Mining the Personal to Carve a Space of One's Own: A Grounded Theory Study of Grassroots Countering Violent Extremism Practitioners

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science,
School of Law and Government,
Dublin City University
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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December 2017

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ABSTRACT

Mining the Personal to Carve a Space of One's Own:
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Orla Lehane

This research focuses on individuals working to counter violent extremism at grassroots level. It details the way in which these practitioners draw on their own personal experiences to carve a space for themselves within a domain of policy that has seen an ever increasing variety of actors seek to augment their positions.

That it is possible to intervene and avert people from being influenced by violent extremist organisations to perpetrate acts of violence is the impetus behind this growing 'countering violent extremism' (CVE) industry. CVE policy, a major concern for governments around the world, marks a shift within counter-terrorism towards prevention. This move comes as a response to well publicised acts of "homegrown" violent extremism, such as the 7/7 bombings in London (2005) and the Madrid train bombings (2004). The idea is that individuals can be "radicalised" to commit such acts, whether by friends or family, other significant individuals in their lives, online materials created and disseminated by violent extremist organisations, or by the wider socio-political context that creates a variety of situations and issues that may fuel individuals' decisions to take violent action against a perceived enemy.

Those seeking to intervene in or reverse the "radicalisation process" range from government officials and offices to Silicon Valley corporations, from educators, NGOs, and private companies to individuals seeking to exert some influence. One set of these actors is focused on herein: grassroots level CVE practitioners. These are individuals who work independently of government and policy makers; they are not part of the "official" system.

This research uses grounded theory to uncover grassroots CVE practitioners main concerns and to theorise the way in which they seek to resolve these concerns. A predominantly inductive method, interviews were conducted with thirty grassroots CVE practitioners working to counter a variety of ideologies, including right wing violent extremism, violent jihadism and violent extremism associated with republicanism and loyalism in Northern Ireland. Those interviewed include former violent extremists, former gang members, survivors of acts of violent extremism, Imams, youth workers, artists, and individuals who feel personally compelled to engage in CVE efforts.

By taking a grounded theory approach to explore their experiences, this research offers an account of the way in which these grassroots practitioners function within the CVE industry. *Mining the personal* conceptualises the way in which these individuals draw on their own very personal experiences, *repurposing* these along with their skills and capacities, to *establish themselves as credible and authoritative voices* within the CVE arena. In doing so, these practitioners are *carving a space for themselves* from which they can work on their own terms, *remaining independent* while continuing to *mine the personal* as a way in which to resolve the *frustrations* they experience as a result of what they believe to be poor policy and practice on the part of other CVE actors.

INTRODUCTION

> *My fellow citizens, 2016 has been a year of difficult trials.*
> - Angela Merkel, Christmas Message 2016

In July 2016 *The Guardian* published the video '30 Days that Shook the World,'[1]:

> [o]ver the last month what has seemed like an onslaught of dramatic events have unfolded around the world: the failed coup in Turkey, the Bastille Day attack in Nice, Brexit, the Baghdad bombing, the Dallas police shooting and the sentencing of Oscar Pistorius.

2016 was the year that saw the rise of the 'Black Lives Matter' movement, coming as a response to a number of deadly police shootings in the USA, and the ensuing attacks on the movement itself. It was the year that saw an increasingly hard-line response to those fleeing war-torn countries in search of security. The "refugee crisis" saw walls going up across Europe and borders being shut, while those who sought to reach safety via the seas were simply left to the mercy of the elements. The horrors of these journeys and the responses, or lack thereof, by governments have been widely documented. Walls of a different sort went up between UK citizens in the wake of the Brexit referendum, a hard fought campaign that, in its dirtiest moments, drew heavily on anti-immigrant and racist sentiments. In Turkey a failed coup left more than 300 people dead, coming in the wake of three suicide bombs at Istanbul's Ataturk Airport. All this before considering the carnage and mass slaughter witnessed in Iraq and Syria. The horror show that was 2016 culminated with the nomination of Donald Trump – a divisive figure, clearly racist and misogynistic – as the Republican candidate for the US presidential elections, the campaign and subsequent election further dividing people. An American woman who was part of a tour group visiting Ireland told me that four of the group (of about twenty in total) had voted for Trump. Referring to herself as one of the five or six 'very liberal' members of the group, and wearing a 'Resist' t-shirt when we spoke, she explained a conversation about political positions *had* to happen at the beginning of the trip; the group had to work out how to get beyond their politics and spend two weeks travelling together. The strength of feeling among US citizens about the Trump administration, and the fraught nature of US politics, are playing out in the everyday lives of US citizens.

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[1]Video available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/video/2016/jul/22/30-days-that-shook-the-world-video [accessed 14 November 2017]

'Have you seen our neighbours' flag?' was a question put to me, somewhat sheepishly, by my Airbnb hosts in Des Moines, Iowa (March 2016). I had indeed seen the flag; the red, blue, and white of the confederate flag flying opposite had already caught my attention. Priding themselves on their hospitality, and their politics, my hosts noted their embarrassment, continuing, only half-jokingly, by suggesting that these neighbours probably had a 'stockpile of guns under their house' and were 'prepping for the end of days.' This stop in Des Moines was one of a number undertaken over a month spent travelling around the USA in February-March 2016,[2] gathering data for this project. The travel itself, the people I happened to meet along the way, offered an additional, rich source of data to that of the scheduled interviews. During this trip, and at other stages throughout this research journey, I saw first-hand a variety of instances indicative of the divisions and polarisation for which 2016 was to become infamous. I also witnessed specific instances of the issues of concern to the participants in this study, namely those working at grassroots level to counter the influence of violent extremist organisations. Staying in Minneapolis my hosts were pessimistic about the situation in the town they were originally from. The school they went to in St Cloud[3] had seen the riot police called out due to the extent and severity of the racially motivated clashes between different groups of students. Once known colloquially as "White Cloud," some residents have not taken well to the increase in immigrants, with Somalis now the largest black ethnic group in the city. Taking the bus from Chicago to Des Moines – the bus being a form of transport famously eschewed by many Americans – I was struck by the fact that the passengers were almost all black and were quite obviously part of a demographic that had not been part of my experience of Chicago up to that point. A black woman celebrating St Patrick's Day in Atlanta, Georgia told me she had 'never met a real life Irish person before.' 'That's because all your friends are black,' her friend laughed. Everywhere I went, it seemed people were emphasising their divisions for me, without being asked.

These are only a small sample of "on the ground" examples of what was being reported as an increasingly "polarised" world. The summer of 2016 was, reported Mount (2016), following 'the relentless roll call of tragedy these past two months,' becoming known as the 'summer of hate.' 2016 was, after all, the year that spawned the infamous 'me at the beginning of

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[2] Stops on this research trip included Atlanta, Georgia; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Racine and Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Chicago Illinois; Des Moines, Iowa and New York City. Other trips in the USA as part of this research included Washington DC; San Francisco, Mill Valley and Los Angeles, California.
[3] St Cloud is approximately 100 kilometres northwest of Minneapolis and St Paul and, with a population of just over 67,000 is Minnesota's tenth largest city.

2016…me at the end of 2016' meme. This 'most necessary' meme (Brogan, 2016) captured the widespread sense that 2016 was somehow one of the most awful years in living memory.[4] This viral meme offered a shared way for people all over the world to frame the experience of living through such a bad news year. Highlighting its place in the chronicles of terrible years, one journalist simply used the phrase 'What a 2016 of a year,' suggesting it would come to take its place alongside 9/11, 24/7 and 360 as numerical descriptors that become words (Lewis, 2016). This barrage of negative headlines, and the sense that the world was somehow falling apart, is a far cry from the jubilant scenes that accompanied the election of President Barack Obama in 2008. Reporting on the 'unique and aching nostalgia' accompanying the five year anniversary of his re-election, and visible all over social media, Anderson (2017) references a tweet by author J. K. Rowling: '[p]eople keep retweeting these Obama anniversary tweets into my timeline and it's like stumbling on pictures of the ex who broke your heart.'

2016's "summer of hate" echoes, almost exactly 50 years later, 1967's "summer of love." That summer would soon turn to 1968's 'year that shook the world.' While 1967 was noted as the year in which the hippy counterculture that had been gathering momentum over the previous years came to the fore, adding phrases such as 'Love In,' and 'vibes,' to the English language, it was followed by a 'more violent affair'(Griffiths, 2017). In 1968 the 'hippy dream turned sour' (Templeton and Kelleway, 2008). Griffiths (2017) attributes this turn to violence at least in part to the realisation that peaceful protest was ineffective and that direct action was needed to effect change.

Whittam Smith (1998) reports that when President Lyndon Johnson announced in March 1968 that he was not going to run for a second term in the White House, he told a friend: 'I felt that I was being chased on all sides by a giant stampede ... I was being forced over the edge by rioting blacks, demonstrating students, marching welfare mothers, squawking professors and hysterical reporters.' Writing in 1968, journalist Henry Brandon ('The Disunited States,' *Sunday Times*, 10 March 1968; quoted in Hall et al., 2013/1978: 22) noted the failing trust of the people in the America that they believe in:

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[4] Brogan (2016) describes the meme: 'In its basic form, it shows us two images—one typically cheery and hopeful, the other most often grim and despondent—then ties them together with a caption: "Me at the beginning of 2016 vs me at the end of 2016." More often than not, it's the same character or performer in both, full of hope in the one, spirit broken in the next. These are stories of catastrophic decline, played for laughs…'

> [t]hey are appalled by the massive confrontation at home between black and white, hawks and doves, intellectuals and non-intellectuals, between young and old, the law and the protestors. I doubt whether so many segments of society have ever been as divided as they are today. It is more than a malaise; somehow the American spirit is temporarily unhinged.

Echoing the '30 days that shook the world' headline quoted above, *The Guardian* (Templeton and Kelleway, 2008), in an article about 1968, ran the headline 'These were the days that shook the world,' noting that '[r]iots swept the globe, assassinations rocked America, the Russians crushed the Prague Spring, the hippy dream turned sour, and women and black people fought for equal rights. It was a year of unparalleled ferment, and the remarkable events of 1968 shaped an entire generation.' 2016 was by no means the first year to have such an effect on society at large. In her famed *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* (first published in September 1967) Joan Didion, writing about her experiences reporting on the "summer of love," opened the piece drawing on W. B. Yeats:

> *Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;*
> *Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world . . .*
> *Surely some revelation is at hand;*
> *Surely the Second Coming is at hand . . .*
> *And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,*
> *Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?*

While riots grabbed attention throughout 1968, the headlines in 2016 were dominated by reports of terrorist attacks, particularly those claimed by ISIS. Across Europe and the USA acts of violent extremism received much media coverage, contributing to the idea that, yes, things are falling apart, anarchy has indeed been 'loosed upon the world.' The perceived[5] "summer of hate" in France is summarised by De Quetteville (2016) as follows: '[e]very day. Every day, now. A new terror attack. A new barbarous way to kill innocent people: men and women watching fireworks with their children; priests celebrating mass; commuters on a suburban train. A whole arsenal is deployed: suicide belt and machete, pistol and kalashnikov; knife. A 19-tonne truck.' In the USA, the June 2016 Pulse nightclub shooting in Orlando, Florida was noted as the 'deadliest terrorist attack in the USA since the 9/11 attacks in 2001' (CNN Library, 2017).[6] The blanket coverage of these events helped kindle the

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[5] Many of the articles, including that quoted here, point out that there have been other terrible years throughout history, and that some could certainly, when studied side by side, be deemed to be worse than 2016.

[6] 49 people were killed and over 50 injured in a nightclub in Orlando, Florida when Omar Saddiqui Mateen opened fire. The shooting, claimed by ISIS, was the deadliest "terrorist" attack on US soil since 9/11. Also classified as a hate crime due to the targeting of LGBT patrons at gay nightclub *Pulse*, the attack had a high

increasing belief that we, "the west," were under threat from outside forces; nowhere was safe, no one was safe:'2016 marred by nearly daily terrorist attacks,' (Dorell, 2016); 'L'horreur à nouveau,' (Le Figaro, Headline, 16 July, 2016) and (The Daily Telegraph, Headline, 16 July, 2016):

> 84 Dead in Nice, 281 dead in Baghdad, 49 Dead in Orlando, 72 Dead in Lahore, 35 Dead in Brussels, 18 Dead in Grand-Bassam, 12 Dead in Jakarta, 45 Dead in Istanbul, 14 Dead in San Bernardino, 130 Dead in Paris, 103 Dead in Ankara, 145 Dead in Maiduguri and Monguno, 38 Dead in Sousse, 38 Dead in Tunis, 17 Dead in Paris, 2 Dead in Sydney, 224 Dead in Egypt, 137 Dead in Yemen…It Never Stops. The World Mourns Another Terror Attack.

In the face of such headlines, governments had to be seen to be doing *something, anything.* Reactions have included the banning of burkinis at beaches in France, the guarding of some French beaches by the police, the banning of bags large enough to conceal a weapon, or bomb at beaches in France (Boyle, 2016) followed by the March 2017 decision by the European Court of Justice to allow employers to ban staff from wearing a headscarf (Ahmed, 2017). Such actions have been further contributing to the widespread polarisation through the singling out of Muslim individuals around the world as potential threats. These are issues that have been picked up on within popular culture: 2016's annual end of year *Screen Wipe*[7] had polarisation as a major focus, while Aisling Bea's 2016 comedy gig at the Electric Picnic Festival (2-4 September 2016) picked up on the idea that Muslims were being unfairly labelled as terrorists. There was, in many senses, no escape throughout 2016 from the discussion of and references to the issues at the centre of this research journey.

It is such issues that cause a great deal of frustration for the participants of this study, namely those working at grassroots level in the field that has become known as *countering violent extremism* (CVE). This is a policy area that has grown in significance in the wake of incidents such as those referred to above, tracing its roots back to the aftermath of the 7/7 attacks in the UK in 2005. The idea that something needs to be done to prevent people, particularly young people, from being influenced by violent extremist organisations to the point they are willing to commit acts of violence on behalf of these groups has been receiving much emphasis within government policy. Ostensibly dealing with a variety of violent

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proportion of Latino victims. This incident was surpassed as the deadliest mass shooting modern US history the following year when a gunman in Las Vegas killed 58 people. The perpetrator, Stephen Paddock, was deemed to be working alone and the act was not considered to be terrorist in nature.

[7] Created and presented by Charlie Brooker, *Screenwipe* offers commentary on television shows and the manner in which shows are produced. It is broadcast on UK's Channel 4.

extremisms, this area of policy, wherein this study is firmly located, purports to emphasise the importance of intervening before the threat of violence is actualised. This has resulted in a whole industry developing around the idea that this is both possible and desirable. An ever-increasing number and variety of actors are becoming involved in work in this area. From government policy makers and private industry, to youth workers and musicians, countering violent extremism is currently a *cause célèbre* attracting much focus and much finance from governments around the world. What follows is a study into one subset of individuals working in the area.

This study has been very much influenced by both the context outlined and the choice of methodology: classical grounded theory. As a methodology not widely used in international relations, adopting such an approach allows for a focus on the actions and behaviours of individual agents as opposed to being restricted to solely exploring CVE relevant policies discourse, thus shifting the focus from the systems at play to those individuals and groups directly affected by, and perhaps seeking to influence, such systems and policies. In following the emerging ideas within the data as per grounded theory requirements, as opposed to approaching the analysis with a predetermined theoretical framework, it soon became apparent there was an interesting story to be told about those working as grassroots CVE practitioners and their concerns, a story about the way in which high level policies and ideas are playing out on the frontlines of practice. The research area proved to be timely and, with little research thus far carried out into CVE generally and grassroots practitioners thereof more specifically, grounded theory offers a way into the phenomenon and for finding out what is actually going on, at least with regards to the subset of individuals in this study.

Following grounded theory procedures, it soon became apparent that CVE policy, the associated terminology and the growth of a CVE industry, was causing problems for the practitioners in question. Contributing to the sense of *frustration* that these individuals are seeking to overcome, which comes as a direct result of poor policy and practice, combined with problematic media coverage of acts of violent extremism and the impact this is having on communities everywhere, it pushes them in a very personal way to take action. In seeking to overcome this sense of frustration, the practitioners in this study are *mining the personal to carve a space of their own.* Throughout their work, they draw heavily on their personal experiences, repurposing these for use in the work that they are doing and seeking to establish themselves as significant actors within the area of CVE. This significance boosted by the current fixation with CVE policy, they pursue the creation of their own space, from

which they can approach their work in the manner they see fit, thereby preventing the worst excesses of policy taking hold.

My personal experience

While I did not come to this study with a specific background in CVE, I did spend eight years working in non-formal education, predominantly with children and teenagers, an engagement that has continued throughout the completion of this research. This work includes human rights education, development education and arts education. While my experience is not within the substantive area of CVE, it did become relevant at various points throughout this study. Within the interviews conducted, I found that I often drew on this background to connect with practitioners, shifting their view of me as a desk bound researcher to someone with hands-on experiences of working with children and teenagers; this includes working with individuals from "troubled" backgrounds, within juvenile detention settings and with individuals and groups with "special needs." Some of these experiences seemed to reflect the work carried out by some of the participants, particularly those working directly with groups of young people. Upon hearing of my previous work, many of the practitioners interviewed seemed to gain an understanding into the development of my interest in this area. They appeared to develop a deeper trust and, in many instances, began to discuss specific initiatives with me, offering further details about where and how they work. That my own personal experience was of interest is, when considering the work that follows, not surprising: it mirrors the emphasis that the participants place on their own experiences, *mining the personal* emerging as a key element of the theory developed.

Structure of the Thesis

This *Introduction* illustrates the backdrop against which this work is set. In setting the scene, this section is designed to highlight the general perceptions of the year 2016, this year having come to be recognised as a year of misfortune, of adversity, of something unprecedented. Central to this idea are the numerous violent incidents labelled "violent extremism" that took place, the coverage of these incidents, and the fallout therefrom. This chapter emphasises the influence of such events on this study. The role of grounded theory and the organic approach adopted in reaching the focus of this study is highlighted, as is the researcher background, which proved relevant as the study unfolded.

Chapter one locates the study, asking 'what is CVE?' This chapter offers further context to the work of those interviewed for this study. CVE is currently a major policy preoccupation and an expanding industry, with an increasing number of actors continuing to become involved in work in this area. Changes in government and acts of violent extremism that prompt and require government responses both have an effect on policy and practice in this area. While CVE may be a hot topic for governments, international organisations, the media, think tanks, and academics, little consensus has been reached on what CVE actually is. This chapter makes these issues clear, focusing on definitions, policy documents, CVE actors and commentators. As becomes apparent over the course of this work, these issues have a significant impact on the work of grassroots practitioners, influencing their approaches and behaviours.

Chapter two is all about methodology; here both the fundamental principles of classical grounded theory and the way in which these have been operationalised in this project are discussed. In covering the path of the research from the very outset, detailing each step of the journey, this chapter delineates the processes that allowed for the emergence of *frustration* as the participants' main concern, discussed here at some length, and the development of the theory, *mining the personal to carve a space of one's own.*

Chapter three is theory focused. As a consequence of their *frustration* with understandings of CVE forwarded through government policy and mass media, those who participated in this study draw very heavily on their own personal experiences in their efforts to *carve a space* for themselves, and their insights, within the CVE field. *Mining the personal* is key to everything these practitioners do in their work; they draw heavily on personal experiences, repurposing these to different ends and, in so doing, seek to establish themselves as credible actors and authoritative voices in the realm of CVE. They are part of this growth industry, but seek to remain outside "official" efforts; they strive to go about their work on their own terms, remaining independent and operating as they see best fit based on their own unique set of experiences.

Chapter four offers a further discussion of the theory developed. By considering the theory within the bigger picture of the CVE field, the significance of what the actions of the participants in this study reveal about the overall area is highlighted. Issues around the degrees of power wielded by different actors in the area of CVE are underlined along with its

politicised agenda, which is set by governments. The substantial gap between what is happening at policy level compared to what is happening on the ground is detailed. The chapter concludes with an exploration of the way in which this theory can be judged according to the criterion of grounded theory methodology, with the limitations of this study also addressed herein.

Finally, the *Conclusion* to this work looks at some of the broader implications of this research. Here, the significance for the wider public is considered, along with the difficulties in offering any policy recommendations based on the data collected. In addition to summarising the project's findings, the discussion turns to directions for future research, highlighting the many opportunities opened up for considering the way in which the CVE world could be, and should be, considered by those seeking to glean further insights into this area.

CHAPTER ONE: CONTEXTUALISING THE STUDY
WHAT IS COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM?

The rise of violent extremism represents the preeminent challenge of the young 21st century.
- John Kerry, US Secretary of State, 2015

Introduction

To contextualise the study that follows, this chapter focuses on the policy area 'countering violent extremism' (CVE). It is an evolving area, subject to considerable attention from governments and, increasingly, a variety of other actors are either seeking to play a role in this area, or are expected, by government and policy makers, to do so. Considered a top priority for many governments around the world, significant amounts of funding are being set aside for CVE work. Given that the participants in this study are practitioners in the area of CVE, this chapter sets the scene for what follows, providing a backdrop to the work they do and offering some insight into the policies and concepts upon which this work is premised.

Before moving to the question 'what is CVE?,' the first part of this chapter discusses the place of the literature review in grounded theory, and the way this chapter fits in with competing views on the use of literature from the substantive area under study. The focus then moves to the discussion of CVE. This begins with a brief summary of the main ideas underpinning CVE, before moving to a more in depth consideration of how this *ideé fixe* is conceived of within those policy documents that remain firmly on governments' national and international agendas. Some of the issues raised by CVE commentators regarding understandings of CVE policy are considered, offering further insights into understandings around CVE.

The Place of the Literature Review in a Grounded Theory Study

> *Ever since the publication of 'The Discovery of Grounded Theory,' concerns have arisen regarding how students and researchers should approach and use the existing literature relevant to their research topic.*
> (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007: 19)

It has been argued that within the field of grounded theory research, 'the use of existing literature represents a polemic and divisive issue' (Dunne, 2010: 113). In a grounded theory study, literature is 'discovered just as the theory is' (Glaser, 1998: 69). In "traditional" research, the literature review, conducted at the beginning of a research project, provides a

theoretical perspective or a framework through which the research problem, is preconceptualised. When following grounded theory, the advice is (Glaser & Strauss, 2008/1967: 37, emphasis added):

> An effective strategy is, at first, literally to *ignore the literature of theory and fact on the area under study*, in order to assure that the emergence of categories will not be *contaminated* by concepts more suited to different areas. Similarities and convergences with the literature can be established after the analytic core of categories has emerged.

Avoiding the substantive literature at the beginning of a grounded theory study enhances the processes of *discovery* and *emergence*, central elements of grounded theory. By adhering to the associated procedures, the researcher simply cannot know at the outset of a study which literature will be relevant to the theory developed. This is ascertained as concepts emerge as part of the research process.

This "abandoning" of the traditional literature review has been criticised by Morse (2001: 9-10), oft cited on the issue, as 'naïve' and 'fraught with danger for the novice researcher,' who runs the risk of having a wealth of data but not knowing what to do with it. Furthermore, Morse suggests that this approach – the 'creative licence and the admonishment to ignore the work of others,' – is having a negative impact on the generation of knowledge, with work not being appropriately situated (Morse, 2001: 10). Not only does this criticism undermine the researcher and their abilities, it also ignores the fact that Glaser (1998: 73-74) advocates reading 'vociferously in other areas and fields while doing grounded theory in order to keep up…theoretical sensitivity.' *Theoretical sensitivity* refers to the researcher's ability to have both theoretical insight and the ability to make something of these insights; it is under constant, continual development, thus enabling the researcher to conceptualise and formulate a theory as it emerges from the data (Glaser & Strauss, 2008/1967: 46). The traditional literature review, with the researcher reading in the substantive area and developing a theoretical framework in advance of data collection, carries the potential for the loss of theoretical sensitivity and risks becoming doctrinaire and insensitive or defensive toward the questions that cast doubt on the theory (Glaser & Strauss, 2008/1967: 46). The aim is to approach the study with an open mind, not an empty mind.

It was with this approach in mind that this literature "preview" was originally conducted. The ideas encountered as this chapter was developed have not been used as a theoretical

framework for the study, but rather to help develop theoretical sensitivity. What was ultimately included in here was the information required to locate the study. An earlier version of this chapter included further discussion of the substantive literature, though this section was certainly not the only literature consulted. No assumption was made that this would be the literature relevant for theory development. I kept an open mind regarding relevant literature, theoretical perspectives and frameworks. As has been noted (Dey, 1993: 63), there is a 'difference between an open mind and empty head.' A wide range of literature was consulted and sampled throughout the process, based on analysis of the data. In the end, the focus of this chapter became those policies that inform the study. This seemed the best approach to this chapter, offering the most appropriate way to offer context for that which follows. As Strübing (2007: 587) remarks, the fundamental point is 'not whether previous knowledge should be used in actual data analysis; the important insight lies rather in how to make proper use of previous knowledge.'

In addition to providing context, there are other arguments for the inclusion of this background chapter ahead of discussing the research undertaken. While CVE is a notable policy concern, understandings of what actually constitutes CVE remain vague. It is an area that is only beginning to receive scholarly attention. Much of the literature available cannot be described as that of the 'theory and fact of the area under study' (Glaser & Strauss, 2008/1967: 37). The vagaries around CVE and the associated ancillary terms are important to acknowledge when undertaking a study of those operating within this area. CVE practitioners come from a variety of backgrounds and work in a variety of ways; it is not a fixed job description. This chapter outlines the macro-level CVE landscape, offering some insight into the environment within which the individuals in this study operate, their day to day micro-level experiences therein forming the core of this study.

There are further practical reasons for the necessity to keep up to date regarding CVE throughout this study, something which Glaser has acknowledged can be the case (1998). Firstly, there is the issue of writing a funding proposal and the need to show some knowledge of the area in question. The proposal for the Irish Research Council, funders of this research, centred on grounded theory and the emphasis therein on discovery and emergence. Knowledge of the literature in the substantive area was used primarily to justify both the need for further research in this area and the appropriateness of taking a grounded theory approach. There was also the issue of the amount of coverage issues around violent extremism and

radicalisation were receiving in the media. As a result, I was invited to sit on panel discussions and attend conferences, often receiving funding to do so, based on my area of research. In such instances, it was very much necessary to be aware of and up to date on policy and scholarship in this area.

Most significantly it was necessary to be aware of this out of respect and consideration for the participants of this study. This feeds into the question of ethics, a topic that weaves its way through this work at various stages. Having given up chunks of their time to meet with me there was certainly an expectation on the part of the participants that I had some knowledge of the area under study. In fact, many were keen to hear my insights and find out about the issues that were coming up in the study. Despite the open-ended nature of the interviews, I felt it would be inappropriate to go in without some knowledge of the macro-context issues. This is very different to having knowledge about the actual work being carried out and the day to day experiences of frontline practitioners.

CVE is very much an evolving area of policy, subject to changes in government and reactive to terrorist attacks and world events. As such, the information offered in this chapter has been under constant revision throughout the study. As with the rest of the study, this has not been part of a linear process. Ultimately, rather than getting hung up on the arguments around the place of the literature review in a grounded theory study, I went down the route that best suited the research in question whilst adhering to grounded theory principles. As Glaser (2004) describes grounded theory: '[it] is a straightforward methodology…a comprehensive, integrated and highly structured, yet eminently flexible process that takes a researcher from the first day in the field to a finished written theory.'

CVE: The Definitional Challenge

> *Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) is a rapidly expanding field of practice. Despite its impressive growth, CVE has struggled to establish a clear and compelling definition as a field [and] has evolved into a catch-all category that lacks precision and focus.*
> (Heydemann, 2014: 1)

CVE is a major contemporary policy fixation, with governments around the world investing millions in programmes in this area. In September 2013, the $200 million-dollar Global Fund for Community Engagement and Resilience (GCERF) was announced, aimed at

'strengthening resilience against violent extremist agendas' (US Department of State, 2014).[8] A public-private partnership, GCERF was established to serve as the first global effort to support local, community-level initiatives aimed at strengthening resilience against violent extremist agendas. The European Commission (2014) has earmarked up to 20 million Euro between 2014 and 2017 to create a 'Knowledge Hub' and other 'prevent-related and centrally managed activities.' As only one part of their CVE strategy, this hub is establishing and disseminating best practices in CVE and seeking to shape the research agenda in this area (European Commission, 2014). This is in addition to the ongoing work of the EU Radicalisation Awareness Network,[9] which, founded by the Commission in 2011, has gathered 700 "experts" and frontline practitioners from all over Europe. In July 2016, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security announced its 'new Countering Violent Extremism Grant Program, marking the 'first federal grant funding available to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and institutions of higher education to carry out countering violent extremism programs.' Made available from $10 million that had been made available by congress[10] for a countering violent extremism (CVE) initiative, it aims 'to help states and local communities prepare for, prevent, and respond to emergent threats from violent extremism' (Department of Homeland Security, 2016b). It is not only governments that are funding work in this area; in September 2017 Google.org launched a five-million-dollar innovation fund. Senior Vice President Kent Walker (2017) explains in a blog post: 'Addressing the threat posed by violence and hate is a critical challenge for us all.'

While this may represent a sentiment shared across the board, shifting power structures and changes in government administrations complicate discussions around CVE and what it means. The most clear cut example of this, and perhaps the most noteworthy with regard to this study, is the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States of America, the election campaign and subsequent actions by the President forming a significant backdrop to this research journey. This change in administration has led to a stark change in the direction of CVE policy in the USA. Since coming to power, for example, funding made available under the CVE Grant Program has been both revoked from organisations that had been offered funding, specifically those working to counter right-wing extremism, and refused by organisations, largely Muslim groups, uncomfortable with the political climate.

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[8] For further information on GCERF see: www.gcerf.org.
[9] See https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network_en.
[10] Via the *Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act, 2016* (Public Law 114-113).

While CVE has become increasingly significant in the wake of the US's 2005 shift from the Global War on Terror (GWOT) to the Struggle Against Violent Extremism (SAVE) (Nassar-Eddine et al., 2011: 9), a widely understood and agreed upon definition of what constitutes this phenomenon remains elusive. Whereas the 'War on Terror' was marked by an emphasis on coercive measures to combat the terrorist threat – military action, increased arrests and the expansion of the intelligence services (Harris-Hogan, Barrelle and Zammit, 2016) – CVE policy and programmes are associated with a non-coercive approach. In the mid-2000s it became clear, in the UK at least, that arrests alone were not a sufficient prevention measure, and that effective communication aimed at prevention was also a necessary part of counterterrorism efforts (GCTF, 2013: 2). This increased awareness that the pursuit and apprehension of terrorists was – and is – a 'different functional problem than the prevention of new recruits' (Holmer, 2013: 2) resulted in this policy shift towards CVE.

The turn to CVE also marks a shift in language strategy. The adoption of the term 'violent extremism' represents a move away from aggressive rhetoric, such as 'war on terrorism' or 'clash of civilisations.' Governments including those in the EU, UK, US and Australia have invested in programmes to develop language guidelines, which also include efforts to move away from reductive, misrepresentative language such as 'Jihadist,' 'Islamist extremism' or 'moderate Muslim.' Government agencies such as the Research Information and Communications Unit (RICU)[11] in the UK were tasked with encouraging the implementation of this language shift (Nasser-Eddine et al., 2011: 53). The rise of the Trump regime in the US has seen a big roll back on these efforts around terminology. Referring to the presidential campaign, Leiter (2017) notes: 'To say that candidate Donald Trump adopted a sharply critical and un-nuanced tone on Islam would be the grossest of understatements.'

The role of language in this policy area continues to be important, with the term 'preventing violent extremism' (PVE) increasingly employed in place of 'countering violent extremism.' Currently, this does not seem to be an "official" shift, rather, as Berger (2016: 3) clarifies: 'CVE portfolios [are] sometimes referred to as PVE (Preventing Violent Extremism).' A report from a June 2016 meeting 'Opportunities and Challenges for Mobilising Resources for

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[11] The Research, Information and Communications Unit (RICU) was established in the Office of Security and Counter-Terrorism in the Home Office in 2007. At that time, it comprised representatives from the Home Office, DCLG and the FCO and reported to Ministers in all three Departments. Its function was to 'coordinate Government communications about the terrorist threat and our response to it and to facilitate and generate challenge to terrorist ideology and the claims made by terrorist groups' (Home Office, 2011: 47-48).

Preventing Violent Extremism,' convened by The Prevention Project and the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund notes that 'PVE (preventing violent extremism) and CVE (countering violent extremism) were used interchangeably throughout the workshop' (The Prevention Project, 2016: 1). In general, the terms are used interchangeably and often the shorthand CVE/PVE, or P/CVE is used.

Initiated by the UK in the wake of the 2005 London bombings, CVE as a concept became all the more resonant once the US followed suit. The UK's *Prevent* Strategy has led the way in CVE, and represents one stream of the UK counter-terror strategy CONTEST.[12] First published in 2006 the document has undergone a series of revisions, which have seen a shift in focus 'from extremist ideologues through to campus organisations and then to the contemporary interest in online dynamics' (Heath-Kelly, 2013: 395). The *Prevent* revisions also included placing the policy on a statutory footing. Under the 2015 Counter-Terrorism and Security Act, there is a statutory responsibility on public bodies to be part of the CVE effort.[13]   In practice, this "*Prevent* Duty" requires that those working in areas such as childcare, education, health care, and youth work have a legal obligation to, 'in the exercise of their functions, have "due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism"' (HM Government, 2015: 2).

