15, 2013 Boston Marathon Bombings*, 15.

changes to the policies and procedures in place for the federal agencies reviewed. Even though there was no need for sweeping changes, the Inspector General for the intelligence community made two recommendations. First, the agencies involved should ensure JTTF personnel have a clear understanding of when to update interagency information systems and second, the FBI should "consider sharing threat information with state and local partners more proactively and uniformly."[71]

From this review of the way intelligence information was processed in the Tsarnaev cases it is important to note that the FBI's reliance on one case agent, with oversight of a supervisor, may not have been enough. Even if multiple investigators had the opportunity to review details about Tamerlan, there is no indication in the record that other types of stakeholders or experts from any other discipline had the opportunity to weigh in on the threat posed by Tamerlan.

2.   Charleston Church Shooting

One summer evening in June 2015, a small group from the membership of the Emanuel African Methodist Church in Charleston, South Carolina, had gathered for bible study and prayer. Dylann Roof, a 21-year-old Caucasian male, entered the church and spent some time speaking with members of the group before pulling a gun and shooting nine of them to death. Multiple sources describe Dylann Roof as isolated and agitated about race relations in the United States. Roof kept an online presence among groups that advocated white supremacy and hatred toward African Americans. Even though a formal report similar to the Boston Marathon Bombing is not currently available in the Roof case, it was possible for journalists to piece together a short profile of Roof from interviews and open source information.

Writers for the *New York Times* compiled a report on Dylann Roof through a series of conversations with Roof's acquaintances and an analysis of public records available

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[71] Office of Inspector General, *Unclassified Summary of Information Handling and Sharing Prior to the April 15, 2013 Boston Marathon Bombings*, 25.

about him at the time.[72] The article details Roof's Facebook profile which contained numerous white supremacy symbols and emblems. The writers say even though he may not have formally joined any of these groups, acquaintances noticed that a once shy Roof started to make more comments about committing violent attacks against black people. One of Roof's friends became concerned enough that he took a handgun away from Roof, but returned it later. Friends dismissed many of Roof's racist threats as nonsense but they admitted to reporters that maybe they could have done something to prevent the incident.

Roof had minor brushes with the law according to court records that were reviewed in the *New York Times* piece.[73] Once, he was stopped at a local shopping mall for asking employees weird questions while he was dressed in all black clothing and he was later charged with trespassing for returning to the same mall after being warned to stay away in the first incident. Roof quit school after the ninth grade according to school records reviewed by the reporters. Friends recall after Roof dropped out of school his bizarre behavior occurred more frequently and he also moved from place to place, sometimes living out of his car.[74]

One of the primary takeaways from the *New York Times* report is the number of people who were aware of warning signs from Roof before the attack took place. Roof's friend was even arrested at a later date because an investigation revealed that the friend lied to investigators about very specific conversations he had with Roof about his plans to attack a black church in order to start a race war.[75] Law enforcement officials knew very little about Roof prior to the attack and by most accounts those who did know about Roof's behavior did very little to warn anyone.

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[72] Frances Robles, Jason Horowitz, and Shaila Dewan, "Dylann Roof, Suspect in Charleston Shooting, Flew the Flags of White Power," *New York Times*, June 18, 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/19/us/on-facebook-dylann-roof-charleston-suspect-wears-symbols-of-white-supremacy.html.

[73] Robles, "Dylann Roof, Suspect in Charleston Shooting, Flew the Flags of White Power."

[74] Robles, "Dylann Roof, Suspect in Charleston Shooting, Flew the Flags of White Power."

[75] Chris Dixon and Kevin Sack, "A Friend Lied About Dylann Roof's Massacre Plan. Now He'll Go to Prison," *New York Times*, March 21, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/21/us/joey-meek-dylann-roof-charleston-church-shooting.html.

3. San Bernardino Shooting

On Wednesday, December 2, 2015, married couple Syed Farook and Tashfeen Malik shot and killed fourteen people during a workplace holiday party at the Inland Regional Medical Center in San Bernardino, CA. The police response to the incident was swift and both suspects were killed during a gunfight a few hours after the attack.

Using a compilation of open source information and FBI Director James Comey's testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee, the *New York Times* published a story on how Syed Farook and Tashfeen Malik might have been radicalized years before the shooting.[76] According to writers of the article, Farook began talking with a friend about an attack as early as 2012. Farook and Tashfeen Malik, were also discussing jihad and martyrdom online in 2013 before she came to the United States to marry Farook. Discoveries about their online activity caused some to question how thoroughly Malik was vetted for a Visa to travel from Pakistan to the United States a year before the attack.[77]

Investigators also found that Farook had contact with other people in the California area who had been investigated for ties to terrorism in recent years, according to information detailed in the *New York Times*.[78] These people were not involved in the shooting, but those interviewed in the article believe contact with known radicals indicates Farook was seeking out likeminded individuals. The article revealed at about the same time of the shooting itself, Malik professed support for the Islamic State. In the timeline of events, the reporters found the link between the couple's path to violence and Islamic extremism started to grow late in their planning process. Some additional information needed to understand the couple's radicalization process remained locked in their electronic devices because of security features that authorities struggled to bypass.[79]

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[76] Michael S. Schmidt and Salman Masood, "San Bernardino Couple Spoke of Attacks in 2013, F.B.I. Says," *New York Times*, December 9, 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/10/us/san-bernardino-massacre-fbi.html.

[77] Schmidt, "San Bernardino Couple Spoke of Attacks in 2013, F.B.I. Says."

[78] Schmidt, "San Bernardino Couple Spoke of Attacks in 2013, F.B.I. Says."

[79] Schmidt, "San Bernardino Couple Spoke of Attacks in 2013, F.B.I. Says."

In subsequent reporting, the *Washington Post* says FBI Director Comey clarified what immigration officials and investigators were able to see on social media at the time Malik entered the country.[80] Comey reportedly said the electronic messages sent by the couple that exhibited their commitment to Jihad were made privately and were not visible in a public forum. Furthermore, Comey insisted without the benefit of a sanctioned investigation the FBI is not in a position to monitor private messages sent to and from U.S. persons.

Farook and Malik did not broadcast warning signs of HVE in a format that was visible to officials. The behavior of the couple that was visible in the years leading up to the attack was no different than many other Americans who use private messaging and have international ties. Immigration officials were definitely involved in processing Malik's entry into the United States, but barring some intrusive examination of her personal communications it is unlikely they would have found any warning signs. Even if a review of private social media had been warranted, the same technology challenges authorities faced in reviewing Farook's devices after the attack would have likely impeded a deeper look into Malik's personal communications as well.

4.   Orlando Nightclub Massacre

One of the worst massacres in modern American history occurred on June 12, 2016, when Omar Mateen entered an Orlando, Florida, nightclub and gunned down over 100 patrons, 49 of whom were killed. Critics of FBI domestic terrorism threat investigations often point to the Orlando incident as a glaring example of how warning signs are missed. The FBI had investigated Mateen prior to the attack; in fact, the FBI interviewed Mateen three times for potential ties to Islamic extremism. Much of the investigation into Mateen remains stored in files that have not been made publically available, but several senior FBI officials spoke on condition of anonymity with reporter Del Wilber for a *Los Angeles Times*

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[80] Adam Goldman and Mark Berman, "FBI: San Bernardino Attackers Didn't Show Public Support for Jihad on Social Media," *Washington Post*, December 16, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2015/12/16/fbi-san-bernardino-attackers-didnt-show-public-support-for-jihad-on-social-media.

investigative report.[81] According to Wilber's article, the FBI investigation started in May 2013 while Mateen was working as a security guard in a Florida county courthouse and his co-workers complained that Mateen made troubling statements about terrorist groups Al Qaeda and Hezbollah, including his own desire to die as a martyr.

During Wilber's interviews, an agent from the FBI and a Sheriff's deputy working in the local JTTF expressed more concern about Mateen than hundreds of other cases they review every year because he had access to firearms and worked for county government.[82] On the other hand, the agents questioned Mateen's commitment to the terrorist groups he spoke of because he did not seem to realize that Hezbollah and Al Qaeda have opposing ideology as Shiite and Sunni. Despite these contradictory clues, Wilber says with due diligence the agents added Mateen to a watch-list and started checking law enforcement information platforms.[83] Additionally, according to Wilber, the agents used other investigative tools including interviews and undercover informants who made contact with Mateen for nearly a year. The informants did not uncover any dangerous plots. Mateen admitted making statements about terrorist groups while at work but he claimed he was only blustering because his co-workers had harassed him for being Muslim.

Wilber's article goes on to say, the case agents extended the Mateen investigation through the summer of 2014, and they interviewed Mateen again.[84] Mateen continued to assert that he only made radical statements to get back at co-workers who were bothering him. An additional clue surfaced when a fellow worshiper at Mateen's mosque told investigators that Mateen had been watching videos of the radical cleric Anwar al-Awlaki. This lead to a third interview with Mateen, but there was still nothing to indicate that

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[81] Del Quentin Wilber, "The FBI Investigated the Orlando Mass Shooter for 10 Months—and Found Nothing. Here's Why," *Los Angeles Times*, July 14, 2016, http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-fbi-investigation-mateen-20160712-snap-story.html.

[82] Wilber, "The FBI Investigated the Orlando Mass Shooter for 10 Months."

[83] Wilber, "The FBI Investigated the Orlando Mass Shooter for 10 Months."

[84] Wilber, "The FBI Investigated the Orlando Mass Shooter for 10 Months."

Mateen was linked to any bona fide terrorism threat and the agents closed the Mateen investigation in order to continue working on other cases.[85]

The FBI officials interviewed for the *Los Angeles Times* story acknowledged how this case will clearly provide lessons learned to help the agency's efforts to monitor at least a thousand suspected extremists who are being tracked across the country at any given time but nothing in particular was overlooked in the Mateen case. For example, viewing a potential suspect's social media remains a high priority even though Mateen only posted support for radical Islamic beliefs the night of the attack, and Mateen's viewing of radical videos online was only confirmed during the follow-up investigation. One official said emphatically, "We don't have a crystal ball, unfortunately…we went right up to the edge of what we could do legally, and there was just nothing there."[86]

5.   Fort Lauderdale Airport Attack

On January 6, 2017, a passenger from a flight that landed at the Fort Lauderdale International Airport retrieved his checked baggage—a single container with a handgun and ammunition inside. He loaded the gun in a bathroom, returned to the baggage area and started shooting at other travelers. Five people were killed and six people were wounded. Within just a few minutes the gunman was taken into custody, but the aftermath caused chaos in the rest of the airport for hours.[87] The suspect was identified as Esteban Santiago, a 26-year-old from Alaska who had once served in the National Guard of Puerto Rico.

A group of writers for the *Sun-Sentinel*, a Pulitzer Prize winning South Florida newspaper known for its investigative reporting, pieced together a compelling report on Santiago's serious social and mental health issues.[88] According to the report, in a

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[85] Wilber, "The FBI Investigated the Orlando Mass Shooter for 10 Months."

[86] Wilber, "The FBI Investigated the Orlando Mass Shooter for 10 Months."