CVE represents a move to intervention; a key tenet of CVE is that the identification of methods to prevent people, especially youth, from being drawn into terrorist activities, is possible. Holmer (2013: 2) summarises as follows: '[c]ountering violent extremism is a realm of policy, programmes, and interventions designed to prevent individuals from engaging in violence associated with radical political, social, cultural, and religious ideologies and groups.' As such, its focus is on individuals who are not engaging in criminal activities (Weine, 2016: 190), but who *may* do so at some point in the future, with the overall goal 'to stop those most at risk of radicalisation from becoming terrorists' (Benjamin, 2010). CVE

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[12] *Contest*, the UK counter-terror strategy, is divided into four streams. In addition to *Prevent* the strategy includes *Pursue* which aims to stop terrorist attacks; *Protect* which seeks to strengthen protection against an attack; and *Prepare* which focuses on mitigating the impact of a terrorist attack where that attack cannot be stopped (Home Office, 2011a: 7, 11, 13).

[13] In March 2015, Parliament approved guidance issued under section 29 of the act about how specified authorities are to comply with the Prevent duty. Specified authorities must have regard to this guidance when complying with the Prevent duty. Two versions of the guidance were approved: one for specified authorities in England and Wales, and one for specified authorities in Scotland. These 2 documents were revised in July 2015, removing the chapters on further and higher education institutions. This is because 4 new pieces of stand-alone, sector-specific guidance for these institutions were issued. Full details are available here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance.

revolves around the idea of acting before the threat of terrorism has become manifest (Martin, 2014: 66) and is underpinned by the notion that it is possible to prevent terrorism by intervening early on, or as far "upstream" as possible.

Although government documents frequently employ the term CVE, there is no shared view of what CVE is or how it should be done (McCants and Watts, 2012: 1). Nasser-Eddine et al. (2011: 16) aptly note that 'the notion of "countering violent extremism" is rarely defined let alone conceptualised or theorised within the literature. Rather, it stands as a phenomenon that is both self-evident and taken for granted.' This is a situation that has not changed since the publishing of their review in 2011, with many studies into CVE programmes, initiatives and interventions not taking the time to define what it is they are actually looking at, yet attempting to discuss and evaluate the work being done. To quote Legrand (2017: 215), '[a] common global footing on countering violent extremism, in short, has not been found and its prospects look dim.'

CVE Policy: So, what is CVE?

> *Here in the United States, acts perpetrated by violent extremists can have far-reaching consequences. Countering violent extremism (CVE) has therefore become a key focus of DHS's work to secure the homeland.*
> (Department of Homeland Security, 2016)

> *This is the challenge of our generation. Extremism is spreading, threatening and taking lives, not just in our countries but in other lands… It is a challenge for our generation, and it is a challenge that we must win.*
> (May, 2015: 7)

CVE 'summits' were held in both Washington and Australia in 2015[14] where governments' commitment to continuing their CVE efforts was underscored. CVE remains based firmly in the realm of government policy, contributing to the difficulties around defining what exactly it is (Nasser-Eddine et al., 2011: 16). Harris-Hogan, Barrelle and Zammit (2016) contend that CVE should be understood as a policy spectrum. It is important, therefore, to examine the

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[14] Australia's Regional Summit to Counter Violent Extremism was held on Thursday 11 and Friday 12 June 2015 in Sydney, Australia. The Regional CVE Summit provided an 'important platform for participants to collaborate to highlight the lies of extremist groups, develop counter narratives and turn vulnerable individuals away from violent extremism' (Attorney General for Australia, 2015b); see https://www.attorneygeneral.gov.au/Mediareleases/Pages/2015/SecondQuarter/16-May-2015-Australia-to-host-regional-summit-to-counter-violent-extremism.aspx. This Summit followed the White House Summit held in Washington D.C in February 2015, which brought together key stakeholders from government, civil society and industry across the region with the aim of building capacity to address the threat posed by violent extremist groups; see https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/02/18/fact-sheet-white-house-summit-countering-violent-extremism.

policies themselves in any effort to gain a deeper understanding of the ideas underpinning this policy fixation.

Considered to have led the way in terms of the introduction of CVE, and the increased focus thereon, the stated aim of the *Prevent* policy in the UK is 'to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism' (Home Office, 2011: 6). Its approach is 'to be seen as focused on extremism; for it is clear that for many who have committed terrorist acts extremism is the foundation, the driver for terrorism' (Home Office, 2011: 3). Moving to the glossary at the end of the policy (Home Office, 2011: 107), *extremism* is defined as:

> vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also include in our definition of extremism calls for the death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas.

Extremism, for policymakers, is seen as an early step on the path to someone becoming a terrorist and committing an act of violence. It is worth noting that the term extremism here is not qualified by use of the word 'violent.' The emphasis on non-violent extremism is furthered in the 2015 policy document simply entitled: 'Counter-Extremism Strategy' (Home Office, 2015). Employing the same definition of extremism, this document emphasises the need to 'counter the ideology of non-violent and violent extremists alike' (Home Office, 2015: 17). Inferring from policy, by intervening early on there is an idea that this move from extremism to violence can be prevented.

The US, which followed the UK in the adoption of a CVE approach, has since surpassed them in making CVE a cornerstone of their counterterrorism policy. In a 2016 commentary on CVE, Alpher remarks of the CVE agenda: '[it] has grown so rapidly in American policy that, "at this point," one government official jokes, "even the lunch ladies in the cafeteria are doing CVE."' In US policy, violent extremists are described as 'individuals who support or commit…violence to further political goals' (Executive Office of the President of the United States, 2011). This *Strategy to Empower Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States* was issued in 2011, and has since been updated in response to 'the efforts of ISIL and other groups to radicalise American citizens' (Department of Homeland Security, 2016a), with the setting up of a countering violent extremism 'permanent interagency task force' to 'ensure that we face the challenge of violent extremism in a unified and coordinated way.' According to the 2016 policy update:

Since publication [of the 2011 strategy], the mission to prevent violent extremism has progressed, and violent extremist threats have continued to evolve. The overall goal of the Strategy and United States Government efforts to implement it remains unchanged: to prevent violent extremists and their supporters from inspiring, radicalising, financing, or recruiting individuals or groups in the United States to commit acts of violence.

In the Australian government context,[15] violent extremism 'describes the beliefs and actions of people who support or use violence to achieve ideological, religious or political goals. This includes terrorism, other forms of politically motivated violence and some forms of communal violence.' Within policy, violent extremists are not only those willing to commit violence themselves, but those who support or justify the use of violence by others. This, notes former White House counter-terrorism advisor Lisa Monaco (2016),[16] is part of a new phase in the evolving fight against terrorism; 'we face an enemy that prioritises recruitment and radicalisation towards violence.'

Radicalisation

...you don't have to believe in barbaric violence to be drawn to the ideology. No-one becomes a terrorist from a standing start. It starts with a process of radicalisation. When you look in detail at the backgrounds of those convicted of terrorist offences, it is clear that many of them were first influenced by what some would call non-violent extremists.
(Cameron, 2015)

"Radicalisation" is the phenomenon in which governments, through CVE interventions, wish to intervene. Defined by the UK government (Home Office, 2011: 108) as 'the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism leading to terrorism,' the term radicalisation features prominently throughout policy documents. The US Department of State and USAID Joint Strategy on Countering Violent Extremism (2016, emphasis added) offer the following definition:

CVE refers to proactive actions to counter efforts by violent extremists to *radicalise*, recruit, and mobilise followers to violence and to address specific factors that facilitate violent extremist recruitment and *radicalisation* to violence. This includes both disrupting the tactics used

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[15] Legrand (2017) notes the common approach to CVE undertaken by the "Anglosphere" countries of the UK, the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, offering a detailed discussion on the approach to countering online extremism taken by this "security community." As such, there is a degree of similarity in the approaches to, or underpinnings of their CVE policies.

[16] Monaco served as United States Homeland Security Advisor to President Barack Obama, and was the chief counterterrorism advisor under the Obama administration. She has since become a senior national security analyst for CNN.

by violent extremists to attract new recruits to violence and building specific alternatives, narratives, capabilities, and resiliencies in targeted communities and populations to reduce the risk of *radicalisation* and recruitment to violence.

Considering the various policy statements, it is clear that governments believe there is an identifiable path that is followed by those who commit acts of terror; extremism is an early point on this path.

The UN placed significant focus on CVE throughout 2016, with strategies in place for this focus to continue indefinitely. Presenting a 'Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism' to the General Assembly in January 2016, then Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon emphasised the importance of prevention work, noting that the spread of violent extremism makes preventive efforts all the more relevant (United Nations Secretary General, 2016). Emphasising resolution 2178 (2014), in which the link between violent extremism and terrorism are underlined, the need for prevention is made clear (United Nations, 2015: 2):

> [i]n its resolution 2178 (2014), the Security Council makes explicit the link between violent extremism and terrorism, underscores the importance of measures being in line with international norms and recognises the need for prevention: "violent extremism, which can be conducive to terrorism," requires collective efforts, "including preventing radicalisation, recruitment and mobilisation of individuals into terrorist groups and becoming foreign terrorist fighters." In that resolution, the Council "calls upon Member States to enhance efforts to counter this kind of violent extremism."

The UN's preoccupation with prevention and intervention in the "radicalisation" process underscores the importance of this idea to governments around the world., A UN system-wide High-Level PVE Action Group is being set up to spearhead the implementation of the Plan at both the Headquarters and field levels (United Nations, 2015). Equally, CVE remains a major focus at EU level: 'The EU firmly believes in eradicating terrorism at its source. Therefore, preventing terrorist attacks by addressing and stopping terrorist radicalisation and recruitment is a priority for the EU' (European Commission, 2017).

CVE objects: potential "violent Islamists"

Since 9/11, our nation has worked to use all elements of national power to deter, defeat and disrupt the type of attack we suffered that tragic day…But the terrorist threat continues to evolve… There's no question that the tragedies in Paris and San Bernardino underscore the urgency of our efforts defeat terrorist groups like ISIL.
(Monaco [Former White House Counter-Terrorism Advisor], 2016)

In presenting his 'Plan of Action,' then UN General-Secretary Ban Ki Moon (2016) noted: 'We are all appalled by the barbaric crimes that terrorist groups such as Daesh, Boko Haram and others are committing against humanity.' While acknowledging that these are not the only terrorist organisations these are the groups to which the General Secretary chose to specifically refer. CVE policy is very much focused on "violent Islamism," with terms such as "radicalisation" and "violent extremism" having their roots in the 9/11 attacks, these attacks, suggests Neumann (2008: 4), marking a shift in the way terrorism was discussed and conceived of. CVE policy grew in significance in the wake of the bomb attacks in Madrid and London in 2004 and 2005, and remains very much associated with such attacks. McCants and Watts (2012) cite a *perceived* increase in radicalisation among Muslim citizens[17] (McCants & Watts, 2012) as contributing to the shift towards CVE. As noted by the UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (2017) 'in recent years, terrorist groups such as ISIL, Al-Qaida and Boko Haram have shaped our image of violent extremism and the debate about how to address this threat.' CVE policy can be viewed as reacting to groups such as these, as opposed to other terrorist organisations. Speaking at the CVE summit in Washington, EU High Representative Mogherini (Delegation of the European Union to the United States, 2017) stated: 'the attacks in Brussels, Paris and Copenhagen shook our continent. Once again, years after London and Madrid, we were brutally reminded that terrorism is a global and European threat.' Again, the priority here is on attacks carried out by "violent Islamists."

The *Prevent Strategy* 2011 review is explicit regarding this concern: 'The UK faces a range of terrorist threats. The most serious is from Al Qa'ida, its affiliates and like-minded organisations inspired by violent Islamism' (Home Office, 2011: 13). In its 2015 'Counter-

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[17] Harris-Hogen, Barrelle and Zammit (2016) note some of the high-profile instances of 'homegrown' terrorism that occurred around this time, likely contributing to this perception, along with some well publicised arrests. These include: the 7/7 public transit bombings in London and the 2004 Madrid train bombings; large-scale arrests of 'homegrown' Jihadist cells including 'Operation Pendennis' in Australia; the 'Toronto 18' in Canada; and the 'Virginia Jihad Network.'

Extremism Strategy' the UK government again notes that the 'greatest current challenge comes from the global rise of Islamist extremism.' (Home Office, 2015: 9). In the foreword to this document, then Prime Minister David Cameron states:

> [o]ne of the greatest threats we face is the scourge of extremism from those who want to divide us. We see it in sickening displays of neo-Nazism, Islamophobia, antisemitism and, of course, Islamist extremism. The fight against Islamist extremism is, I believe, one of the great struggles of our generation.

While the focus remains "violent Islamism," the reference to other varieties of extremism is potentially significant, and *may* be indicative of the beginnings of a policy shift, in the case of the UK at least. Again, this can be seen as a reaction to world events; in this case the rise of the populist far-right and the associated implications. In December 2016, National Action, a neo-Nazi group established in 2013, became the first extreme right-wing group to be proscribed as a terrorist organisation in the UK (Home Office, 2016).[18] This action came ahead of the trial of Thomas Mair for the murder of Jo Cox,[19] with the group promoting and encouraging acts of terrorism in the aftermath of the murder. In late 2017, a number of reports about the threat posed by right-wing extremist organisation were published, from the banning of further far-right groups[20] to stories about the arrests of members of these groups,[21] including the arrests of a number of British soldiers for their involvement in the group (Dearden, 2017).

Prior to the election of Donald Trump, policy in the US had also been indicative of a shift. Most notably, the 2016 *Strategic Implementation Plan for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States* (SIP) makes no reference to "violent Islamism" or any of the organisations associated with this ideology. Rather, it states: 'Violent extremists have many motivations and are not limited to any single population, region, or

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[18] They are the 71st organisation to be proscribed in the UK, alongside 14 organisations relating to Northern Ireland. As a result, being a member – or inviting support for – the organisation will be a criminal offence, carrying a sentence of up to 10 years' imprisonment (Home Office, 2016). A full list of proscribed organisations can be found at:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/578385/201612_Proscription.pdf.
[19] Thomas Mair was sentenced to life imprisonment (November 2016) for the murder of Labour MP Jo Cox in June 2016. In evidence presented to the court, Mair, while attacking her, uttered the phrases: 'This is for Britain,' 'keep Britain independent,' and 'Britain first.' The judge said Mair would have to 'serve a whole-life sentence due to the "exceptional seriousness" of the offence: a murder committed to advance a cause associated with Nazism' (Cobain and Taylor, 2016).
[20] Scottish Dawn and NS131, aliases used by the National Action, were banned in September 2017.
[21] Eleven people were arrested in England and Wales as part of an investigation into the banned group National Action (Russell, 2017).

ideology. Over time, different forms of violent extremism have come to the fore, and new forms will likely emerge in the future.' Despite these indications of a widening of the scope and definition of 'violent extremist,' it is fair to say that policy in this area remains closely associated with groups such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda and those individuals who act in their name, as seen in the agenda of the Washington CVE Summit. This has been further emphasised with the election of Donald Trump in the USA: his words and actions suggest a major shift back to a very explicit association with "violent" and "radical" Islam, indicative of an increasingly different policy direction than that being taken in the UK. While there had been a growing sense that some effort was being made to move towards a more all-encompassing idea of what violent extremist organisations look like, this was reversed almost immediately after Trump came to power and introduced the so-called "Muslim ban," which saw an attempt to prevent citizens of a number of Muslim majority countries from travelling to the USA.[22] Prior to the election, at a December 2015 rally in Charleston, South Carolina, just a few days after the San Bernardino shooting, Trump told thousands of supporters: 'Donald J. Trump is calling for a complete and total shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country's representatives can figure out what the hell is going on' (CBS News). In fact, in the wake of an attempted terrorist attack on the London underground, on 15 September 2017,[23] Trump (2016) tweeted the following: 'The travel ban into the United States should be far larger, tougher and more specific-but stupidly, that would not be politically correct!' This, coupled with his controversial comments following the August 2017 "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville[24] and his reluctance to condemn right-wing violent extremism, represents a marked departure from where the previous regime was potentially headed. This is further underscored with the rise of the "alt right" and the praise

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[22] The original ban marked an attempt to prevent people from Iran, Syria, Yemen, Somalia and Libya travelling to the USA. This also included those who have visas from these countries travelling. The ban proved controversial and has been challenged, As of 26 September 2017, there is a ban on citizens from seven countries travelling to the USA, with North Korea, Venezuela (certain citizens) and Chad added to the list, and sanctions placed on travellers from Sudan having been lifted. This is an ongoing issue that is changing reasonably regularly.

[23] On 15 September 2017 there was an incident at Parson's Green underground station that saw an improvised explosive device partially explode, injuring 29 people. An 18 year old was arrested the following day at Dover.

[24] A "Unite the Right" rally took place in Charlottesville on August 12, 2017 to protest against the removal of a statue of Confederate icon General Robert E Lee. One of the largest white supremacist events in recent US history, it was organised by Jason Kessler, a former journalist and a member of the Proud Boys, an ultra-nationalist group. According to Al Jazeera, the previous day marchers had descended on the University of Virginia carrying torches and yelling slogans "white lives matter" and "blood and soil" (Al Jazeera, 2017). During these events, there were clashes with anti-fascist, anti-racist protesters, that saw a car ram into the group, killing Heather Heyer and injuring a number of others.

that Trump has received from some of those promoting this agenda.[25] While he signed a resolution condemning white supremacists and hate groups, Trump continues to be a figure that some leading white supremacists see as "being on their side."

The effects of his presidency on the CVE agenda are further clear when issues around funding and staffing are considered. Funding that had been made available through the CVE Grant Program for organisations that are working to counter Neo-Nazi violence has been rescinded (Allen-Ebrahimian, 2015). Close to $10 million has been slashed from the CVE programme, with Trump favouring a harder approach that focuses specifically on "radical Islam." Not only has funding been removed, there are organisations who have refused to take money that had been granted to them. According to Reuters reports (Edwards Ainsley, Volz and Cooke, 2017), one such organisation is the Michigan-based 'Leaders Advancing and Helping Communities' which is led by Lebanese-Americans. The articles states that the organisation 'has declined a $500,000 DHS grant it had sought [noting the] "current political climate and cause for concern."' They are not the only organisation to have distanced themselves from any association with the Trump administration. Significant figures working in Homeland Security in the area of CVE have also resigned. George Selim, the federal counterterrorism official who previously worked closely with the organised American Muslim community, stood down in July 2017, further indication of the breakdown with Muslim communities in the USA. Despite moves to shift to a more all-encompassing understanding of what violent extremism looks like, whether for reasons of optics or otherwise, the association with Muslim communities, having been there from the outset, remains. This association is driven not only by the fact that CVE policy was developed and refined in the aftermath of attacks by violent jihadist groups, but also comes as a result of the preoccupation with ISIS's deft use of propaganda, which ties into a central basis of CVE policy: the focus on ideology and the battle of ideas.

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[25] Figures such as David Duke – a former Ku Klux Klan leader – have tweeted their thanks for what they see as the President's support. For more, see Menegus (2017).

CVE and the "ideological challenge": the battle of ideas

> *It is not going to be enough to defeat ISIL in the battlefield. We have to prevent it from radicalising, recruiting and inspiring others to violence in the first place. And this means defeating their ideology. Ideologies are not defeated with guns, they're defeated by better ideas – a more attractive and compelling vision.*
> (President Obama, White House Office for the Press Secretary, 2015)

Terrorist groups, according to *Prevent* (Home Office, 2011:19*)*, 'often draw upon ideologies which have been developed, disseminated and popularised by extremist organisations that appear to be non-violent.' Ideology, according to CVE policy, justifies and drives violence. This is echoed by Trump in an August 2016 speech in which he refers to 'the hateful ideology of Radical Islam' (Klein, 2016). The notion that thought comes before action, and that intervening at the thought, or ideological phase, can prevent the development towards violent actions is very evidently a cornerstone upon which CVE policy is premised. The UK's 2015 'Counter-Extremism Strategy' devotes a whole chapter to 'Countering Extremist Ideology,' and in the 2011 *Prevent* Strategy review, objective one is to challenge the ideology that supports terrorism and those who promote it (Home Office, 2011). It is at this point that policymakers see CVE intervening and preventing further progression through the "radicalisation" process. For Trump, a goal of a "Commission on Radical Islam" would be to educate the American people regarding the core beliefs of radical Islam, 'to identify the warning signs of radicalisation, and to expose the networks in our society that support radicalisation' (Quoted in Klein, 2016).[26] According to the FBI (2016a) its primary aim is 'to protect the nation from attacks by violent extremists [and] one important way to do that is keep young people…from embracing extremist ideologies in the first place.' Key to CVE, therefore, is preventing the dissemination and spread of extremist ideologies, or countering these ideologies, offering an alternative story.

Again, the UK can be seen as the first to emphasise the importance of a counter-narrative strategy, having set up the Research, Information and Communications Unit (RICU) in 2007, designed to coordinate 'government-wide communication activities to counter the appeal of violent extremism while promoting stronger grass-roots inter-community relations' (CounterExtremism.org, 2013). This emphasis has continued and spread, with the issue of counter-narratives being key on the agenda at both the Washington CVE summit (White

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[26] This was discussed by Trump at a foreign policy speech at Youngstown, Ohio in August 2016. The speech was entitled Understanding The Threat: Radical Islam And The Age Of Terror. For more on this speech, see Klein (2016).

House, 2015) and the Australian summit: 'The program for this Summit has…been designed to convene discussions about the core aspects of the terrorist narrative [and how to create] effective counter-narratives in our region and abroad' (Attorney-General for Australia, 2015). The Commonwealth Counter Extremism Unit,[27] established in 2015, also puts strong emphasis on counter-narratives with David Cameron (Home Office, 2015) suggesting that civil society and the education networks in commonwealth countries make it 'particularly well placed to complement international efforts to build counter-narratives to this poisonous extremist ideology.' Indeed, according to the Home Office (2015) the unit is 'to focus on strengthening the ability of Commonwealth countries to counter extremist narratives.' The EU Radicalisation Awareness Network (2015) suggests that 'counter-narratives and alternative narratives must be central to countering violent extremism (CVE) efforts.' The turn to 'counter-narrative' as part of CVE intervention comes as a direct response to the spread of increasingly sophisticated dissemination of jihadi ideology. The 'professional and sophisticated use of social media by ISIL in particular has been a game changer,' notes the EU Radicalisation Awareness Network (2015) in a report on the role and use of counter-narratives. The Department of Homeland Security (2016) also emphasises this: 'CVE aims to address the root causes of violent extremism by providing resources to communities to build and sustain local prevention efforts and promote the use of counter-narratives to confront violent extremist messaging online.'

CVE battlegrounds: the internet and social media

> *The high-quality videos, the online magazines, the use of social media, terrorist twitter accounts. It's all designed to target today's young people online, in cyberspace.*
> (President Obama speaks at CVE Summit, Obama White House, 2015)

> *We have to win the battle of ideas on the social media.*
> (John Kerry speaks at CVE Summit, US Department of State, 2015)

The idea that violent organisations can target young people directly via social media platforms that are used every day – Facebook, Twitter, YouTube – to spread extremist messaging is of great concern to governments and policy makers. With violent extremist groups increasingly drawing on popular culture, from slickly edited Hollywood-style movies to Instagram accounts full of selfies and cat pictures, to influence young people on the other

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[27] This is a dedicated unit, established within the Commonwealth Secretariat in 2017, to support national strategies to counter violent extremism; see http://thecommonwealth.org/countering-violent-extremism.

side of the world there had been an increased emphasis on ways to counter this material using the same platforms. Again, while reference is made to other extremist groups, the focus is on ISIS in particular: 'The past 18 months have seen a remarkable shift in the way extremists use the internet to spread their ideology and radicalise – most notably, but not exclusively, ISIL. ISIL's use of the internet has been central to its recruitment efforts' (Home Office, 2015: 24). Robert Hannigan (2016), head of the UK Government's Communication Headquarters (GCHQ) explains that ISIS 'is the first terrorist group whose members have grown up on the internet,' which explains their 'ease with new media.' In response, 'contesting the online space' features prominently in the UK's Counter-Extremism Strategy (2015: 24), with the document noting that 'a fundamental shift in the scale and nature of our response is required to match the huge increase in extremists' use of the internet.' The role of the internet and social media, like counter-narrative, was a major focus at both the Washington CVE Summit and the Regional CVE Summit in Australia. The quest for 'social media solutions' and the identification of 'concrete ways to build upon ongoing initiatives aimed at countering extremists' perverse message and new and innovative solutions to the challenges posed by violent extremists, especially online' is part of the US's policy to counter violent extremism globally (The White House, 2015). A section of the US's 2016 *Strategic Implementation Plan for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States* (SIP) (Executive Office of the President of the United States, 2016) is devoted to 'Communications and Digital Strategy,' noting that: '[i]n recent years, violent extremist groups have used and exploited digital environments and a number of communication platforms. The speed at which the digital landscape is evolving challenges government efforts to directly address individuals being radicalised to violence online,' and states the need for efforts and discussions that 'will improve government ability to communicate and leverage the digital environment to reach stakeholders, address violent extremist narratives, and encourage alternatives to violence.' Tweeting in response to the September 15 terror attack in London, Trump (2016) suggests: 'Loser terrorists must be dealt with in a much tougher manner. The internet is their main recruitment tool which we must cut off & use better!'

The approach taken in dealing with extremists' use of the internet should use 'all the communications tools which have been adopted by terrorists' (Home Office, 2011: 44), with the internet and social media a key front for the ideological struggle, and a key space in which to counter extremist ideology. 'Our global fight against terrorism is more and more happening online,' notes Commissioner Avramopoulos who, with Commissioner Věra

Jourová, launched the EU internet Forum to develop partnerships to help protect the public from the 'spread of terrorist material and terrorist exploitation of communication channels to facilitate and direct their activities,' the internet being 'the most critical battleground' (European Commission, 2016).

CVE warriors: local communities

> *Our primary focus for counter-ideological work online is on increasing the confidence of civil society activists to challenge online extremist content effectively and provide credible alternatives.*
> (Home Office, 2011: 52)

While the attention on the online means tech companies may be increasingly involved in, or expected to be involved in CVE work, the role of civil society and community groups in CVE is stressed within policy documents. Challenging extremist narratives is viewed as a task better addressed by people and organisations whose own experiences often best disprove the claims made for and about them (Home Office, 2011: 47). In a 2014 speech the British high Commissioner to Kenya (Turner, 2014) underlined the importance of local communities, reiterating the words of Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Cressida Dick: 'communities beat terrorism.' The 2015 *Counter-Extremism Strategy* (Home Office, 2015: 17) refers to building a partnership with all those opposed to extremism, stating: 'We will go further to stand with and build the capacity of mainstream individuals, community organisations and others in our society who work every day to challenge extremists and protect vulnerable individuals.'

In the US, the strength of communities is 'central' to preventing violent extremism, with 'well-informed and equipped families, local communities and local institutions' identified as 'the best defence against violent extremist organisations' (Executive Office of the President of the United, 2011:2). In September 2015 the Office for Community Partnerships (OCP) was established to streamline and head the Department's efforts to counter violent extremism domestically (Department of Homeland Security, 2016). Indeed, the title of the US's major policy document refers to the empowerment of local partners[28] and, according to US Attorney General, Loretta E. Lynch, the new task force 'will allow us to more efficiently and effectively support local efforts to counter violent extremism,' with protecting the American

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[28] As referred to previously, the document in question is titled: 'Strategic Implementations Plan for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States.'

people from 'all forms of violent extremism' the federal government's 'top priority.' This top priority, in the US, is guided by the following assertion: '(1) communities provide the solution to violent extremism; and (2) CVE efforts are best pursued at the local level, tailored to local dynamics, where local officials continue to build relationships within their communities through established community policing and community outreach mechanisms.' The Federal Government's 'most effective role in strengthening community partnerships and preventing violent extremism is as a facilitator, convener, and source of research and findings' (The White House, 2015). This priority was echoed in President Obama's address to the United Nations Summit on Foreign Terrorist Fighters (September 2014) where he reemphasised the commitment to helping local communities, considered 'best able to identify and help disillusioned individuals before they succumb to extremist ideologies and engage in violence' (The White House Office of the Press Secretary, 2014).

At the EU level the Radicalisation Awareness Network has a 'Youth, Families and Communities' working group (European Commission, 2017a), observing that 'engagement with – and empowerment of – youth, communities and families, are critical in the prevention of radicalisation leading to violent extremism.' The work that community actors have already done has also been noted: '[w]e need to underscore the important, and effective work that is undertaken by grass roots organisations across the region, often below the radar' (Australian Attorney-General, 2015a). The Home Office (2015: 31) too states their intent to work with those 'who are already standing up to extremists in their communities…those local partners…already doing important work to protect communities.' Local communities have very much been placed at the centre of CVE efforts, at least ostensibly from a policy perspective. However, they are not the only actors considered to have an important role to play. In addition to emphasising the role of civil society activists, the *Prevent Strategy* (Home Office, 2011: 52) identifies other partners for its work:

> [w]e will continue to work with social media enterprises, such as Facebook, to help civil society organisations understand the effect of social media and Web 2.0 on marketing communications, online influence and public relations.

CVE: A Growth Industry

As we look to counter violent extremism, we need to take a smart, strategic approach, and it would be narrow of us to assume that governments have all the answers. The approach we take must…be one that involves the collaboration of governments, law enforcement agencies, religious leaders, academics, industry and in particular the technology sector, as well as community groups, families and individuals.
(Attorney-General for Australia, 2015)

*Three cities—**Greater Boston, Los Angeles, and the Twin Cities**—with the leadership of representatives from the Federal Government, have created pilot programs to foster partnerships between local government, law enforcement, mayor's offices, the private sector, local service providers, academia, and many others who can help prevent violent extremism.*
(The White House, 2015)

While the role of local communities and civil society actors is emphasised in policy documents they are certainly not the only actors involved, or expected to be involved, in work in this area. In fact, the sheer variety of individuals, organisations, industries and public sectors that are becoming part of the CVE efforts highlights the reach of this area of policy. Even Hollywood executives have been called upon, with John Kerry (2016) tweeting the following, accompanied by a photograph of the meeting: 'Great convo w studio execs in LA. Good to hear their perspectives & ideas of how to counter #Daesh narrative.'

That there are community based individuals and groups that have been doing this work for a considerable amount of time has been noted by policy makers. This includes former extremists – "formers"[29] – who are now redeploying their skills to prevent young people from being influenced by violent ideologies, survivors of acts of violent extremism and individuals who felt there was an issue and that they could do something about it. For example, *Abdullah-X* is a series of animated shorts, developed by a former extremist (who prefers to remain anonymous), specifically with CVE and counter-narrative aims in mind. The creator also runs workshops with young people in London. Another counter-narrative effort using short animated online clips is *Average Mohamed.* Created by Mohamed Ahmed,[30] a Somali-American convenience store manager in Minnesota, this series of short animated clips aims to counter the ideology of extremism. In this case the creator of the project is a "regular guy" who became frustrated seeing what was happening within his community and decided to take action and used his savings to create and launch the project. He also works with the local

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[29] A number of the participants in this study are self-described "formers."
[30] Mohammed Amin is a participant in this study.

Somali community in Minnesota, particularly Somali youth in the area. For Muflehun,[31] an independent non-profit organisation 'working since 2010 against hate, extremism and violence' the reason to set up in the first place was due to a concern with 'the growing hate and bigotry surrounding us' and the desire to 'prevent the spread of hate, extremism and violence in our country' (Muflehun, 2017).

Along with these individuals and NGOs, Imams and youth workers operate within this area. In Ireland, for example, Imam Dr Shayk Umar Al-Qadri[32] is the founder of the Irish Muslim Peace and Integration Council. He also set up the website *Jihad Info[33]* to provide 'authentic information on the Islamic concept of Jihad' (Jihad Info, 2017). In London, the youth organisation STREET (Strategy to Reach and Empower and Educate Teenagers), co-founded by Imam and academic Abdul Haqq Baker,[34] with Alyas Karmani,[35] also an Imam and academic. For a number of years, the organisation, which works with 'at-risk youth to divert them from involvement in antisocial behaviour, gang violence, and violent extremism, and toward leading more productive and positive lives' (Barclay, 2011), was considered an example of best practice, winning awards and endorsements from a variety of sources.[36] The small number of examples listed are in addition to those countless community workers, working quietly in their local area, much of whose work receives little or no attention at all.

Given the significant policy focus on countering online extremism, there is an increasing emphasis on the role of private industry, tech companies in particular, in the area of CVE. The significance of this role is underscored by the September 2017 Google.org fund for countering violent extremism. A factsheet with information about the White House Summit on Violent Extremism (The White House, 2015) explains that 'The United States and our partners in the private sector are organising multiple "technology camps" in the coming

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[31] The organisation's website is available at www.muflehun.org. I met with Humera Khan, Executive Director of Muflehun, at the early stages of this research process.
[32] Imam Dr Shayk Umar Al-Qadri is also a participant in this study.
[33] This website is available at http://jihad.info/. As of September 2017 this site still exists but a malware warning comes up on attempt to access the site. Many of the "most recent" articles date to 2015.
[34] Abdul Haqq Baker is a participant in this study.
[35] I met Alyas Karmani informally at Dublin City University in December 2015; we both spoke on a panel there regarding "radicalisation." The 'Roundtable: Facing Radicalisation' event was organised by the Institute for International Conflict Resolution and Reconstruction at DCU; see https://www4.dcu.ie/iicrr/news/2015/nov/round-table-facing-radicalisation.shtml.
[36] 'This programme was cited by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and British think tank DEMOS, among others, as a model case study. Its effective approach towards youth engagement and intervention led to it winning a government award for being the most innovative youth programme in 2008. Endorsement for this initiative has also been received by renowned religious figures from Muslim societies' (Baker, n.d.).

months, in which social media companies will work with governments, civil society, and religious leaders to develop digital content that discredits violent extremist narratives and amplifies positive alternatives.' In January 2016 a delegation of senior intelligence officials travelled to California to meet a number of executives from Silicon Valley's tech companies,[37] with the White House seeking to 'channel Silicon Valley's talent into its war against Islamic State and other extremist groups' (Yadron, 2016). The main question on the agenda was: '[i]n what ways can we use technology to help disrupt paths to radicalization to violence, identify recruitment patterns, and provide metrics to help measure our efforts to counter radicalization to violence?' These efforts come in the wake of both Snowden's allegations about spying, which saw the tech industry wanting to distance themselves from government and the stand-off between the government and Apple regarding the unlocking of the iPhone belonging to the perpetrator of the San Bernardino attacks.[38] As such, this is a complex relationship, but it did appear that the two were becoming closer based on a mutual desire to do something about online extremism. This again is an area that has not been immune to the Trump effect. Silicon Valley companies having been very outspoken against Trump's travel ban, among other policies. Indeed, Trump called for his supported to boycott Apple products over their refusal to unlock the iPhone associated with the San Bernardino shootings (Cherelus and Volz, 2016). The relationship, it would appear, is an uneasy one at best.

Following events at Charlottesville a number of web hosting and social media companies sought to crack down on the use of their products by right wing extremist organisations. The *Daily Stormer*[39] had its web hosting support revoked by GoDaddy and Google, and Cloudflare Inc stopped offering its services to the site.[40] Airbnb matched user names to posts on social media profiles and 'cancelled dozens of reservations made by self-identified Nazis

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[37] According to reports (Yadron, 2016), executives from Facebook, Twitter, Apple, Microsoft, YouTube, LinkedIn and Dropbox were scheduled to attend the meeting.
[38] A mass shooting incident and an attempted bombing were carried out by a husband and wife in San Bernardino, California in December 2015. Opening fire at the husband's place of work 12 people were killed and 22 injured. In the ensuing investigation police forces squared off against Apple who refused to offer access to the perpetrator's iPhone to help with the investigations.
[39] An America neo-Nazi and White Supremacist website established in July 2013. The long running *Stormfront* website, the internet's first racial hate site and internet forum created for neo-Nazis to communicate with one another, suffered a similar fate also in the aftermath of violent events at Charlottesville.
[40] Cloudflare Inc is a web-security company that has protected the networks of several neo-Nazi sites, including the *Daily Stormer*. Previously, the company has defended itself by saying service providers shouldn't be censoring content on the internet, but in August 2017, Cloudflare 'decided to end its business with the *Daily Stormer*, saying it could no longer remain neutral because the neo-Nazi website was claiming the company secretly supported its ideology' (Frier, Green and Zaleski, 2017).

who were using its app to find rooms in Charlottesville, where they were heading to protest the removal of a Confederate statue' (Frier, Green and Zaleski, 2017). Not only has Apple Inc moved to block hate sites from using Apple Pay, Chief Executive Officer Tim Cook said the company will donate $1 million each to the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Anti-Defamation League, which track hate groups (Frier, Green and Zaleski, 2017). Such moves are a further indication of the gulf between Trump and these technology companies who, while they continue to meet with him, do not enjoy the same kind of relationship that they did with the Obama administration and the Clinton campaign.

Despite this increasing gap with the US administration, representatives from Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Google and other social media/tech companies remain regulars at CVE conferences, events and meetings. An example of a specific project is the *Against Violent Extremism* (AVE) *Network*[41]: 'a unique and powerful new global force in the ongoing struggle to tackle violent extremism' (AVE, 2014). The network aims to prevent the recruitment of 'at risk' youths, pushing back the extremist narratives to which they are exposed. Devised and launched by Google Ideas,[42] the AVE Network is managed by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD)[43] and is a unique private sector partnership between ISD, Google Ideas, the Gen Next Foundation[44] and rehabstudio.[45] The use of technology is central to the network, connecting its members, who include former violent extremists and survivors of violent extremism, through its website and YouTube channel. Members connect online, sharing their ideas, collaborating and disseminating their message in ways made possible by the use of social media.[46] Sasha Havlicek[47] (quoted in BBC, 2012) outlines the

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[41] The project website is available at www.againstviolentextremism.org.
[42] Google Ideas is a think/do tank that explores how technology can enable people to confront threats in the face of conflict, instability and repression; see http://www.google.com/ideas/.
[43] The Institute for Strategic Dialogue is a London based 'independent think tank working with leaders in government, business, media and academia to develop multi-country responses to the major security and socio-economic challenges of our time' (ISD, 2014); see www.strategicdialogue.org for further information about the organisation.
[44] Gen Next Foundation seeks 'to create opportunities and confront challenges that face future generations in the areas of education, economic opportunity, and global security. We aspire to solve the greatest generational challenges of our time using a unique hybrid of private sector and non-profit business models – called a venture philanthropy model' (Gen Next Foundation, n.d.); see http://www.gennextfoundation.org/ for further information about the organisation.
[45] Rehabstudio is a creative technology company that creates digital brand experiences that live online, mobile and in the real world, employing a unique creative process based on the principles of hacking to help clients solve business and communication problems using creativity and technology; see https://rehabstudio.com/.
[46] The website lists people and/or projects to connect with under categories such as member/project 'type,' 'ideology,' 'region' and 'help offered/needed.' Clicking through these categories, people can connect with others, whether formers or academics, or from the private or public sectors, and become involved in a variety of projects.

aims of the initiative: 'We want to present an alternative narrative, to help young people with identity issues – or with a sense of alienation – to realise that these groups [extremist groups] do not have the answers they are looking for.'

Governments themselves have also been involved in this creation of CVE "products." The US government's *Think Again Turn Away* campaign is the most infamous example, though it has been rebranded.[48] This social media project sought to counter the online propaganda of ISIS. According to Ambassador Alberto Fernandez (quoted in Sanchez, 2014),[49] it was aimed at those sympathetic to jihad but who have not yet made the decision to turn to violence – those at whom CVE policy more generally is targeted. In the wake of the widely publicised terrorist attacks in Paris (November 2015), the French government released an online video 'designed to steer young people away from joining militant groups in the Middle East.' As with *Think Again Turn Away*, it repackages images and materials from 'jihadist websites such as scenes of jubilant fighters celebrating in Syria or Iraq' (BBC, 2015). In this case these materials are interspersed with 'darker images, showing a different side to the conflicts there' (BBC, 2015). The French government plans to spread them as widely as possible via various social media platforms. In early 2016 the FBI launched a website *Don't Be a Puppet* to 'help teenagers learn how to protect themselves against violent extremists trying to radicalize and recruit them' (FBI, 2016b). The website uses quizzes, videos, and interactive methods that 'teach teens how to recognise extremist propaganda and recruitment methods that groups like ISIL are using' (FBI, 2016b).

Along with such government initiatives and the CVE summits in Washington and Australia, *Hedayah*, the first-ever 'International Centre of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism (CVE),'[50] has organised events and "expos," with the numbers attending indicating just how populous this arena has become. The 2014 Research Conference on Countering Violent Extremism in Abu Dhabi in conjunction with Curtin University and People Against Extremism brought together researchers and practitioners from all over the world. This was followed by Hedeyah's 'Global CVE Expo 2014' where more than 300 individuals and companies gathered to exchange ideas about helping to prevent violent

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[47] Founding Chief Executive Officer of The Institute for Strategic Dialogue.
[48] See Katz (2014); Ackerman (2014) and Beutal et al. (2016) for further discussion on this initiative.
[49] Alberto Fernandez was the Coordinator for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications (CSCC) at the US Department of Foreign Affairs from March 2012 to February 2015, having previously served as US Ambassador to Equatorial Guinea.
[50] The organisation's website is available at www.hedayah.ae.

extremism (Afghan Zariza, 2014). In December 2015, Hedayah, Edith Cowan University and New York University Abu Dhabi Institute hosted the International CVE Research Conference 2015 in Abu Dhabi, with over 175 practitioners, policymakers, academics and researchers coming together to discuss the latest research on violent extremism and CVE. Based in Abu Dhabi, *Hedayah* was created in 'response to the growing desire from GCTF [Global Counter Terrorism Foundation] members and the wider international community for the establishment of an independent, multilateral centre devoted to capacity building programs, dialogue and communications, in addition to research and analysis to counter violent extremism in all of its forms and manifestations.'[51] In October 2015 *Club de Madrid*[52] launched the Madrid+10 initiative, aimed at informing and empowering stakeholders in the 'struggle against radicalisation and violent extremism and the actions that governments and society must firmly and jointly undertake to effectively tackle this scourge, while respecting democracy and the rule of law' (Club de Madrid, 2016). *Extremely Together*, a project that is part of the work of the Kofi Annan Foundation, sees 10 young leaders tasked with providing young people with tools and methods to channel and transform disparaging tendencies into positive action in an attempt to prevent the threat posed by violent extremism to young people in particular.[53] The Sawab Centre, a joint initiative by the governments of the UAE and the US[54] to fight IS's extremist ideology online, seeks to partner with 'people, organisations and businesses throughout the world to challenge Daesh's doctrines of hate and intolerance…and expand the network of people willing to speak out against the terrorist group's propaganda' (US Department of State, 2015).

In addition to these initiatives, governments are also bringing academia into the world of CVE, with funding being made available for research: 'to further strengthen the evidence base, **we will work closely with academics and universities, commissioning and part funding research**' (Home Office, 2015: 18 – emphasis in original). In the US nearly $3.5 million in National Institute of Justice research and evaluation grants were made available to 'address radicalisation to violent extremism *for the third year'* (The White House, 2015 –

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[51] See http://www.hedayahcenter.org/ for further information.
[52] *Club de Madrid,* comprised of democratic former presidents and prime ministers from around the world, lists its mission as 'Democracy that delivers' (Club de Madrid, 2016). For further information see http://www.clubmadrid.org/.
[53] See http://www.kofiannanfoundation.org/extremely-together/ for further information.
[54] This partnership has been questioned by Human Rights Organisations, including Human Rights First, who note that '[r]epressive practices foster the very grievances that drive violent extremism and threaten peace and stability. President Obama knows this, and has said it many times. But as the administration seeks to expand countering violent extremism (CVE) partners, U.S. officials are making some questionable ties. Some of these partners rule their countries with an iron fist, thereby putting multilateral efforts at risk and undermining the initiative's very purpose' (Sheff, 2016).

emphasis added). Via the Commonwealth Secretariat, UK Universities are engaged in an initiative to tackle radicalisation on campuses across the Commonwealth, partnering with a special unit that has been established to combat the "radicalisation" of young people, with a special focus on educated youth (Flather, 2016). Being recognised within policy as a site of potential radicalisation and spaces that have been the focus of attention for extremist speakers (Home Office, 2015: 14), universities and students are also now being drawn into becoming part of this CVE industry, and being encouraged to counter online extremism. A striking example is the *Peer 2 Peer: Challenging Extremism* initiative, a government-industry-academia partnership.[55] This initiative sees 'teams' from universities all over the world challenged to create social media campaigns to combat violent extremist propaganda and compete with each other to create the 'best' or 'winning' campaign. The students earn academic credit for participation in the project and receive money (USD 2,000) to implement their campaign. The programme is sponsored by the US government, with this money coming from the State Department. This is managed by an Education Venture group – EdVenture Partners – who act as a go between for their clients (in this case the State Department) and their 'network of academic institution and faculty partners to directly engage with the valuable and powerful Millennial market' (EdVenture Partners, 2016). The aim is a draw upon student innovation and harness the power of millennials as a social media savvy demographic. The claim of those involved is that it empowers 'the very people ISIL and other violent extremist groups are trying to recruit – young people.'

That such a variety of actors are involved in different ways further complicates understandings of CVE and what it is, or what it should be. That CVE is becoming an arena with so many and such varied stakeholders is seen on the one hand as something positive, with some commentators suggesting that the more efforts taking place the better. On the other hand, that there is such an industry building up around the idea is one of the criticisms levelled at CVE and those who promote it as a solution to the acts of violence that have been taking place around the world.

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[55] I met with Tony Sgro, founder and CEO of EdVenture Partners in the early phase of this research.

CVE Commentary: Really, What is CVE?

[T]here is no scholarly consensus on what causes "violent extremism" and no quantitative or dispositive evidence on what causes individuals to turn to "violent extremism" or become "radicalised."
(Modirzadeh, 2016)

That this industry is developing without the work or input of the various actors being grounded in any kind of knowledge base is one of the starkest criticisms that CVE faces. Even the UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (2015: 6-7) acknowledges that there 'is no authoritative statistical data on the pathways towards individual radicalisation. While there are some recognisable trends and patterns, there are only a few areas of consensus that exist among researchers… More research, both qualitative and quantitative, is required on this evolving phenomenon.' Although policymakers around the world have increased calls for CVE engagement and research, the CVE field within an academic context is at a very early stage of development (Maestro and Szmania, 2016: 2). The problems with grounding any action in an evidence base is compounded by questions as to what CVE actually is. This lack of a clear definition, argue McCants and Watts (2012) 'not only leads to conflicting and counterproductive programs but also makes it hard to evaluate the CVE agenda as a whole and determine whether it is worthwhile to continue.' This is echoed by Anyadike (2016): 'CVE's definition problem is important. Is the goal to prevent violent behaviour by disengaging individuals from violent groups; or is it to inoculate people against radical thought, part of a grander counter-radicalisation social engineering project? The lack of clear parameters is one reason measuring CVE success is extremely hard.' The government and policy focus on CVE is occurring amidst a significant lack of clarity and understanding. Romaniuk (2015: v) describes CVE as a 'field that has risen to prominence in a manner disproportional to its achievements.' Questions include: 'What is CVE? What isn't CVE? Is there sufficiently strong evidence upon which to base CVE approaches? What is lost by dedicating resources to CVE, and therefore away from other initiatives?' (Modirzadeh, 2016). Despite this lack of evidence, supporters of CVE argue that such questions arise from a lack of study, and that 'the imperative to do something in the face of a growing extremism problem requires action rather than analysis' (Brennan Centre for Justice, 2015).

In addition to the myriad approaches taken when examining CVE,[56] there is an emphasis on measurement and evaluation of CVE interventions within much of the literature, the lack of an evidence base having been noted. Such work seems to accept that CVE is something worth pursuing, the issue is to pursue it in the most effective way; it is an area of policy that is not going anywhere, it is worth trying to do it "right." Neumann (2016: 185-186) argues against claims that prevention doesn't work, suggesting there is much evidence to the contrary. That efforts are fragmented across different levels of government and those outside government simply highlights the need, he claims, to have a national strategy in place, making it possible to 'bring everyone involved to the table, to set priorities, assign tasks and compare results' something he claims is already working in Canada and Australia. However, there are clear problems when it comes to evaluating programmes associated with prevention, in particular the challenge of 'trying to prove that a behaviour or action has not occurred' (Maestro and Szmania, 2016: 4). This has not prevented an ever increasing amount of effort in this area, and a variety of suggestions for evaluation methods.[57]

When contrasted with the Global War on Terror (GWOT) of the Bush Jr administration, CVE has been considered 'a more useful concept' (Schmid, 2013:53), though there clearly remains much dispute regarding its contours and its effectiveness. Heydemann (2014) argues that despite such reservations and concerns, it should not be set aside, with its very presence placing a central focus on violent extremism, as opposed to seeing it as secondary to another goal. An alliance of NGOs has had some positive words to say regarding CVE (Melanie Greenburg, Alliance for Peacebuilding: 2015)[58]**:** 'There are good things in the [CVE] strategy, like empowering women and youth, and looking at issues of inequality and social grievances.' However, Greenburg then goes on to state: 'But the strategy still assumes the problem is "over there" and that we can reduce radicalisation locally without discussing global and national factors that fuel feelings of alienation, or our own dependence on using

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[56] These include those from a resilience framework (Weine, 2016); an educational framework (Aly et al., 2014); peace-building perspectives (Holmer, 2013); a public health perspective (Harris-Hogan, Barrelle and Zammit, 2016; Weine et al., 2016; Weine et al., 2009; Bjørgo, 2013); a mental health perspective (Weine et al., 2017); and communicative approaches (Archetti, 2015).

[57] See Maestro and Szmania (2015) for starting point for this discussion and evaluation attempts that have taken place thus far.

[58] The Alliance for Peacebuilding and 40 other leading U.S. humanitarian, development and peacebuilding organisations released a joint NGO statement on July 20th weighing in on the Obama Administration's new 'Countering Violent Extremism' strategy. It is the largest group of U.S.-based international NGOs to date that have spoken with a united voice about the plan; see http://www.allianceforpeacebuilding.org/major-ngo-joint-statement-on-countering-violent-extremism/. The full statement and details of the organisations who signed up is available at http://www.allianceforpeacebuilding.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Statement-FINAL.pdf.

militarised responses to conflict.' CVE places the focus firmly at the level of the individual, taking a person-centred approach that considers only micro-level reasons for "radicalisation." This approach is reductive and, as Schmid (2013: 4) explains, fails to consider meso- and macro- level issues such as the enabling environment – the 'radical milieu' – or, at macro-level, government actions at home and abroad, or a society's relationship with minorities or migrants, for example.

CVE: The Problem with Terminology

A central problem within the literature is that definitions of the key concepts are diverse and contested.
(Nasser-Eddine et al., 2011: 1).

It is almost impossible to write about countering violent extremism and the associated areas of terrorism, radicalisation and counterterrorism without devoting some space to the longstanding issue of definitions. While the focus of this chapter has primarily been on CVE policy, the fact that definitions and understandings around CVE are elusive should not come as any surprise. Definitions have long been of concern in terrorism studies and have been the subject of much research, column inches and journal articles. The discussion here is not intended to rehash debates around definitions, nor to make any attempt to offer a new approach to such deliberations. This chapter seeks to offer a context to what follows, where the focus is on the day to day work of the CVE practitioners interviewed for this study. However, in doing so, the complications around the terminology employed in this study must themselves be contextualised within the broader area of "terrorism studies." There is overlap and confusion between a number of relevant terms. This is unlikely to change anytime soon; the debate on what exactly makes something terrorism as opposed to another form of violence has been subject to decades worth of research. Acknowledged within the *Prevent* Policy (Home Office, 2011: 12), wherein it is noted that '[m]any terms and expressions are used in discussion and debate about *Prevent*. The review and the consultation indicated that there are almost as many definitions of some of these terms as there are people using them.' This issue feeds into the backdrop for this study, and, is worth considering, albeit briefly, here.

On "terrorism"

> *Few terms or concepts in contemporary political discourse have proved as hard to define as*
> *terrorism.*
> (Weinburg, Pedahzur and Hirsch-Hoeffler, 2004)

The difficulty in defining, or conceptualising terrorism has been long recognised, perhaps most notably with Schmid's 1988 attempt to reach a definition based on the input, via questionnaire, of 200 (with 109 responses received) "terrorism experts," coding the responses to devise a definition made up of 16 different elements that were required in order to apply the label terrorism.[59] Other attempts to reach a consensus have been played out through the United Nations, where a common definition among states is yet to be found,[60] and even within different US government departments there are varying definitions of terrorism in place.[61] The very question of a need to reach consensus on a definition is divisive. While Schmid (2004), acknowledging that arriving at a definition will not solve the underlying problem, argues that having a definition is absolutely necessary, others, such as Walter Laqueur feel differently: 'We know terrorism when we see it,' claims Laquer (1977: 5), who believes that a comprehensive definition is simply not possible, with terrorism having appeared in such a variety of circumstances and forms. The lack of definition should not, he suggests, hinder research in the area at all.

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[59] Based on this study (Schmid, 2004: 382) the definition arrived at is as follows:

> 'Terrorism is an [1] anxiety-inspiring method of repeated [2] violent action, employed by (semi-) [3] clandestine individual, group, or state actors, for [4] idiosyncratic, criminal, or political reasons, whereby - in contrast to assassination - the direct targets of violence are not the main targets. The [5] immediate human victims of violence are generally chosen [6] randomly (targets of opportunity) or [7] selectively (representative or symbolic targets) from a target population, and serve as message generators. [8] Threat- and violence-based [9] communication processes between terrorist (organization), (imperiled) victims, and main targets are used to [10] manipulate the main target (audience(s)), turning it into a [11] target of terror, a [12] target of demands, or a [13] target of attention, depending on whether [14] intimidation, [15] coercion, or [16] propaganda is primarily sought.'

Schmid revised this in 2011, with a list of 12 elements, in an attempt to reach an academic consensus. The full list and details regarding how it was devised, can be found here: http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/schmid-terrorism-definition/html.
In another work, Hoffman (1998) examines 109 definitions of terrorism; a 2004 article by Leonard Weinberg, Ami Pedahzur and Sivan Hirsh-Hoefler looks at 73 definitions of terrorism from 55 articles in three leading academic journals on the subject. These are a small number of examples from a wealth of similar literature on the topic.
[60] For a full discussion on this issue see European Parliament, 2015: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2015/571320/EPRS_ATA(2015)571320_EN.pdf.
[61] Again, for more on this see European Parliament, 2015: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2015/571320/EPRS_ATA(2015)571320_EN.pdf.

The appearance of terrorism in a variety of forms and circumstances is only one of a long list of reasons that have contributed to the difficulty in reaching a consensus on a definition. There are political reasons, ideological reasons and issues around "legitimate resistance" that complicate any attempt at reaching a consensus. What is clear from the various definitions offered is that terrorism is considered something that exists; it is a certainty. It is conceived of in a negative way; 'the term terrorism is a word with intrinsically negative connotations…applied to enemies and opponents…to those with whom one disagrees' (Nasser-Eddine et al., 2011: 5). Baudrillard (1991) questions the state that has the ability to eliminate terrorism; '[d]oes it not have to equip itself with its own terrorism and in doing so simply generalise terrorism at all levels?' highlighting the fact that states too can be perpetrators of terrorism. Another evolving concept, definitions are often reactionary, responding to changes in tactics. Indeed, terrorism as a tactic, as opposed to a definable enemy, is another important way in which the concept is understood. With the emergence of, and focus on the term "violent extremism," what then is the relationship, or the difference, between terrorism and violent extremism?

Terrorism versus violent extremism

> *Often the need to "counter violent extremism" is noted in the literature but no actual definition of what "violent extremism" constitutes, is provided.*
> (Nasser-Eddine et al., 2011: 9).

Lacking an agreed upon definition, understandings of both violent extremism and terrorism tend to be taken for granted. Again, the UN does not have an official definition for violent extremism, neither does the EU and the two terms, terrorism and violent extremism, are often used synonymously (Glazzard and Zeuthan, 2016). For Schmid (2013: 8-11), (violent) extremism is very much tied to ideology and an emphasis on the use of violence to achieve their aims, however, non-violent extremists are, for Schmid, also problematic. For Sedgwick (2012) the idea of non-violent extremism is a more complicated, in that what makes something "extreme" can vary from context to context and depend on social norms in a given region. Glazzard and Zeuthan (2016) suggest that while "violent extremism" is usually considered to be a more inclusive term than "terrorism," it tends 'to be applied much more narrowly, to Islamist violence alone, ignoring the many other forms of ideologically motivated or justified violence that affect countries.' However, Dean (2014) suggests otherwise, explaining that trends in the literature see definitions of "terrorism" absorbed under the

umbrella term of "Violent Extremism" (VE) with its wider encompassing terminology to fit in both right-wing militants, white supremacists and the like, and left-wing ideologists as well as 'old and 'new' forms of terrorism like radical Islamic fundamentalism. This trend does not solve all of the nagging problems associated with this new label of "violent extremist," as it is still a highly-contested notion, but it does offer a "softer" sounding and less derogatory terminology than the label 'terrorist.

Nasser-Eddine at al. (2011: 9) summarise a discussion regarding the emergence of violent extremism as follows: '[N]o real distinction between violent extremism and terrorism has fully evolved, in fact, it remains an evolving concept.'

On "radicalisation"

> *[Radicalisation] has become a political shibboleth despite its lack of precision.*
> (Schmid, 2013: iv)

Radicalisation is yet another contested term, lacking a concrete definition, often conflated with 'violent extremism.' There is no universally accepted definition in academia or government (Schmid, 2013: 5). The OSCE, for example, in a 2014 report includes a section entitled: 'Understanding Violent Extremism and Radicalisation that Lead to Terrorism,' which is abbreviated to VERLT. Beyond the title, the term 'violent extremism' does not appear at all in that section (other than within the abbreviation). However, they refer frequently to 'radicalisation,' and seem to see violent extremism and radicalisation as synonymous and representing something that happens prior to a person becoming a terrorist.

The emergence of the concept of radicalisation as a process leading to violence as a key concern of policymakers and security services has seen radicalisation constructed as a process which a person (or persons) undergoes that *may* result in their committing violent acts (Awan, Hoskins & O'Loughlin, 2011: 3, emphasis in original). The use of the term radicalisation is divisive. As Leuprecht et al (2010: 47) note, emphasising the need to distinguish between non-violent and violent political behaviour, both the movement for voting rights for women, and the civil-rights movement militating for racial equality were, at the time, considered radical and engaged in some illegal political action. While some radicals do, indeed, conduct, support, or encourage terrorism, many others do not, and actively (often effectively) agitate against it (Bartlett & Miller, 2012: 2). That 'radicalisation' is used to describe a process by which an individual becomes a terrorist or a violent extremist 'implies a

direct link between radicalism or extremism and violence, which risks the stigmatisation of non-violent groups,' argue Frazer and Nünlist (2015). Schmid (2013) problematises the term from a definitional perspective, discussing it at length and, noting that, like the term terrorism, the term radicalisation has become very politicised, makes an effort to progress towards a clearer understanding of what 'radicalisation' is. As above, 'radicalisation' in its current conceptualisation has come about as a reaction to shifting tactics and methods employed by violent extremists, with definitions fluctuating as further research takes place. It is a significant term here in that it suggests there exists some kind of process, in which it is possible to intervene, thus allowing for the increased focus on prevention in the area of terrorism and violent extremism.

Countering violent extremism versus counterterrorism

> *The concept of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE), in conjunction with peace and development policies, has developed as part of a modern approach to counterterrorism.*
> (Frazer and Nünlist, 2015)

Countering violent extremism is seen to be one part of wider counter terrorism strategies and policy. Again, it has evolved out of changing ideas about terrorism and violent extremism. National security concerns around terrorism, particularly following 9/11, and its association with other transnational security challenges, including, suggests Chowdery Fink (2014: 5) 'drug trafficking, organized crime, and armed conflict,' coupled with 'the ability of extremist groups to continue generating support and sympathy,' has led to this focus on a more preventive and multidimensional response, with CVE allowing practitioners to complement counterterrorism strategies in a number of countries and regions. Vidino and Hughes (2015: 13) suggest that the interventions associated with CVE are viewed by officials throughout Europe as 'an extremely useful complement to traditional counterterrorism tactics,' and that CVE 'despite its many difficulties, is widely considered an indispensable part of a comprehensive counterterrorism policy' (Vidino and Hughes, 2015: 5).

This brief discussion around terminology highlights the fact that the terms '(violent) extremism' and 'countering (violent) extremism' are victims of the same definitional issues as their ancillaries: terrorism; counter-terrorism; and radicalisation. These are terms that tend to be taken for granted in media reports, academic literature and at government level. This is before considering the various CVE initiatives themselves. This study is not seeking to rectify this situation – as Silke (1996) has remarked, 'because concepts such as terrorism and

radicalisation are so context-dependent, there may never be any universally agreed definitions of these phenomena.' Important to remember is, despite the difficulties surrounding these terms, they are concepts that remain very much on government agendas.

Conclusion

> *Scholarship that conceptualises and theorises violent extremism and countering violent extremism as ontological phenomena that emerge in relation to particular contexts is required. Such approaches would move stagnant debates in the literature beyond superficial issues focussing on lack of theory and agreement on conceptual definitions.*
> (Nasser-Eddine et al., 2011: Executive Summary)

This chapter has served to provide a backdrop for the study that follows; it aims to highlight the policy that underlies the notion of CVE. It offers a macro level view of the landscape ahead of the following exploration of the issues and experiences of those involved in day to day work in the area. The chapter seeks to make clear the lack of clear definitions and understandings around CVE, despite the significant focus for governments. This lack of understanding permeates policy at all levels and scholarship around the issue, complicating efforts to seek insights into the work that is taking place. Having set the scene, the following chapter moves on to discuss the methodology applied to this study and detail the research process.

CHAPTER TWO: GROUNDED THEORY
A JOURNEY THROUGH EMERGENCE AND DISCOVERY

Introduction

> *It is a capital mistake to theorise before one has data. Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts.*
> – Arthur Conan Doyle.
> Sherlock Holmes, A Scandal in Bohemia.

Grounded theory is the generation of a theory from data, while remaining open to the ideas emergent from the data in question. Throughout his works, Glaser (2001: 127) emphasises getting on and doing grounded theory. Therefore, this chapter, rather than simply outlining the methodology, emphasises the doing, and the way in which the nature of grounded theory has influenced this whole research project. More specifically, this chapter looks at how the core characteristics of the methodology have been used along the way.

The chapter opens with a discussion of the main traits underpinning grounded theory and its significance as a method for generating theory. The history and evolution of the method are discussed, along with a consideration of the reasons for choosing to adopt a classic grounded theory approach. The focus then moves to the study in question, detailing the early stages of this research project and the role that openness, discovery and emergence, key characteristics of grounded theory, played from the outset and throughout the investigation. The core elements of grounded theory are discussed, both in general and in relation to this research. The final section focuses on the point at which the theory began to emerge, discussing the main concern and core category.

The research process did not necessarily happen in a straightforward way; a number of the issues experienced throughout the process are also noted within the chapter. The main concern – *frustration* – and core category – *mining the personal* – are also discussed. Here I draw on the words of participants in the interviews. Their sense of frustration was something palpable. The only way to do this justice was to rely on their words. The use of their words also adds colour to what might otherwise be discussion directed solely at methodological issues. Previous iterations of the theory developed are also outlined, elucidating the research process and highlighting the way in which ongoing analysis led to the emergence of the core category and the theory.

The Nature of Grounded Theory

Discovery, emergence and relevance

> *The goal of grounded theory is to generate a theory that accounts for a pattern of behaviour which is relevant and problematic for those involved.*
>
> (Glaser, 1978:93)

Grounded theory is rooted in the concept of the *discovery* of theory from data. Originally developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss through their study of the interaction of hospital staff with dying patients (Glaser & Strauss, 1965), the approach was more fully enunciated in the 1967 work *The Discovery of Grounded Theory,* which offers a description of the method and remains a key reference to this day (Amsteus, 2014: 72). As Glaser (1998: 21, emphasis added) remarks: 'Grounded theory was *discovered*, not invented.' It is a term that, along with *emergence,* another bedrock of the grounded theory approach, is easily misunderstood and potentially ill-regarded by those who take the words too literally, believing them to mean that there is no rigour to be found when ideas simply make themselves apparent. Reflecting upon these concepts in relation to the methodology easily clarifies any would-be criticisms of these ideas as constituting something that simply happens in an unsystematic manner.

Grounded theory involves entering the research setting with 'as few predetermined ideas as possible' (Glaser, 1978: 3) and being led by what is emerging from the data. It is through this 'mandate to remain open to what is actually happening' (Glaser, 2004), coupled with the systemic procedures offered by grounded theory, that the researcher can '*discover* the main concern of the participants in the field and how they resolve this concern' (Glaser, 2004 – emphasis in original). Via the researcher's engagement with the systematic procedures of grounded theory – data collection, coding, constant comparison, memo writing, theoretical sampling and arrival at theoretical saturation – the theory emerges and is built. Discovery doesn't simply happen. It entails the thorough analysis of data, with all of those processes involved in the collection and codification of the data 'guided and integrated by the *emerging* theory' (1978: 2). This happens from the outset in a grounded theory study, with analysis taking place after the first data is sourced. Further data collection is driven by the emerging concepts that will form part of the final theory. This happens throughout the research process; as categories and their properties *emerge* from the data, that is, as the researcher engages with the data and pulls it apart seeking to understand what is going on in the data, further data sources are identified based on the likelihood that they will contribute to the development of

the emerging categories and theory. Ultimately, good ideas 'earn' their way into the theory through *emergence* or *emergent fit* (Glaser, 1978: 8).

For Glaser and Strauss, this was very much in contrast to the way research was typically conducted at the time of the method's development. They viewed grounded theory as an important step in moving away from the focus on the verification of "grand theories" created by "great men [or women]" of sociology. Grounded theory marked a move toward the development of theories that were of relevance to those in the area of interest. Verification, suggests Glaser (1998: 23), 'hobbled the generation of theory and the generation of inducted hypotheses, and often its value was not relevant.' In addition, Glaser and Strauss felt that grounded theory empowered researchers to emulate those who had created theories before them, rather than being stuck a '"proletariat" tester,' through the focus on verification, which 'train[ed] young sociologists to test their teachers' work but not to imitate it' (Glaser and Strauss, 2008/1967: 11).

Taking a grounded theory approach, the notion of discovery and emergence emphasises the finding of something new; a new approach, a new way of looking at a particular problem. It is these elements of the method that also contribute to its relevance. With grounded theory's focus on the patterns emerging from the data, and being led by the participants in the study, rather than on preconceived ideas or theories, the product is of relevance to those working in the area. Glaser (1978: 5) explains that grounded theory 'arrives at relevance because it allows core problems and processes to emerge.'