[87] Broward County Aviation Department, *Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport Active Shooter Incident and Post-Event Response*, (Dania Beach, Florida: Broward County, 2017), http://www.policefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Ft.-Lauderdale-Hollywood-International-Airport-AAR.pdf.

[88] Mike Clary et al., "How Accused Airport Killer Esteban Santiago Spun Out of Control — With No One to Stop Him," *Sun-Sentinel*, January 14, 2017, http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/fort-lauderdale-hollywood-airport-shooting/fl-airport-shooting-santiago-profile-20170113-story.html.

tumultuous year before the shooting, Santiago had domestic violence issues that caused him to live separately from his child and the child's mother. He was stripped of rank as member of the U.S. military and he lost his job with Alaska National Guard. Family members who spoke to the reporters said Santiago tried to get psychiatric help in both Puerto Rico and Alaska. At least twice he had his guns confiscated by police but the guns were returned to him each time.[89]

The *Sun-Sentinel* continued detailing the Santiago timeline.[90] He first arrived home in 2011 after a yearlong deployment in Iraq. After his return, he sometimes could not control his anger. Santiago continued living in Alaska in a troubled marriage that involved a physical fight in early 2016. During a court hearing on March 24, 2016, Santiago pleaded guilty to both assault and criminal mischief charges as part of a deferred sentencing agreement in the domestic violence case. Although ordered to complete a 12-week anger management program, there is no indication in the court documents that he finished the course. In August 2016, shortly before his son was born, Santiago was separated from the Alaska Guard under a general discharge for unsatisfactory performance. His brother visited Alaska around this time and he said he could see his brother was "out of his mind."[91] In November 2016, an agitated Santiago carried his newborn child into an FBI office in Anchorage and incoherently explained to agents that the government was brainwashing him into becoming a terrorist for the Islamic State. After determining that he was not on any watch lists, agents notified the Anchorage police. Anchorage police detained him as a mental health case. Santiago was taken to a hospital and voluntarily admitted for evaluation and apparently discharged after four days. After his release, he retrieved his gun from the Anchorage police who had no legal reason to keep it. It is not clear if that was the gun he flew to Fort Lauderdale with on January 6, 2017.[92]

[89] Clary, "How Accused Airport Killer Esteban Santiago Spun Out of Control."

[90] Clary, "How Accused Airport Killer Esteban Santiago Spun Out of Control."

[91] Clary, "How Accused Airport Killer Esteban Santiago Spun Out of Control."

[92] Clary, "How Accused Airport Killer Esteban Santiago Spun Out of Control."

Although Santiago walked into an FBI office to confess that ISIS was controlling him he was most likely not investigated as a terrorist. Instead, he was referred to local police officers who used a temporary mental health evaluation process to get a clearly disturbed man off the street and into treatment. Details concerning how he was medically treated in the hospital are not readily available, but it is likely that he was stabilized from being an immediate threat to himself and others in order to be released back into the community. He may have been offered outpatient options, but it is believed that he was not under surveillance as a terrorist threat after his release from the hospital.

C.   GAPS IN THE INVESTIGATION OF HVE THREATS

From the sampling of incidents reviewed for this thesis, hindsight analysis makes it appear easy to critique what should have been done to prevent an attack when in reality other steps may have been attempted that are not known to the public. Information used in this study is limited because the full range of law enforcement sources and methods that were used to investigate these cases in real time are not readily available for a complete open source review. With the exception of Roof who was barely known to authorities prior to the attack, the primary investigators assigned to the cases reviewed for this thesis have been portrayed as the only decision makers. Once these cases reached a point where nothing pointed toward a crime, the cases were closed usually with nothing more than the approval of a supervisor.

In great detail, auditors found that several intelligence officials, both foreign and domestic, had information about Tamerlan Tsarnaev, the older of the brothers responsible for the Boston Marathon Bombing. Several federal agencies in the United States conducted overlapping investigations into tips about Tamerlan's activity. Other agencies processed information to determine the correct immigration and naturalization status for the entire family. The auditors recommended that state and local officials should have been more informed. The facts of this case point to a gap in the information sharing mechanisms used by government agencies, including the divide between information known at the federal level and local level.

The case of Dylann Roof was quite the opposite. Roof exhibited several warning signs that he was spiraling toward violent action intended to propel the nation into a race war, but very few government officials knew anything about his threats. Even though Roof was investigated by local law enforcement for bizarre behavior, it is unlikely anyone would believe those contacts were enough to foreshadow the terrible massacre to come. The public may never know what Roof spoke to his mental health counselors about, but it is unlikely that those professionals knowingly allowed Roof to pose an imminent threat without any attempt to intervene. The gap in this investigation was formed because Roof's friends and associates did not recognize or utilize any method to inform the proper authorities of his increasingly dangerous rhetoric and odd behavior.

The case of Syed Farook and Tashfeen Malik from the San Bernardino attack demonstrates the difficult in seeing social media connections related to extremist beliefs in real time. Similar to Roof, however, friends and acquaintances of Farook and Malik were aware of increasingly radical ideas from the couple but those observers either tacitly approved the radicalization or did not contemplate any reason to notify authorities.

On the other hand, investigators were well aware of the potential radicalized threats expressed by Omar Mateen in Orlando in the three years leading up to his terrible attack. Following proper law enforcement investigation protocols, the case agents spent ten months trying to either build a criminal case or dismiss Mateen as a loudmouth who was not really a threat. All efforts led to concluding the latter. The gap in the Mateen investigation is arguably a failure to utilize any resources beyond the typical law enforcement methods that are used to build a criminal case.

Traditionally, mental health professionals assist law enforcement in circumstances when a person is disturbed and posing a threat to himself or others. When needed, some individuals who exhibit bizarre behavior are transported for an evaluation and the mental health profession becomes responsible for making recommendations and decisions for the

prevention of violent behavior. Law enforcement on the other hand, continues to be more reactive by investigating a crime of violence after it occurs.[93]

Esteban Santiago's increasingly troubled life leading him to Florida where he started shooting inside the Fort Lauderdale airport clearly illustrates the reactive nature of law enforcement's response to mental health problems that cause violent behavior. The gap exposed in this case is the one-way flow of information from the police to the mental health provider that may not be reciprocated as often because of patient confidentiality.

From the review of the investigative process in the days or years that led up to each violent attack it is apparent that many people, government employees, and experts from different disciplines had contact with the suspects. These examples add to the conversation about a need to weave together information held by multiple entities in order to recognize an imminent attack before it occurs—similar to the 9/11 commission's conclusion that multiple sources of information leading up to that attack indicated "the system was blinking red."[94]

All stakeholders responsible for preventing HVE must take steps to close the type of gaps identified in these cases: poor information sharing between government agencies; citizens failing to report suspicious activity; sole reliance on criminal investigation resources which lag behind technologies that can mask an individual's violent intentions; not engaging other experts who can better interpret an individual's threatening behavior; and the lack of two-way communication between government officials and social service providers in the community.

It is important to recognize that simply sharing information may not be enough. Policymakers should consider weaving together inter-discipline expertise as well to make better decisions about potential threats in real time, rather than after the fact. Director of

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[93] Randy Borum et al., "Threat Assessment: Defining an Approach for Evaluating Risk of Targeted Violence," *Behavioral Sciences and the Law* 17 (1999): 323, http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/mhlp_facpub/146.

[94] National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011): 254.

the FBI, Robert Mueller, in 2006 delivered a speech to the City Club of Cleveland that emphasized the importance of shared expertise:

> Our greatest weapon against terrorism is unity. That unity is built on information sharing and coordination among our partners in the law enforcement and the intelligence communities. It is built on partnerships with the private sector and effective outreach to the public as our eyes and ears. It is built on the idea that, together, we are smarter and stronger than we are standing alone.[95]

In order to be truly smarter together, effective teams must be established that have the tools necessary to ensure all aspects of an individual's potential threat for HVE are evaluated before a case is closed. The next chapter explores the use of multidisciplinary teams along with validated risk assessment tools in a threat investigation process.

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[95] Robert S. Mueller, "Homegrown Terrorism and the Radicalization Process," *Vital Speeches of the Day* 72, no. 20/21 (2006): 562, https://www.vsotd.com/issue/2006-20-21/homegrown-terrorism-and-radicalization-process.

III. MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAMS AND ASSESSMENT TOOLS

High quality criminal investigations occur every day at the federal, state, and local level. Unfortunately, in today's homegrown violent extremism (HVE) threat environment quality law enforcement work alone is not enough. Some investigations into the threat posed by individuals reach a dead end due to a lack of evidence to establish the elements of a crime. Even when an arrest cannot be made, other programs and services can be engaged to prevent an individual from continuing toward violent action.

This chapter examines how threats are assessed and how multidisciplinary teams (MDTs) are formed to aid in the management of risk. Common risk assessment instruments used to complete individual evaluations in other situations are applied to conditions that are also evident in HVE. The processes used by MDTs along with combined risk factors that comprise threat assessment instruments are applied retrospectively to the HVE threat investigations discussed in the previous chapter. The final portion of this chapter is an overview of empirical studies that discuss the reliability of risk assessment tools that have been employed to predict violent behavior.

By some accounts, the use of an assessment procedure to confront issues related to criminal or sexual violence using expert testimony, evaluation tools, and team processes has been ongoing for more than 30 years.[96] Moreover, the use of teams to evaluate cases and evidence is not unique to a single discipline or science. Even within social sciences, it is often necessary to create multidisciplinary teams to evaluate data, make decisions, and establish programs. A multidisciplinary team capitalizes on differing expertise to solve problems and the use of such a team to evaluate complex issues can be found in medicine, sociology, criminal law, terrorism studies, technology, education, and a host of other fields.[97]

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[96] Seena Fazel et al., "Use of Risk Assessment Instruments to Predict Violence and Antisocial Behaviour in 73 Samples involving 24,827 People: Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis," *BMJ* 345 (2012): 2, http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.e4692.

[97] Irina Roncaglia, "A Practitioner's Perspective of Multidisciplinary Teams: Analysis of Potential Barriers and Key Factors for Success," *Psychological Thought* 9, no. 1 (2016): 15, https://doi.org/10.5964/psyct.v9i1.145.

Collaboration is a cornerstone for decision making in complex situations. If the decision to be made requires knowledge weaved together from different sciences, it becomes even more critical for a decision-making team to include members from more than one discipline. Shared expertise is expected to produce better outcomes when making tough decisions. Specifically, a team comprised of stakeholders that share a common goal and a shared set of rules benefits from increased processing ability for different aspects of a problem; hopefully resulting in more creative options to resolve novel situations with limited information.[98]

A.   ENGAGING MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAMS

The use of a multidisciplinary team is mentioned frequently in guidelines for risk management and more specifically for this thesis, in the creation of countering violent extremism (CVE) programs. It is assumed that a strategy for the prevention of radical violence can bring together governmental agencies (law enforcement, public health, schools and social services) along with nongovernmental organizations (faith-based groups, fraternal organizations, and membership groups) to "intervene in the lives of individuals who have come to their attention as potentially going through the process of radicalization."[99] In recent years, the push to engage a multidisciplinary approach for the prevention and countering of violent extremism has only increased.[100]

Engaging MDTs in the evaluation of HVE tends to merge two similar but separate types of assessments. Risk assessment and threat assessment are often used interchangeably, but it is worth noting that these two processes are applied differently.[101] Risk assessment has been in use longer and relies on evaluating characteristics about a

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[98] Kathleen L. Mosier and Ute M. Fischer, eds., *Informed by Knowledge: Expert Performance in Complex Situations* (New York: Psychology Press, 2011), 71.