Theory development and theoretical sensitivity

> *We believe that the discovery of theory from data – which we call* grounded theory – *is a major task confronting sociology today, for, as we shall try to show, such a theory fits empirical situations, and is understandable to sociologists and laymen [laywomen] alike.*
> (Glaser and Strauss, 2008/1967: 1)

Given the emphasis on theory development within grounded theory, it is worth considering not only the significant contribution theory makes. Theories offer a way of conceptualising reality, helping us to understand certain aspects of life. Theory offers a way of linking concepts that would otherwise be described within qualitative research more generally; the generation of grounded theory is an attempt to arrive at concepts that capture an aspect of life in a way that helps us to understand it (Philbin, Summer School 2016). A theory not only

describes phenomena, it can also explain and predict them. A theory can mean different things across different disciplines and for different people. For Glaser and Strauss (2008/1967) theory offers a means of handling data, enabling prediction, describing behaviour, and offering understanding for practitioners and is a process, an ever-developing entity as opposed to a 'perfect product.' Taking a grounded theory approach, the concern is not with discovering reality, or an element of reality, or a particular individual's or group's reality. 'Grounded theory is not findings, but rather is an integrated set of conceptual hypotheses. It is just probability statements about the relationship between concepts' (Glaser, 1998: 3). As such, theory has much to offer by way of communicating 'current understandings of the dynamic conditions of human lives and behaviours' in a given area (Kearney, 2007: 128). This ties in with the importance of relevance and the benefits that theory generation can bring to those working in a given area.

Substantive theory tends to be that most associated with grounded theory research, the focus typically being a substantive area of analysis. Generating grounded theory is a way of arriving at a theory, grounded in the data of the area being studied, that is suited to its supposed uses and moves beyond description to offer people, 'researchers and laymen alike, research that enables them to handle the everyday problems of substantive situations' (Glaser, 1998: 33). Formal theory is not excluded from grounded theory research. As a higher level theory, formal theories can be developed from substantive theories, or through further analysis, the conceptual level goes up from substantive to formal (Glaser, 2002).[62] Formal theories are those theories that have been developed for a 'formal or conceptual area of sociological inquiry' (Glaser, 1978: 144); they are not restricted to one substantive area.[63]

When developing a theory, having an understanding of the way in which theories are built is important. It is here that the development of *theoretical sensitivity* plays a role. This is key to rendering theoretically the categories discovered by the researcher. This involves being well-read in a variety of literatures and the literature of various theories. Reading widely in a variety of fields allows the researcher to become sensitive to how they conceptualise data, with the analyst then in a position to generate categories familiar to a variety of fields, with the 'data of the substantive area [becoming] theoretically tractible' (Glaser, 1978: 3).

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[62] Glaser's 2007 *Doing Formal Theory,* for example, focuses on this.
[63] Glaser (1978: 144) offers 'stigma,' 'deviant behaviour,' 'socialisation,' and 'authority and power' as some examples.

Theoretical sensitivity is continually developing. In addition to reading widely and considering the various ways that theories can be constructed, life and professional experiences can also increase theoretical sensitivity (Higgins, GT Seminar, 2014). Through this development, the researcher approaches the study with a wealth of ideas, but they remain just that – ideas. Given that the aim is theory generation, having an understanding of theory and its significance in the world is important. This is not the same as having a preconceived framework or theory into which to fit the study being undertaken. Kelle (2007: 611) describes theoretical sensitivity as 'the ability to see relevant data and to reflect upon empirical data material with the help of theoretical terms.' This emphasis on theoretical sensitivity further underscores the rigour of the grounded theory method.

Evolution or Erosion: theoretical perspectives and competing methodologies

The origins of grounded theory

> *Piecing together the history of roots of grounded theory is not easy and not always linear.*
> (Glaser, 1998: 22)

Both Glaser and Strauss, drawing on their different backgrounds, had a role to play in the development of the grounded theory methodology. It was through the combination of both backgrounds that grounded theory emerged (Glaser, 2003): Strauss' experiences of symbolic interaction[64] and qualitative research at the Chicago School of qualitative research, merged with Glaser's background in qualitative maths and quantitative methodologies at the Columbia school of quantitative research. Glaser (1998: 21) argues that these roots, in 'some of the best schools and methodological thought in sociology in the sixties,' aided in legitimising the method. Strauss 'brought notions of human agency, emergent processes, social and subjective meanings, problem-solving practices and the open-ended study of action to grounded theory' (Charmaz, 2006: 7). The role of qualitative maths, which Glaser outlines in 1998's *Doing Grounded Theory* (22-23), is also clear through the identification of patterns and the use of probability statements. Glaser was additionally influenced by his time

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[64] Charmaz (2013/2006: 189) offers a succinct description of symbolic interactionism: 'a theoretical perspective derived from pragmatism which assumes that people construct selves, society and reality through interaction. Because this perspective focuses on dynamic relationships between meaning and actions, it addresses the active processes through which people create and mediate meanings. Meanings arise out of actions, and in turn influence actions. This perspective assumes that individuals are active, creative, and reflective and that social life consists of processes.' Symbolic interactionism, informed by interpretivism and pragmatism, 'assumes human beings construct and reconstruct the meaning of reality in a constant interaction with the self and others' (Lomborg and Kirkevold 2003: 196). Influenced by the ideas of Mead (1934), it draws on the notion that individuals are self-aware and, able to see themselves from the perspective of others and therefore adapt their behaviour according to the situation (Heath & Cowley, 2004: 142).

at the University of Paris where he undertook the study of literature, receiving training in 'explication de text,' which encourages a close line by line reading of a text to 'ascertain what exactly the author is saying' (Glaser, 1998: 24). This training was useful in rounding out the constant comparison element of grounded theory and its focus on the generation of concepts that closely fit 'without imputation as to what is going on in the substantive area, while at the same time being able to claim the authorship of the concept generated' (Glaser, 1998: 25).

Grounded theory endeavoured to integrate the strengths inherent in quantitative methods with qualitative approaches, combining the depth and richness of qualitative interpretive traditions with the logic, rigour and systematic analysis inherent in quantitative survey research (Walker & Myrick, 2011: 548; referencing: Charmaz, 2000; Dey, 1999; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Keddy, Sims & Stren, 1996; Robrecht, 1995).

Glaser and Strauss diverge

Diverging concepts and understandings of Grounded Theory have arisen from these attempts [on the part of Glaser and Strauss to explicate, clarify and reconceptualise some of the basic tenets of their methodological approach] which have led to a split between its founders.
(Kelle, 2007: 133)

As grounded theory grew in popularity, moving from beyond those doctoral students mentored by Glaser and Strauss in the School of Nursing at the University of California and being embraced around the world within the disciplines of nursing, business and education (Glaser, 1999: 837), issues arose regarding its misuse. Those using the method were not being trained in its principles and, without appropriate mentorship, work was being presented as grounded theory which simply were not, in fact, grounded theories at all. This "erosion of method" led to Strauss publishing his 1987 methodological work *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*, followed by another text in collaboration with Juliet Corbin, *Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis* (1990). In addition to discussing the elements of grounded theory familiar from the original texts, further suggestions for data analysis were included, such as the notions of 'axial coding' and the 'coding paradigm' (Strauss, 1987). These were further expanded in the 1990 work to include techniques for analysis, such as 'far out comparisons,' and 'flip flop technique,' along with the introduction of the 'conditional matrix.' These concepts, designed to offer more guidance to researchers, were not welcomed by Glaser. In his 1992 work *The Basics of Grounded Theory,* Glaser argues that Strauss had in fact

outlined a whole new methodology; it was not grounded theory. Chief among his concerns was what he considered the pre-framing of issues, via the introduction of new elements, such as the coding paradigm, which Glaser (1992: 63) viewed as anathema to the emphasis on openness and discovery in the original work:

> [i]n grounded theory we do not link properties and categories in a set of relationships denoting causal conditions, phenomena, context, intervening condition, action/interactional strategies and consequences. This would be preconception and forcing theoretical concepts on data to the max. The grounded theorist simply codes for categories and properties and lets whatever theoretical codes emerge where they may.

This divergence between the two originators of the method marks the beginning of a debate around the grounded theory methodology.

Theoretical perspectives and competing methodologies

> *Trust grounded theory, it works! Just do it, use it and publish!*
> (Glaser, 1998: 254)

The evolution of grounded theory has led to the development of different versions and debates regarding their place and validity. Gibson and Hartman (2014: 44) note that this should not come as a surprise, with grounded theory 'developed at a time when methodological pluralism in social science was emerging.' Key to many of these debates is the epistemology and ontology of the method. From a classic grounded theory perspective, these debates are moot, the method being epistemologically and ontologically neutral (Glaser, 2005), summarised by Holton (2007: 269) as follows:

> this is not to say that classic grounded theory is free of any theoretical lens but rather that it should not be confined to any one lens; that as a general methodology, classic grounded theory can adopt any epistemological perspective appropriate to the data and the ontological stance of the researcher.

Chief among those arguing that grounded theory should adapt to current trends in the social sciences are Charmaz (2000, 2006), who, with *Constructivist Grounded Theory* emphasises reflexivity and constructivism; and Clarke (2005) who, with *Situational Analysis* suggests that grounded theory should evolve to be more in line with post-modernist ideas. These are briefly discussed, having been considered at the early stages of this project as possible ways to progress, but ultimately dismissed as not necessarily adding anything of significance for this study to those original ideas presented in *Discovery*.

In the case of Charmaz (2000: 513) and *Constructivist Grounded Theory*,[65] she emphasises the 'interpretive understanding of subjects' meanings,' arguing that this 'focus on meaning while using grounded theory furthers…interpretive understanding.' This approach assumes multiple realities and multiple perspectives on these realities (Charmaz, 2008, 2009). Through the co-creation of knowledge researchers are involved in both making and interpreting the data under study (Charmaz, 1994, 2003, 2006). There is a shift in focus from explanatory theory to a more descriptive theory focussed on meaning and the construction thereof, rather than a focus on the how and why and the consequences of these meanings.

The focus on essential meaning and the role of the researcher, it has been argued, limits the possibility of entering a study remaining open, with questions being more direct and concepts constructed rather than discovered. The idea of multiple perspectives has also been problematised, with Glaser claiming that grounded theory process does recognise multiple participant perspectives, but the emphasis is not on individual pieces of data. Instead, 'the GT researcher comes along and raises these perspectives to the abstract level of conceptualisation hoping to see the underlying or latent pattern, another perspective' (Glaser, 2002: 2). Grounded theory is not focussed on the production and verification of facts, but on the generation of concepts that will have different meanings to different people, with the final theory open to modification and new data (Breckenridge et al., 2012). Arguments have been made regarding whether *Constructivist Grounded Theory* marks an evolution of the method (Hallberg, 2006) or an erosion (Glaser, 2012) more akin to qualitative descriptive analysis than to grounded theory.

Also arguing for an updated grounded theory is Clarke (2005), who advocates a 'situational analysis' approach. She outlines some of the difficulties surrounding value claims on theories in the postmodern era, essentially theorising situations that are constantly changing and evolving. With this approach, the socio-political and discursive context is moved from background to centre, and, drawing on Foucault, Clarke brings attention to those power relationships creating and created by discourse (Kearney, 2007: 146-147). For Clarke, the emphasis, due to ever changing contexts, is on theorising as opposed to generating theory.

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[65] Andrews (2012) is critical of Charmaz's (2000, 2006) interchangeable use of the terms 'constructionism' and 'social constructionism,' suggesting that she doesn't outline the differences between the two; constructivism has an individual focus, with individuals mentally constructing the world of experience while with social constructivism the focus is on the social construction of the world.

Given that theory generation is the central premise of grounded theory, questions arise as to whether *Situational Analysis* is, therefore, a form of grounded theory. It is also important to consider Glaser and Strauss' description of theory in *Discovery* as a process as opposed to a finished product.

The focus on context has also been questioned. Holton (2007: 270), for example, suggests that Clarke's privileging of context as an essential consideration in the framing and analysis of a grounded theory study is a forceful example of preconception, with the presumed significance and centrality of context forcing a preferred theoretical framework on a study from the outset. This has been evident in the research discussed here; the significance of the socio-political context has been coming through strongly in the data analysis without having been imposed from the beginning. This does indeed suggest that context is simply another variable for grounded theory which may or may not be relevant for a theory's explanation of how a main concern is continually resolved (Glaser, 2004).

Feminist grounded theory (Wuest, 1995), developed to amplify women's voices and associated with the field of nursing studies, incorporates elements from different varieties of grounded theory. Wuest (1995: 129) states: '[f]eminism is not a research method; it is a perspective that can be applied to a traditional disciplinary method.' Again, Glaser (2003) suggests that gender should not be assumed as a relevant category at the outset of a study. Similarly, he has expressed reservations about issues of social structure and power (2005), his argument being that underlying assumptions have the potential to obscure more relevant (and more ranging) conceptualisations.[66] It is, rather, the application of the method to the type of data within a specific research method that indicates 'where grounded theory takes on the mantle for the moment of pre-positivist, positivist, post-positivist, postmodernism, naturalism, realism etc.' (Glaser, 2005: 145). The debates and preoccupation with ontological and epistemological issues of grounded theory do indeed, it seems, as Breckenridge et. al

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[66] For an in-depth discussion see:

Olesen, V. L. (2007) 'Feminist Qualitative Research and Grounded Theory: Complexities, Criticisms, and Opportunities.' In: A. Bryant & K. Charmaz (Eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Grounded Theory*. London: Sage: 417-435

Gibson, B. (2007) 'Accommodation Critical Theory.' In: A. Bryant & K. Charmaz (Eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Grounded Theory*. London: Sage: 436-453.

McDonald, M. (2001) 'Finding a Critical Perspective in Grounded Theory.' In: R. S. Schreiber & N Stern (Eds.) *Using Grounded Theory in Nursing*. New York: Springer Publishing Company: 113-158.

(2012) note, 'distract from the simplicity of its purpose: to generate a theory from the data that fits, works and is relevant within the area from which it was derived.'

This study: choosing classic grounded theory

[A]rguments between the methods can go on forever. They are just different. The novice…just chooses and uses the method he [she] chooses. He [she] likes one method over the other for essentially personal abilities, skills and reasons. A method has grab for him [her]. If he [she] does not choose he [she] will be lost in the many conflicts of the wrestle. Lost in not knowing what to do or which way to go.

(Glaser, 2014)

It is important to elaborate here on the reasons for the decision to use grounded theory in this study, particularly given that it falls within a discipline wherein this approach is not typically taken.[67] The rationale for using the grounded theory methodology has been influenced by the research topic and the aims of this study. As Glaser and Strauss (2008/1967: 233-234) note, the approach should be taken based on methods 'best suited to the socially structured necessities of the research situation.' Ultimately the reasons for choosing grounded theory were tied to its suitability to the study and its suitability to me as a researcher. The exploratory and open ended nature of the research lends itself to a classic grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 2008/1967). Within terrorism studies more generally there has been considerable criticism of the lack of systematic research methods (Freilich and LaFree, 2016: 571), and the need for further emphasis on clarity of methodological choices concerning the collection and analysis of empirical data within the field has been identified (De Bie and De Poot, 2016: 580). Dolnik (2013:1) notes that while the field of 'terrorism studies' has witnessed a significant increase in academic output over the last decade, comparatively little attention 'has been devoted to attempts to systematically develop the quality of the terrorism studies discipline itself.' Here he calls in particular for more first-hand research to be carried out. Glaser (1992) notes that grounded theory is particularly useful in areas of limited scholarship. While CVE literature, as with terrorism literature, has experienced considerable growth in output, policy is based largely on unfounded assumptions. Rigorous research is certainly required. This can be research that guides policy,

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[67] Glaser (1999: 845) suggests that there will be less need to legitimise grounded theory in the future and hence, less need to justify using it: 'Its future portends that grounded theory will be as accepted as are other methods (e.g. surveys) and will require little or no explanation to justify its use in a research project…it will empower the PhD candidate with a degree, a subsequent career, and the acclaim of an original creative theory.' Despite this far-reaching claim, I feel that in this study it is necessary to offer some explanation and justification for the choice of method, mainly due to the fact that it is not widely used in the area of terrorism studies or international relations.

in particular by offering insight into the processes that are taking place, and that is grounded in empirical data, thus offering a more informed basis on which to develop policy,[68] or research that is significant to those operating in the area. There is also a need to bridge the gap between policy and practice, wherein CVE is firmly rooted, and academia. This work seeks to contribute to the growing output of work that focuses on CVE and the work of CVE practitioners (Kohler, 2017; Tierney, 2017; and Ambrozik, 2018, for example). Grounded theory, by focusing on the concerns of the participants, feels like a good step in this direction.

I felt that the combination of the rigorous approach to data analysis and the openness to the concerns of the participants would lead to the outcome of a model that would offer an explanation accounting for what was happening in one area of CVE practice, at least. The focus on discovery and relevance was appealing here. It also offered a different approach to much of the work thus far undertaken in this area and so, had something new to offer.[69] Despite the vast preoccupation with the notion of CVE, preconceived ideas have not been generating the relevant answers to the issues under study. The focus on what is actually happening as opposed to what should, could, or ought to be happening furthered the appeal of the method, particularly when studying an area wherein much of the research is comprised of unconvincing accounts of what *should* be happening.

The flexibility and openness of the classic grounded theory method suited me personally, leaving me free, particularly at the early stages of the study, to follow leads, engage with a variety of data sources, see what was important, and, ultimately, to reach the focus of the study in question. As such, I decided, after weighing up the various options within grounded theory, that classic grounded theory was best suited for this study.

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[68] This is not to suggest that all research in this area should be policy driven. Some of the problems with such an approach were referred to in the previous chapter, with research feeding into the conventional wisdom. A special issue of *Critical Studies on Terrorism* (2016, 9:1) covers the debate over policy-relevance and research in this area extensively.

[69] There are some examples of work in this area claiming to use a grounded theory approach. For example, Bartlett and Miller (2011) 'borrowed techniques from grounded theory methodology' in their article *The Edge of Violence: Towards Telling the Difference Between Violent and Non-Violent Radicalisation* in an attempt to 'achieve a more adept discrimination of violent and non-violent radicalization.' De Bie and De Poot (2016) use grounded theory in their empirical research project on jihadist networks, drawing on confidential police files, interviews and trial observations as their sources of data. Here they suggest that they would not have acquired the same theoretical insights using another method, with grounded theory offering a useful way to reach a higher level of abstraction. Constant comparison and theoretical sampling, they explain, led to an increased awareness of the kind of data needed to 'sharpen and enhance our understanding of a particular phenomenon.'

Beginning this Grounded Theory Journey

Remaining open – the substantive focus emerges

> *The full power of grounded theory comes with staying open to the emergent and to earned relevance throughout the whole GT methodology process.*
> (Glaser, 2005: 1).

Rather than starting out with a specific research question, this research, as it should do with a grounded theory study, started with an area of interest. At the very outset, my interest was in comic books and graphic novels and the way in which these were increasingly being used to depict events of political violence.[70] At this point, I felt there was potentially an interesting study into the use of visual language. This was underscored by the rising importance of the visual, these genres having enjoyed a significant reanimation in recent years, with the 'pictorial' turn (Mitchell, 1994) in contemporary culture and theory acknowledging images and visuals as important and as worthy of scrutiny as the realm of language is.

Shortly after I enrolled in the PhD programme the *Abdullah-X* project caught my attention. Advertised in 2012/2013 as an 'animated mini graphic novel' *The Adventures of Abdul-X* (as it was initially called) was beginning to receive coverage. With the tagline 'Mind of a Scholar…Heart of a Warrior,' the work was described as a 'ground-breaking animated mini graphic novel that tells the tale of a young Muslim coming to terms with the issues of our time.'[71] The project was created by a self-described 'former extremist' specifically with CVE aims in mind. That this product had been created specifically to counter the online messaging and propaganda of violent jihadi groups led to a shift in my focus to the ways in which different formats and platforms were being used to counter the online material being created by violent organisations. This was also influenced by the significant media and government attention on the dangers of "online radicalisation."

At this point, the focus of the study became the use of such visual materials as a form of counter-narrative, an element of the "battle of ideas" and an example of politics being

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[70] Examples include the graphic adaptation of the 9/11 report (Jacobson & Colón, 2006) undertaken, according to the foreword, 'not only to inform our fellow citizens about history but also to energize and engage them on behalf of reform and change, to make our country safer and more secure'; *American Widow* (Torres & Choi, 2008) is a personal telling of the effect the 9/11 attacks had on one woman; *The Complete Maus: A Survivor's Tale* by Art Spiegelman, telling the story of his own family and their experiences in the Holocaust and created to 'sort out and put into linear form, the chaos of my own personal history,' (cited in Weiner, 2003: 37); and *The Search* (2008) by Ruud van der Rol, Eric Heuvel, et al, an 'educational graphic novel on the history of the Holocaust for young people from 13 to 16 years old,' (Anne Frank House Website).

[71] This description is taken from a cached version of the Cypher7 website:
http://www.cypher7ad.com/abdulxposter.html.

conducted through popular visual language (Weber, 2008: 137).[72] This interest included the significance of the format and the choice of platform. Having decided to take a classic grounded theory approach, the data for this study would include interviews with the creators of such online counter-narratives, an analysis of the works themselves and the way in which they were framed and reported on by the media. The *Abdullah-X* project proved timely for my research; given the interest it was generating and its niche focus, it seemed like the obvious starting point for this work. The assumption was that those involved in the project would have insights into the areas of interest at the outset of this study, offering an entry point into the process of data collection using purposive sampling.

It was through the analysis of initial interview data that the focus of this study was further fine-tuned. Following the grounded theory approach, interview data was analysed immediately. Through this early data collection and analysis, it soon became clear that one of the significant occurrences in the area of CVE was the ever-increasing number of actors becoming involved in this area and the idea of the growth of a CVE industry. The growing emphasis on the use of social media for work in this area was also apparent. This was also coming through in much of the media coverage at the time, and was the focus of many CVE events. The decision was taken to interview a variety of these actors, with interviews being conducted with those involved in the State Department's *Think Again Turn Away* campaign and EdVenture's *P2P: Challenging Extremism* online initiatives. This aim was to explore and compare the experiences of a variety of actors working to counter violent online extremism. By using a grounded theory approach, the research would focus upon the work and concerns of the content creators – those ostensibly seeking to prevent the "radicalisation" of vulnerable youths, male and female, by countering the extremist propaganda to which they are exposed online.

In addition to the concepts emerging from the data at this point, informal discussions with those operating at grassroots level in the USA highlighted the large gap between the different actors. While they may all claim to be working to counter violent extremism online, their main concerns were very different. This was coming thorough strongly in the data, and was apparent very early on. The main concerns of a former extremist who has devoted their time, energy and their own finances into setting up an NGO and creating content are far removed

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[72] The January 2015 Charlie Hebdo shooting also tied in with these ideas, adding another dimension to the proposed study.

from a State Department employee whose job it is to go to their desk and work in the area of creating online counter-messaging content. While they might be using the same technology, and have a similar stated aim, the main concerns of each participant, even at this early stage, were clearly very different. This was coming through in the way they discussed everything from their work and their motivations, to the challenges they face and the ways in which they seek to overcome these. Writing with hindsight, this makes sense and is obvious; those working at governmental level are part of the very system that causes the frustration the grassroots participants in this study are experiencing.

Around the time of these interviews and discussions I attended a Grounded Theory seminar with Barney Glaser in Mill Valley.[73] The discussion there echoed the concerns I was having regarding the participants for the study in question being too disparate; Dr Glaser suggested that I focus on one group of participants. In *Discovery* Glaser and Strauss (2008/1967: 56) suggest that 'when beginning the generation of a substantive theory, the sociologist establishes the basic categories and their properties by minimising difference in the comparative groups.' As such, the focus on one group with more similarities seemed the most appropriate way to go based on both Dr Glaser's feedback and on the data itself. In addition to drawing on early interview data and informal conversations, CVE policy documents were reviewed and analysed at this stage of the research. Policies in both the UK and US promote the idea of localism and refer to the unique position of local communities to recognise the threat of violent extremism. Sampling the literature, Dolnik (2013: 3) observes that much of the research within the field of terrorism studies relies on a government perspective which brings its own biases, with research skewed by the comparatively easier access to government data and the one-sided nature of research funding. The comparison of interview data with policy data and relevant literature at this stage of the research also contributed to the decision to focus on grassroots/community based CVE practitioners.

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[73] Grounded Theory Trouble Shooting Seminar, Mill Valley, CA May 28-30, 2015. This seminar was led by Dr Barney Glaser, PhD, Hon PhD. I received different advice at another GT seminar (Grounded Theory Collaboration Group, TCD, 2016) where it was suggested that these differences were what would round out the end theory, that it was, in fact, such differences I was looking for. However, I feel that for the generation of a substantive theory, starting out with a more similar group is most appropriate. As the theory develops and emerges, it would then be possible to look to other groups for elaboration or testing of the theory.

Remaining open and following the data: the participant group emerges

Identifying the most appropriate participant group is crucial.
(Morse, 2007: 235)

In addition to early data analysis leading to the substantive focus, it also led to the participant group. The analysis of the data collected suggested that looking specifically at those working to counter *online* extremism was not the best way to proceed. Comparing the early interview data, in nearly all cases, those working in online CVE see their online and offline work as 'synonymous.' It was clear that even those working predominantly online and creating online content also engaged in CVE work in offline settings. There is more of a blurring of the lines between the two areas than there is for those working at government/policy level. Early analysis ultimately suggested that the participant group should be widened to those working more generally within CVE, not those working specifically in *online* CVE.

Another issue that came up repeatedly in the data at an early stage was the narrow focus within CVE policy and the reporting of CVE issues on the Muslim community. Seeing this emerge from the data led me to ask questions and memo about this issue. This included asking questions of the data and of the policy, media reports and literature in the area. Based on this analysis I felt that those working to counter *varieties* of extremist messaging from a grassroots or community based level should be included in the study. This would provide the opportunity to see if the codes and categories coming up thus far would be similar, or if the variety of extremism involved would see changes in the patterns within the data. Glaser and Strauss (2008/1967:47) explains that 'with theoretical sampling the question is: *what* group or subgroup does one turn to *next* in data collection? And for *what* theoretical purpose?' Here I felt that turning to those working in the same area, but tackling a different 'extremist ideology' would add to the dimensions of the categories that were emerging from the data. While the original participant group was too disparate, adding in these different "varieties" of extremism has not seen this issue arise; those operating at grassroots level, regardless of the extremism they are tackling, have more in common that those working at different levels, but tackling the same type of extremism. There are many similarities across the data, and where differences arise it has enhanced the emerging theory as opposed to making it impossible to identify a common main concern. Having followed the early codes and concepts and considered where to go to next, the participants of this study emerged as those working to

counter violent Islamic extremism, right-wing extremism and nationalist/loyalist extremism in the context of Northern Ireland.

While initial interviews were being conducted, coding of data and analysis thereof was taking place concurrently. The data was comprised not only of interview transcripts; informal conversations, policy documents and media reports all fed into decisions that were made. These decisions were taken based on emerging codes and categories. As such, the decision to focus on grassroots CVE practitioners, whether they work predominantly online or offline, working across a variety of violent extremist ideologies, has 'earned' its way into this research rather than being assumed from the beginning.

Data collection

> *The GT perspective is that 'all is data'…The GT researcher figures out what is the data, not what it is not or should be.*
> (Glaser, 2001: 50)

Interview data was the primary focus for this study. In total, interviews were conducted with thirty 'grassroots' CVE practitioners, seeking to counter a variety of extremist ideologies (listed in Appendix I). The initial interviews with the creator of *Abdullah-X* were conducted in August 2014 and March 2015. As the aims of the study evolved, I approached people that I felt would be best placed to contribute something to the emerging theory. I identified these individuals via online searches, RAN listings,[74] conversations with colleagues and recommendations from participants. I considered anyone who works within CVE[75] at community level as opposed to working for the government or local authorities.[76] As 'CVE practitioner' is not one set job description, interviewees included former (violent) extremists ("formers"), youth workers, psychologists, artists, writers, musicians, Imams, individuals who felt there was an issue in their community but felt uninspired by the "official" efforts

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[74] The list of organisations that the EU Radicalisation Awareness include in their network is available at https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network_en.

[75] The unclear nature of what exactly constitutes CVE as outlined in the previous chapter comes into play here. It is not clear what exactly CVE is and therefore, not always clear what a 'CVE practitioner' is. Rather than get too bogged down in definitions I left it to participants to determine whether or not their work ties in with the area under study. In the majority of the cases, informants work expressly in this area and many are developing a reputation for the work they do.

[76] Some of the practitioners straddle both worlds. They are grassroots CVE practitioners, but might have done some freelance work for government agencies. Or in a day job work with authorities, but have set up their own projects in their spare time. In these cases, the focus in the interview was specifically on the work in which they are involved at community level. The set-up in Sweden and Denmark, with local authorities playing a larger role, means that those interviewed there are in a slightly different position, with some of the authorities taking a very bottom up approach and working closely with local communities.

that were taking place and NGO staff. Interviews were conducted in the USA, Ireland, Northern Ireland, the UK, Denmark and Sweden. Interview venues have included a variety of Costa Coffee shops, one Starbucks, a number of independent coffee shops, a McDonald's, a skate park, a park bench, and, very occasionally, an office space.

At the beginning of this study there were considerable gaps between interviews. The first interview took place in August 2014, with another interview taking place with the same participant in March 2015. Further interviews and informal meetings took place in May 2015 as part of the initial phase of the research. The idea here was to give time for analysis and constant comparison. I wanted to have time to really consider what participants were telling me and identify what was happening within the data. There were practical reasons for this; I was researching grounded theory methodology to both ensure that this was the way I wanted to go with this project, and ensure that I had a good understanding of the method before fully embarking on the study. I also had teaching commitments and class assignments as part of the structured PhD programme in which I was enrolled.

Upon settling on the participant group, the following four interviews took place between 21 September 2015 and 19 December 2015. At this point patterns began to emerge in the data and direct where to go to next both in terms of participant selection and regarding the questions to add in, or remove, in future interviews. It has not always been possible to leave so much time between interviews. Firstly, as many of the interviews have involved travel, I had to conduct the interviews when I was in a given location and had the opportunity to do so; I interviewed eight participants in Northern Ireland over five days in January 2016. Similarly, I carried out eleven interviews over twelve days in the United States in March-April 2016. Participants often put me in touch with other participants. This snowball sampling proved very useful, as it gave me access to people I may not otherwise have been aware of.[77] It also ensured access to people who are not always willing to be interviewed, or might be wary of researchers; once I was put in touch by someone they have worked with, or feel comfortable with they were happy to speak with me.

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[77] While this happened on a few occasions I certainly haven't relied on this way of finding participants, with theoretical sampling being a central part of GT. 'Opportunity sampling' has been noted as a big issue within the field of terrorism studies (Silke, 2004: 64-65) and, while I did take advantage of the access that was provided, I was careful to ensure that I used theoretical sampling to consider where to go next for participants. I make sure to look to a variety of sources for potential interviewees and connect with people in a variety of ways.

Following the grounded theory maxim 'all is data' I also drew on policy documents, literature, informal discussions, conference panels, media reports and TV and radio documentaries, and social media accounts[78] along with anecdotes. Some participants have published (auto)biographies and others have given TED talks or interviews that are readily available online. Many are very active on social media, their accounts very much focussed on their work. Indeed, in a number of cases participants were more accessible via Facebook than via email, and I ended up being part of a number of group chats, with introductions often made this way to other potential participants. The journey from interview to interview also contributed to the 'all is data' maxim in some interesting ways, particularly in the USA. Writing on *experiential incidents*, Glaser (1978: 51) suggests: 'Once it is safe to go outside the data for comparisons with other data he [or she, the analyst] may even take on kinds of incidents that are not arrived at through systematic research, but can be helpful. This class of comparisons is called experiential incidents.' This refers to anecdotes and stories, for example, and proved to be something that I encountered much of on this research journey. There were many conversations and incidents along the way that could be compared to the data, the area of CVE and all that is associated therewith being a topic of interest for many people over 2016 and 2017.

Recording and transcription

> *DO NOT TAPE INTERVIEWS.*
> (Glaser, 1998: 107)

Before discussing the interview process itself, it is important to state that all the interviews for this study were recorded, and the majority were also transcribed. While this is not the advice given to grounded theory researchers – Glaser (1998: 107) describes the taping of interviews as 'one of the strongest evidentiary invasions into grounded theory' – I felt, certainly at the beginning of the study, compelled to go through this process. This stemmed in part from not trusting the process and, indeed, not trusting myself; I was worried I might miss something important. There is also the fact that it is generally accepted in qualitative research that interviews are recorded and used as 'complete evidence for substantiating or verifying a finding' (Glaser, 1998: 107). However, in grounded theory, the advice is to rely on field

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[78] These are public accounts via which the participants seek to promote their work and their ideas. In a number of instances I am "friends" with the participants on Facebook. In these instances that was pre-empted by the participants as a way of being in touch to arrange meetings. They are fully aware that I am a researcher working in this area. Where I draw on social media posts they are all publicly available.

notes, which is both efficient and contributes to the delimiting that occurs throughout the process.

The transcribing of interviews did, indeed, prove time consuming. Having been through the process I can now see that tape recording is not as necessary as I felt it was – though it does have some benefits – and that the time I spent transcribing interviews, certainly beyond the first few, possibly did slow down the analysis. I also ended up with very large amounts of data. On the other hand, I felt that going through the process of transcription made me very familiar with my data and feel a great deal more confident that I was not going to miss anything of significance. While issues of significance did reoccur and pattern out in the data, I didn't necessarily trust this to be the case from the outset. There were also those occasions when data collection occurred without much time in between interviews. Even later in the study, when I stopped transcribing interviews, I recorded the interviews. Throughout, this was done with participants' permission; the participants were happy, and in many instances very keen, to be 'on the record,' something that has had implications regarding ethics and the write up process.

The interview process

Grounded theory interview questions need to be sufficiently general to cover a wide range of experiences and narrow enough to elicit and explore the participant's specific experience.
(Charmaz and Belgrave, 2012: 351)

According to Glaser (2004) the grounded theory researcher 'listens to participants venting issues rather than encouraging them to talk about a subject of little interest.' This is part of remaining open to the discovery of the main concern of the participants and the ways in which they resolve this concern; there are no 'preconceived interview protocols' (Holton, 2007: 269). The interviews in this study were unstructured and in depth. Participants were encouraged to speak about the work in which they are involved and the issues they face. More specific questions were asked based on the information they provided, when clarification was required, or something warranted further exploration. With grounded theory, pre-defining the questions may cause issues with framing the problem a certain way and encouraging participants to talk about certain issues as determined by the researcher. Glaser describes interviewing as trying to 'instil a spill' in the participants – having them really open up about the issue in question and speak freely about it. Interviews and interview technique was constantly refined, based not only on theoretical sampling, but also on the interview

experiences throughout this process. While the interview focus narrows along with the emerging theory – questions become more specific – I still gave the participants time to talk about whatever it is they felt they needed, or wanted, to say.

All interviews began in the same manner, with a broad question about the participant's work, what they do and why. More often than not, once they started talking about this they got into a flow and kept talking, citing examples of their work and issues that they face. Other follow up questions were based on the concepts that were emerging during coding of previous interview data. Generally, I found that the same issues and concerns were coming up over and over again without the need for prompting. On average, interviews lasted between forty minutes and a little over an hour.

The relationship between interviewer and informant has been widely discussed as being an important part of any study, with status issues coming in to play (Aléx and Hammerstrom, 2009; Anyan, 2013). The relationship here was an interesting one; I am not a CVE practitioner and never have been. On the one hand, this certainly helped in terms of approaching the interviews with an open mind. However, there was a sense of my having "outsider status," and, in several cases I felt I had to prove myself and my interest in the area under discussion. This gaining of credibility was not necessarily difficult, in that once I spoke about my personal background participants could see that there was a connection; I stopped being simply a researcher, and became someone with practical experience.[79] In other cases, my being Irish helped participants to feel comfortable with me; there were a number of references to this fact and the idea that the Irish were once a "suspect community" so we 'get it.'[80] For example, initially one participant was reluctant to speak with me, having felt that his work was being used as somewhat of a 'show pony,' which he was uncomfortable with. In

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[79] Of course, it is worth considering how much my own feelings of not being an "expert" played into this and further consideration of the relationship with the informants may be a worthy endeavour at some point. Here I spoke about my years working in human rights education and arts education with children, teenagers and young adults. There were certainly instances when, having discussed this work, particularly the fact that this work has brought me into contact with a large variety of young people, including those in juvenile detention and in prison, the interviewees seemed more open, or more willing to speak to me. I think, up until that point, they assumed that I am, and have always been, sitting at a desk commenting on the work they are doing.

[80] Again, this raised interesting personal issues for me. On the one hand, I have many stories from family (including my parents, who are both Irish) who lived in Belfast and London through the 1960s, '70s and '80s. They have numerous stories and incidents indicative of this 'suspect community' idea, not least my father managing, inadvertently, to have part of the Tube system shut down having left his briefcase behind. Noting the Irish name on it, the police assumed it might be a bomb. However, for me personally, I am too young to really remember any direct experiences such as these, so in many ways I don't "get it," at least on such a personal level.

this case, having met me, he was happy to talk, citing not only the fact that I am Irish, but also the grounded theory approach that I was taking; I was not setting out to prove a hypothesis.

On ethics

Grounded theory is an approach or set of approaches to the analysis of data. As such, the classic works did not address other aspects of the research process.
(Olesen, 2007: 425)

That the classic grounded theory works offer little advice by way of ethical issues is not entirely surprising given the time in which they written. The work pre-dates the rise of the Research Ethics Committee within universities and the attendant ethical requirements. These requirements and the nature of this study, coupled with the participants therein, provoked some interesting considerations around ethics. This was also likely influenced by my attendance at a number of grounded theory seminars where fellow attendees were carrying out research into substantive areas with vulnerable participants, or participants who would not necessarily see themselves as "spokespeople" for the area under investigation. In such cases ethical concerns and the idea of 'do no harm' should, unquestionably, be central to their approach, with recruitment and interviewing delicate tasks that require a particular approach. However, ethics is not, and should not, be wholly focused on the participants and the effects of a study on them individually.

In this study, the participants are by no means vulnerable or at risk. Having a conversation about their work does not put them at any additional risk than that associated with the day to day lives they are living. They are individuals, many of whom are receiving much coverage for the work they are doing and could be considered public figures, who, as such, have a responsibility to talk about their work. This does not mean that they are obliged to speak with me; the participants are adults who have decided to participate in this study. In many cases the participants expressed a wish to go 'on record' openly; they want their ideas and their work noted. This, for me, is where the idea of ethics comes into play and ethics being something that is important to consider throughout the process, rather than a formality at the outset of a study. Ethics approval, which was sought and received, was very much a one-off requirement. There was a sense that once approval has been sought and granted, the ethics box has been firmly ticked. In fact, in my experience, the paperwork associated with ethics approval – the plain language statement and the consent form – can cause concern

themselves. In this study, many participants did not seem to pay much attention to either form and were happy to simply sign (though at this stage we had been in touch via email and I had explained about my research while seeking to meet with them). Participants based in Northern Ireland made jokes about the "Boston Tapes" as they signed, [81] suggesting that they had some awareness of a risk but did not really take it seriously (though these participants were not required to reveal anything to me that was potentially incriminating).

With a grounded theory approach, the focus is on the conceptual patterns emerging from the data, not the specific revealing of information about a participant, thus lessening any potential harm to participants (Glaser, 2001: 129). There is also the fact that informal discussions inform a grounded theory study, raising questions about at which point a participant becomes a human subject and is required to sign a consent form (Glaser, 2001: 129). Previous studies, where I have been at the other end of this process, signing the forms myself, or being a designated person to go to if an interview were to cause 'distress,' has also made me question the efficacy of such forms. In the case of teenagers, who were willing to be interviewed and had parental permission, as soon as they were presented with the forms and noted that line that advised them who to go to if they were to become distressed, this seemed to complicate things, causing them to worry. Again, I am talking about projects where risk would be minimal, the only reason presenting the idea of risk being that as teenagers, they fell into a 'vulnerable' population, regardless of the details of the study. Combined, many of these issues have made me question what having ethics approval really means when considering the overall research process.

I have sought to document the research process in its entirety here; including the initial research ideas and how these changed significantly throughout the process, the initial ideas and concepts that I had that did not pattern out, earlier versions of the final theory that is presented here, and the difficulties I had at various stages of the grounded theory process. Such transparency is also part of maintaining an ethical approach, but remains something that is given scant attention, save on the part of individual researchers. Different ethical issues throughout this research were more striking than those to do with obtaining ethical approval.

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[81] The so-called Boston Tapes are recordings made as part of the 'Belfast Project,' launched in 2001 and designed to become an oral history of 'the Troubles.' The project saw both former loyalist and republican paramilitaries give interviews detailing their involvement in 'the Troubles' with the understanding that the content would only be made public after their deaths. The recordings were stored in a library at Boston College and, following a lengthy court battle, the Police Service of Northern Ireland was given access to the transcripts of some interviews (BBC, 2017).

Markham and Buchanan (2012) note that the principles of research ethics and the ethical treatment of persons are codified in a number of policies and accepted documents,[82] which, at their core, enshrine a number of fundamental rights that are accepted as basic to any research endeavour. In this study, methodological issues encountered along the way could also be considered to have ethical implications. Grounded theory has a significant delimiting element at various stages, with the emerging theory determining the questions that are asked in subsequent interviews. Narrowing the focus in this way is something that I did not feel I could do given the participants had given up their time to meet and speak to me, but, more importantly, they were very keen for this to be 'on the record.' Many participants expressly referred to wanting certain claims and statements attributed to them; there was certainly no call for anonymity.[83] This led to significant consideration being given to how to write up the theory. When taking a classic grounded theory approach, the write up is conceptually focused; indicators for the concepts (descriptive statements) are used only for illustration and imagery, to support or introduce concepts rather than being used to tell a story or describe what is happening in the data (Glaser, 1978: 134). However, there is not one way of approaching the write up. Gibson and Hart (2014: 218-219) refer to Raphael's grounded theory,[84] explaining that her approach was to focus on the journey her participants went through, providing plenty of examples to demonstrate that her categories were well developed and fully grounded in the data. This is simply one example; there are many different approaches that people have taken when writing up. Again, I took the approach that I best felt suited and was justified in the context of the research in question. Using their words is another way in which the concerns of the participants are heard and documented. Ethics, throughout this research, was about something considerably more than seeking and obtaining approval from a committee.

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[82] These include the UN Declaration of Human Rights, the Nuremberg Code, the Declaration of Helsinki, and the Belmont Report. Again, the fact that I have a background working in human rights education possibly puts some of these things firmly on any agenda for me.

[83] There was just one instance of an informant wishing to remain anonymous. This was largely to do with protecting the credibility of their project – *Abdullah-X* – and avoiding any conflation of the character and the creator.

[84] Raphael, H. (2008) 'A Grounded Theory Study of Men's Perceptions, Understanding and Experiences of Osteoporosis.' Doctoral Dissertation, School of Nursing and Midwifery, University of Southampton.

Analysis – What Makes this a Grounded Theory Study?

Coding and analysis: code, memo, compare, code, memo, compare…

> *Research aimed at discovering theory…requires that all three procedures go on simultaneously to the fullest extent possible; for this, as we have said, is the underlying operation when generating theory. Indeed, it is impossible to engage in theoretical sampling without coding and analysing at the same time.*
>
> (Glaser and Strauss, 2008/1967: 71)

Grounded theory is, as Glaser (1998: 13) describes, a 'package.' Within this package the method is clearly laid out, offering a systematic process for the generation of a relevant theory. It is through data collection, coding and analysing through memoing, theoretical sampling and sorting to writing, using the constant comparative method that a theory with fit and relevance is arrived at (Glaser, 1998: 13). Key is to use the complete package of grounded theory procedures as an integrated methodological whole (Glaser, 2004). Remove any of the elements listed and the product cannot be called a grounded theory. Echoing Sipe and Ghiso (2004: 478-479), in writing about the processes of data analysis – coding, constant comparison, memoing and theoretical sampling – I realise it appears to be a tidier and more straightforward process than it was. I too had 'moments of insight and of confusion, small epiphanies, and times when much had to be reworked…[with the] intricacies and messiness of the process a bit lost in the retelling, making the problems appear orderly and easily resolved.' Data collection and data analysis are continuous and concurrent processes within grounded theory, with analysis beginning as soon as the first pieces of data are collected. Data collection is not a one-off event. There is a constant comparative analysis taking place as data is being collected, and memoing takes place throughout the process. Based on the emerging theory, theoretical sampling is employed to verify emerging concepts and categories and to decide where to go next for data. This section outlines the processes of coding, constant comparison, memoing and theoretical sampling, thus setting the scene for the discussion of the emergence of the main concern and core category that follows.

Open coding

> *What is a code? A code sets up a relationship with your data, and with your respondents.*
>
> (Star, 2007: 80)

Coding is a central process when using grounded theory methodology; it is through coding that the 'conceptual abstraction of data and its reintegration as theory takes place' (Holton, 2007: 265). Coding is a key tactic through which the researcher engages with the data and ask

questions thereof; it is the process through which concepts, categories and their properties, and, ultimately, theory emerge. Different types of coding are taking place simultaneously and continuously throughout the research. Coding has two purposes: to capture the substantive content of the area under study; and to articulate relationships that can be observed in the data (Gibson and Hartman, 2014: 153).

Open coding happens from the beginning of the study. This involves asking the following questions of the data (Glaser, 1998: 140): What is this a study of?; What is the participants main concern?; How do they resolve their main concern?; What is happening in the data? These questions are important in focussing the coding onto behaviour, which is the unit of analysis in grounded theory. The emphasis should be on what people *do*, not what they think. This process is not simply about labelling the pieces of data that are there, but it is a way of capturing the data and accounting for it (Philbin, DCU Summer School, 2016); codes conceptualise the patterns within the data.

With the early data I found that I was simply labelling pieces of data rather than coding them as per grounded theory principles. With initial interview data, I carefully went through line-by-line. At this point I tried to play with the data, taking it apart, and remaining open to all theoretical possibilities. During open coding I remained close to the data, going through it looking for actions and comparing incidents. Initially I was generating hundreds of codes within an interview, worried that I would miss something important if I did not code everything. This was compounded by the fact that the interview transcripts were lengthy, covering many issues. I soon realised that my codes were very repetitive and descriptive. Holton (2007: 276), notes that this is not unusual at the beginning of a grounded theory study. I was not adequately comparing the incidents within the data. I spent some time memoing around the issue of coding and went back to the transcripts. On this occasion I coded quite quickly, had far fewer codes, and realised that many of my original codes were similar and fit nicely under the same label. In this instance, the codes began to move from simply descriptive labels, to those that were more conceptual in nature, and began to fulfil Lempert's (2007) suggestion that codes capture patterns and themes and cluster them under an evocative title. As I coded more interviews and compared the data to the emerging ideas it became

easier to see how incidents were similar, or connected and were tied together under the same label.[85]

As the study progressed, I began to move away from open coding to *substantive coding* which involves looking at connections, category properties, how categories are linked and their dimensions. Throughout this process constant comparison was taking place to see if the data supported and continued to support the emerging categories (Holton, 2007: 277). This use of constant comparison helped with the 'data overwhelm' (Glaser, 2003: 24) that I had been experiencing. With growing confidence, I could code reasonably quickly, focussing on coding for process and actions as per the coding questions, with memo writing beginning to take over from coding as the more time-consuming element of the research once a number of interviews had been conducted, patterns identified and categories emerging.

On codes, concepts, categories and properties

> *A new concept is a new idea.*
> (Glaser, 1998: 133)

Glaser (1998: 135) differentiates conceptual levels, with concepts forming the building blocks of the substantive theory to be generated. Concepts, in grounded theory, should be analytic – 'sufficiently generalised to designate characteristics of concrete entities: not the entities themselves,' – and also sensitising, 'yield[ing] a meaningful picture, abetted by apt illustrations that enable one to grasp the reference in terms of one's own experience' (Glaser and Strauss, 2008/1967: 38-39). A concept is an idea, and it is the concept that links the data to the theory. Concepts arise from the coding of data and tend, as Hartman and Gibson (2014: 80) have noted, 'to be ubiquitous in grounded theory and linked to almost everything.' In this study, I would describe the concepts as the ideas that emerged from the analysis of the initial codes that were generated in open coding. By comparing incidents and memoing around them, initial codes were grouped together into concepts. A category is a higher-level concept than a property – a property is a concept about the category; a category has properties. A category captures the underlying patterns in the data. Again, it was through memoing and comparison that categories emerged from the grouping together of concepts in this study;

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[85] One way of remaining close to the data in open coding is through the use of In vivo codes, that is, lifting phrases directly from the data to label codes. At the early stage of research, I feel these both helped and hindered. It was useful to use the participants' own words as a starting point and use these to label the data. I also feel this contributed to the large number of codes I had initially.

their properties were identified and elaborated in the same way. Gibson and Hartman (2014: 80) suggest that categories are the main object of the method because they are the outcome of all its processes, with the relationships between categories giving the theory its meaning and relevance.

Constant comparison

> *Constant comparisons force the analyst to consider much diversity in the data.*
> (Glaser and Strauss, 2008/1967: 114)

Constant comparison is another key element of grounded theory, happening in different ways throughout the data analysis. The focus on constant comparison adds to its rigour, ensuring that the procedures remain systematic. By comparing, initially, incident with incident 'underlying uniformity and its varying conditions' are identified (Glaser, 2004). As analysis continues, emerging concepts are compared with incidents to elaborate and develop category properties further. Concepts are then compared with concepts to establish the best fit of a concept to a set of indicators. Holton (2007: 277) summarises the purpose of constant comparison as follows: 'to see if the data support and continue to support emerging categories. At the same time, the process further builds and substantiates the emerging categories by defining their properties and dimensions.'

Throughout this study, constant comparison was carried out at all levels from the comparing of incidents within the first pieces of data right up until the later stages of the process as the theory began to fit together. Codes were compared to codes, and concepts to concepts, with the emerging theory compared to the new data and additional data, including experiential data towards the end of the study.

Theoretical sampling

> *Theoretical sampling is the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyses his [her] data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his [her] theory as it emerges. This process of data collection is* controlled *by the emerging theory.*
> (Glaser and Strauss, 2008/1967: 45 – emphasis in original)

Theoretical sampling works closely with constant comparison, and is the way that the grounded theory researcher decides where next to go for further data collection. This is guided by the emerging theory, and is focussed on what data will add to its further

development. Through theoretical sampling, emerging codes, concepts and categories are expanded. This includes identifying their properties and relations up to the point where a code is 'saturated, elaborated and integrated into the emerging theory' (Glaser, 1978: 36).

In this study emerging codes led to the focus on those working to counter a variety of extremisms and working in different policy contexts. Theoretical sampling also influenced the interviews as the study progressed. While I continued to start out in the same way, once codes, concepts and categories were emergent, I asked about these in further interviews. In October 2016 a number of interviews were conducted in Denmark and Sweden. These were used to verify emergent categories and to add to them, but also to consider any further variation in these categories. These countries were mentioned in a number of interviews as places that were 'getting CVE right' which led me to wonder was there something in particular that might account for any variation that might come through in the data. In addition to using theoretical sampling to drive data collection and gather new data, I also spent a considerable amount of time going back to data that had been collected earlier in the study. Given the significant time lapse between interviews I returned to early data as categories became more elaborate, and ways that they might fit together became clearer, allowing for further verification of fit.

It is this moving forward and back through the data that highlights the inductive-deductive element of grounded theory. As Glaser (1978: 37) makes clear: '[g]rounded theory is, of course, inductive; a theory is induced or emerged after data collection starts.' Through theoretical sampling the researcher deduces where to go next to acquire further data for comparison purposes. This is the 'conscious, grounded deductive aspect of the inductive coding, collecting and analysing' (Glaser, 1998:157). Glaser (1978: 38-39) emphasises that deduction in grounded theory is in the service of induction and is used to check the emerging conceptual framework rather than to verify preconceived hypotheses.

Memo writing

> *Memo writing is the* core *stage in the process of generating theory, the bedrock of theory generation.*
> Glaser (1978: 83 – emphasis in original)

Memo writing is another essential feature of the grounded theory process and a valuable way of engaging with the data. While memos are also used in general inductive qualitative

methods, in a grounded theory study memos are more focused on 'theoretical' rather than 'substantive' richness (Hood, 2007: 161). Here they are used to develop theoretical categories and their properties. It is the type of memoing rather than existence of memoing that sets a grounded theory study apart from other qualitative studies (Hood, 2007: 161). Glaser (1978: 83) notes: 'If the researcher skips this stage [memo writing] by going directly to sorting or writing up, after coding, he [she] is not doing grounded theory.'

Throughout the process of coding, constant comparison, and theoretical sampling, I wrote memos based on anything and everything that was emerging from analysis of the data. This continued throughout the final write up of this work. It was, to quote Glaser (1978: 86), *never over*. For me, a memo represents a 'moment capture' (Andrews and Scott, 2015). At the beginning of the study I felt, surprisingly, somewhat burdened by the idea of memo writing. This was, in part, due to the vast number of codes I was generating at the very beginning of open coding; to memo every code in the first interview would have resulted in a very large number of memos, and I was assuming the same for subsequent interviews.

On another level, it was not the act of memo writing that I found intimidating, but rather the idea that these represented an audit trail of my research.[86] I felt that I needed to have a very formal system of memo writing, with everything stored nicely in a system that would allow for the retrieval of every and any idea I might have had along the way. Such a system is simply not in keeping with the way I work, nor was it in keeping with the early stages of this research project.[87] Moving to thinking about memos as capturing a moment, and the fact that a memo can be anything (it can take on different forms) or be about anything was freeing – freedom being a central goal in memo writing (Glaser, 1978: 85) – and allowed me to focus

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[86] I likely also worried about the research trail given that grounded theory is not a typical approach within the field of International Relations and certainly not within my School. This probably added to my considerations about being able to trace a clear path that I could document to those unfamiliar with the method and, perhaps, initially at least, trying to fit in (or feeling that I should try and fit in) with module requirements within the School.

[87] Initially I used NVivo for this research, taking a number of classes. At an earlier stage of the research, when the focus was different, I felt that NVivo would be useful to help with the analysis of some of the online animated videos that I planned to use as data. However, as the focus shifted I found that NVivo did not prove particularly useful and added an extra level of work. Transcripts and memos in word documents were easily searchable, as were various coding documents I created to keep track of coding. I used a lot of indexed notebooks, transferring memos that were significant and highly analytical to word documents. This seemed to work best and really helped me capture moments as they occurred, especially when I was travelling a great deal for interviews and conferences, etc.

on ideas rather than keeping track of a process.[88] 'Memos,' notes Lempart (2007: 249), 'especially early ones, are often messy and incomplete, with undigested theories and nascent opinions. Ideas may be represented in fragmented phrases, in weird diagrams, half sentences, or long treatises.' I have written memos, scribbled notes and doodles in response to books, movies, pub conversations, newspaper articles, news reports and ideas that pop into my head. This is in addition to memos based around conference panels and presentations, meetings I have attended where the focus is on CVE and CVE policy, journal articles, grounded theory seminars, and, of course, the data I have collected and the emergent ideas. These memos include description, speculation, flights of fancy and anything that might have come to mind at a given moment in time. Even the early memos, though not necessarily directly of use in the final write up and un-useful in terms of integrating concepts into an emerging theory, have formed an important part of the process in clarifying any ideas and issues I have had along the way. As Charmaz (2006: 81-82) describes it, 'memo-writing forms a space and place for exploration and discovery. You take the time to discover your ideas about what you have seen, heard, sensed, and coded.' Memo writing has certainly proven most helpful in identifying and elucidating patterns and concepts within the data, and in providing a way to track how the various concepts and categories progressed throughout this research journey.

The Theory Emerges

The main concern

> [Grounded theory] ...presupposes two basic things about the social world. That the social world is organised around the problems people experience and that this organisation can be discovered and conceptualised.
>
> (Gibson and Hartman, 2014: 36)

It is through following the processes outlined that the main concern – the problem being faced by the participants in the study – and the core category – the way in which the participants resolve this concern – emerged. In a grounded theory study it is the main concern that drives the theory; the theory is the way in which the participants resolve the issue that is of concern to them, the way in which they deal with the problems and challenges they face. The main concern of the participants in a grounded theory study is *a* main concern. Grounded theory offers one way, a relevant and useful way, of looking at the issues in the area under study. Of course, another analyst could come along and look at the data in a different way,

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[88] This is not to suggest that this research has been unsystematic. As I found out, using grounded theory does in fact ensure that those important issues pattern out and come up time and again. Those elements that have earned their way into the final theory can be traced throughout the whole process.

uncovering a different main concern and developing a different theory that accounts for the way in which this concern is resolved by the participants.

For a time in this study, the main concern was causing considerable difficulty. As the theory was coming together I was struggling to name a main concern. There were certainly issues around not trusting the process, and not trusting in my own ability to do justice to the concerns of the participants in question. The main concern comes across as a given in many of the texts. It does not receive the same amount of attention within grounded theory literature as other elements of the methodology do. This did not help when it came to trying to pin the main concern of this study down. I sought to read as much about the idea of a main concern as possible before feeling confident to proceed. Reading grounded theories, it becomes clear that again the main concern is often not discussed in any in-depth and explicit way. For example, in *Awareness of Dying* (1965) the main concern is clearly there; it is not elaborated widely, justified time and again, or referred to continuously. That is not to suggest that the main concern is not adequately discussed; it is labelled and made clear, but then the authors move on, with the focus being on the theory that they have developed. In some ways the idea of the main concern is so obvious it requires little elaboration. The main concern plays a key role in getting to the point of being able to elaborate a theory, and identify what it is that that is being resolved via this theory, but takes up little space in many works.

The main concern is a key idea throughout the coding process, with coding questions focussed thereon. The longer I left it to pin down the main concern, the more data I was dealing with, data that seemed full of concerns. I had to remind myself that I was identifying *a* main concern of the participants, not *the* main concern. Various conversations around the idea of the main concern in grounded theory were helpful here, along with memos. Talking to grounded theorists I was reminded that this is not a linear process; the main concern does not necessarily emerge first, neatly followed by other concepts. It emerges when it emerges.

Having considered a number of possible main concerns, it did, finally, click that essentially the participants in this study are battling *frustration*. The area in which they work is influenced by those primary definers of government, media, and violent extremist

organisations.[89] Meanings, understandings, and perceptions of CVE are determined by these groups and the participants in question see that this is having not only an effect on the individuals and communities with whom they work, but it is also having a direct impact on the work they are seeking to do. The parameters within which they work are being defined by other actors, actors with vastly more resources and power than they have. While they are doing what they can to overcome these issues, to get their message out, to work with individuals and communities that are often otherwise neglected, the sense of *frustration* with the context is coupled with the *frustration* of not being able to do more, their work not being recognised, of being limited in their reach, and their funds. It is the fallout of these issues, and the combination thereof, that cause this sense of frustration with these external restrictions on their work. Participant Daisy Khan, Executive Director of the Women's Islamic Initiative in Spirituality and Equality (WISE),[90] for example, explains the diverse challenges that leave her feeling stuck. These include the problems caused by government actors – 'the government initiated this CVE it feels as though there's some government intrusion in this and that has also been very counterproductive' – and the resulting sense that the Muslim community 'always has to justify itself,' leaving many members 'on the defensive,' and making her work more difficult. Summing up her *frustration*, she explains:

> we don't say it's CVE because we started the work well before the CVE term came about…We're just doing what we need to do…we are showing people clearly how terrorist groups distort Islam. And that is the work of Muslims, no government can do that, no intel people can do that, it's not their job, it's our job.

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[89] Here I draw on the term "primary definers" which Hall et al (2013/1978: xiii) use in *Policing the Crisis* and describe as those organisations and institutions that 'provide base-line interpretations, influence "lay" attitudes, mould the ideological climate and are instrumental in the orchestration of political and public responses.' Here I suggest that it is government policy, the mass media and violent extremist organisations that influence the dominant discourses around violent extremism, its roots, its effects, and the ways in which to deal with it. While the state and its associated experts, the judiciary and other government institutions were traditionally seen as primary definers – those who had access to the media, which was traditionally a secondary definer – changes in the mediascape have created a situation whereby media and, in this case, violent extremist organisations also play a role in defining the narrative. For example, ISIS has become well known for its use of social media. But in addition to their social media channels, many of their more infamous YouTube, videos, for example, have received extensive media coverage, fuelling the message they wish to get out. Acts of violent extremism, particularly those perpetrated in the name of/claimed by ISIS tend to receive almost blanket media coverage. On the other side of the violent extremist spectrum, right wing extremists are increasing and formalising their power base in many instances. The current (Autumn 2017) situation in the USA highlights this, with the "alt-right" finding somewhat of a hero in President Trump, thereby legitimising their views and bringing them firmly into the mainstream, their cultural power contributing to the framing of narratives and discourses around the issues in question.

[90] The organisation website is available at http://www.wisemuslimwomen.org/.

This *frustration* with government policy is echoed by participants across the spectrum. Former white supremacist, Arno Michaelis, a founding member of what would become the largest racist skinhead organisation in the world (The Forgiveness Project, 2011), and lead singer of the hate-metal band Centurion,[91] provides an example of having to overcome the effects of government policy within a workshop:

> [s]o we're at a Muslim youth group in Leeds. The week before, the *Prevent* people had basically come in there and said, "Don't be bad Muslims." Like, "Be good Muslims and don't ..." They were pissed. They were really alienated by this. They were like, "How come, you know, we're the only ones being looked at here?"

One of the greatest sources of *frustration* for those interviewed for this study is the limitations and restrictions associated with a lack of resources. Mohamed Amin, creator of the online animation *Average Mohamed,* is emphatic around these issues, citing the biggest challenge he faces as 'lack of governmental support':

> [t]hey [the government] have their preferred people they go to. They've already handpicked the people who they want…most are poverty pimps, you know, issue pimps…they don't do shit. They really don't do shit…And they're the ones who are the darlings because they take good photos and they're in the right political party and they're in the right environment. People like me... scare the government. The government doesn't want to touch us. They don't want to touch us because they know that we are also against the government...

From the practitioners based in Northern Ireland, the same sense of *frustration* is recognisable. Many similar conditions feed into this *frustration* from lack of funding and resources to counterproductive government policies and actions. Darren Richardson, a former loyalist prisoner turned community worker in Magherafelt, Derry highlights his *frustration* with the state and the role they played in bringing about violence:

> I blame our politicians for creating the situations that it was…I'd say that the state themselves were probably the biggest incitement of it [the violence]. I watched the DUP, in particular the late reverend Ian Paisley. I watched him, I went to his rallies. I stood and I listened to him boil the blood of young loyalists, young loyalists going and joining what were just paramilitaries. When a lot of them young loyalists were incarcerated for their actions, the DUP walked away…People might say "oh, they won, we won." Whatever it was. I can quite categorically say "murder, it took us nowhere." We had over 30 years of violence and we got nowhere with it. Probably from a Protestant community perspective, and we live under the

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[91] Centurion had sold 20,000 CDs by the mid-nineties and remains popular with racists today.

state and the monarchy and everything else, we were probably victims because we ended up getting nothing. I'm not talking about financial reward or anything like that, I'm talking about communities now are just sitting…I use the word raped, we've nothing left.

Similarly, Conal McFeely, Development Executive of Ráth Mór Creggan Enterprises in Derry speaks of the issues facing working class communities in Northern Ireland:

we had to begin to challenge the government policies…in many ways it was failed politics that created the conflict here and in that context, it would be quite easy for the media and government to refer to particular communities as people involved in terrorism…What's happening in the Muslim community now in the British context, the way that community is now being demonised by the British media was the way the Irish people during the conflict were demonised by the British media.

Dublin based Imam Dr Shayk Umar Al-Qadri picks up on this *frustration* with media depictions of his community:

a lot of non-Muslims, people who do not have a lot of information about Islam, their narrative of Islam is also established by the media, and the media, as I said, highlights the sensational, and that is not really representing the mainstream Islam. And that kind of feeds into that extremism also because it creates a group of people that are not Muslim but that have a lot of hatred against Islam because they believe Islam is all about killing infidels and Islam is all about clash of civilisations…The way the British newspapers report these events [acts of violent extremism] does not help in any way.

The *frustration* is compounded by the magnitude of the problem and the lack of practical efforts as opposed to bureaucratic efforts. Amar Singh Kaleka, film director and "survivor" – his father was killed at the Sikh Temple shooting in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, 2012 – explains: 'the difficulty is just the magnitude of the problem, the numbers. People have ... As they bring the numbers together, they start to realise how difficult it is, and then that means we need a lot more people on the ground, not in the office.' While practitioners are frustrated by the effects of policy and media, they are stuck with the way things are, to a degree; they cannot topple policy and the media. Therefore, they must find other ways of dealing with the *frustration* they face as a result thereof.

As the main concern started to crystallise for me, and as I became more confident in naming it and committing to it,[92] it also became clear that the previous incarnations were, in many ways, quite similar and that really what I had been doing was fine tuning the ideas that I had around the main concern as opposed to rejecting them and trying to come up with an alternative. There were similar issues around the core category, which, having noted the non-linear process associated with grounded theory, were ongoing simultaneously. Indeed, this also added to the problems I was experiencing, believing that I could only progress the study by being clear on the main concern from an early stage. Here again, through the various iterations of the core category and the ideas feeding into it, there was a great deal of similarity; the journey through emergence in both cases was more an evolution of the concepts in question as opposed to a reinvention thereof.

The core category

> *In the beginning, one's hypotheses may seem unrelated, but as categories and properties emerge, their accumulating interrelations form an integrated central theoretical framework –*
> the core of the emerging theory.
> Glaser and Strauss, 2008/1967: 40, emphasis in original)

The core category, or core variable, accounts for the way the main concern is continually resolved. It must, explains Glaser (1978: 95-96), be central, recur frequently as a stable pattern, have clear and grabbing implication for formal theory and carry through. This core category is the prime mover of most of the behaviour seen and talked about in the substantive area. It must be proven over and over again by its prevalent relationship to other categories, thereby integrating them into a whole (Glaser, 1978: 95). There were various iterations of the core category in this study. Through memoing and constant comparison the core category was refined, undergoing both changes and developments within the category itself, and in the naming of the category. As per Glaser's advice, I used labels for categories that I knew were not quite "right," but that worked for the purposes of developing the category: 'Possible core categories should be given a "best fit" conceptual label as soon as possible so the analyst has a handle for thinking of them. The analyst may have a feel for what the core variable is, but be unable to formulate a concept that fits well. It is ok to use a label which is a poor fit until a better fit eventually comes' (1978: 94). This was certainly the case in this study, not only with the core categories, but with many of the concepts and categories along the way. Indeed,

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[92] This was helped greatly by conversations at grounded theory seminars and with grounded theorists, in particular Dr Mark Philbin in the School of Nursing and Health Sciences at Dublin City University.

some of the concept labels remained "works in progress" up until and part way through the write up phase of the study. In fact, the write up process, which included drawing on many of my memos, was helpful in reconsidering the concept labels and improving them.