[99] Sarma, "Risk Assessment and the Prevention of Radicalization from Nonviolence into Terrorism," 278.

[100] Matthew Levitt, ed., *Defeating Ideologically Inspired Violent Extremism*, (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2017), 15, http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/defeating-ideologically-inspired-violent-extremism.

[101] J. Reid Meloy et al., "The Role of Warning Behaviors in Threat Assessment: An Exploration and Suggested Typology," *Behavioral Sciences and the Law* 30 (2012): 257, https://doi.org/ 10.1002/bsl.999.

person that are compared to a group of people in the same category to determine the probability the person will commit some act in the future. Most often, risk assessment is used to determine the chance of recidivism for certain types of crime. Threat assessment on the other hand examines a person's specific threat to do harm and the circumstances surrounding the nature of the threat to determine the likelihood that the threat will be carried out. Risk assessments rely on evaluating the prior behavior of a person, whereas some threat assessments may be attempted without the benefit of a detailed history or any previous criminal acts by the individual being evaluated.[102]

Risk evaluators typically utilize one of three techniques in making risk assessments—unaided professional judgment, actuarial methods, and structured professional judgment (SPJ).[103] Unaided professional judgment is more than intuition but not quite a formal process. Parents become very proficient in identifying unusual behavior in their own children and often the children of others. Engineers can hear the hum of machinery and recognize that something is wrong. Police officers have a sense that someone is suspicious based on body language and other clues. Doctors can listen to a patient describe an ache or pain and usually diagnose a cause without formal testing in the same way that an auto mechanic may understand that a certain knock or ping is caused by bad fuel without having to test the tank. While none of these evaluations could be validated scientifically, they have a kernel of truth because of the expert's experience with similar cases. Intuitive expertise is often enough to take further action to prevent something from getting worse.

Actuarial methods, on the other hand, require large data sets collected over time to statistically determine the likely outcome when a similar set of facts are known in a new situation. Within a few degrees of certainty, an actuary can determine the life expectancy of a person or piece of equipment but more importantly can estimate how often something out of the ordinary will happen. Actuaries related to risk management are used most often in the insurance industry and are built upon rigid structures that are not flexible enough to

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[102] Meloy, "The Role of Warning Behaviors in Threat Assessment," 257.

[103] Sarma, "Risk Assessment and the Prevention of Radicalization from Nonviolence into Terrorism," 278–279.

deal with other types of risk.[104] Other social sciences adopt actuarial methods when the data sets are large enough to determine patterns. If enough evidence-based risk factors can be identified, actuarial tools can be created to take a structured approach in risk assessment.[105]

Structured professional judgment combines the experience of an expert with the structure of an actuarial scale. An educated and experienced professional is capable of making decisions in situations with limited new information. A professional is able to collect information, measure related data, and use similar prior experiences to make a more informed decision about the likelihood of a particular outcome. Informally, the parent's intuition about a teenager's late night out can be combined with evidence found in her child's social media and a doctor's feeling about a set of symptoms can be combined with data from similar cases in a journal. In some disciplines, the professional decision making process can be augmented by a checklist of evidence-based factors. Combining the two processes together creates structured professional judgment. It is commonly accepted that SPJ, which combines the knowledge of a subject matter expert with actuarial scales, provides more predictive accuracy.[106] It is also assumed that a panel of experts may produce better results than a single expert.

The creation, function and nurturing of an MDT is not a simple process.[107] Every member of an MDT will bring a perspective that will impact decision-making, morale, communication, and the interplay of personalities. By definition, a multidisciplinary team will have members who will each approach social problems with a different toolbox. Law enforcement officers will long for evidence that establishes probable cause, not necessarily for a crime but for facts that are stronger than mere suspicion. School officials nurture better choices and assume bad choices can be corrected with more knowledge, and social

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[104] Douglas W. Hubbard, *The Failure of Risk Management: Why It's Broken and How to Fix It* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 75.

[105] Sarma, "Risk Assessment and the Prevention of Radicalization from Nonviolence into Terrorism," 280.

[106] Blais and Forth, "Prosecution-Retained Versus Court-Appointed Experts," 533.

[107] Irina Roncaglia, "A Practitioner's Perspective of Multidisciplinary Teams," 21.

workers may put more emphasis on environmental conditions that could be corrected to form a better citizen. Faith-based leaders support the soul and may use empathy to guide a person to a closer relationship with God and away from wrongdoing. The team itself must have trust and strong communication. The competency of each team member in no way guarantees success—it is imperative to foster trust and allow enough time to create a team dynamic that is capable of accomplishing the team objective.[108]

It is logical to support the creation of MDTs in situations where more than one type of expertise is required. It is even more attractive to utilize an MDT to bring together individuals that possess diverse perspectives on a complex problem.[109] Nevertheless, the mere creation of an MDT does not ensure it will function adequately. Similar to a sports team or an entrepreneurial team, an MDT must adopt a common objective. If the team does not adopt the collective team identification that embraces a common purpose, then the diversity of expertise represented in the team may not be enough to achieve the best outcomes.[110]

To increase the reliability of risk assessment procedures, most MDT structures involving SPJ review multiple sources of information including reports, official records, and interviews.[111] Experts on the panel should receive training on the use of assessment tools that supplement the SPJ of the team. If used properly, the team should reach a consensus in a decision about individual risk based both on an evaluation of the information available to the panel and the risk factors listed in the assessment tool used during the evaluation. If comprised correctly, the value of an MDT that evaluates threats related to HVE is the possibility that more than one expert will recognize warning signs of imminent violence and provide a mode of intervention that is not available to law enforcement alone.

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[108] Gerben S. Van Der Vegt and J. Stuart Bunderson, "Learning and Performance in Multidisciplinary Teams: The Importance of Collective Team Identification," *Academy of Management Journal* 48, no. 3 (2005): 544, https://doi.org/10.5465/AMJ.2005.17407918.

[109] Van Der Vegt and Bunderson, "Learning and Performance in Multidisciplinary Teams," 532.

[110] Van Der Vegt and Bunderson, "Learning and Performance in Multidisciplinary Teams," 533.

[111] Cailey Miller et al., "Reliability of Risk Assessment Measures Used in Sexually Violent Predator Proceedings," *Psychological Assessment* 24, no. 4 (2012): 944, http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0028411.

B.   RISK ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS AND CHECKLISTS

Threat assessments can be further enhanced through the use of tools or checklists that compare a subject's profile to a set of validated factors in order to classify a risk level. In many instances, historical and contextual data on a subject is combined with an interview to complete a full evaluation. However, an interview is not always required. Some tools and checklists can be utilized solely with background information, which is an important consideration in HVE cases when an MDT may not have access to the subject in question. This limitation is not unique to HVE cases; some evaluations in forensic settings are done without the benefit of an interview with the subject being assessed.

The development of violence risk assessment instruments and their use on subjects held in penal and mental health settings has become increasingly widespread. In U.S. states that have parole procedures, 72% use violence risk assessments to make determinations about a subject's future threat level.[112] Internationally, over 150 tools that estimate the probability of violent behavior (actuarial instruments) or provide a defined risk level (low, moderate, or high) from a validated checklist are used to supplement SPJ in the assessment of violence risk.[113] Today, the most common risk assessment tools can be categorized as predictors of an individual's likelihood to commit general criminal offenses, violent criminal offenses, violent sexual offenses, targeted violence, and violence related to extremism or terrorism (see Table 1).

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[112] Fazel, "Use of Risk Assessment Instruments to Predict Violence and Antisocial Behaviour in 73 Samples involving 24,827 People."

[113] Fazel, "Use of Risk Assessment Instruments to Predict Violence and Antisocial Behaviour in 73 Samples involving 24,827 People," 2.

Table 1. Sample of Common Risk Assessment Tools

Tool	Name	Predictive Use
LSI-R	Level of Service Inventory-Revised	Criminal Offending
PCL-R	Psychopathy Checklist-Revised	Criminal Offending
HCR-20	Historical Clinical Risk Management	Violent Offending
SVR-20	Sexual Violence Risk	Sexual Violence
WAVR-21	Workplace Assessment of Violence Risk	Targeted Violence
ERG-22+	Extremist Risk Guide	Violent Extremism
VERA	Violent Extremism Risk Assessment	Violent Extremism

One of the primary tools used in predicting general recidivism in criminal populations is the Level of Service Inventory—Revised (LSI-R). The LSI-R is a risk scale tool that has 54 questions across several broad categories including criminal history, education and employment status, family or marital problems, financial stress, housing status, recreational activities, general companionship, substance abuse problems, emotional problems, and overall attitude on criminality issues.[114] The LSI-R is a widely accepted instrument to identify risk for criminal recidivism, but it is also essential that offender needs identified during the assessment be met during case management.[115]

Identifying psychopathy—a general indicator for criminal propensity—is the primary function of the revised Psychopathy Checklist (PCL-R). Canadian Professor of Psychology Robert Hare, creator of the PCL-R, "devoted considerable effort to the development of an assessment procedure for criminal psychopathy that has acceptable psychometric properties and that is closely tied to traditional clinical conceptions of

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[114] Grant Duwe and Michael Rocque, "A Jack of All Trades but a Master of None? Evaluating the Performance of the Level of Service Inventory–Revised (LSI-R) in the Assessment of Risk and Need," *Corrections* (2016): 83, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/23774657.2015.1111743.

[115] Stephan M. Haas and Kimberly A. DeTardo-Bora, "Inmate Reentry and the Utility of the LSI-R in Case Planning," *Corrections Compendium* (Spring, 2009): 11, http://jrsa.org/pubs/forum/full-articles/inmate-reentry.pdf.

psychopathy."[116] The PCL-R evaluates overarching personality traits that can be associated with psychopathy such as superficial charm, grandiosity, pathological lying, manipulation, little remorse, parasitic lifestyle, and a lack of behavioral control.[117] The PCL-R has been shown to effectively link the presence of psychopathy to an increased risk for criminal recidivism and dangerousness.[118]

Those held in forensic hospital settings are frequently evaluated for future risk of violent criminal offenses using the Historical, Clinical, and Risk Management (HCR-20) instrument. This tool evaluates separate influences of risk: static risk factors and clinical risk factors. Static risk factors (such as age at first offense and two parent home in childhood) cannot be undone but clinical factors (such as behavior and substance abuse) are dynamically influenced by treatment and life changes.[119] The HCR-20 instrument in particular includes five dynamic clinical factors such as insight, attitude, symptom control, impulsivity, and responsiveness to treatment along with five risk management variables such as a valid life plan, stabilizing influences, support structures, remedial compliance, and managing stress.[120] Since these factors can change over time, the risk assessment can likewise adapt.