Also interesting in terms of labelling concepts was the "loaded" nature of some of the terms that I was coming up with, at least in the early stages of naming the patterns in the data, that is the use of terms that have pre-existing connotations and associations. It was not necessarily the case that I felt these ought to be automatically rejected, but it was something further to consider. This helped, in some instances, to realise that the label was not quite right, as the pre-existing associations were not relevant to what it was that I wanted to get across. For example, until the write up phase the concept *personal entrepreneuring* was used as a label on what went on to become, through memoing and modifying, *mining the personal. Entrepreneuring* was certainly an interesting term to consider due to my own preconceived feelings about the term and discussions around broader understandings of the term and how it ties in with the idea of CVE as a growth industry and these actors seeking to make a space for themselves within the industry. Ultimately, I changed the term to something I felt better captured the patterns that I was seeking to label, but the choice of word in the earlier life of the concept added to the analysis thereof and made me consider things in a different light. This example serves to highlight the complex thought process that goes into appropriately labelling the concepts in question and emphasises the analysis that goes into grounded theory; emergence only happens through the work of the analyst.

For a time in this study, the core category was conceived of as *reframing.* Here, many of the concepts that were emerging to feed into this category were In vivo codes, that is, the labels had been taken directly from words and phrases appearing within the data. Given further consideration, these concepts became, for example, *dispelling myths* and *myth-busting*, *de-vilifying* and *de-suspecting,* and *challenging primary definers.* It soon became apparent that this wasn't working as a core category. Rather, it seemed that this was one element of a larger pattern that was at work and which I needed to capture. Another potential core category revolved around the idea of *getting on with it* or *doing what has to be done.* This tied in with participant concerns around the lack of action, underlying issues not being dealt with, being under resourced and poor policy leading to poor practice on the part of other actors in the industry. This category, which remained significant, was propelled for a time by concepts such as *remaining independent, taking ownership, stepping up, being driven, doing things my*

way, and *filling an institutional void.* Again, I realised that I was not accurately capturing enough with this category; it accounted for some of the patterns in the data and the behaviours that were taking place, but not enough of them.

There was, at one stage, a focus on *space* as a concept working on different levels at the centre of this study. While not a core category, it was a concept that was woven throughout the various elements of the theory being developed; a thread holding the story together. It helped to make sense of a number of the concepts that I had been working with. It pulled the working theory (as it was then) together on a narrative level. At this point, the main concepts were *identifying opportunity space, creating spaces of engagement, carving a space of one's own, bridging space and reimagining space.* There was a sense here that practitioners were restricted in the *space* they had to get on with their work and this is how they were responding to this restriction. The participants were creating the conditions under which the *bridging of space* would occur: this was the way in which participants create spaces and opportunities to afford those with whom they work the space to see things differently, have their views challenged and discussed, invisible boundaries between people could be broken down and individual and collective futures reimagined. Concepts such as *breaking down stereotypes*, *humanising*, *including*, *de-othering*, *creating a community*, *reimagining community*, *closing the gap,* and the accompanying memos all fed into the emergence of this concept. However, it was during the attempt to write the theory up that I realised, that it did not work; it did not accurately capture the way in which the practitioners were dealing with their main concern.[93] In particular the latter elements, such as *rescaling space* and *reimagining space* were problematic. I struggled to write about them because they did not fit. While writing I could feel myself forcing the data and, in fact, moving too far beyond the data. These ideas did not fully represent the way in which participants were seeking to resolve their main concern and the frustration they are feeling. While it did not work that is not to say the effort was wasted; this was simply another step in the process of arriving at the final theory. Indeed, there were many concepts that were carried over, adapted, amended and fleshed out further. *Carving a space of one's own* is the clearest example, but other elements such as *personal motivation,* and *repurposing personal skills and capacities* remained as

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[93] While the ideas around space did not fully pattern out in this study, they did offer an interesting way to conceive of the "CVE space." It would certainly offer an interesting approach for a different type of study into this field.

concepts within the new categories; at this stage, it was more a case of sorting, or arranging what I had in a different manner.

As I continued memoing and comparing, the core category *mining the personal* began to emerge. Drawing on the previous ideas and conceptions of possible core categories, this concept captures such a large chunk of what it is that the participants in this study are actually doing; it captures the way in which they are resolving their main concern. *Mining the personal* is something that happens continually and forms the basis of other action taken by the participants, informing what it is they do and how they do it. Being able to draw on their own, personal experiences, whether skills, competencies and capacities developed in work elsewhere, or very personal experiences of being involved directly with acts of violent extremism as a "former" or a "survivor" thereof, using these experiences to propel the action that they take is central to what these practitioners are doing and how they justify their role and their expertise in the area.

As the core category became clear for me, so too did the way in which *carving a space of one's own* worked as a sub-core category. This was a concept that had been part of an earlier iteration of the theory, but it still worked in this updated version. Not only did it still work, in light of *mining the personal* as a core category, this concept took on greater significance than it had previously and seemed to fit in with the new core as a sub-core category. The *frustration* outlined above causes this emphasis on the personal for the participants as a way to underscore their relevance within a growing industry. It also fuels this need and desire to *carve a space of one's own* within this industry. This happens on different levels: firstly, the participants are frustrated with the way things are and seek to do things their way, following their ideas and their experiences; secondly, the fact that there is such an emphasis on policy adds to the significance of these experiences while also creating an increased opportunity for a variety of actors to become involved in CVE work; as a result, these actors must emphasise their value and justify the work that they do.

In reaching the core and sub-core categories, in addition to the constant comparison and continuous memoing that was taking place, I had also been reading widely to sensitise myself to various literatures. This certainly helped in identifying patterns in the data and in identifying links between the different concepts. While it did take a while to be confident with the core category, this stemmed more from my own personal reluctance to commit to

ideas than issues with the theory. This reluctance to commit to a main concern, or the discomfort in doing so, had an effect on my ability to delimit the study at an early stage via selective coding. Having referred to other factors that hampered the delimiting of the data – the use of data and the practical need to carry out some of the interviews in a shorter than ideal timeframes – the lack of confidence in sticking with the core category in particular added to this issue, slowing down the process of selective coding.

Selective coding

> *Selective coding begins only after the analyst is sure that he/she has discovered the core variable.*
>
> (Glaser, 2004)

Selective coding in grounded theory takes place once the core category has been identified. Along with theoretical sampling it is a way of focussing the analysis and delimiting the study: 'To selectively code for a core variable, then, means that the analyst delimits his coding to only those variables that relate to the core variable in sufficiently significant ways to be used in a parsimonious theory. . . Selective coding significantly delimits his work from open coding, while he sees his focus within the total context he developed during open coding' (Glaser, 1978: 61).

When I began to think about *mining the personal* as a core, I went back through everything I had – memos, coding documents, transcripts – and compared all the codes.[94] I identified further patterns and the pieces began to fit together in a way that they hadn't up to that point. By looking through everything again for the conditions and consequences that related specifically to *mining the personal* – the core process at work (1978: 61) – I started to see how the data I had pulled apart could be pieced together to tell the story of what was happening within these data. *Mining the personal* remained a potential core category until I was fully satisfied that it fit with what I already had and with the new patterns I was identifying.

Selective coding is another way in which a grounded theory study is delimited as the analyst moves through the various procedures. Selective coding should cut down on memoing, as

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[94] I used index cards for this purpose, writing the name of a concept on each and outlining its main properties underneath. This proved a useful way for me to be able to see quite quickly all the information that I had and indeed to move the various concepts around with ease.

Glaser notes in *Theoretical Sensitivity* (1978: 86). The question is 'how soon to selectively code and…cut down on memoing and for what reason,' with Glaser (1978:86-87) suggesting that small studies selectively code as soon as possible to achieve one monograph and a few articles.[95] The key however, is not to close off memoing too soon; certainly, in this study, memos were used right up until the end, including throughout the write up phase. As new ideas were generated through the writing process, memos were added to, connections between memos became clearer, and new ideas were noted. While delimiting this study happened later than is probably ideal, a reflection of the uncertainty associated with the process when undertaking a grounded theory study as a novice researcher, in an area in which it is not widely used, in hindsight, it is clear that it works and that trusting a little more in the procedures would help to streamline the data at an earlier stage and avoid the data overwhelm that can happen so easily.

Theoretical coding

> *Theoretical codes conceptualise how the substantive codes of a research may relate to each other as hypotheses to be integrated into a theory. They, like substantive codes, are emergent. They weave the fractured story back together again.*
> Glaser, (2005: 2)

Theoretical coding involves identifying and conceptualising the relationships between substantive codes. It is this interaction between substantive and theoretical coding which 'characterises GT as an analytic inductive research method rather than empty journalism' (Glaser, 1998: 164). Glaser (1978: 72) suggests that the researcher should be familiar with, or have a stock of theoretical codes to draw upon – developed through theoretical sensitivity – in order to 'be sensitive to rendering explicitly the subtleties of the relationships in his data.' A chapter in *Theoretical Sensitivity* is devoted to the discussion of possible theoretical codes. Adding to this is the 2005 *Grounded Theory Perspective III: Theoretical Coding.* Here, Glaser lists additional 'New Theoretical Codes,' (17-30). It is important to remember that while these works offer lists and examples of theoretical codes, a theoretical code cannot be forced on the data; the theoretical code should emerge and fit the theory being developed. There are, states Glaser (2005: 17), 'literally hundreds of TCs that are yet to be found, named and available to GT generating.' The theoretical code is, in most cases, implicit within the

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[95] Larger studies, Glaser suggests (1978: 86), with 'sufficient resources can keep up open coding and open memoing a much longer time and develop a fund of memos that can lead to many writings and talks based on resorting to memos to cover many topics.'

emerging theory, bringing 'the fractured substantive story turned into substantive concepts back into an organised theory' (Glaser, 2005: 11).

In this case, I could see that the various concepts with which I was working towards the end of the study were linked; they were certainly connected and worked together. The task was making what was implicit explicit; I sought to name the connections. When writing up a previous iteration of the theory that revolved around concepts of space, in addition to forcing the theory, I also realised that I was attempting to force a theoretical code onto the various elements that made up this theory. I sought to write it up as a *process*. However, as I read back over what I had written I knew the fit wasn't there; I was trying to neatly parcel the various elements that I had and had forced a code on to the work.

Again, it was as I was writing the theory, piecing sorted memos together and considering the different ideas, that the way in which the various elements were linked became clear. I could see that the action taken by the participants was clearly coming about as a result, or a consequence, of the context in which they operate. I returned to Glaser's works on theoretical coding and focussed on the "6 C's," the "bread and butter" theoretical code of sociology (Glaser, 1978: 74): causes, contexts, contingencies, consequences, covariances, and conditions. I was getting a strong sense, as I sorted, that there was a causal, consequence, or condition model taking place within the theory generated. While this seemed to be the correct coding family, pinning the theoretical code down still took some work to feel confident that I have the right C in the right place. Ultimately, it is straightforward: the actions undertaken by the participants in seeking to abate the *frustration* they experience come as a direct consequence of what they see happening within the area of CVE. Their actions are driven by their frustration with the context in which they are working. This is implicit within the discussions of the theory that follow in the next two chapters, something that is usual for studies in the social sciences.

Memo sorting

> *It [memo sorting] is the epitome of the theory generation process.*
> (Glaser, 1998: 187)

Memo sorting, happening at the end stages of research marks the final procedure that 'challenges the researcher's creativity' (Glaser, 1998: 187). The researcher builds up a

'memo fund' throughout the research process; it is through the sorting of these memos that the theory is formulated in preparation for writing up.

In this study I took different approaches to sorting, almost playing with my memos at first, to see what worked. I printed the more significant memos, having copied and pasted bits from memos into other memos, using different coloured fonts. I then put them into different piles according to categories in the first instance, then, going through each and every memo, reorganised them by comparing them with one another. Once links and connections were becoming clearer, I used index cards to summarise some of the main ideas. These proved useful in being able to move them around and see links and connections quickly. It was through this process the overall picture became clear. Despite this clarity, at times it became quite frustrating, because everything seemed linked. I was not describing a clear cut process that moved through defined stages. Trying to get to the root of this and devise a way of explaining the links between the various elements of the theory was time consuming and often challenging, perhaps more so than anything else. The process did become easier towards the end; as the overall picture became clearer, so too did the various elements of the story I was seeking to tell, and the way in which they all fit together to form this whole. It also became clear throughout this process that I had reached a point where I could confidently state that I had reached a point of theoretical saturation. By going back through memos and checking what I had come up with against the previous memos and the transcripts and recordings, I reached the point where I could reasonably claim that my categories were accounted for.

Theoretical saturation

The problem of "when to stop" is an example of how grounded theory addresses the obvious (but awkward) questions that confront the researcher. To this question we have the answer: theoretical saturation, stop when the ideas run out.
(Dey, 2007: 184)

The cessation of theoretical sampling is determined by theoretical saturation. This marks the point where no further variations on a category are emerging form the data. It is important to note that this is not the same as repetition, rather, no additional data is found to develop the properties of a given category. As the researcher sees similar instances over and over again, the researcher becomes empirically confident that a category is saturated (Glaser & Strauss, 2008/1967: 61). Saturation, in the context of grounded theory, implies the point when

categories are completely explained and accounted for, and when relationships between them have been assessed (Amsteus, 2014: 76, referencing O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). With a grounded theory study, the adequate theoretical sample is judged based on how widely and diversely the groups for saturating categories were chosen, according to the type of theory under development (Glaser & Strauss, 2008/1967: 63).[96] Saturation and 'knowing' is always provisional, and the potential that next participant will add some new property always remains (Cutcliffe & McKenna, 2002). Dey (1999: 117) uses the term 'theoretical sufficiency' rather than 'theoretical saturation,' noting '[w]hile both indicate that the data have been properly analysed, the latter turns out to be an inflexible expression because it has connotations of completion [and] seems to imply that the process of generating categories (and their properties and relations) has been exhaustive.' Here it is worth restating that, for Glaser and Strauss in *Discovery,* theory is not a final, finished product; theory is always modifiable, and, as Glaser (2003: 147) notes 'as good as far as it goes.' Theoretical saturation does not, therefore, imply a finality in terms of having seen everything, rather, it is a tool for the researcher to recognise when to stop collecting data.

In this study theoretical saturation was reached within the participant group under study, and, as such, this theory applies to the group in question. Data collection and theoretical sampling was ended in this study once I could see that newer data was not offering anything that would further develop the categories I had come up with. I was confident that I had saturated the categories in question, and made sure of this by revisiting the data and checking against what I already had. I also attended a relevant event and conducted a further interview while there, further testing the concepts I had developed as I was engaged in the final write up of this work. Many of the participants in this study are active publicly on social media and receive media coverage/contribute to the media themselves. I was keeping up with this throughout the write up of the theory and seeing how and if it altered anything or fed into what was already there. Though these processes I was confident that I had reached an appropriate point to cease with data collection.

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[96] It is important, as Glaser and Strauss (2008/1967: 62) explain, to 'contrast theoretical sampling based on the saturation of categories with statistical (random) sampling. Their differences should be kept clearly in mind for both designing research and judging its credibility. Theoretical sampling is done in order to discover categories and their properties, and to suggest the interrelationships into a theory. Statistical sampling is done to obtain accurate evidence on distributions of people among categories to be used in descriptions or verifications. Thus, in each type of research the "adequate sample" that we should look for (as researchers and readers of research) is very different.'

Conclusion

Having outlined the main ideas underpinning the grounded theory methodology, this chapter details the way classic grounded theory was operationalised throughout this research process, informing the various stages along the way. Thus use of this methodology contributed to the substantive focus, the discovery of the participant group and, ultimately, the theory developed and discussed in the next chapter. By highlighting some of the previous manifestations of the theory, this chapter has stressed the analytic work that goes in to developing a grounded theory and the processes that led to the emergence of the main concern of the participants and the core and sub core categories. In detailing the final procedures adhered to after this emergence, this chapter has covered the way in which the theory *mining the personal to carve a space of one's own,* as carried out by the grassroots CVE practitioners in this study, was developed.

CHAPTER THREE: INTRODUCING THE THEORY
MINING THE PERSONAL TO CARVE A SPACE OF ONE'S OWN

Introduction

The *frustration* experienced by the grassroots practitioners interviewed for this study, caused by systems too large to take on and tackle directly, leads to these individuals drawing heavily on their own experiences – *mining the personal* – to establish themselves as actors within the CVE sphere. Seeking to bypass those systems that are having such an effect on their day to day work, the participants are *carving a space for themselves* within this industry. This is a unique space; it is made possible through personal experiences and practitioners drawing on their own skills and capacities. It is a space from which they can operate in a way that suits them, based on their understandings of the issues at hand. The growth of focus on CVE policy serves to increase the significance of these experiences.

This chapter offers a detailed outline of the elements that make up *mining the personal,* and *carving a space of one's own.* While the properties of each category are discussed separately, there is considerable interaction between them. They are not neat, distinct packages; the lines between many are blurred. Throughout the discussion, the words of the participants are used to illustrate the concepts under consideration. I have chosen a 'concept-illustration dosage' (Glaser, 1998: 198-199) high in illustration. While Glaser is in favour of a dosage that favours brief quotes to break up theory density, when it came to writing the theory up, based on the data collected and the journey to that point, I felt drawing on the words of the participants was important. Throughout their interviews the participants emphasised the importance of their knowledge, expressing a desire to have this on record. Given the centrality of the personal to the theory developed, including a snapshot of these experiences is appropriate. The information about the backgrounds of the participants further contributes to understandings about the different people who are becoming involved in CVE work and why. As Glaser (1998: 199) himself notes, '[t]he grounded theory researcher…is on the forefront of a developmental generating process and is construction oriented. He [she] can construct what is appropriate…Within the limits of his [her] theoretical codes and overall integration he [she] can design what he [she] wants to present.'

Mining the Personal to Establish Authority and Credibility

Mining the personal

Personal experience both drives those interviewed here, and is drawn upon, or mined, throughout their work. This *mining of personal experience* happens in a variety of ways. Central to all elements is the idea that the individual's personal experience is something unique, special, and significant; it is something from which details, information, and understandings can be extracted for use elsewhere. The notion that these participants are *mining the personal* suggests they have something of value to offer: this is something precious, that they believe to be distinct and of definite benefit in their area of work. In the natural world mining is something that is required to access materials that cannot be created in another way, they cannot be "artificially" manufactured. This is how these practitioners feel about their own personal experiences; they cannot be replicated. They result from specific events in these individuals' lives, yet are something made accessible for the work they are doing by digging deep within themselves. The practitioners are the mines; they possess something of value within. This value is potentially both economic and knowledge based. It offers these actors the possibility to earn a living within a growth industry, but also offers the industry a level of knowledge that other actors may not have.

Regardless of background, participants emphasise individual experiences. This includes, for example, experiences of being part of a community[97] that is alienated, or the hands on experience and practical work in which practitioners have previously been involved, whether as youth workers, as community development workers or as mental health practitioners. A personal story, or journey, is something that was spoken about at length in many of the interviews, with a number of practitioners telling of their involvement in violent extremist organisations, or of their having survived acts of violent extremism. In different ways, these personal experiences influence the CVE work that these actors carry out. They believe it to be a valuable asset with regard to their ability to work within the CVE area and contributing to the very urgency that they be included within the field and afforded the opportunity to shape understandings.

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[97] The use of the term 'community' here and in other such instances throughout this work refers to macro level affiliations such as religion (Muslim community), or identity (loyalist or nationalist communities in Northern Ireland). I recognise that this is a problematic term; it is not intended to suggest that all experiences within a given group of people who have one thing in common are the same, or that they are defined by this.

By mining their personal experiences and emphasising the significance thereof, these practitioners are seeking to make themselves indispensable within CVE. The contemporary fixation by governments on the development of CVE policy in turn adds weight to the personal experiences in question. These experiences take on a wider significance, ultimately legitimising the work they are doing. This "qualifies" these practitioners, in their eyes at the very least. On the one hand, the context contributes to the creation of opportunities within CVE and for the participants to *mine their personal experiences* and put them to use. On the other hand, it is this same context that is causing considerable *frustration* for the practitioners.

Mining the personal: driven by a personal motivation

The personal drives these grassroots practitioners to become involved in CVE work, which separates these actors from those that are government-employed. This *personal motivation* manifests in different ways for the participants, with the category of personal motivation determining the degree to which the further elements discussed throughout this chapter apply. The different types of personal motivation are: (i) *bystander personalising*; (ii) *personalising responsibility*; and (iii) '*it is personal.*'

With *bystander personalising* a participant is motivated by something they have witnessed or heard about but that does not involve them directly. They identify closely with those who have been involved in an act of violence: 'it was a little bit disconcerting…it really disturbed me that this young person that looked a lot like me and had a very similar background as mine could so easily do something like that.' This was Junaid Afeef's reaction to seeing a young man who grew up in the same suburbs as him indicted for trying to blow up a bar.[98] Afeef, Director of the Targeted Violence Prevention Program at the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority,[99] upon hearing about a similar incident a couple of years later was prompted to take action: 'somebody has got to do something about this.' Prior to taking on this role, Afeef was working on the area of CVE in his spare time, outside his day job as an

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[98] Afeef describes this incident: '[a]bout two and a half years ago, we had a young man who was indicted for trying to blow up a bar just a couple of blocks from here. When I read about it, I saw that he actually grew up in the suburbs near where I grew up. One of the mosques that he went to was one of the mosques that I spent a lot of my time at. It was a little bit disconcerting….I really got to thinking about it. Then, a couple of years later, another young man from the community, same background, was [stopped] at O'Hare airport on his way to join ISIS with his younger brother and sister.'

[99] A lawyer by profession, Afeef took on this role in February 2016. A change in leadership at the agency in early 2015 led to a situation that saw the new head of agency suggest that Afeef take the work he was doing in the area of CVE in his spare time into the agency and develop a programme around it.

attorney. He started by writing op-eds in the Chicago Tribune[100] in response to the incidents that motivated him and gradually expanded his knowledge of the area: 'I went from knowing nobody and knowing nothing to knowing a little bit and knowing a lot of people working in this area.' Afeef's experience of *bystander personalising* pushed him to become involved in CVE, and create a role for himself within this field.

Being motivated to act through *personalising responsibility* involves witnessing something happening around you, within your community, but feeling that no one else is addressing the issue. Those who should be dealing with it are not doing so, or are not doing so effectively. Participants feel the need to step up and fill the void created by this lack of action. They strongly believe they have something to offer and are driven to take responsibility. Mohammed Amin, a gas station manager in Minneapolis who, having been disillusioned with government efforts to counter violent extremism created the character and website *Average Mohammed*, explains: 'unfortunately our government hasn't done it, no government has ever done it [dealt with violent extremism], and we're doing it.' Having seen young people from the local Somali-American community leave to join al-Shabaab,[101] Amin, *personalising responsibility,* felt compelled to deal with an issue that was, he believed, otherwise being neglected.

For some participants, *it is personal*. These are instances where individuals feel obliged to act based on their own direct experiences of violent extremism. Former violent extremists ("formers") and survivors of violent extremism are motivated by what has happened in their own lives, and a desire not to see this happen to others. Former white supremacist Christian Picciolini explains: 'We're doing this work [CVE]…because it's our duty…we created this mess and it's our duty to fix it.' Having spent seven years as part of an American Neo-Nazi skinhead organisation, becoming a leader and recruiter, he left after the birth of his son. After a significant period of readjustment he co-founded 'Life After Hate,' a support group for those seeking to leave "the movement." Former loyalist prisoner, Darren Richardson, states similarly: 'I don't want to see them [young people, his children] go down the same route

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[100] One of Afeef's op-eds is available here http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/opinion/commentary/ct-muslim-leaders-stop-radical-perspec-1009-20141008-story.html.

[101] Amin refers to this issue in the interview (conducted on a park bench in Minneapolis, 21 March, 2016) and also emphasises the fact that ISIS and al-Shabaab are not the only groups causing concern. Local gangs are also an issue, with some of these having 'become Muslim all of a sudden.' Amin explains: 'gangs, the sense of belonging, the sense of family, the sense of community that they create is the same thing that the Islamic extremists create.'

[becoming involved in violence and ending up in prison]. I have a duty…I can't walk away from this.' Children regularly play a role within *personal motivation*. A number of formers cite having children as an important part of their movement out of violence. Equally, many talk about not wanting children and young people, including their own children, to follow the path they have, their motivation fuelled by their own personal experience. Richardson continues:

> [n]ow that I've taken that journey, my role is to bring young Protestants through. Learn them. Tell them about the journey I travelled, tell them the reason why you do not want them to be taking it. Tell them that it's very unpleasant. Tell them about the house raids, tell them about your wife coming to visit you and your son, coming through a prison door and not knowing me, and running back to his mother again. Heart-breaking stuff.

Bjorn Magnus Jacobson Ihler, a survivor of the July 2011 attacks carried out on Utøya island in Norway by right-wing extremist Anders Behring Breivik, simply states: 'I was given the gift of life and if I can spend my time making sure that one single person doesn't have to go through what my friends and I went through then this work will be worth it' (The Forgiveness Project, 2015).[102]

There are also instances where a participant feels strongly that their community is under attack, something that affects them personally, and they are therefore compelled to act; *it is personal.* Imam Dr Shayk Umar Al-Qadri cites the need to 'protect the traditional, the real Islam,' in his work, understandings of which, he suggests, have been distorted by media representations, creating an 'extremism towards Muslims.' Conal Feely speaks of wanting to put across another image of his community in Creggan, Derry,[103] who have been 'marginalised and demonised by the media.' Feeling that their communities are under attack is something these individuals experience as very *personal*, thus prompting them to respond.

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[102] I was in touch with Bjorn Ihler regarding this research. He was very keen to be interviewed; indeed he put me in touch with others that he felt I should interview. We had planned to meet while I was in Sweden carrying out further interviews there (October 2016). Unfortunately, due to unforeseen circumstances, he had not manged to arrive in Sweden as planned. I have relied on social media accounts and interviews that are all publicly accessible to learn about his work, his motivations and concerns. Having become somewhat of a public figure in the area of CVE, there is a considerable amount of information about Ihler and by Ihler available.

[103] Creggan is a large housing area outside Derry city in Northern Ireland. While it continues to be associated with dissident republican activity, the vast majority of residents do not support a return to violence. Feely refers to an image of the area being used repeatedly on news reports about the Troubles, a stock image that was put up regardless of where an incident being reported on actually took place in Northern Ireland. While at one time a "no-go" area for the British during the Troubles, due to it being under IRA control, it has subsequently been redeveloped – including via social enterprise projects such as the one in which Feely is involved. It nonetheless remains a relatively deprived area within Northern Ireland.

Mining the personal: personal resources

In addition to *mining* their personal experiences, those interviewed are also *mining* their own resources, including financial, to get their work done. Christian Picciolini refers to using money 'out of our own pockets,' for 'Life After Hate' interventions. Even those who are in paid positions, such as Junaid Afeef, give examples :

> I attended… [the] Muslim Mental Health Conference sponsored by Michigan State University...Even as a person who does this full-time, I still have to pay out of my own pocket to cover the cost of the registration and travel and everything.

Afeef refers not only to his personal resources in terms of money, but also in terms of time; prior to making CVE work his full-time job, he was working on the issue in his own time.

Michael Culbert from *Coiste na nIarchimí*,[104] an organisation advocating on behalf of the republican ex-prisoner community in the north of Ireland, describes their move into working in tourism:

> [w]e do a lot of advocacy and we try to provide employment opportunities for political ex-prisoners community. That's why we do the tourism.[105] We're a non-profit making organisation. We have this building and our landlord's good to us 'cause we're all voluntary workers. We've no funding this last five months. But we're hanging on it.

Personal resources are being mined, both in the tours they organise and through their volunteering. Those ex-prisoners who work as tour guides *mine* their own stories and

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[104] Culbert is a former political prisoner himself, having been released from prison under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement. This interview was conducted in the *Coiste* offices in Belfast in January 2015. For more on the organisation see http://coiste.ie/.

[105] *Coiste* run a tourism project – The *Coiste* Irish Political Tour – where 'former activists and political ex-prisoners from within the Republican community host [a] 3 hour walking tour and provide the visitor with an in-depth insight into the most recent phase of the Anglo/Irish conflict' (Coiste, n.d.). There is a similar tour organised by former loyalist prisoners through the organisation Ex-Prisoners Interpretive Centre (EPIC); see http://www.epic.org.uk/. Initially, EPIC's primary objective was to address the problems surrounding the reintegration of politically motivated prisoners into the community, particularly those prisoners from an Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) or Red Hand Commando (RHC) background, but has since expanded its activities. It is not unusual for a tour guide from *Coiste* to hand over to a tour guide from EPIC (or vice versa), with tour groups spending time with a guide from either side of the divide in Northern Ireland. I have experienced these torus myself, both with visiting academics and tourists from the USA. The reactions in some cases have been quite interesting. One student from a university in Iowa really struggled to get beyond the fact that he had spent the morning walking around and chatting with someone who had killed people. Others, upon learning more about the history of the area – in addition to participating in the tours they also had a lecture from Dr Dominc Bryan (Queen's University) – viewed the messages they wrote on the "Peace Walls" in a new light, some feeling uncomfortable about how flippant they had been in their suggestion that everyone just get on. In another interesting instance, a visiting undergraduate student from the UK, involved in a research project in the area of online violent extremism at Dublin City University, refused to participate in the tour that had been organised for the group, not wanting to spend time with people who had committed murder.

experiences to share with tourists. Those working at organisational level *mine* their own time and volunteer, when the funding is not available to them, to keep the work going. This voluntary aspect is emphasised by many participants; whether they are volunteering their time, or drawing on their personal funds, they are very often *mining their own personal resources* in the work that they do. I spoke to a friend of the creator of *Abdullah-X,* someone who supports him as much as possible, but in his own time. He explains: 'if I was given the opportunity to fulltime commit to *Abdullah-X*, to support a project, to do grassroots work, I would happily do so. Unfortunately, because of certain responsibilities and commitments in the life I have, I have to keep my fulltime job.' Abdul Haqq Baker also speaks of the volunteer work he and his colleagues do, noting that in many ways it is the greatest challenge they face as they cannot deal with the volume of referrals they get to STREET:

> at the moment we're confined to what we're doing on a voluntary basis and we will continue to work because we believe in the work that we're actually doing, but it means that our hands are tied and we're very limited.

To cap the out of pocket expenses involved with running his websites, Bjorn Ilher has set up a *Patreon* where people can support his work, noting:

> I know a lot of you appreciate the work I do, the lectures I give, the workshops you've attended, op-eds and interviews you've read and pictures you've seen. It takes a lot of time for me to research, develop and create all the output you see. These efforts are rarely compensated, I therefore depend on your support to be able to continue this work, to improve it, and to grow it to have the impact it should.

This is another element that separates those working at grassroots level from those working at a different (e.g. government) level. For example, some of those I interviewed in Denmark and Sweden, while working in a very grassroots, bottom up manner, are employed through the local municipality. In these cases, being employees with a regular salary ensures that they do not have the same issues regarding having to rely on their personal resources in the same way as the other participants interviewed.

Mining the personal: fulfilling a duty and making meaning
The practitioners in this study believe they are *fulfilling a duty.* They are, based on their experience and position, obliged to take action. In taking action, they are *making meaning* out of their own experiences. That the *personal motivation* driving the participants in this study is coupled with a *sense of duty* is clear in the words of Christian Picciolini and Darren

Richardson above. This is echoed in the name of the organisation 'Serve 2 Unite,'[106] with the idea that through the work that takes place there, those with whom they work are performing a duty for their community. The story of this organisation, being founded in the wake of a violent incident in which six members of the congregation of the Sikh Temple of Wisconsin were murdered by a white supremacist in August 2012, highlights the way in which these actors are *making meaning* on foot of events that have taken place in their life. In describing all the work in which 'Serve 2 Unite' is involved, Arno Michaelis notes: '[s]o, all that happened because of this atrocity [2012 Sikh Temple Shooting in Wisconsin].' He does emphasise that this by no means excuses the atrocity that took place, but notes the example that has been set by the organisation and the way in which it came together: 'No one,' Arno explains, 'says, "well, it's okay that that happened because these good things happened," but it does set an example to say, "this is how we can transform this horrific inhumanity into a glowing example of humanity."'

It is not only formers who believe they have a *duty to fulfil.* The sense of obligation is reiterated by Daisy Khan, who, as with Shayk Umar Al Qadri, feels that her community has been under attack. Their suffering affects her on a personal level, while her knowledge and experience compel her to do something: 'I, as a Muslim, have an obligation to do that because I live and breathe my religion and if I don't do it who's gonna do it?' Khan is protecting her religion and is, she believes, better placed than others to do so and is, therefore, obliged to do so.

Making meaning is permeated by personal experiences and seeing these reflected elsewhere. By identifying their own experience as something that is repeated and happens to others elsewhere, practitioners ascribe *meaning to their own experiences*: 'what the physical reality of my life had given me, through isolation, marginalisation, lack of self-esteem, racism and discrimination I could see parallels in between this new journey that experts started calling "radicalisation." I could see it's the same process I went through' (creator of *Abdullah-X*). Peace activist and founder of the charity Building Bridges for Peace,[107] Jo Berry, whose

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[106] 'Serve2Unite' engages students in a variety of creative projects with peacebuilding at their core. They also work with 'global mentors' who share details of their own personal experiences, often as survivors or perpetrators of violence, with the young people engaged in the 'Serve2Unite' programmes. For further information about their projects and work see https://serve2unite.org/.

[107] For information about the organisation's work see http://www.buildingbridgesforpeace.org/.

father was killed in the 1984 Brighton bombing[108] has, in the 33 years since his death, been trying to 'make sense' of her father's death; *making meaning* is inextricably linked to the work that she carries out. This is something very personal that drives her work, which she refers to as her 'passion.' When something like that happens, 'you feel it,' she explains, referring to the killing of her father. Even in cases where the motivation is not so directly personal there is a sense of making meaning; Afeef, for example, is, though his work, trying to make meaning of the actions of others with whom he can identify.

Mining the Personal: Repurposing Life Experience

Linked to *fulfilling a sense of duty* and *making meaning* of one's own personal experience is a *repurposing* of one's life experience. This is an element that is particularly true of those who are "formers" or survivors – those for whom *it is personal* – and sees participants shift their perspective on their life story. Kenny Blair from Ulidia Training,[109] set up to improve opportunities for upskilling and confidence building within marginalised Loyalist communities in North Antrim, speaks of the desire not to see another generation repeat their mistakes:

> [o]ne of the things we started to hone in on…there was a generation of young people who, whilst the organisations weren't recruiting people actively, there was still a generation growing up who were showing an allegiance to the different organisations like the UVF and the UDA…their Facebook pages would have been full of symbolism…We realised we're heading for another generation going to do the same things that we done, so we needed to really do something about that.

As a former member of the UDA in Northern Ireland, Blair speaks about his dissatisfaction with the current political system, a system he feels very let down by, and not for the first time: 'I went the legal way first through politics [Blair was a DUP councillor] and then frustration made me get involved in extra political activities [he became involved with the UDA].' He refers to beginning to 'see through' what was happening, with the final straw being 'when Ian [Paisley] and [Martin] McGuinness became the Chuckle Brothers[110] and I'm

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[108] The Brighton hotel bombing took place on 12 October 1984. It was carried out by the Provisional IRA as an attempt to assassinate members of the British government, including then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who were staying at the Grand Brighton Hotel to attend the Conservative Party conference. Five people were killed in the bomb attack, including Sir Anthony Berry MP, Jo Berry's father. A further 31 people were injured.
[109] See http://www.communityni.org/organisation/ulidia-training#.WUkmxPnysdU.
[110] Images of the Reverend Ian Paisley and Martin McGuinness laughing and joking together during their time as First Minister and Deputy First Minister under the power sharing agreement earned them the nickname "The Chuckle Brothers." McGuinness, speaking after the death of Paisley notes: 'Our relationship confounded many.

thinking you big bollocks you. Look how many people have died over the years for you to turn round in the end and do this?' Throughout the interview, Blair refers to his being let down by government actions and the actions of those for whom he believed he was fighting. In seeking 'to steer these [young Northern Irish] people away from making the same mistakes as we did,' Blair is *repurposing* his own life story and experiences for different ends, and *making meaning* out of the time he spent in prison for his involvement in UDA violence. He is seeking to turn his own disappointment into a learning experience, even a warning, for others.

The personal journeys of those interviewed are being turned around, or redirected. Formers refer to their involvement in violent organisations as finding a purpose in life; their involvement was filling a gap that otherwise was not being addressed. In many ways, this is the same thing that is still happening, but the purpose is different: their life's purpose has shifted from being part of an organisation that perpetrated acts of violence and hatred, to a life that is marked by a desire to do the opposite. Instead of seeking to cause harm to themselves and to others, they are, having refocused their purpose, seeking to become agents of change as peacemakers and have an effect and significance through different methods.

These methods include making use of their own personal story and telling it in various ways, either through the written or spoken word. A considerable number of those interviewed have published autobiographical works, or are planning to do so.[111] The participants are continuously seeking out platforms for sharing these stories; many as speakers and on speaking tours, including giving TED talks.[112] A number of the practitioners in question list

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Of course, our political differences continued; his allegiance was to Britain and mine to Ireland. But we were able to work effectively together in the interests of all our people' (Belfast Telegraph, 2017).

[111] Michaelis, Arno. (2010) *My Life After Hate*. Authentic Presence Publications: Milwaukee; Meeink, Frank & Roy, Jody M. (2010/2005) *Autobiography of a Recovering Skinhead*. Hawthorne Books: Portland, Oregon; Picciolini, Christian. (2015) *Romantic Violence: Memoirs of an American Skinhead*. Goldmill Group: Chicago, Illinois; Rangel, Sammy. (2011) *FOURBEARS: Myths of Forgiveness*. Life After Hate: Milwaukee.
All of the above are involved in the organisation Life After Hate. I was in touch with Angela King, Deputy Director of Life After Hate, in the hope of interviewing her. She cited working on her book as one of the reasons that she did not have time to meet for interview. During this research I also read Leyden, T.J. & Cook, M. B. (2008) *Skinhead Confessions: From Hate to Hope*. Cedar Fort Inc: Springville, Utah. Leyden also went on to work in preventing people from following the path that he did, including a spell at the Task Force Against Hate at the Simon Wiesenthal Centre. Other participants too referred to wanting to write/publish their stories; for example, Jo Berry.
[112] Examples of TED talks:
Robert Orell TEDxVilnius: 'A Way Out From Violent Extremism.'
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CNIgKsb1QbA&ab_channel=TEDxTalks.
Sammy Rangel TEXxDanubia: 'The Power of Forgiveness.'
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iOzJO6HRIuA.

'speaker,' 'keynote speaker,' 'motivational speaker,' or similar in their online biographies. During interviews, they speak of giving talks in various places, including prisons, to sports teams and so on. In fact, the day I interviewed Frankie Meeink he was due, later in the day, to share his story with a sports team at the local stadium. Jo Berry shares her personal story alongside Patrick Magee, an ex-IRA member who spent time in prison for his part in the bombing that killed her father.[113] This is the way in which they choose to share their *repurposed* life story. In interview, Berry speaks of 'lending' and 'sharing' her story being a way for people to look at and examine things in their own lives. It is, she explains, 'a quick way in.' She is taking what happened to her, her personal story, and using it – though for Berry 'using is the wrong word' – for a particular purpose. In the wake of the October 2017 mass shooting in Las Vegas, Amar Singh Kaleka refers[114] to organising funds via the National Compassion Fund,[115] set up to support victims of mass casualty crimes, to send survivors out to the scene of the shooting. Kaleka, whose father was killed in the Sikh Temple shooting in Wisconsin, is one of the volunteer victim representatives of past mass casualty crimes. These survivors have, he explains 'been through the wringer' and this experience can be used to have conversations with people who are currently suffering, with many in a position to help with the post-traumatic stress that those affected by the incident are dealing with.

Mining the personal: repurposing skills and capacities

Parallel to the *repurposing of a personal journey,* these grassroots CVE practitioners are *repurposing skills and competencies* that they have developed elsewhere. By repackaging and redeploying these competencies, those interviewed are taking advantage of the opportunities afforded them by the contemporary policy focus on CVE, continuing to *mine the personal* to identify more specific entry points through which to become involved in work in this area. Feely, for example, as a former trade unionist (he is an engineer by profession), began his

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Among the many TED talks available on the issue of terrorism and violent extremism, Mubin Shaikh, former "jihadi" turned CVE expert, also speaks at TEDWomen2015: 'An Inside Look at Islamic Extremism' https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RK8zb8dA4G4&ab_channel=TEDArchive.

[113] I attended one of their events as part of the research for this work, interviewing Jo Berry directly afterwards. This discussion, 'Empathy after the Brighton Bomb,' took place as part of the 2017 Festival of Ideas and Writing; see www.festivalofwritingandideas.com.

[114] This quote is from a Facebook live video that Kaleka posted on 4 October 2017. The video is a conversation between Kaleka and filmmaker/peace activist Rod Webber and is available at https://www.facebook.com/amardeep.kaleka/videos/10101971014313707/.

[115] The National Centre for Victims of Crime was approached by victims of past mass casualty crimes to partner with them to establish a "National Compassion Fund" to support victims of future mass casualty crimes; see https://nationalcompassionfund.org/.

CVE journey by organising a workers' occupation of a local company that had closed down, setting up a workers cooperative. He went on to play a large role in Creggan Enterprises, a social economy initiative established in 1991, and continues to work to address the social and economic needs of his local community. The creator of *Abdullah-X,* having had his own 'brush with extremism,' uses his own background, and the skill set he developed as an extremist – 'the ability to engage people, the ability to get them thinking how I wanted them to think' – in 'reverse, to try and engage people around positive understanding.' Mohamed Amin draws on his corporate background, which, he explains, influences the way in which he sees things and the way in which he approaches his CVE work. Barrie Philips, Director of the 'Getting on Together' project in Cardiff, a series of lessons linked to the national curriculum and set up in the wake of 9/11, is a former school principal. In choosing this educational approach, Philips is, using his own background and professional experience, working in a way that is familiar to him. Similarly, Mohamud Noor, Director of the Confederation of Somali Community in Minnesota, draws on his experience of working within the government system as both a state employee and a county employee to help others navigate these systems. Often, he explains, members of the Somali community with whom he works are not aware of services that might be available to them, or, if they are aware of them are unable to access them.[116] Chicago-based practitioner and activist Dr Bambada Shakoor-Abdullah, in her CVE work, draws very much on her background working as a mental health professional and the work that she has done previously around gang violence. The idea that 'we cannot arrest our way out of this problem [violent extremism] is the same thing they began to do with gang violence and community violence…My experience is that the issues with violent extremism and terrorism are similar to the issues around gangs and community violence, so similar violence intervention is important.' The members of the police force in Aarhus, famed for the "Aarhus Model"[117] refer to their experiences of working in crime prevention, comparing their work in CVE to their crime prevention work in other areas.

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[116] He notes that it is not only Somali immigrants that have difficulty navigating the system, but that these difficulties are increased for those new to the USA, for example. He helps people with all sorts of issues, giving an example of consumer rights when talking about a recent problem he helped with where someone had an issue with their mobile phone provider.

[117] The 'Aarhus Model' has received much praise for the way in which it approaches issues of "radicalisation." This is a multi-agency, bottom up approach that seeks to build trust between the authorities and those young people with whom they seek to work. The focus is very much on prevention, drawing on experiences in crime prevention over years of police work. I interviewed team members in Aarhus in October 2016. This research trip was directed by theoretical sampling.

Mining the personal: establishing authoritative knowledge based on experience and connections

By drawing on their own experiences, their knowledge and capacities, their access to relevant communities and their unique skillset, the participants in this study are *establishing themselves* – on an individual level – *as having an authoritative knowledge* about CVE issues. They are presenting themselves as experts on the subject. Throughout the interviews it is clear that the participants are emphasising not only the wealth of knowledge they have, but also the unique position they are in to have gained this knowledge. In some cases that occasions being negative and disparaging about the work of other grassroots practitioners in the area of CVE. In doing so, they are seeking to highlight their specific expertise in the area, setting themselves up as having something different and better to offer. Included in this are claims surrounding who is "really" a so-called former, and who is not, with some practitioners suggesting that others are, at best, exaggerating their claims of involvement with violent extremist organisations.[118]

Equally, in some instances, bonds have been made with other grassroots CVE practitioners. Here practitioners emphasise these connections as significant in building their own learning and knowledge. Barrie Philips refers to his 'friend the Sheikh'[119] throughout our interview. In setting up the 'Getting On Together' project, Philips worked with the Muslim Council of Wales to create those parts of the lessons that deal with 'countering the distortion of the non-violent message of Islam.' In recognising the need to work with those best placed to 'disassemble the rubbish that's going on out there' he has forged strong links with those based locally and best placed to be of assistance. Frankie Meeink, a former SkinHead leader and Neo-Nazi recruiter (even having his own cable TV show *The Reich*),[120] refers to his 'allies' – a pool of people he can draw on to mentor young people in the area and have skills and experiences to offer that are different to those that Meeink has. He refers specifically to the benefit of having allies from a variety of backgrounds: 'your allies are much stronger

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[118] In this study no attempt is made to judge who is "really" a "former" and who is not. If a participant describes themselves as a former, that is how they are described here.

[119] Here Philipps refers to Sheikh Mohamed Abdi Dahir MA, imam, Noor-El-Islam mosque, Cardiff. He is a co-director of the GOT project.

[120] Meeink founded 'Harmony Through Hockey,' a hate prevention programme using hockey and hockey coaching; see http://www.frankmeeink.com/.

when you are not only allied to white people,' referring specifically to local former gang member, Will Keeps, with whom he works regularly.[121]

In all cases, *establishing themselves as authorities* involves highlighting the flaws in "official" approaches, both in terms of policy and practice, while emphasising their own ideas and beliefs. A great deal of interview time is devoted to not only what is wrong with current approaches, but what they believe should be done, based on their own unique experience and knowledge. In an interview with Michael Culbert, the recognition of their expertise and that of their organisation is underscored. That many groups and individuals come to learn from them is seen as significant: '[w]e don't mind sharing our experience. We don't see ourselves as a big deal but people seem to think that what has happened here is quite unique. I suppose to a degree it is.' Former gang member and founder of 'Formers Anonymous' Sammy Rangel,[122] emphasises not only his personal experience of life in a gang, but he discusses the work he has done since that and the qualifications he has earned. Rangel goes on to list other work he has done and discusses getting a Master in Social work, continuing to emphasise what it is that qualifies him in particular to speak as an authority on these issues:

> [m]y first job...I had it for 16 years, I was working to protect kids who were being sexually exploited…exploitation through association, through gangs, and networks like that, family networks and gangs that were working together….I did that for 16 years, and that's kind of how I started to develop a name for myself in the field, and in the community…

Through highlighting the problematic aspects of much of the other work carried out in the area of CVE, participants are framing their own work against that of governments and other actors who simply do not have the experience and understandings that they have gained through their life journeys. They are establishing themselves as expert voices within a growing industry and an area that is receiving much attention. As small and, in the main, independent actors there is a need for them to highlight their significance to be able to create a space within the CVE field in which their knowledge and experiences can be recognised and acknowledged. Given the participants' desire to go on the record, the interview with me

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[121] Meeink has directed music videos for Keeps. It was via Meeink that I was introduced to Keeps as someone I should really meet and talk to about his work in this area. I met Keeps at a skate park in Des Moine Iowa while Meeink trained some junior hockey players.

[122] I met and interviewed Rangel together with another participant, Amar Singh Kaleka, in Ms Katie's Diner, Milwaukee on 26 March, 2016. There was a significant amount of good natured banter between the pair as we spoke. They were also very supportive and encouraging of one another's work. They had also been part of a group Facebook chat that had been set up by Christian Picciolini by way of introduction to me and my research.

was, for many of the participants, a way to get their views and opinions out there and another way in which to show they are significant actors in this area. Henrik Melius, founder and CEO of Spiritus Mundi, an NGO based in Malmö, Sweden, was clear about wanting to be identified on the record for the work they do. In drawing on their lengthy experiences of working "in the field," in refugee camps and with disenfranchised youth in Jordan and Egypt, they have put together a programme that is, he explains, unlike any others they are aware of. The focus of the organisation is on intercultural dialogue and creating projects that bring people, especially young people, together. 'We haven't found any other NGOs that have chosen a path like ours,' Melius explains.

In interviewing people who are holding themselves out as experts I often had to refer to and draw on my own experiences of working with children and teenagers in difficult situations to show participants that I had hands on experience and was not simply jumping on the CVE bandwagon. It seemed that there was a sense with some of the interviewees that they had all this knowledge and experience, whereas I was simply a researcher. At times I felt that age and gender played a role, in that I was a young woman in a male dominated area and couldn't begin to understand their experiences. In these cases, once I spoke about my own work experience there was certainly a breaking down of this barrier and an increased rapport. In fact, this led to invitations to observe work or visit workplaces. In a number of instances there was definitely a shift in the interviewees perspective, or attitude towards me upon hearing details of my own personal experience. Perhaps this is an example of the way in which I was *mining the personal* to establish myself as having some credibility and knowledge.

These practitioners use and emphasise their personal experiences to place themselves as "go to" people in the area of CVE. That I was able to access them, and that they were willing to, and in most cases keen, to speak with me about the issue goes some way towards illustrating this. Regardless of whether they embrace, grudgingly accept, or reject the CVE label, they all believe they have something unique and significant to contribute to this discussion. They have a strong self-belief rooted in personal experience, which they emphasise to prove their expertise and justify their role within CVE.

Mining the personal: establishing credibility based on personal experience
In addition to emphasising their *authority* on the subject in question, the practitioners also draw on their experiences to place themselves as a *credible voice* in the area of CVE. Here

the focus is on those at whom their work is aimed, as opposed to proving themselves to other CVE actors or commentators. Former gang member, musician and educator Will Keeps, explains:

> I let 'em [the children that he works with] know what happened to me. Everybody goes through something in life. It's how you come out of it. So I let 'em know what happened to me…I was molested when I was seven. I was left for dead at fifteen. I didn't feel that my parents were there for me…I tell 'em about all this experience and it helps me relate to them.

The unique credibility associated with personal experience is promoted by the practitioners. This idea of credibility does not only come from having been involved in violent organisations. Junaid Afeef underlines his credibility:

> I took a sabbatical from law practice for two years to work as the executive director of the Council of Islamic Organisations of Chicago. I've done a tremendous amount of pro-bono work for Muslim causes. I'm not a Johnny-come-lately to the community. Everybody knows who I am, everybody knows what my track record is.

Jo Berry suggests that she is well placed to work with Muslim women in the UK, having spent a large number of years building up trust with this community. She has a level of access that others may not have. This is due to long term engagement by her and acknowledgement of the situation these women are in. 'I've got trust now in the Muslim world,' Berry explains. '[E]ither someone knows me, or knows someone who has worked with me.' She attributes this access to both being there – showing up year after year – and putting in the work and also to access to the appropriate gatekeepers. This is a trust that has built up over time and is based on her own work and those connections and networks that she has developed. It is not something that just anyone can go in and do; it takes time and experience.

Those interviewed seek ways to highlight their credibility, drawing on their own experiences to add weight to their conviction. In the case of formers, Picciolini suggests that they have 'a lot of very unique information' and a different perspective than academics, law enforcement or others working in the area, 'because we were there. We knew, we know exactly why we got in and we know why the people that we recruited got in. And we also know why we got out.' Underlining this he states:

> if a cop knocks on your door and you're an extremist, you're not going to talk to the cop. If a teacher tries to talk to you at school, you're not going to talk to the teacher… You're more likely to talk to somebody who's come from the same background as you, because we understand the

language, we understand the reasoning, we understand the motivations for it.

Mining the personal: a quest for significance and recognition

Recurring throughout the above discussion is the idea that the experiences and knowledge of the practitioners in question are *significant* and, furthermore, that they are *recognised* as such. The participants are on a *quest for significance*; they are seeking to *make meaning* from something that happened to them, something they did, or something they are witnessing around them that is troubling them. In seeking to *establish themselves as authorities*, as *credible voices* and, in doing so *mining their very inside, personal experiences*, the participants are seeking recognition for their work, their knowledge, and, ultimately, their life journey. This *quest for significance and recognition* can be seen right from the outset in the personal motivation driving the participants, through *making meaning* and *establishing authority*. It is inherently tied to the idea that they have something precious, something of value, that is available to them to mine for use throughout their work; this valuable resource is something they seek to have recognised for what it is worth, its significance inextricably linked to that of its proprietor.

A number of those interviewed have been receiving considerable media coverage, appearing regularly as experts in discussions of violent extremism. This suggests that many of the practitioners in question are having some success in *mining the personal to establish authority.* They are gaining *recognition* not only for the work they are doing, but for their own personal experiences. In some cases, this can be traced to the rise of Trump and the ensuing issues around the "alt-right." In September 2017 I was talking to an American couple who were visiting Ireland. Discussing my research, the pair, both retired academics, referred to the fact that there was a gentleman 'with an Italian sounding surname' appearing on many news shows offering commentary on the issue of right-wing extremism. They were referring to Christian Picciolini; they recognised the name immediately when I checked with them. It was an interesting additional piece of data, given that it tied into the writing of this theory, the very part of the research I was working on at the time. I had noticed myself that Picciolini, and a number of others, seemed to be "getting their voices out there." However, as I was mostly seeing this on social media I wasn't sure if there was an echo chamber effect taking place, or indeed that because of this research I was simply more aware of the work of such individuals. Christian Picciolini's memoir is due to be republished with Hachette books in December 2017, retitled: *WHITE AMERICAN YOUTH: My Descent into America's Most*

Violent Hate Movement—and How I Got Out, again highlighting the increased attention that such work is receiving in a climate of increasing polarisation and violence.

Other participants, including Sammy Rangel and Bjorn Ihler have spoken at high level events, to which they have drawn attention on their social media pages. Rangel, for example, in mid-September 2017 was invited to speak at a St Louis Jewish Community event on forgiveness, being the first non-Jewish person to be invited to speak at the synagogue in question. In the same week he accepted a United Nations Humanitarian award on behalf of 'Life After Hate,' being introduced at the gala dinner event by Forest Whitaker.[123] Bjorn Ihler has also been posting text and images about his time in USA in September 2017, having been invited to speak to MiSK-UNDP[124] youth at the Plaza Hotel in New York city:

> [g]reat speaking to United Nations Development Programme - UNDP and MiSK about the importance of bursting bubbles today, and to be Extremely Together with the Extremely Together[125] gang again!
> (Bjorn Ihler, Facebook).

Some are also becoming affiliated with university programmes. Christian Picciolini is an associate for the USC Price 'Homegrown Violent Extremism' programme, and has worked as an adjunct professor at college level. He was a speaker at the University of Southern California Summit: Global Solutions in the Age of Homegrown Violent Extremism (November 14, 2017)[126] as part of a panel titled: 'Untold Stories of "Formers" & the Human Impact.' He was joined on this panel by his colleague from 'Life After Hate,' Angela King[127] and by Mubin Shaikh[128] who is listed as a 'terrorism subject matter expert.' Mohammed Amin also spoke at the same event, having garnered much interest among the staff at USC on foot of his *Average*

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[123] Rangel detailed these events on Facebook Live; see
https://www.facebook.com/sammyrangel/videos/10214570745121291/.
[124] Information about this youth forum is available at https://misk.org.sa/miskundpyouthforum/about/.
[125] Ihler is one of the 10 young leaders, who, as part of the Kofi Annan Foundation, with the support of the European commission and One Young World, have been selected to 'steer the way in countering and preventing violent extremism' (Kofi Annan Foundation, 2016).
[126] Full details on this event are available at http://www.uscsummitonextremism.com/.
[127] A former skinhead, King spent time in prison for her part in an armed robbery of a Jewish-owned store. Since leaving prison she has graduated from the University of Central Florida with an M.A. in Interdisciplinary Studies and works as a keynote speaker, consultant, and character educator; see
https://www.lifeafterhate.org/staff. I was in touch with her re my research, but unfortunately King was unable to meet as she was working on her book.
[128] Mubin Shaikh is a Canadian CVE practitioner who, having experienced an identity crisis as a Muslim growing up in Canada, travelled to Pakistan. Here, he encountered the Taliban and was drawn in by their extremist ideas. However, the events of 9/11 coupled with the teachings of an Imam, served to alter his view. He became an undercover operative and informer in the infamous 'Toronto 18' case. These events are detailed in *Undercover Jihadi: Inside the Toronto 18 — Al Qaeda Inspired, Homegrown, Terrorism in the West,* written by Dr Anne Speckhard with Shaikh. The text was consulted in this study as an additional data source, and served to back up the interview data from the participants of the study.

Mohammed work, and received support from them.[129] While the other speakers could be deemed part of more "official" efforts, such examples may go some way towards suggesting that these practitioners have had some success in *establishing themselves as authorities* on the issues in question. Both Picciolini and Amin are on a panel at the 2018 South by SouthWest Festival (SXSW) in Austin Texas, focused on 'Grassroots Efforts to Counter Violent Extremism.'[130] A festival noted for its cutting-edge content, this suggests that grassroots CVE actors are perceived as increasingly relevant, or will be perceived as such and highlights the wider fascination with the issue, a fascination that moves far beyond the world of government officials, think tanks and NGOs.

Carving a Space of One's Own within the CVE Space

Carving a space of one's own

Through *mining the personal*, the participants in this study are seeking to *carve a space* for themselves within the CVE industry. This is a space in which they can *remain independent* and work on their own terms, drawing on their unique knowledge and experiences. Given their frustrations with policy and practice, the participants want to use this space to move beyond the restrictions associated with CVE policy and "official approaches." While doing this, the space they create is a *space in between;* they are outside the "official" CVE world, yet they are part of this CVE industry, the preoccupation with violence prevention adding significance to their work and generating a need for their experiences to be drawn upon. In creating this space, the participants are forging identities as CVE "experts," finding a place of belonging within the CVE space. As a result, the participants are struggling with insider/outsider status, placing themselves as people in the know, yet remaining, and being forced to remain, on the periphery. This section details the different elements of the space that the practitioners create for themselves. Linked closely to *mining the personal,* there continues to be considerable convergence across the various elements of *carving a space of one's own.*

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[129] While in the USA I met with staff at the University of Southern California (USC), including Dr Erroll Southers, Director of the USC Price Safe Communities Institute and Director of the USC Price Homegrown Violent Extremism Studies Program. At this point, they had recently become board members of Average Mohammed, expressing much support for this project and those behind it. They had spent times themselves in Minneapolis, carry out research into issues of homegrown violent extremism. While they are no longer board members, they clearly still support the work of Mohammed Amin, having invited him to speak at this event.
[130] Full details about this event are available at https://schedule.sxsw.com/2018/events/PP73468.

A space of one's own: remaining independent

A *space of one's own* for the participants is a space in which they are free to create the conditions whereby they can *remain independent* with regard to their CVE work. This is tied to policy and funding issues and the desire to do their own work on their own terms; they are striving to identify and create ways in which they remain in control of their work, as opposed to having aspects of their work dictated by others. They are seeking to be unrestricted in both a financial sense and in terms of having autonomy over the approach they wish to take. Referring to a workshop he conducted in Addis Abbaba, Bjorn Ihler explains: '[i]t was my kind of talk, *not a talk at the terms of others* [sic]' (Bjorn Ihler, Intragram account, emphasis added). Moving beyond simply *repurposing skills and capacities* to use generally within CVE, the participants of this study are using these skills to create ways to work that suits them. This is a key manner in which they are seeking to bypass the *frustrations* created by the underlying context within which they are working. They are not only finding ways to work in the area of CVE, they are finding ways, or seeking to find ways, to do this on their terms. For the creator of *Abdullah-X,* there was a strong desire to take control of the situation himself, rather than having to toe a policy line and be restricted in his actions. Having briefly worked in an "official" capacity within the area of counter-terrorism, he notes that this was focussed on 'commissioning…monitoring…[and] reporting,' an experience that 'didn't lend itself well to me personally.' Participants are creating situations where they can draw on their skills and knowledge, applying them in the way that they see best fit. To be able to do the work they wish to do, to reach the numbers of people they are seeking to reach, to be as effective as possible, this has financial implications that extend beyond the need for participants to simply draw on their own resources.

Participants experience difficulty finding funding sources that allow them to carry out their work effectively, while also allowing them to remain independent. Taking money from the government would, for the majority of the actors, compromise the work in which they are involved. Sean Feenan, Community Development Officer with the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland,[131] highlights the issue with regard to the various groups with which he works (emphasis added):

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[131] This organisation was established in 1979 as the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust, and acts as a bridge between donors and community based individuals and groups who are seeking to effect change within communities in Northern Ireland; see http://www.communityfoundationni.org/. I interviewed Feenan in the organisation's offices in January 2016. Feenan was instrumental in getting me access to those on the loyalist side of the divide in Northern Ireland working in the area of community development.

> various people come lookin' in to see what we're doing…the Northern Ireland Office for example, would come noseying to see what's going on and they're very political… They promise all sorts, particularly money, but never really deliver…Some groups will say they'll not meet the police…We are like an honest broker in between, negotiating all these different relationships. Our role is to try and encourage those people who are outside of the political and the peace process…to try and engage them in some form of peace building that *suits them.*

Paul Gallagher is an independent councillor for the Sperrin area in Northern Ireland. Coming from a family that has 'been involved in all shades of republicanism,' he refers to the fact that there are sometimes offers from the PSNI of funds for the community development work in which he is involved. Having started this work with former Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) prisoners in *Teach na Fáilte*,[132] the concerns are unsurprising. 'It's too direct,' he explains, noting that while community development work may bring benefits for the police force indirectly, this cannot be its aim; the focus is firmly on young people and helping to improve their lives. Practitioners do not want to risk their work being coloured by any funding they might receive.

While participants are reluctant to take money that compromises their work, they also suggest that funds are simply not being made available to them, despite the notion that masses of money are being thrown at those operating in this area. During the 2016 Annual Convention of the International Studies Association in Atlanta, for example, an audience member at one roundtable discussion (Media and Social Media on Countering Violent Extremism and Supporting Peace Building Efforts) highlighted this idea. There is, she suggested, pots of money available; anyone working with young people can slap the label 'CVE' on what they are doing, whether sports training, arts classes, whatever, and receive funding. This has not patterned out in the data here. The first thing the police team working in Aarhus stated when asked about the challenges they face speaks to this issue: 'what makes it tougher than it should be is lack of resources. If we want to develop this programme we need more resources.' Even those in organisations such as police are noting the lack of funds available specific to the CVE work in which they are engaged. Practitioners speak of 'ad-hoc' projects and 'cobbling together what we can' for people. There is an interesting tension here, with participants one the one hand seeking to *remain independent*, but on the other hand lamenting

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[132]*Teach Na Fáilte* now acts as a vehicle for INLA ex combatants / prisoners and their families in addressing the legacy of conflict and most importantly in making the transition from a military position to that of a political solution; see http://teachnafailte.com/.

the fact that there is no funding available to them and questioning where the money that is available is going.

Participants work around funding issues as best they can; some have sourced private funding for their work: 'we have a fiscal sponsor…an arts organisation [that] provide[s] supplemental arts programming to Milwaukee public schools by raising money through foundations and grants and private donors…they're the ones who pay us to do what we're doing' (Arno Michaelis, referring to the work of *Serve2Unite*). Some rely heavily on goodwill and their own connections:

> I need funding. You have to get equipment, you have to get this, you have to get that for them…Every year, every year I got to beg, borrow, from people everywhere to get it done. This year my friend, a pro hockey player, you know, gave me a couple hundred... (Frankie Meeink)[133]

The creator of *Abdullah-X* talks of using crowdfunding to be able to expand his work while remaining independent. Daisy Khan suggests that there are supports governments could offer without directly funding initiatives, for example, supporting content distribution. This way the content remains independent from government interference, but they could help ensure it reaches as many people as possible.[134] Humera Khan spoke of a meeting that was arranged between CVE practitioners like herself and potential funders outside the government realm. There was a fear on the part of the funders to back projects in this area; they asked the government representatives present at the meeting whether or not they could guarantee that the people and organisations they might fund would still be welcome after a change of government. While the participants want to *remain independent* they are still, to some extent, reliant on the government focus on CVE to highlight the importance of their work.

Satnam Singh, who works with a unit in the municipality of Copenhagen set up specifically to deal with politically motivated violence, suggests that in some ways their work has been boosted by the increased awareness around these issues, citing incidents such as terrorist attacks in Paris and Belgium and the widespread coverage these received. Increased awareness, he points out, can mean more money being made available and more support for the work they are doing. Robert Örell, a former white supremacist, who has been working in

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[133] Here Meeink is referring to the hockey equipment he needs for his 'Harmony Through Hockey' programme.
[134] This interview took place when Obama was in office. It is not a stretch to suggest that Khan might have changed her stance in the meantime, highlighting the significance of the context in which these practitioners operate.

the area of countering violent extremism for over fifteen years and is now the Director of EXIT Sweden,[135] suggests that the increased policy focus on CVE, while not unproblematic, is contributing to a situation whereby there is more collaboration between different organisations working in the field. There is, thus, an increase in possibilities for practice sharing, with those who have been working in the area for a long time feeling less isolated. This has a knock on effect for those who might want to become involved or take action; as the work becomes more visible and known, people are more likely to understand that they have something to offer. This indicates a variation for those that are operating within a context in which local municipalities (as is the case in Denmark and Sweden, for example) have a considerable amount of power, relative to national powers, such as in the UK, for example. Although, the rise of the "alt right" in the USA is also bringing attention to the work of 'Life After Hate.' This seems to be opening opportunities for them to seek funding in new ways and to expand their reach. Comedian Samantha Bee, for example, has been championing their work and helping to raise funds via her TV show, 'Full Frontal.'

A space of one's own: resisting the CVE gaze

Tied to the desire to *remain independent*, is the concept *resisting the CVE gaze.* CVE policy and the negative associations therewith is having an effect on the work of the practitioners within this study. It is not the lack of clarity around understandings that is an issue here; in fact, many practitioners are tired of the ongoing academic focus on definitions and would rather research that helps them get on with their work. Some reject the term CVE altogether, others accept it grudgingly. Junaid Afeef speaks of the problems he has faced in his networking attempts, with individuals and groups he has approached being interested in what he is doing, supportive of his initiatives but reluctant to become involved, saying they cannot be involved in anything around CVE; 'if the money is appropriated for anything that even hints of CVE then we don't want [to be involved],' is something he regularly hears when trying to involve others, for example, local mental health practitioners, in his work. The creator of *Abdullah-X* refers to the issues that arise from the attention his project has received from the CVE world:

> A-X [*Abdullah-X*] is now dressed up like a show pony, the CVE world puts my project up there as an example of best practice…So on the ground, being allied to White House summits and having your cartoon shown there probably doesn't do much for A-X's credibility so how I

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[135] For details about this organisation see http://exit.fryshuset.se/english/.

> offset that is I have a go at the American government on Twitter as A-X and keep him real and grounded about foreign policy and grievances…That's how I've dealt with it.