The Sexual Violence Risk (SVR-20) instrument is designed to detect a sex offender's risk for recidivism but it also has broad categories of general risk that echo some

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[116] Robert D. Hare et al., "The Revised Psychopathy Checklist: Reliability and Factor Structure," *Psychological Assessment: A Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 2, no. 3 (1990): 338, http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/1040-3590.2.3.338.

[117] Robert D. Hare, "The Revised Psychopathy Checklist."

[118] Randall T. Salekin, Richard Rogers, and Kenneth W. Sewell, "A Review and Meta-Analysis of the Psychopathy Checklist and Psychopathy Checklist-Revised: Predictive Validity of Dangerousness," *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice* 3, no. 3 (1996): 203, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2850.1996.tb00071.x.

[119] Martin Grann, Henrik Belfrage, and Anders Tengström, "Actuarial Assessment of Risk for Violence: Predictive Validity of the VRAG and the Historical Part of the HCR-20," *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 27, no. 1 (February 2000): 100, https://doi.org/10.1177/0093854800027001006.

[120] Robert D. Morgan, Daryl G. Kroner, and Jeremy F. Mills, *Re-entry: Dynamic Risk Assessment*, Report Number 2007-IJ-CX-0027 (Washington, DC: Department of Justice, 2012), 8, https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/238075.pdf.

of the factors in the HCR-20.[121] The SVR-20 complements structured professional judgment and it can be used on all types of offenders in evaluating psychosocial adjustment, sexual offenses, and future plans. Specifically coded factors include sexual deviation, victim of child abuse, psychopathy, mental problems, substance abuse, relationships with others, offense history, frequency or violence in sex offenses, and realistic goals or attitude.[122]

Targeted violence in a workplace or school setting has been successfully evaluated using the Workplace Assessment of Violence Risk (WAVR-21).[123] This tool is appropriate to assess targeted violence risk among adults and students in organizational settings.[124] The assessment includes several psychological factors such as motive, violent ideation, planning behaviors, stressors, anger, isolation, and criminal or personal history. The authors of WAVR-21 believe targeted violence is a result of a "discernible process of thinking, behavior, and preparation" and likewise, several of the WAVR-21 factors are intended to capture steps along the escalating path toward violence.[125]

The Extremist Risk Guide (ERG-22) is used to predict the likelihood of radicalized violence among at-risk subjects mostly in the United Kingdom. Monica Lloyd, Department of Psychology, Birmingham University and Christopher Dean, National Offender Management Service in the Ministry of Justice, explain "in the ERG, the factors have been brigaded under three dimensions of engagement, intent, and capability that clarify their relationship to risk and to need…the three dimensions of the ERG are not derived from statistical analysis but from a conceptual understanding of the functional distinction between engagement and intent and the self-evident relevance of capability to extremist

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[121] David L. Shapiro and Angela M. Noe, *Risk Assessment: Origins, Evolution, and Implications for Practice*, (New York: Springer, 2015), 33.

[122] Shapiro and Noe, *Risk Assessment*, 33.

[123] Philip Saragoza and Stephen G. White, "Workplace Violence: Practical Considerations for Mental Health Professionals in Consultation, Assessment, and Management of Risk," *Psychiatric Clinics* 39, no. 4 (2016): 604, http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.psc.2016.07.007.

[124] J.Reid Meloy, Stephen G. White, and Stephen Hart, "Workplace Assessment of Targeted Violence Risk: The Development and Reliability of the WAVR-21," *Journal of Forensic Sciences* 58, no. 5 (2013): 1356, https://doi.org/10.1111/1556-4029.12196.

[125] Meloy, "Workplace Assessment of Targeted Violence Risk," 1353.

offending."[126] The flexibility of ERG-22 to evaluate intent and capability in a changing environment depends heavily on the judgment of the assessor and that subjectivity is a source of criticism from other researchers.[127]

Another tool that has attempted to forecast violent radicalization is the Violent Extremism Risk Assessment (VERA). Like several other tools described in this chapter, VERA supplements structured professional judgment. Indicators of risk found in VERA are organized into four categories: beliefs and attitudes; context and intent; history and capability; and commitment and motivation.[128] VERA is very specific to individuals who are in late stages of moving toward violent extremism and it has received praise in a recent review of violence assessment tools for being grounded with extensive research and operational accuracy.[129]

Each of the assessment instruments and risk factor checklists described here have been used by individual experts and panels of experts to evaluate cases in a variety of settings. A full explanation of the research that backs each assessment tool and the empirical basis for each risk factor is beyond the scope of this thesis. It was useful, however, to apply a combination of these static and dynamic factors to test the hypothesis of this thesis that threat assessment processes are generally more effective than traditional law enforcement investigations in the pre-crime space, and multidisciplinary teams provide the best framework for effective risk assessments.

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[126] Monica Lloyd and Christopher Dean, "The Development of Structured Guidelines for Assessing Risk in Extremist Offenders," *Journal of Threat Assessment and Management* 2, no. 1 (2015): 45, http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/tam0000035.

[127] Asim Qureshi, *The 'Science' of Pre-Crime: The Secret 'Radicilsation' Study Underpinning Prevent* (London: CAGE Advocacy UK Ltd, 2016), 41, https://cage.ngo/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/CAGE-Science-Pre-Crime-Report.pdf.

[128] D. Elaine Pressman and John Flockton, "Calibrating Risk for Violent Political Extremists and Terrorists: The VERA-2 Structured Assessment," *The British Journal of Forensic Practice* 14, no. 4 (2012): 244, https://doi.org/10.1108/14636641211283057.

[129] Akimi Scarcella, Ruairi Page, and Vivek Furtado, "Terrorism, Radicalisation, Extremism, Authoritarianism and Fundamentalism: A Systematic Review of the Quality and Psychometric Properties of Assessments," *PloS One* 11, no. 12 (2016): 3, https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0166947.

C.   APPLYING RISK FACTORS TO ASSESS INDIVIDUAL THREATS

To facilitate this study, risk factors from the sample of seven assessment tools were condensed into four generalized risk factor categories:

1.   Prior criminal or violent behavior—including experience that demonstrates the ability or willingness to access networks or weapons necessary to commit a violent act.

2.   Social stability—including employment or school status, coping with stress, support from family or friends, stable relationships, and meaningful goals or the lack thereof serve to aggravate or mitigate potential path toward violence

3.   Psychopathy—including demonstrated psychological issues that can result from substance abuse, emotional problems, underlying personality traits, or traumatic history can be a strong indicator of potential violence

4.   Direct threat or threatening behavior—including an attitude that is accepting of violence, verbalized political grievances, planning for violence, poor anger control, suspicious paranoia, or homicidal ideation.

These four generalized risk factor categories were compiled from viewing a side-by-side comparison of risk factors that are shared among common threat assessment tools (see Table 2). For the purpose of this study, the use of generalized risk categories was a broad stroke attempt to test how potential homegrown violent extremists may be more effectively identified before an attack takes place. Moreover, it may not be necessary to create new tools for MDT threat assessments related to HVE if the interdisciplinary team is assembled carefully and their SPJ is supplemented by whichever tool is most useful to them during an evaluation.

Table 2. Comparison of Risk Factors Used in a Sample of
Threat Assessment Tools

Risk Factor	LSI-R	PCL-R	HCR-20	SVR-20	WAVR-21	ERG-22+	VERA
Criminal History	✔		✔	✔	✔	✔	
Violence History				✔	✔		✔
Criminal Versatility		✔				✔	✔
Parole Violations		✔	✔	✔			
Employment/School	✔		✔	✔	✔		
Stress/Coping	✔		✔		✔		
Family/Support	✔		✔		✔		✔
Short Relationships		✔	✔	✔			
Housing/Stability	✔		✔				
Lacking Goals		✔	✔	✔			
Group/Companions	✔				✔	✔	
Substance Abuse	✔		✔	✔	✔		
Emotional Issues	✔		✔	✔	✔		
Personality Traits		✔	✔	✔			
Traumatic History			✔	✔			
Attitudes/Motives	✔		✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Political Grievance						✔	✔
Threats/Planning			✔		✔	✔	✔
Poor Anger Control		✔	✔		✔		
Suspicion/Distrust					✔	✔	✔
Homicidal Ideation				✔	✔		

Applying the four generalized risk categories created for this study to the sample of cases presented in Chapter II revealed some subjective and exploratory observations that affirm how a risk assessment process may have been useful in closing some of the investigative gaps that were exposed in hindsight.

A detailed review of the intelligence information available about Tamerlan Tsarnaev in the years leading up to the Boston Marathon Bombing revealed gaps in the information sharing mechanisms used by government agencies, including the divide

between information known at the federal level and local level. The proper composition of an MDT includes stakeholders at the federal, state, and local level. If an MDT process had been engaged, much of the information that was not shared in electronic databases would have been shared in person among members of the team. With regard to the four generalized risk categories, a deeper assessment of Tamerlan would have revealed social stability issues related to his immigration status and dropping out of school. A different interpretation or more information regarding his travel to Russia may have revealed some direct threat behavior, along with some indication that he was willing to commit a violent act. The research reviewed for this study did not find any indication of psychopathy for Tamerlan.

The case of Dylann Roof revealed a gap in information sharing with authorities because none of Roof's friends or associates told anyone about his dangerous behavior. Rutgers University Criminal Justice Professor John D. Cohen believes that an important role MDTs will fill in CVE programs is an organized effort to educate the community about the services that are available in lieu of criminal investigations. He goes on to say, "locally based, multidisciplinary violence prevention efforts [will provide] community-level pattern detection, reporting, and referral."[130] Increased opportunities for community reporting may have created a mechanism for acquaintances to report Roof's expressions of violence. If an MDT had been given the opportunity to evaluate Roof, it is likely that all four generalized risk categories (prior criminal behavior, social stability, psychopathy, and direct threat) would have been clearly indicated.

The case of Syed Farook and Tashfeen Malik from the San Bernardino attack demonstrated some of the difficulty in seeing private social media connections related to extremist beliefs in real time. At the federal level, a fully formed MDT may have included a member of the team who had contacts with different segments of the community; segments that may have been privy to social media posts by Malik. Similar to Roof, it is also possible that community level pattern detection may have opened a door for someone to report the direct Jihadist support expressed in private social media by Farook and Malik.

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[130] Cohen, "The Next Generation of Government CVE Strategies at Home," 124.

If an MDT had been engaged, however, it is likely that direct threat would have been the only generalized risk category present. By most accounts, Farook and Malik were socially stable, did not exhibit any psychopathy, and did not have a criminal record.

The case of Omar Mateen revealed a failure to utilize any resources beyond the typical law enforcement methods that are used to build a criminal case, and that may have created a huge gap in the accurate evaluation of his threat level. Unlike some of the other cases reviewed, Omar Mateen was cooperative when he was interviewed three different times in the years leading up to the attack. If an MDT had been in place at the time, Mateen might have been willing to submit to an evaluation. A detailed evaluation of Mateen may have checked several boxes in a typical risk assessment instrument: Mateen's fascination with law enforcement demonstrated the ability or willingness to access networks or weapons necessary to commit a violent act; his poor relationship with co-workers is a social stability factor; it is also likely he had undiagnosed psychological problems emanating from underlying personality traits; and his verbal threats to coworkers and videos he viewed contributed to an attitude that is accepting of violence along with verbalized political grievances and homicidal ideation.

Finally, the case of Fort Lauderdale Airport shooter Esteban Santiago exposed a gap in the flow of information between law enforcement and mental health providers. This case is a convincing example of how a properly assembled MDT may have been very effective. Advocates for an MDT threat assessment process would argue Santiago is an archetype for the detection, intervention, and case management solutions that are needed. If Santiago had been referred to even a basic MDT threat assessment process, it is likely that everyone involved would have seen clear warning behaviors in all four generalized categories of risk including prior criminal behavior, social stability, psychopathy, and direct threat.

Others who are working to improve the nation's CVE strategy have also proposed applying existing tools to HVE in new ways. The National Security Critical Issues Task Force stated, "Since violent extremism shares some risk factors with other social ills,

opportunities exist to use pre-existing capabilities and resources."[131] Kiran M. Sarma, Professor of Psychology at the National University of Ireland, concurs by asserting that despite certain limitations caused by a low base rate of cases that can be compared, assessments for counterterrorism can still be "rooted in good practices developed in the broader field of violence risk assessment."[132]

Retroactively applying an MDT process and generalized risk factors to the sampling of cases reviewed in this thesis produced some subjective support for a belief that threat assessment processes are generally more effective than traditional law enforcement investigations in the pre-crime space, especially when there is lack of probable cause for an arrest. The evidence presented in this study also produced some anecdotal support that multidisciplinary teams provide the best framework for effective risk assessments. In order to fully test the original hypothesis for this thesis, additional literature and recent meta-analysis studies were reviewed as well. Recent studies done by others have evaluated the reliability of risk assessment instruments used by individual experts or MDTs.

D.   RELIABILITY OF RISK ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS

Combining risk factors used to assess other threats of violence to create a single tool for the evaluation of HVE remains an elusive goal of many scientists. Dr. J. Reid Meloy and colleagues from the University of California posit four obstacles to the development of meaningful threat assessment tool for use in HVE.[133] First, several existing tools have focused on traditional terrorism instead of the unique threats posed by homegrown extremists; second, some tools fail to distinguish between affective (emotional) and predatory (instrumental or intended) violence; third, factors that contribute to short term motivations of violence are overlooked in favor of long term characteristics or personality traits; and fourth, the mixing of prediction and prevention efforts.

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[131] Challgren, *Countering Violent Extremism*, 13.

[132] Sarma, "Risk Assessment and the Prevention of Radicalization from Nonviolence into Terrorism," 283.

[133] J. Reid Meloy and Jacqueline Genzman, "The Clinical Threat Assessment of the Lone-Actor Terrorist," *Psychiatric Clinics* 39, no. 4 (2016): 650, http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.psc.2016.07.004.

Dr. Meloy believes risk assessments are more useful in identifying conditions that can be changed in a person's life to prevent an act of violence, rather than predicting the imminence of a violent act.[134] This confirms the importance of engaging multiple disciplines in the evaluation of HVE threats. Even if a threat assessment tool enjoys a high degree of accuracy, the mode of intervention used to disrupt a particular subject's draw toward HVE must involve more than just law enforcement. Other stakeholders may be in a better position to change aspects of the person's life to prevent violent action.

Dr. Kiran M. Sarma contends assessment tools work best with a combination of risk factors (predictors) that have evidence-based relatedness to the consequence that is being forecast, and trusted tools are calibrated to identify those who go on to offend with sufficient specificity to avoid incorrectly identifying subjects that do not commit a new or repeated offense.[135] The accuracy of an instrument to identify true cases (sensitivity) and correctly eliminate false cases (specificity) is a high but necessary standard in most empirical studies. Dr. Sarma believes the assessment of terrorism has severe consequences if a true threat is missed, but equally important is a concern for wasted resources expended in the surveillance of a false positive.[136] In his review of other studies on this matter, the effectiveness of risk assessments to predict future violence related to extremism and terrorism continues to be plagued by an insufficient number of cases to form a solid statistical base for comparison.

Researchers involved in the development of instruments specifically designed to evaluate the risk of homegrown violent extremism—the Extremist Risk Guidance (ERG-22) and the Violent Extremism Risk Assessment (VERA) protocol—readily concede a qualitative rather than quantitative evidence base. During the development of ERG-22, "the advisory group suggested that accounts of individual offenders, evidenced also where possible from the wider terrorist literature, should be collated into a set of factors for

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[134] Meloy and Genzman, "The Clinical Threat Assessment of the Lone-Actor Terrorist," 650.

[135] Sarma, "Risk Assessment and the Prevention of Radicalization from Nonviolence into Terrorism," 281.

[136] Sarma, "Risk Assessment and the Prevention of Radicalization from Nonviolence into Terrorism," 282.

assessors to consider within future case formulations, producing a set of structured professional guidelines."[137] Likewise, the VERA protocol is a compilation of commonly accepted characteristics that differentiate extremist violence from ordinary violence but its creators caution, "The VERA is not intended to serve as a definitive predictive instrument for those who have not offended but rather provides some indicators as to measure the likeliness of danger. In fact, such decisions are made precisely when there is no certainty."[138] Both tools have face validity from grounded research, but remain limited because of the statistically rare number of cases in which the assessments have proven useful.

Seena Fazel, a senior research fellow in clinical science in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Oxford, and her colleagues have published two detailed comparative studies of violence risk assessment tools.[139] Dr. Fazel distilled nine of the most commonly used violence risk assessment tools from a list of 150 such instruments that were in use as of 2012, and her team analyzed reports claiming predictive validity for those nine tools. Dr. Fazel concludes, "That even after 30 years of development, the view that violence, sexual or criminal risk can be predicted in most cases is not evidence based."[140] Dr. Fazel also asserts assessment checklists should not be used independently of holistic observations made by experts.

Notably, Dr. Fazel's analysis did find that assessment tools had better negative predictive values by accurately classifying those individuals who are a lower risk for future violence.[141] Therefore, violence risk assessment tools may be more valuable to release some individuals from further surveillance rather than trying to predict imminent violence

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[137] Lloyd and Dean, "The Development of Structured Guidelines for Assessing Risk in Extremist Offenders," 42.

[138] Pressman and Flockton, "Calibrating Risk for Violent Political Extremists and Terrorists," 245.

[139] Fazel, "Use of Risk Assessment Instruments to Predict Violence and Antisocial Behaviour in 73 Samples involving 24,827 People," 1.

[140] Fazel, "Use of Risk Assessment Instruments to Predict Violence and Antisocial Behaviour in 73 Samples involving 24,827 People," 5.

[141] Fazel, "Use of Risk Assessment Instruments to Predict Violence and Antisocial Behaviour in 73 Samples involving 24,827 People," 5.

in all cases. If experts from a MDT can properly eliminate low risk cases, then limited law enforcement resources can be focused on more threatening cases. This can be an invaluable contribution from MDTs utilizing properly calibrated threat assessment instruments.

In an earlier study utilizing some of the same data on violence risk assessment reviewed by Dr. Fazel and others, researchers observed that assessment tools tend to work better when they are applied to very specific populations.[142] For example, the study found that the Structured Assessment of Violence Risk in Youth (SAVRY), which is specifically limited for use with criminal juveniles, had the highest predictive reliability rate. Despite a high level of reliability, the authors found no reason to suggest the SAVRY tool could be applied successfully in other situations.[143] Nonetheless, it is worth noting that MDTs focusing threat assessments on very specific cases involving HVE may experience greater success than teams responsible for evaluating generalized criminality.

A counterpoint to research that criticizes assessment tools for the high rate of false positives is the idea that some individuals who are identified as a threat are stopped before committing a subsequent act of violence. Surprisingly, only a handful of authors have attempted to assess the circumstances surrounding failed attempts to commit violence. In one such essay, Dr. Erik Dahl argues that after-action reviews of successful terrorist attacks often focus on deep transnational analysis that failed to piece a puzzle together in time to reveal the threat.[144] To the contrary, Dr. Dahl's review of 176 failed plots suggests that "most plots were disrupted when…intelligence and law enforcement agencies obtain very precise information about specific plots being planned by specific groups. And this precise intelligence is most often developed by ground-level, domestic intelligence and security efforts."[145] A study by Dr. Christine M. Sarteschi found similar evidence for quality police

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[142] Jay P. Singh, Martin Grann, and Seena Fazel, "A Comparative Study of Violence Risk Assessment Tools: A Systematic Review and Metaregression Analysis of 68 studies involving 25,980 Participants," *Clinical Psychology Review* 31 (2001): 509, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2010.11.009.

[143] Singh, "A Comparative Study of Violence Risk Assessment Tools," 509.

[144] Erik J. Dahl, "The Plots that Failed: Intelligence Lessons Learned from Unsuccessful Terrorist Attacks Against the United States," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 34, no. 8 (2011): 622, https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2011.582628.

[145] Dahl, "The Plots that Failed," 622.

work in thwarted mass murder plots but even more compelling evidence for the important role of family and acquaintances in recognizing and reporting threatening behavior.[146]

Even if specific violence risk assessment tools cannot be applied with high accuracy, a holistic MDT approach may still increase the opportunity for investigators to obtain precise information about potential terror plots, and an MDT framework also facilitates community level reporting of a friend or family member's behavior of concern. The predictive value of an MDT approach is found in applying expertise and contacts from different disciplines, supplemented by the use of empirically tested risk assessment instruments. Moreover, if additional resources from the community and social services are attached to an MDT, family and friends may come to believe that helping investigators intervene does not automatically equate to getting a loved one arrested.

This thesis set out to test a hypothesis that MDT threat assessments better identify those at risk for HVE. The hypothesis also asserted that once potentially dangerous individuals are identified, government must engage methods for case management to prevent an attack, which includes the possibility of preventive detention for mandated participation in a CVE program. Since risk assessment instruments lack a high degree of accuracy, preventive detention options are questionable. Nonetheless, other qualitative aspects of engaging an MDT are clearly beneficial. The next chapter explores a model for the use of MDTs in future threat investigations along with a discussion of efficient and timely case management options for individuals that are evaluated as a threat during an assessment process.

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[146] Christine M. Sarteschi, "An Examination of Thwarted Mass Homicide Plots and Threateners," *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 30 (2016): 91, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2016.06.010.

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IV. A MODEL FOR FUTURE THREAT INVESTIGATIONS

The use of threat assessments can supplement existing law enforcement methods for the investigation of homegrown violent extremism (HVE). The assistance of a multidisciplinary team (MDT) and the use of empirically grounded risk assessment instruments can further enhance threat assessments. This chapter examines the way MDT evaluations are applied in some programs today and recent strategy recommendations for the future of countering violent extremism (CVE) in the United States.

CVE programs that are underway today and future strategies both provide a strong foundation for better threat investigations. This chapter also describes a trusted contact model for visualizing the stakeholders in an MDT and a threat assessment matrix to prioritize resources, both of which were developed as an extension of the study and other research in this thesis. A model that can be used to convene an MDT and a priority matrix will both add value to future threat investigations of HVE and the subsequent case management required to divert identified individuals away from violence.

There are three important ways MDTs contribute to CVE in the United States. First, collaborative teams that include law enforcement and members of the community are used to set guidelines for CVE policies. In addition to the evaluation of individuals who are at risk for HVE, some note that it is important to engage multiple stakeholders in the development of CVE programs from the outset. Dr. Stevan Weine recommends a team approach that includes mental health, education, social services, and police officials to determine other options besides arrest; to find ways to empower communities instead of investigating them; to implement programs that promote community cohesion; and most importantly to "define for themselves their most crucial concerns regarding targeted violence and to generate solutions that will build healthy and resilient communities."[147] A recent strategy proposed by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy describes CVE collaboration as the "connective tissue" that allows programs to focus less on security while

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[147] Stevan Weine, John Cohen, and David Brannegan, *Moving Beyond Motive-Based Categories of Targeted Violence*, Report Numbers ANL/GSS 15/6 122067 (Argonne, IL: Argonne National Lab, 2015), 11–12, https://doi.org/10.2172/1224067.

still maintaining a trusted link with law enforcement for those threats that must be reported.[148]

A second way MDTs assist in the response to HVE is participation in the after action review of violent incidents. Law enforcement investigators, prosecutors, and other government officials have a legal obligation to fully investigate a criminal act of extremist violence even if the perpetrator is killed during the attack. In addition to the criminal investigation, an after action review that engages trusted experts from several disciplines is invaluable in strengthening future responses.

Executive staff of the FBI's National Security Branch emphasizes that the agency relies on behavioral experts, academia, and agency partners that apply research models to understand prior incidents of violence to better position the agency in the pre-crime space for future investigations.[149] Experts with the United States Secret Service (USSS) concur, "The field of threat assessment benefits from ongoing research and the translation of that research into operational practice."[150] The USSS report goes on to say that finding common indicators of violence is best achieved with assistance from the entire community, not just federal, state, and local law enforcement.

The third way MDTs contribute to CVE in the United States is the evaluation of individuals who are at-risk for HVE in order to make appropriate case management referrals. Dr. Hedieh Mirahmadi, the founder of the World Organization for Resource Development and Education (WORDE) and senior advisor to the FBI, testified before Congress to explain how years of research and the practical application of HVE case management in what has become known as the "Montgomery Model" could be expanded to a nationwide strategy.[151]

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[148] Levitt, *Defeating Ideologically Inspired Violent Extremism*, 11.

[149] "A New Approach to Countering Violent Extremism," Federal Bureau of Investigation, October 7, 2014, https://leb.fbi.gov/articles/featured-articles/a-new-approach-to-countering-violent-extremism-sharing-expertise-and-empowering-local-communities.

[150] National Threat Assessment Center, *Attacks on Federal Government 2001–2013*, 5.

[151] Hedieh Mirahmadi, "Building Resilience Against Violent Extremism: A Community-Based Approach," *ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 668, no. 1 (October 2016): 137, https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716216671303.

The CVE strategy used by the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office in Maryland is built upon four MDT components that are used to identify and divert individuals away from HVE.[152] First, the Montgomery Model includes police, politicians, social workers, religious leaders, and a host of others that are vetted to participate in the process. Second, wide ranging information is provided to the public to encourage participation. Third, options to connect troubled individuals with professional help are readily available. And, fourth, multidisciplinary training is a priority for all of those who participate.[153] Program elements described by Dr. Mirahmadi go beyond simply listing the members for an MDT by instead recommending a fully informed network of professionals and citizens alike who all share in a multidisciplinary approach.

In addition to professional interventions in the community, the Montgomery Model maintains a link with law enforcement by placing a licensed social worker inside the police department. This direct access to intervention options is critical in preventing potential violence while an at-risk individual is still in the pre-crime space. Dr. Mirahmadi goes on to explain, "Although no one can prove a counterfactual—that services prevented someone from becoming a terrorist—one can prove through preclinical and post-clinical assessments that clients have had a reduction in potential risk factors and an increase in protective factors."[154]

It is becoming clear from current CVE strategies that interdisciplinary contacts must be maintained by federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies to provide a holistic approach to future threat investigations. This is the crux of an MDT approach to detecting and disrupting HVE.

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[152] Mirahmadi, "Building Resilience Against Violent Extremism," 137–138.

[153] Mirahmadi, "Building Resilience Against Violent Extremism," 138.

[154] Mirahmadi, "Building Resilience Against Violent Extremism," 138.

A.   THE TRUSTED CONTACT MODEL

Criminal investigations by the FBI and other law enforcement agencies will continue to play an important role in the prevention and prosecution of terrorism-related cases in the United States. But what is indicated from lessons learned in this study and other sources cited in this thesis is the importance to intervene in a much earlier stage of potential radicalization among individuals who are identified to be at-risk. One way to visualize the way multiple, interdisciplinary stakeholders interact is the trusted contact model (see Figure 1). The trusted contact model (TCM) proposed here is a layered response that provides MDT assessment options through four levels: criminal indictment at the federal level; notification at the state and local level for additional law enforcement resources; engagement of local mental health and social services both voluntarily and involuntary as needed; and preventive intervention by community-based organizations.
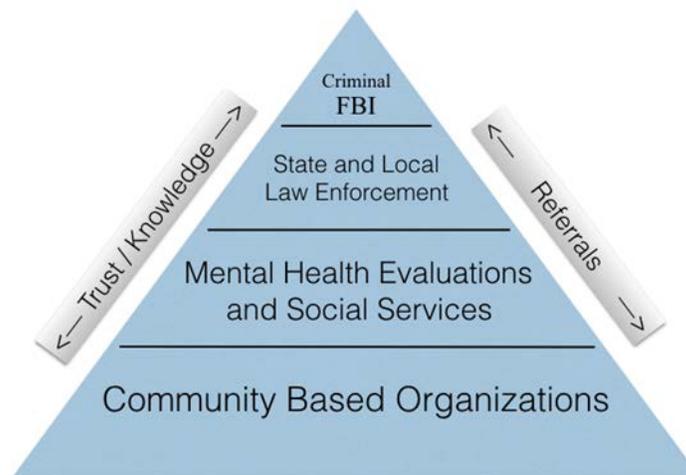

Figure 1. Trusted Contact Model (TCM)

The TCM approach is not unidirectional. Local authorities should be permitted to proactively utilize all levels of the TCM through the available modes of intervention. One key to effective referrals through the layers of intervention is shared knowledge of the roles played by each key stakeholder and trust that each level of the process can make important contributions to the prevention of HVE.

The wide base of the TCM is community-based organizations. Faith-based services, support groups, and neighborhood intervention will be engaged most often. Progressively, there should be fewer cases that require mental health services, even fewer that require investigation by local law enforcement, and the least amount of cases will require federal prosecution. The TCM satisfies a sentiment in the Washington Institute report that says a national CVE strategy should "strike a healthier balance between security-based and other community-wide efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism, especially in the preventive space."[155] Bipartisan contributors advocating the Washington Institute's recommendation for a national CVE strategy also "recognize that local service providers and community organizations are best positioned to spot radicalization in its earliest phases," but note that it is equally important to educate community stakeholders about thresholds for certain behaviors that become illegal and dangerous.[156] The TCM is a visual reference that captures all of these cooperative influences into one clear model.

Communities throughout the United States experience different types of HVE and have different levels of resources available to establish CVE efforts. Some communities will be able to establish fully functioning MDTs, while others may not. It is clear from the sampling of cases reviewed in this thesis that prior incidents of HVE have occurred in small communities, large communities, workplaces, and public places. When it is not possible to establish a full MDT, communities should still consult the TCM to ensure that trusted links are maintained at each level.

Every community must have trusted contacts in community-based organizations, in the mental health profession, among social service providers, and certainly between and within law enforcement agencies that have jurisdiction. In advance of future threats, every law enforcement agency must establish a trusted contact at each level represented in the TCM. This may involve informal relationships or it may require a formal memorandum of agreement. Some law enforcement information and data sharing platforms may also require these contacts to be vetted in advance to maintain proper clearances for information

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[155] Levitt, *Defeating Ideologically Inspired Violent Extremism*, 21.

[156] Levitt, *Defeating Ideologically Inspired Violent Extremism*.

sharing. There is no doubt that fusion centers and terrorism taskforces established regionally across the United States fill this role in many cases.[157] Nonetheless, it is still important for all investigators to know trusted contacts for each of the stakeholders that will contribute to the prevention and intervention of HVE.

B.   THREAT ASSESSMENT MATRIX TO PRIORITIZE RESOURCES

If an MDT determines that an individual is on a path toward imminent violence, the first priority is to engage intervention that involves mental health support, social services, job services, or trusted sources that can promote counter narratives that challenge dangerous ideology. If that does not have an immediate effect, the MDT must engage law enforcement officials who will decide if increased surveillance is needed to establish probable cause for a crime. Law enforcement ability to conduct long-term surveillance on any potential HVE threat is constrained by limited resources. Moreover, the burden to sustain other aspects of CVE must be shared between government and the community alike.

Risk assessment instruments employed by MDTs will help prioritize which cases require the most attention. Rutgers University Professor John D. Cohen, with over thirty years of law enforcement experience who once served as a Department of Homeland Security counter-terrorism coordinator, explains:

> Aggressive law enforcement efforts remain necessary to counter violent extremism, but they alone are no longer sufficient. The United States is moving to an approach to CVE that recognizes the limitations of "detect and arrest" in the new threat environment; traditional law enforcement tactics must be supplemented by approaches that engage local communities and civil society to identify at-risk individuals and to develop other, earlier forms of intervention.
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> The federal government simply does not have the resources to conduct surveillance and investigate the expanding number of individuals who derive inspiration from terrorist groups or extremist ideological causes. Furthermore, traditional counterterrorism-related investigative strategies may be insufficient to prevent acts of targeted violence. Accordingly, we

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157 W. Payne Marks, "Integration of Behavioral Threat Management into Fusion Center Operations to Prevent Mass or Targeted Violence," 78.

must incorporate behavioral risk assessment methodologies into the investigative processes associated with terrorism tips and lead evaluation.[158]

Other researchers advocating a public health model for CVE also believe stakeholders will be required to make better assessments as a way to stretch limited resources, a reality exacerbated by the fact most threats never materialize into actual violence and the sheer number of threats that are reported expend a lot of CVE resources.[159]

One way to prioritize resources is through the use of a threat matrix. In the threat assessment matrix proposed here, a person's radical belief system is aligned along one axis while evidence of violent behavior is aligned along the other axis (see Figure 2). Using this matrix, stakeholders in a CVE program or a threat assessment MDT can visualize HVE threat levels and make intervention decisions accordingly. Most HVE experts agree that each person's path to radicalized violence is not only different but also dynamic.
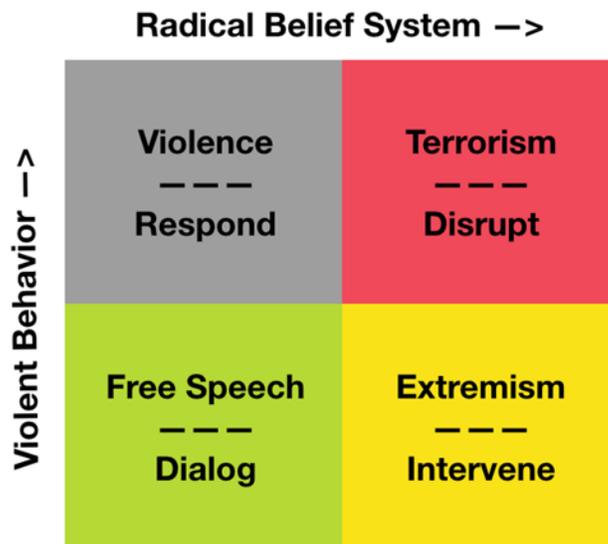
Figure 2. Threat Assessment Matrix

[158] Cohen, "The Next Generation of Government CVE Strategies at Home," 126.

[159] Challgren, *Countering Violent Extremism*, 13–14.

Certain factors that influence an individual may change slowly over time or rapidly after a stressful life event. MDTs and risk assessment instruments will be useful to identify those who are at high risk for violence, but it is important to recall that studies have shown risk assessment instruments are even better at screening out those who are low risk to commit a violent act.

The lower left segment (Free Speech—Dialog) of the threat assessment matrix represents a person who has few indicators of violent behavior but who starts to express a radical belief system to others. If a burgeoning radical belief system is detected in an individual, there is an opportunity for trusted community leaders to engage in meaningful dialog. This segment resides entirely within the freedom to think and speak as one chooses, but it is also an early opportunity to work toward a change of heart that prevents a radical belief system from festering into violence.

The lower right segment (Extremism—Intervene) of the threat assessment matrix contains those individuals who have a belief system that has become extreme in comparison to others in the community. In this segment, evidence of violent behavior is still low but there is a more clearly defined need for the community to intervene with services and a counter-narrative to walk back the individual's radicalization. Stakeholders in the community must manage responses in the lower segments of the matrix that involve free speech and non-violent extremism. Government action in these segments is not only an affront to constitutional freedoms, but also a waste of resources with little chance of success.

The upper left segment (Violence—Respond) of the threat assessment matrix represents violent action by an individual that is not attached or is only loosely attached to a radical belief system. Individuals who do not harbor radical beliefs in advance of an attack perpetrate these acts of criminal violence. During the development of this thesis, yet another violent attack—the current "most deadly"—occurred in Las Vegas on October 1, 2017 when a lone gunman killed 58 people attending an outdoor music festival.[160] The

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[160] "Las Vegas Shooting," CBS News, accessed November 19, 2017, https://www.cbsnews.com/feature/las-vegas-shooting.

gunman did not communicate a motive and did not display a radical belief system. In this type of case, law enforcement must respond swiftly to save lives and conduct a thorough investigation that supports full prosecution under the law. However, even within this violent criminal action segment, a well-formed threat assessment process can still contribute to some preventive efforts. According to John D. Cohen, modeling new programs around other successful efforts that use police response and community intervention of underlying issues like mental health "holds promise in not only preventing violent extremism but also preventing other types of mass casualty attacks and even gang-related violence."[161]

The upper right segment (Terrorism—Disrupt) of the threat assessment matrix represents individuals who subscribe to a highly radicalized belief system and exhibit evidence of violent behavior. The use of MDTs and risk assessment instruments is intended to identify individuals at risk for HVE at an earlier stage. A threat assessment framework works to reveal individuals who pose an imminent threat of targeted violence or terrorism. Accordingly, any threat that is assessed to be in this segment must be disrupted by law enforcement efforts that establish probable cause for an arrest. Government agencies are responsible for prosecuting and disrupting individuals who land in the upper segments of the threat assessment matrix.

Community stakeholders can still contribute to CVE efforts in segments of the threat assessment matrix that represent imminent violence by reporting suspicious behavior, which should be better enabled by a well-formed MDT framework. This is an important operational consideration that is recommended by the USSS for local law enforcement threat investigations:

> As law enforcement professionals, we rely on others to share information with us about a person or situation of concern and to work with us to develop intervention strategies to mitigate the risks. One way we can enhance our efforts in this area is by encouraging the development of effective threat and/or behavioral assessment programs in our local communities. These programs identify what behaviors are, or should be, concerning in various settings; encourage the reporting of certain behaviors to law enforcement

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[161] Cohen, "The Next Generation of Government CVE Strategies at Home," 124.

and others who have the authority or capacity to intervene; gather information about the behaviors and the factors influencing them; and identify appropriate interventions. Although law enforcement plays a critical role in these programs, their ability to prevent acts of targeted violence requires the collaboration and efforts of the entire community.[162]

The USSS guidance goes on to say that the level of concern needed for the community to report suspicious behavior should be purposely low. Citizens should not be required to discern threatening behavior; they need only report their concerns. As stated earlier, well functioning MDTs and threat assessment processes will then be engaged to categorize what, if any, threat is represented in the suspicious behavior that has been reported. If a threat is identified, the next step is to apply a case management process to prevent an act of violence.

C. CASE MANAGEMENT OF INDIVIDUALS AT RISK FOR HVE

Once a threat is communicated to law enforcement and shared with members of an MDT, information gathering that gauges the seriousness of the threat will then lead to a plan to manage the risk posed by the individual. Dr. Stevan Weine and other contributors to an *International Review of Psychiatry* article explain:

> A multidisciplinary team, including specially trained mental health professionals, conducts information gathering activities from the person of interest and corroborating sources so as to identify, with the help of risk assessment measures, whether or not they appear to be on a path towards violent action…If so, then the team develops a risk management plan, which can include psychiatric treatment or case management and follow-up assessment.[163]

Dr. Weine goes on to relate that several programs in the United States are establishing protocols to assess and manage HVE, but not without some daunting challenges. Some communities still have lingering suspicions that CVE programs are police intelligence mechanisms in disguise, and programs that focus on treatment suffer political loss of funds

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[162] National Threat Assessment Center, *Attacks on Federal Government 2001–2013*, 5.

[163] Stevan Weine et al., "Utilizing Mental Health Professionals to Help Prevent the Next Attacks," *International Review of Psychiatry* 29, no. 4 (August 2017): 335, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09540261.2017.1343533.

in some jurisdictions that prefer a traditional law and order approach.[164] Despite these challenges, Dr. Hedieh Mirahmadi and others remain optimistic that policymakers can develop a productive CVE framework with meaningful case management options.

Dr. Mirahmadi is confident that the Montgomery Model's field-tested case management solutions are ready for use in other areas but requisite conditions must be met. She contends better coordination of intervention standards at the federal level, instead of ad hoc efforts in hundreds of communities across the nation, will help create a "community of practice that can be fine-tuned and improved across jurisdictions."[165] Dr. Mirahmadi goes on to advocate for training resources that will build additional capacity for intervention programs, and she believes the use of diversion programs for HVE cases should mirror other pre-trial options already in use within the criminal justice system.

Recommendations in the bipartisan Washington Institute report on preventing and countering violent extremism include very specific methods to increase capacity for case management.[166] First, the report recommends MDT networks should engage existing professional organizations that serve the mental health and social work community, along with higher-level educational institutions that support these professions. Second, localities should partner with emergency management entities that already manage a network of stakeholders that can be tapped for additional resources to confront HVE. And, third, quick response teams with appropriate training for CVE can be established in a way that is similar to the model used for FEMA's community emergency response teams. CVE quick response teams can headquarter in major metropolitan areas, but remain available on short notice to respond to areas that have less capacity to respond to an identified HVE case.[167] All of these suggestions, along with the TCM model proposed in this thesis, provide multiple ways any community can make an MDT threat assessment process part of a CVE policy.

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[164] Weine, "Utilizing Mental Health Professionals to Help Prevent the Next Attacks," 338.

[165] Mirahmadi, "Building Resilience Against Violent Extremism," 140.

[166] Levitt, *Defeating Ideologically Inspired Violent Extremism*, 21.

[167] Levitt, *Defeating Ideologically Inspired Violent Extremism*, 21.

Collectively, documents calling for collaborative approaches to CVE seem to advocate casting a wide net of both professionals and trained civilians in the hope that no potential threat of HVE will be overlooked. It is important to note that a wide net has the potential to stigmatize whole communities and demonize some individuals who are incorrectly identified as a threat if the threat assessment approach is not handled properly. The Brennan Center for Justice, a respected think tank that analyzes government policies in context of civil rights and democratic values, compiled an important review of CVE in the United States. The report notes that much has been written on the theories behind the prevention of extremism, but data related to the practical implications of case management in CVE are less explored.[168]

As an example, the Brennan Center is critical of the Montgomery Model because it employs a long list of mostly harmless political beliefs that can be used to entangle a person in blurred frames between police investigation and patient treatment. In addition to the Montgomery Model, the Brennan Center reviews CVE pilot programs in Minneapolis-St. Paul, Boston, and Los Angeles with a frame that is critical of government intervention in the pre-crime space.

Funding for the Minneapolis-St. Paul model was earmarked for expanding youth engagement within other well-established programs in the non-profit sector and school system. According to the Brennan Center report, the Minneapolis strategies were geared toward long term prevention and community resilience but were still met with some trepidation by the mostly Somali-American community because the program received its funding from the federal government.[169] The report further criticizes that it is not clear how the police should become involved if intervention fails.

The Brennan Center report contends the Boston CVE framework originated with the same community resilience goals that are typical in other programs started with federal

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168 Faiza Patel and Meghan Koushik, *Countering Violent Extremism* (New York: Brennan Center for Justice, 2017), 22, https://www.brennancenter.org/analysis/cve-programs-resource-page.

169 Patel and Koushik, *Countering Violent Extremism*, 31.

grant money.[170] The Brennan Center outlines how Boston officials began their CVE efforts by hosting training sessions that were designed to teach members of the community to recognize those on a path to radicalization, but the report is critical that the program also encourages participants to report individuals who threaten violence without much guidance on how to gauge imminent violence. The Brennan Center goes on to report that Boston has moved toward a model that primarily provides support for family members who believe their loved ones may be exploring radical ideology.

The Brennan Center for Justice report on CVE provides more detailed case management steps in the Los Angels model than were found researching other programs. The Los Angeles model has general CVE community resiliency aspects, but it also includes specific steps for individual interventions as part of their Recognizing Extremist Network Early Warnings (RENEW) program.[171] According to the Brennan Center, the RENEW program is managed by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Office, the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF), the Los Angeles Police Department's (LAPD) mental health evaluation unit, and others in the regional intelligence center. Cases come to the attention of the RENEW team from LAPD leads or reports from the public. The name of the individual of concern is first run through a series of checks at the intelligence center then the LAPD mental health unit evaluates the subject's behavior to determine if he or she should be held for treatment or referred to outpatient services. If the subject does not have a mental health issue, he or she can be referred to social services or cultural programs to better integrate the person back into positive aspects of society.[172] Again, the Brennan Center expresses concerns because results from the Los Angeles process are reported back to the JTTF for tracking and there is little evidence that a person can be fully cleared of any suspicion once this process starts.

Dr. Alex P. Schmid, Director of the Terrorism Research Initiative, conducted a thorough literature review on the process of radicalization, de-radicalization, counter-

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[170] Patel and Koushik, *Countering Violent Extremism*, 29.

[171] Patel and Koushik, *Countering Violent Extremism*, 30.

[172] Patel and Koushik, *Countering Violent Extremism*, 30.

radicalization for the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT) – The Hague.[173] In his review, Dr. Schmid observes that leading research still argues that most terrorists do not have a mental defect even if their ideologically based violent behavior is outside of the norm. He also found some research indicates a potentially violent subject can become disengaged from a violent plan or group even if the person remains cognitively radicalized. This is especially true for "lone wolves," even though researchers know very little about why lone wolves disengage from violence because the process happens so privately.[174]

Even more telling of the need for more research concerning intervention options, Dr. Schmid reviewed a meta-analysis of 183 studies in the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) and found that only nine studies related to de-radicalization. A lack of options to disengage a person from dangerous ideology once he is identified as a threat raises serious concerns about any CVE model that purports to use risk assessment instruments, in an MDT framework, to better identify those individuals who pose the greatest risk of HVE.

Even if potentially violent radicals are identified more accurately, one is still left wondering what to do next. Nonetheless, having trusted experts from multiple disciplines engaged in the decision-making process for HVE cases offers the best opportunity to engage the right resource at the right time. While other applications of law allow for the detention of individuals deemed dangerous to society, the risk assessment processes employed or proposed for CVE programs in the United States do not yet have the empirical foundation needed to justify the use of preventive detention that forces participation in CVE related treatment plans.

For now, CVE programs in the United States must depend on the community, mental health professionals, and clinical social workers to gain voluntary compliance for individuals to reject radical ideology that advocates violent behavior. If voluntary

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[173] Alex P. Schmid, *Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review* (The Hague: International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, 2013), https://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-Schmid-Radicalisation-De-Radicalisation-Counter-Radicalisation-March-2013_2.pdf.

[174] Schmid, *Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation*, 29.

compliance fails, law enforcement agencies must work to disrupt violent extremism before it occurs through surveillance and arrest by establishing probable cause for a crime.

The problem posed by HVE indicates a need for multidisciplinary teams to help build solid CVE programs, to evaluate lessons learned after an attack occurs, and to continue working toward a threat assessment process to better identify individuals who pose the greatest risk of violence related to HVE. In the next chapter, this thesis finishes with a review of recommendations that are drawn from this study and areas for future research.

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V.   DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This thesis was formed around a hypothesis that threat assessment processes are generally more effective than traditional law enforcement investigations in the pre-crime space, and multidisciplinary teams provide the best framework for effective risk assessments. Applying generalized risk factors to a sample of cases produced some evidence that an assessment process can aid in more effective identification of potential threats, and a handful of empirical studies also lend support to the idea that risk assessment instruments have validity in both sensitivity to predict threatening behavior in some individuals and the specificity necessary to exclude other subjects who are unlikely to become a violent threat. But, the evidence is far from conclusive.

The exploratory nature of this thesis has also added subjective support for the use of multidisciplinary team (MDT) frameworks in countering violent extremism (CVE) strategies. MDTs can be useful in building a connected and community-sensitive CVE program. A series of strategy recommendations and other practices explored in pilot programs across the country have demonstrated the importance of engaging an MDT to build CVE programs from the ground up, instead of from the federal government down. MDTs are also logical structures for the review of violent incidents after the fact. Even though law enforcement has the legal duty to investigate crimes for motive and the prosecution of those responsible, experts from other disciplines can dissect details of criminal violence to build better overall responses in the future.

An MDT threat assessment to evaluate an individual threat of HVE is a viable option in the range of responses needed to address this complex issue in the United States. Relatively speaking, the base rate of HVE cases is still low compared to other types of criminal violence so it is difficult to generalize the success of MDTs that utilize risk assessment instruments to predict future violence. Even in programs related to criminal recidivism or sexual predation that have a huge index of comparable cases, evidence for the accuracy of MDT threat assessments to predict future behavior is not strong enough to alleviate civil rights concerns related to civil detention and questionable treatment modalities. The same can be said for preventive detention in CVE. Insufficient empirical

foundations for risk assessment instruments as predictive tools make the use of pre-crime detention to mandate individual participation in de-radicalization programs dubious.

A.   RECOMMENDATIONS

The current national strategy for CVE in the United States recognizes the need for community involvement.[175] Members of the community are in the best position to recognize and report individuals who are vulnerable to radical ideology or poised to commit extremist violence. However, family members, teachers, counselors, and friends are unlikely to report at-risk individuals if the only option is criminal investigation and prosecution. Therefore, advocates for programs that incorporate community resilience against violent extremism recommend a full range of stakeholders to create a multidisciplinary approach.[176] This thesis offers two recommendations for policymakers to consider when making modifications to the national strategy for CVE.

Recommendation 1—Utilize the trusted contact model (TCM). Some cities have the resources required to create a functional MDT that can work fulltime on the goals and objectives of a CVE program. Other communities may not be so fortunate. It is argued in this thesis that a TCM can provide guidance for the formation of a complete team, and the TCM is also useful for situations when subject matter experts should be consulted despite the absence of a formal MDT framework. Every law enforcement agency should identify and when necessary, engage at least one expert at each level of the TCM during HVE threat investigations. The TCM is set on a base level of frequently utilized community-based programs, and then progressively less utilized levels of mental health treatment, local law enforcement intervention, and federal prosecution. Research detailed in this thesis provides support for a wide range of expertise to confront HVE at the community level, and the TCM specifies trust and knowledge as the connective links between stakeholder levels. The TCM is a clear visual reference that illustrates how intervention referrals related to

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[175] U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *Strategy for Countering Violent Extremism* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2016), https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/ 16_1028_S1_CVE_strategy.pdf.

[176] Mirahmadi, "Building Resilience Against Violent Extremism," 137.

individual threats of HVE can be made between all aspects of a comprehensive CVE program.

Recommendation 2—Utilize the threat assessment matrix to prioritize resources. This matrix aligns a person's radical belief system alongside evidence of violent behavior in a way that creates a clear visual of which CVE techniques should be engaged at particular stages. Circumstances related to a person's beliefs and behaviors change gradually over time, or suddenly after a triggering event. For decades, the FBI and other local police agencies have taken the lead to detect and disrupt HVE related threats. It is becoming clear that other resources must be expended in the fight against HVE. Since all community and government resources for CVE programs are limited, it is important to engage the right resource at the right time to improve efficiency and efficacy.

The threat assessment matrix is designed to provide a visual reminder that certain beliefs are protected by freedom of speech but may be changed through respectful dialog. Other beliefs held by an individual can become radical in comparison to the rest of the community and even if violent behavior is not present, this is an important time for the community to progressively intervene in the individual's life to dissuade violent action. The threat assessment matrix is also a visual reminder for the role government plays in the prevention and prosecution of violence that occurs absent a radical belief system; and more importantly, the even stronger role government plays in the disruption of terrorism borne out of a radical belief system that is combined with evidence of imminent violent behavior.

To fully engage community stakeholders in a pre-crime intervention model, Dr. Stevan Weine from the University of Chicago and John Cohen from Rutgers University recommend establishing an MDT with law enforcement and community members who are empowered to conduct a formal threat assessment when certain behavior patterns are reported by the community.[177] To do so, Weine and Cohen assert that specific training on individual risk assessment, authority to directly intervene in the life of the at-risk individual, and the ability to continually monitor and assess future progress of the individual away from dangerous radicalization are all required. The TCM and the threat

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[177] Stevan Weine, *Moving Beyond Motive-Based Categories of Targeted Violence*, 9.

assessment matrix proposed in this thesis will benefit an empowered MDT similar to that recommended by Weine and Cohen.

The FBI and local law enforcement should not use assistance from community members that are part of an MDT as a replacement for traditional counterterrorism efforts. The mission of pursuing criminal cases is still the responsibility of police, federal agents, and intelligence experts. Nonetheless, community level MDTs can help to identify dangerous radicalization earlier than traditional criminal investigations. Even though police may be the first to become aware of a potential radicalization threat, other cases exposed at the community level may be resolved directly or come to the attention of law enforcement if community intervention options fail. MDT stakeholders must have the trust and training needed to recognize an obligation to warn law enforcement of an imminent threat. Trust, training, and communication among all levels of government and the community are required to make an MDT threat assessment process work.[178]

B.   LIMITATIONS AND AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The research for this thesis is limited to cases in the United States. The data sampling used for this study is too small to make definitive recommendations but the observations made here are useful in the ongoing pursuit of better ways to recognize and prevent HVE before an attack occurs. On the whole, HVE related cases in the United States represent a very small percentage of criminal violence and an even smaller percentage of global terrorism. Future research into the efficacy of CVE programs for the United States will benefit from wider data sets that include domestic and international incidents of HVE.

Research reviewed in this thesis assumes the formation of MDTs is simply a matter of gathering experts from community groups, law enforcement departments, federal agencies, and other professional organizations. The underlying sciences related to trust, training, and collaboration are each complex subjects in their own right. Future research into the performance of MDTs that are utilized to assess individual risk of HVE may need

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[178] Levitt, *Defeating Ideologically Inspired Violent Extremism*, 11.

to first determine if the assumptions related to the creation and nurturing of an MDT are valid.

One surprising finding in the research compiled for this thesis is the lack of studies detailing methods for de-radicalization and the case management steps required to move a person away from the appeal of HVE. It appears that the bulk of research available on the subject of HVE and CVE focuses on detecting a potential threat. This thesis also adds to the body of knowledge on effective ways to assess which individuals are more likely to commit HVE-related violence. With regard to what happens next, this thesis offers limited information on the treatment and case management of those individuals who are identified at greater risk for HVE. Future research should continue to focus on detecting *and* if possible, deprogramming individuals who are on a path to violent extremism.

C.   CONCLUSION

Research questions at the start of this thesis asked: How can potential homegrown violent extremists be more effectively identified before an attack takes place? Can the predictive framework of multidisciplinary team evaluations be used to identify individuals who are more likely to commit extremism-inspired violence? Once these individuals are identified, should preventive civil detention be used to mandate participation in CVE programs? Research in this thesis indicates increased use of trusted contacts from multiple disciplines can help to better identify HVE and to build better services related to CVE. The predictive framework of MDTs and risk assessment instruments can add value to programs that attempt to identify individuals who are more likely to commit extremism-inspired violence, but these techniques lack the precision necessary to justify preventive civil detention to mandate participation in CVE programs.

This study has contributed to a better understanding of known risk assessment measures that contribute to the reliability of MDT evaluations to predict potentially violent behavior of an individual, but more work needs to be done. Some of these techniques can serve as a crystal ball to foresee future acts of radicalized violence in some individuals, but the crystal ball remains cloudy in its accuracy. Nonetheless, MDT threat assessment

models used in other circumstances did provide guidance for prospective policy options for the use of an MDT threat assessment model for CVE programs in the United States.

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