Malin Martelius, working for the municipality of Malmö, Sweden, and focusing in particular on civil society groups, avoids the term CVE. When the order came from above to focus on CVE, she replied: 'well if you mean by safeguarding democracy you're right, but CVE…that sounds like police work…It is not what we do.' Continuing, she stresses: '[w]e take care of people…our job is to have trustful relations with everyone in society.' She cites that in following the direction of the UK and *Prevent* there has been a backlash; trust with the community has been jeopardised. Taking a bottom up approach to the issues facing her municipality, she works to bring people together and create opportunities for interfaith dialogue.[136] She does not want to be in a position where she is working to protect society, or safeguard society *from* certain people, rather she feels her role is in supporting people, something that an association with CVE policy hinders.

This *resisting the CVE gaze* is heavily associated with the policy context. Both former republican prisoners and former loyalist prisoners in Northern Ireland highlight the issues that have been caused by the state throughout their interviews, and their subsequent refusal to be associated with the state in their CVE work:

> the state themselves was probably the biggest incitement of it [the violence]. I watched the DUP... the late Rev Ian Paisley. I watched him, I went to his rallies. I stood and listened to him boil the blood of young loyalists, young loyalists going and joining what were just paramilitaries. When a lot of them young loyalists were incarcerated for their actions the DUP walked away' (Darren Richardson).

Here Richardson is underlining his assertion that the state simply cannot carry out the work that is required here. Mohamed Amin feels that it is up to average people, not the government, to engage in CVE work; the government, he explains, 'has issues pending with the community.' Mohamud Noor explains that while he has been working with the Somali community in Minnesota for over twenty years, for a long time the community was ignored and was certainly not a priority for governments; they received no aid or support. Now that they are finally receiving some attention, it is in a negative way Noor asserts due to 'the

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[136] For example, she is involved in the 'Coexist Malmö project which consists of representatives from different faith communities in Malmö coming together to create opportunities for interfaith dialogue between faith communities, public authorities and Malmö residents; see http://malmo.se/Nice-to-know-about-Malmo/Inclusion-in-a-diverse-city/Coexist.html.

association with countering violent extremism.' Michael Culbert refers to being a member of the 'RAN DERAD' group[137] but speaks of not attending the sessions and not having been invited back because he addressed them publicly and questioned the terminology being used, feeling that it was particularly anti-Muslim. 'Radicalisation,' he explains, 'means a new thing nowadays. But I don't think it's referring to western Europeans. I think it's referring to people of the Muslim faith.' While terms such as radicalisation may have taken on new meanings and the growth of a CVE industry is considered a contemporary phenomenon, it is not unique or unprecedented. Practitioners in Northern Ireland refer to the security industry that has been in existence in their corner of the world for many years. Through the focus on *remaining independent* and *restricting the CVE gaze* the practitioners seek the freedom to work as they see fit, determined by their own knowledge and experience. They are creating a situation whereby they are not subject to the same restrictions as someone employed by, or funded by the government. In *resisting the CVE gaze* the practitioners are seeking to unshackle themselves from any problematic associations with government policy the would-be difficulties this arising from such an association.

A space of one's own: moving beyond CVE etiquettes

This independence gives the practitioners a certain freedom to move beyond what Henrik Melius terms 'the *etiquettes* of CVE.' Here he refers to those who are preoccupied with terminology, rather than being able to *move beyond* this and actually do something. He highlights the fact that different extremisms are fuelling each other, further aided in this process by government policy and media coverage of violent extremist organisations and the acts of violence they commit. In discussing the work in which he is involved, Melius refers to the ways in which at 'Spiritus Mundi' they go directly to their audience – in this case that includes the media, journalists, policymakers and parents; not only "youth at risk" – and access them directly. He compares this to those working in an "official" capacity who are stuck spending their time 'bouncing labels and concepts around,' preventing them from being able to *move beyond the etiquettes* in question. This ties in closely with the idea of *resisting*

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[137] This is the deradicalisation network that previously formed one of the working groups of the EU Radicalisation Awareness Network; see https://www.counterextremism.org/resources/details/id/310/ran-deradicalisation-working-group-proposed-policy-recommendations. These working groups have since been updated and added to; a full list is available here: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/about-ran_en. These working groups have since been updated and added to, a full list is available at https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/about-ran_en.

the CVE gaze, with he and his colleagues eschewing much of the terminology and refusing to differentiate between different varieties of violent extremism, noting that:

> [o]ne extremism will be used as a baseball bat against the other, by media, by politicians, by everyone. When you call right wing extremism white power, and the left wing anti-Fascist and then so called Islamic extremism, if you have these concepts and you bounce them around you will strengthen the whole thing rather than *going beyond the etiquettes*.

By focusing on labels and terminology, governments and policymakers and the media help to fuel the power that violent extremist organisations have, fuelling their ability to instil fear and terror. The labels themselves matter. This is clear when comparing media coverage of acts of violent extremism to that of other acts of violence. By *moving beyond these etiquettes*, the grassroots practitioners here are freeing themselves to tackle the issues they see as important head on. They are not weighed down by unhelpful policy and terminology. Furthermore, they making an effort not to contribute to the policy problems. They are not slowed down by procedures and red-tape, 'waiting for green lights, waiting for things to get the go ahead,' explains the creator of *Abdullah-X*, highlighting the importance that he is not held back like this, something that influences the consideration given to any potential 'stakeholder relationships' for his project. Jens Tang Holbek, an EXIT Coordinator in Nykøbing Falster, Denmark, uses the term 'destructive subcultures' in his CVE work. This, he explains, is less 'sexy' than using the term extremism when talking with those that may be influenced by violent organisations, including gangs and biker groups. This, he feels, helps to give the problem 'the attention it deserves without blowing it up into something else.'

Moving beyond CVE etiquettes extends to dealing with whoever needs to be dealt with in order to get the job done. In some cases this can mean, as Will Glendinning, speaking about his involvement in the charity 'Diversity Challenges' put it during our interview, 'you have gotta' get your hands dirty at some point…and now the trouble with getting your hands dirty is that they get dirty.' Glendinning, a former politician and former Chief Executive of the Community Relations Council of Northern Ireland, explains that 'Diversity Challenges' was set up to 'try and engage with people outside the mainstream' who were against the Good Friday agreement, and continues to work to facilitate change within cultural groups in Ireland.[138] Avila Kilmurray, who has worked in community development in Northern Ireland since 1975 and was Director of the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland from 1994-

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[138] For full details about the organisation see http://www.diversity-challenges.com/home-page/.

2014, stresses the importance of inclusion to avoid a sense of 'radical alienation.' She explains 'I always remember a loyalist paramilitary saying to me, you know, we don't come down from the mountains at night and go back up in the morning. We sort of live next door to people, you know.' Henrik Melius notes that 'these are people [violent extremists]. We can't cut off elements of society that we don't like.' The practitioners, by *moving beyond CVE etiquettes,* are free to interact with members of society that might be off limits to government actors.

The current CVE context, however, means that some practitioners are better placed than others to *move beyond CVE etiquettes.* Alyas Karmani, Co-Director of STREET UK (Strategy to Reach, Educate and Empower Teenagers), has a background in psychology; he explains that 'the *Prevent* agenda has become a very politicised agenda…it's really become a securitisation tool' (Fitzgerald, 2016).[139] In this interview, Karmani, who is also imam and khateeb at a number of Mosques in the North of England, and an academic, goes on to explain the issues that this is causing for practitioners who are unable to work with young people who may have issues and concerns as there is no longer a space to do so. This is due to the mandatory reporting associated with *Prevent*. Practitioners working with Muslim youth are being put in increasingly difficult situations due to the policy context in which they are operating. This is having a negative effect on the work they are seeking to do and the space or ability they have in which to engage with those they see as needing to be engaged. It is not only those working specifically in the field of CVE that are affected. A woman working as a counsellor at a university in the UK told me of the problems the "*Prevent* duty" causes for those, like herself, working in a place where people come and share sensitive information. She was categorical about the fact that she felt this statutory obligation was targeting Muslims. As she explained it, if a young white Irish man came to her and, during a session, expressed sympathies with a violent paramilitary group, that would be okay; nothing beyond her regular interaction with her client would be expected of her. However, she absolutely believes that if a Muslim client came in and expressed any sort of sympathy for a Muslim cause – whether violent or not – she would be expected, under the statutory obligations of the *Prevent* policy, to report this. She was absolutely clear on the fact that this has a negative impact on her work. Satnam Singh, speaking of the fact that nearly all of those who are

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[139] While we had plenty of time to talk around 'Roundtable: Facing Radicalisation' event, I did not carry out a "formal" interview with Karmani, though this is not an issue in grounded theory as "all is data." I have relied quite heavily in coding and analysis on a published interview with Karmani carried out by DCU's Dr James Fitzgerald for the journal *Critical Studies in Terrorism.*

referred to the programme he works on are Muslim, suggests this does not mean that is representative of the problem; these are simply the cases that are *reported*. This ability to be entirely free to move beyond the CVE etiquettes is varied as a result of policy conditions, namely the fact that CVE policy is inextricably linked to Muslim communities.

By *moving beyond CVE etiquettes,* the practitioners are *challenging dominant narratives* in the area and seeking to reframe those general understandings people might have around CVE issues, or issues that might feed into their work in this area. Their emphasis on the fact that there are many varieties of violent extremisms underscores this, so too their assertion that these violent extremisms fuel one another, essentially providing the fuel to keep the other going. As Henrik Melius puts it, whether South Africa or Northern Ireland – both of which offer much to learn from – 'it's really no different, it's just a different beast. A beast is created to instil fear.' Arno Michaelis draws attention in his workshops to the fact that 'white guys blow up shit too,' moving away from the notion of Muslims as a "suspect community." This reframing can happen on a very small scale, one small incident at a time:

> [t]he other day, I was wearing my tunic. Our [Sikh community] tunics come down below our knees for a wide variety of reasons. Most of it had to do with just ancient times. I was walking in Milwaukee, and this gentleman…he walked by me and he turned, and he goes, "Why don't you wear your towel with that too?" … I stopped, and instead of getting mad, I was like, "Teaching moment!" I turned, and I go, "Bro, this tunic is old. We defeated Alexander the Great with this tunic."…We had like a two-minute conversation. At the end, he was like, "I never knew that about you guys. I thought you were Muslim."…The teaching moment was good. He said it. He said, "I thought you were Muslim." That's a big thing for them to say. (Amar Singh Kaleka).

The Aarhus team explain that, when starting out, their brief from above was very much to focus on Islamist extremists, despite the fact they had a serious local issue with a group called 'White Pride,' which had sprung out of the hooligan movement. Satnam Singh suggests there is a danger in only focusing on "Islamist violence." This ignores the mainstreaming of right wing groups who have been mobilising and getting stronger while the policy focus has been elsewhere.

Within CVE policy, violent extremism tends to be portrayed as a global issue. However, the vast majority of the work carried out by the practitioners in this study emphasises the local,

small scale actions that they take. In doing so, they are again *moving beyond CVE etiquettes* to focus their efforts on underlying issues and needs, whatever these might be:

> [w]e try to find out what's missing in people's lives and then we try to provide those voids. So if they turned to the "movement" because they never had a great job, well maybe we can find a partner who does job training on the field they want to pursue. Or maybe it's education, we can get a grant or a sponsor to pay for that. Sometimes it's tattoo removal…' (Christian Picciolini).

Rather than adopting the one size fits all approach of policy makers, the practitioners are starting where people are at. Their concerns are very different to those that are prominent within policy documents; they have little to do with intervening in a person's ideology, or beliefs. Rather, it is simply about dealing with the issues that are important to the local community. Avila Kilmurray explains:

> [w]hen there was quite a lot of funding for it, it was also a bit of an issue because people felt a degree of resentment because there would be funding for perhaps cross community work back in the '90s, however, their real day to day problem was poverty. And they'd say well look if you really want to work with us address the issues that we see as important. If you want to do something on top of that that's fair enough. But don't assume then that you can bring us all together to be nice to each other over tea and sandwiches if you're not going to address the fact that we can't afford to buy uniforms for our kids going to school. So the line we took very much was very much look you have to start with the issues that people feel are important to them and then you know if you're going to try and move on from that, or you're going to try and challenge politics with a small p then that's on top of that.

A space of one's own: a space in between

In *remaining independent* and moving *beyond CVE etiquettes*, the practitioners can be seen as both creating and occupying *a space in between*. 'Formers Anonymous,' created by Sammy Rangel, offers support for those seeking to leave what might be called "Street Life."[140] This space aims to be a 'network of self-lead and self-contained support groups, [with members] helping each other address common problems and recover.' Similarly, 'Life After Hate' and the recently launched EXIT USA[141] offer support for those seeking to leave hate groups. Christian Picciolini states, 'I hate to say this, but we're kind of like the gang that they join after they leave the gang.' They are seeking to ensure that the structure that is

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[140] This is a group of men and women who are addicted to "street life," and have, or are seeking to leave this life behind; see http://formersanonymous.org/.

[141] EXIT USA is a programme of 'Life After Hate' that provides support for those seeking to leave the white power movement; see https://www.exitusa.org/.

missing for people once they leave a violent group is replaced in a healthy way, that this space is filled though support and understanding rather than drugs, alcohol or a different gang. Throughout the interviews, many of the participants who are formers talk of this period of readjustment, a period in which they are figuring out their beliefs and where they belong – perhaps beginning their journey to *repurpose* their life. Here that *space in between* represents 'the moment after you leave, but before you get there.'[142] People who have been involved in violent organisations do not simply exit and re-join society; they require appropriate help and support to move from one situation to the other. In this case, it is often formers who are offering the required support. Tony McAleer, a co-founder of 'Life After Hate,' and former organiser for the White Aryan Resistance (WAR), skinhead recruiter, proprietor of Canadian Liberty Net (a computer operated voice messaging centre),[143] and manager of the racist rock band, Odin's Law describes this *in between* place:[144]

> [w]hen we join a violent extremist group we basically excommunicate ourselves from our friends and family, the rest of society. But friends, family and society aren't there with open arms waiting to welcome you back. I know in my own life and the lives of the people we work with we've broken those relationships, we've broken the trust when we left and that trust and those relationships need to be rebuilt and that takes time. You find there's a gap between the two – I call it the void – where people are, and the loneliness of being in that void can appear to the mind to be much more painful than the dysfunction of being in the group and I think it's at that point where people are most at risk to go back. They would rather go back to the dysfunction than deal with the pain of the loneliness.

This is often help and support that governments cannot offer; their hands are tied regarding who they can and cannot work with. By *moving beyond CVE etiquettes* these actors are in a situation where they can create, and work in, these *in between* spaces.

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[142] This quote comes from an art exhibition that was shown at Gallery X in Dublin in May-June 2017. The exhibition, by artist Shane Sutton which he describes as dealing with the 'void of uncertainty' that many people experience at some point, with his spacemen/women representing this (Sutton, 2016). Upon seeing the exhibition as I was working on bringing these concepts together, something clicked and I felt that this term spoke to what it was that I was writing about, albeit with a then provisional concept label. See http://www.shanesutton.com/?p=2124.

[143] Tony was eventually found to have contravened Section 13 of the Canadian Human Rights Act that prohibits the dissemination of messages likely to expose groups to hatred by telephone. I was in touch with Tony as part of this research and, while he was willing to be interviewed via Skype, it is one of the interviews that I ran out of time to pin down and complete. One of the issues in this research was that so many people were willing to speak with me and, when they did so had so much to say, that managing the data had to become a priority at some point.

[144] This quote is taken from a video promo used to raise funds for a full length documentary 'Angry White Men: Life After Hate'; for more, see https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1842189011/angry-white-men-healing-from-hate and https://www.facebook.com/AngryWhiteMen.LifeAfterHate/videos/293454601129995/.
I became aware of this particular video in mid-September 2017 and used it as additional data. It fit in with the theory as I was writing it and spoke to the concepts I had developed.

The *space in between* can also be viewed as that time before people become involved in violent action, or join a hate group, those who are on their way into potentially violent situations. Dr Bambada Shakoor-Abdullah details her work with a young man who was stuck in this *in between* space. Struggling with various aspects of his life, he had slowly started moving towards a place where travelling to be part of a violent extremist organisation seemed like a better option than the situation he was in. Through her work with this young man, Dr Shakoor-Abdullah could meet this young man at the *in between space* he was in, help him within this space and, ultimately move him beyond this space in a way that those officials who were aware of his plans to travel to join a violent organisation could not. By working closely with him to help him overcome obstacles that were facing him – his inability to access certain services due to a lack of knowledge and support – Dr Shakoor-Abdullah was in a position to offer practical, hands on support to help him navigate the system and move out of this *in between space*.

While creating and working with those who are in this *space in between*, the practitioners themselves are also occupying *a space in between*. Not only is this clear from the struggle to remain independent while having adequate funding, but for certain actors this also includes the struggle for acceptance. This is particularly an issue for formers; they speak of the difficulty in being accepted due to their pasts. The stigma around 'work[ing] with the enemy' (Christian Picciolini) exists. This adds to the sense of the in between space certain practitioners experience. In many cases, they have been doing this work and are, on the one hand establishing a name and reputation within the area of CVE, but on the other they are "formers"; people who cannot be fully trusted. They are not only in between within the CVE space, they also remain in an in between space due to their connections with their previous lives. In interview Sammy Rangel speaks of being 19 years out of his gang, and his friend and colleague, Amar Singh points out that 'they [the gang] still want him back.'
'They do, they still do, trust me,' replies Rangel.

Robert Örell has seen a change to some extent on the issue of "formers" and those who exit violent organisations. When they first started their work, he explains that there was a stigma attached; they were viewed with suspicion. People did not believe that it was possible for these "Nazis" to change and re-join society. He feels that, in Sweden, there has been a societal level change; nobody questions that you cannot leave and change, at least for those who have been involved in far right organisations. However, he suggests that this same

suspicion is now aimed at those who have supported or joined ISIS. What they are experiencing now is what he experienced previously, the doubts and suspicions about whether people can change are being aimed at a different group of individuals.

It is this in between space that contributes to the credibility of "formers." When I ask Rangel what prompts people to reach out to 'Life After Hate,'[145] he explains: 'I think Chris, Frankie, Tony, Angela, and Arnold [all formers involved in 'Life After Hate'] are still well-known in the white supremacist movement.' This means that sometimes, they are reached out to by 'active white supremacists who still kind of idolise these guys.' This again highlights also the way in which these actors have *carved a space for themselves* and *established themselves as credible actors* that people in difficulty will go to.

By *moving beyond the CVE etiquettes* and seeking to reframe understandings, the practitioners are stuck between a variety of violent extremisms, extremisms that they see as fuelling one another. This comes out in some of their responses to the reactions to the "alt right" marches. While many counter protests have taken place, these practitioners are wary of the "call out culture" and some of the "antifa"[146] who believe that this is the way in which to respond. Writing on *Medium*, Arno Michaelis says of his suggestion to organise 'a fundraiser for a peacebuilding non-profit across the street from their [Neo-Nazi] event, or somewhere close by' that,

> [i]n order for this to work, the neo-Nazis would have to be soundly ignored. Like people would be flocking to the amazing fundraising event right past the KKK like they weren't even there. Like absolutely no acknowledgment of the hate message. No signs. No typical counter-protest. And yes, so sorry antifa homies, no attacking them either.

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[145] Rangel and Picciolini both filled me in on the story of one gentleman, a former member of the US Army, who got in touch claiming that he hated all Muslims as a result of his time in the military. He was, he explained, fearful about what he might do. They travelled to meet the person in question. Having spoken to him, they then, drawing on their own contacts and resources, arranged for him to meet with a local Imam. Initially the Imam offered to give a few minutes of his time, but they all ended up talking for hours. Since that meeting, the man who got in touch has become friends with the Imam and visits him at the mosque reasonably regularly. In this instance, the man in question knew there was an issue and took it upon himself to get in touch with an appropriate organisation.

[146] The term 'antifa' refers to antifascists. This is an informal collection of groups, networks and individuals who believe in direct action and aggressive opposition to far right-wing movements. Traditionally associated with the far left, their ranks have seen a rise in members with more mainstream political views in the wake of Trump's election. According to the Anti-Defamation League, their ideology is rooted in the assumption that the Nazi party would never have been able to come to power in Germany if people had more aggressively fought them in the streets in the 1920s and 30s (ADL, n.d.).

There is the notion of government extremism that has an effect. Bjorn Ihler, for example, posted a picture of himself outside Trump Tower, referring, facetiously, to his failed attempts to 'deradicalise Trump.' While there may have been some humour attached to this post, the fact is that these practitioners see Trump as a major obstacle to their work, whether in cutting their funding or in his demonisation of the Muslim community and his support for White Supremacist groups. This again places them in an in between space in the area of CVE, seeking to challenge violent extremist ideas, but also those of the government. In fact, many have argued that the "rise of Trump" has served to bring racism and hate out into the open; it is now acceptable to spread hate. Again, the practitioners are stuck between trying to combat this hate and bring people together, while dealing with increasingly polarised societies and a spread of hate that is increasingly legitimised by those in power.

In the UK, Abdul Haqq Baker speaks of being on good terms with a previous government, but, again, that situation changing once the current conservative government came into power: 'That's completely gone now and it's reverted to the age old top down coercive sort of relationship with communities, where communities are looked at as suspect communities or target communities and no longer are they partners.' Again, the work in which they are involved, what it is that they can do, remains, to varying degrees, determined by external forces. In addition, Haqq Baker refers to being criticised by the current government, 'but on the other side from the extremists we get criticised for being in the pocket of, or working in tandem with the government and both of them are incorrect. Which places us effectively in this whole arena in the middle and that further endorses our credibility because we're getting it from both sides which, and they're both polarised and opposites as it were.' Malin Martelius refers to the fact that there are tensions between the national and local levels, and that Malmo has been criticised for not always doing what it is told.[147] Furthermore, while the Municipality of Malmo has a large staff (24, 000) and plenty of resources, there are issues with communication between different departments. Martelius questions how she can get those, like social workers, for example, who are too busy to have time to wade through document upon document, to understand issues around CVE, particularly given the confusion that stems from debates and discussions in the media. Singh, in Copenhagen, suggests that the tendency for people to focus on public and national debate, which is often centred on

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[147] This is possible because of the degree of independence that local authorities and cities have within the Swedish system. As Martelius explains, they collect tax money locally and decide what to do with it, as opposed to this happening at national level.

talks of punishment and harsh rhetoric, leads people to believe that this is the approach taken within the country. However, this drowns out the soft work at local level; nobody tells the public about the municipal plans and the way in which they work, he explains.

As a result of these negative government policies and actions, those working with the Muslim community also find themselves stuck in a strange, *in between place*. On the one hand, they are seeking to reframe and counter the demonisation of the Muslim community, on the other hand they are trying to involve members of this alienated community in their work:

> [e]verybody knows who I am, everybody knows what my track record is and yet I still get push back on this issue. People say…this is not a real problem, this is just our community being stigmatised and profiled. The challenge is to overcome those perceptions either by correcting them or by addressing the underlying issues that caused people have them.

In Northern Ireland practitioners work with those who have rejected the Good Friday Agreement and are, as such, outside the mainstream. While many support peace, they do not agree to the terms that the government has signed up to. Paul Gallagher, coming from the leftist position held by the Irish National Liberation Army, speaks of finding 'unique ways to satisfy their constituency.' For example, he talks about the decommissioning process under the Good Friday Agreement and arranging for weapons to be handed over to an independent body so that they would not be seen to be surrendering them to the government, while at the same time they were accepting the fact that, while they do not agree with the terms of the agreement, the people of Ireland do not want the armed struggle to continue.

A space of one's own: the insider/outsider balance
While the participants seek to emphasise those aspects that render their work unique, they are still very much part of the CVE industry, whether they term their work CVE or not. The CVE agenda adds weight and significance to their work and their experiences. In turn, their work in the area, and attempts to draw attention to this work, contributes to the increased awareness of, and promotion of the CVE agenda that they see as flawed. In many ways, it could be argued that these actors need the focus on CVE to be able to do their work. Some of those interviewed have some connection the "official" CVE world; they are not entirely outside the system. This is through funding, through previous work they have done, through their work being held up as a prime example of "best practice," being invited to high level CVE meetings, or simply doing consulting work in the area. This is not to suggest that the

practitioners are happy with, or accepting of government policy. In fact, generally, they are doing what they have to do and dealing with whoever they need to in order to get their work done, get their message out, raise awareness about their work, and, not least, try to make a living of some sort. In this sense there is often a balancing act going on between what they want to do and what they need to do, with different levels of compromise required. There is a balance to be struck between 'moving beyond [CVE] etiquettes, but not challenging the structures to the point that it becomes impossible to carry out the work' (Henrik Melius).

Contributing to their *frustration* is their position outside of the "inner circle" and distance from those who are in receipt of funding for CVE work. While they struggle to remain independent and remove themselves from government influence on their work, they are vocal about those in a different position. Paul Gallagher refers to 'jobs for the boys,' highlighting the way in which certain people, who adhere to certain agendas – those who are 'in that circle' – are making a very decent living out of the problems and issues around CVE. Abdul Haqq Baker explains: 'This is an industry now, countering violent extremism is an industry where you've got so many so called experts, including so-called formers, and we know that the money is available there, vast amounts.' These are the 'poverty pimps' and 'issue pimps' to which Mohammed Amin refers. He elaborates:

> [t]hey [the government] have their preferred people they go to. They've already handpicked the people who they want… They will hold meetings, they will never invite us. They will hold conferences, they will never invite us. But they will invite the darlings they picked. Now, more importantly why they pick these darlings is because these darlings are yes men…And that is something that we as independent people will never accept, you know. We have, we have, we have our own integrity and that is something that our government hasn't come...they want to rent a community. I want ownership.

While the participants are outside this circle and do not wish to compromise their work to carve a space within this circle, they do acknowledge the need for support and recognition: 'But you got to help us [government], but you got to accept us at our level' (Mohammed Amin). They cannot operate from entirely outside the CVE world, despite their efforts to challenge the "conventional wisdom."

In challenging the dominant narratives the practitioners highlight a different "insider status." They have a level of personal experience that cannot be manufactured by other actors. This echoes the way in which the practitioners seek to establish their credibility and authority. The

practitioners have a variety of insider knowledge, whether as formers, survivors, or through their previous work experiences. Henrik Melius describes what they are doing as 'basic social work,' an idea echoed by Jens Tang Holbek, who, through his experience in social work has focused a great deal on violent extremism through his work as an EXIT Coordinator and his involvement in deradicalisation work within the prison system. The practitioners are mining this insider knowledge and experience to share with others and to guide their CVE work. While they are doing this they remain part of the industry, with the focus on CVE creating a context whereby their personal experiences have an increased resonance. These experiences legitimise their role within CVE, allowing them to create a space in which to operate. However, they remain critical of the policies that are in place, without being entirely on the outside. Even those who refuse to use the terminology associated with CVE were still willing to be interviewed by me and go on the record about the significance of their work and what they do.

A space of one's own: a place of identity and belonging

While being stuck in this in between space – within the CVE system and outside it, being insiders in one way and outsiders in another – the participants are, through their actions, seeking and creating a *place of belonging*. By *carving a space of one's own*, participants are forming *spaces of belonging* for themselves within the CVE field. They are establishing a unique place for themselves as CVE practitioners and developing an identity as such. In doing so, participants place themselves and their skills and backgrounds as allowing them to do something that others cannot: 'we are engaging in an area where very few are able to effectively engage. That's been the success of what we've been doing for over twenty years now…we engage and we have credibility' (Abdul Haqq Baker). Participants strive to emphasise either the distinct nature of their work, or the distinct skills they have. They are exclusively positioned to do this work effectively. 'There is nothing else like this…it has its own unique selling point' explains one practitioner of their work. In *establishing their authority and credibility*, in creating a space for themselves within the CVE industry, they are also forging out a space where they belong, a space where their experience matters and is significant, a place where they can create their own networks of supporters and allies and like-minded individuals. The practitioners are building their own community, despite being individuals who work in a given area. This is a community with which they can share their skills and experiences, teaming up when necessary to found an organisation, to support one another, or simply to chat on social media. In many cases, particularly for those former

violent extremists and survivors of acts of violent extremism, this comes after having had to create a space of belonging for themselves in a wider context, tying in with the *repurposing of their personal experience* after either leaving a violent organisation, or coming to terms with what happened to them or to their family members. Christian refers to the summit in Dublin 2011[148] that brought a number of them together:

> [m]ost of us, even though 'Life After Hate's' only been around since 2009, most of us have been doing this work on our own for 20 years. It was really the summit in Dublin that brought us all together…And it was like, "Wow, you're doing this too? You're doing this? Why don't we just do it together? This is cool."

Conclusion

Grassroots CVE practitioners, despite being a diverse group of people going about their work in different ways, are seeking to overcome, or bypass, much of the *frustration* they experience with regard to trying to operate in an area where those in power set the agenda. Their work negatively affected by government policy and mass media definitions of violent extremism, the participants rely very heavily on their own personal experiences and backgrounds in the work that they do. They draw on these, repurposing them, to create a unique space within the CVE industry, from which they can operate and go about their work on their own terms, to the extent that this is possible. While being tied to the bigger industry, the way in which they fit within it is complex; they seek to remain independent and outside "official" understandings of CVE. To do this, participants mine their own personal resources – their knowledge and, sometimes, finances – to establish themselves as credible authorities in the field. They create a space for themselves within the larger industry. From here, they operate as they see best bit, avoiding associations with government policy, reframing understandings and, ultimately, making their work their own.

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[148] The 'Summit Against Violent Extremism' was organised by Google Ideas. Taking place in Dublin in June 2011, it brought together a number of former violent extremists from around the world.

CHAPTER 4: RE-CONTEXTUALISING THE STUDY
THE BIGGER CVE PICTURE

Introduction

No theory stands alone, it must be integrated into the yet bigger picture of the substantive area.
(Glaser, 1998: 207)

This chapter considers the derived theory within the substantive area of CVE, highlighting a number of issues that it raises for the CVE sphere in general. That macro level CVE policies are having a significant effect on the day to day work of grassroots CVE practitioners is clear; their main concern stems in no small part from these effects. By considering the theory developed within the wider context of CVE, this research offers a perspective not often considered within international relations and security studies; the day to day work and experiences of a group of individuals who are dealing with the fallout from policy and media are elevated. The perspectives of such actors and the details of their experiences and insights have often been overlooked despite the fact that they have much to offer regarding understandings and interpretations of the overall substantive area, though a number of publications over 2017 and 2018 suggest a shift in this tradition (van de Weert and Eijkman, 2018; and Derbas, Dunn, Jones et al., 2017, for example). Considering the implications of *mining the personal* to *carve a space of one's own* within the CVE industry goes some way towards judging the theory and emphasising its fit and relevance, two of the elements via which grounded theory is appraised. This is picked up on further in the latter part of this chapter, in which relevance, fit, workability and modifiability, the elements by which grounded theories are judged, are considered with respect to the theory developed.

Integrating the Theory: The Bigger CVE Picture

Just because grounded theory has emerged and can stand on its own, does not mean it should be left to isolation or only for the laymen interested in the area. It should contribute more explicitly to the "bigger enterprise" in some way. If theoretical and substantive literature is sparse…hopefully it starts a literature to which others can contribute.
(Glaser, 1978: 139)

The theory developed in this study offers insight into the CVE arena in general, not only into the issues specific to the work of grassroots practitioners. The actions taken by the individuals interviewed for this study come about as a direct result of the context in which they are operating; their day to day work and the approach they take is directly influenced by

the "bigger enterprise" of the CVE industry. In this chapter, the macro level picture is discussed based on the insights offered by consideration of the micro level experiences of grassroots workers. To put the theory developed into context, the concept of a CVE industry is considered, with the discussion focusing on the resources that different actors in this area have and wield. This leads to a discussion highlighting the politicised nature of CVE policy, with governments, media and academia shaping the agenda. A running theme throughout these discussions is the effect that CVE policy is having on Muslim communities; this is picked up on in a way that offers historical context to the CVE issues discussed. Here, the way in which the effects of the CVE industry mirror those of the security industry during 'the Troubles' in Northern Ireland (and beyond) is used to emphasise the fact that what is happening currently in the CVE arena is not something new and unprecedented, rather it is something that has been witnessed before. This is an idea absent from much of the discussion around CVE, which remains, despite this historical context, understudied and lacking in a literature that is empirically based.

CVE: community versus government and industry?

> **2) Investing in community-led prevention:** *Governments should enable civil society efforts to detect and disrupt radicalisation and recruitment, and rehabilitate and reintegrate those who have succumbed to extremist ideologies and narratives. Community and civic leaders are at the forefront of challenging violent extremism but they require much greater funding, support and encouragement.*
> (Green and Proctor, 2016: v)

As an industry, CVE is increasingly the domain of a variety of actors, not only those operating at grassroots level, with some of those other actors having significant resources. From government officials and offices, to Silicon Valley corporations, to NGOs, to academic researchers, to individuals seeking to exert some influence, there are a diversity of players within the contemporary CVE sphere. Despite the focus on community input and empowerment in CVE policy documents, this is not playing out in the findings of this study: those practitioners working at community level have to create ways, drawing very much on their own personal skills and experiences, to carve a space for themselves within the CVE industry. They are not, despite what policy documents suggest, particularly supported and encouraged in this endeavour; they certainly do not perceive themselves to be receiving the support referred to by governments.

The opening quote in this section suggests that the lack of support for community and civic "leaders" has become apparent through research conducted by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, with a key recommendation of their 2016 report *Turning Point: A New Comprehensive Strategy for Countering Violent Extremism* being to further the support available for community based CVE practitioners. However, the theory developed here calls this element of CVE policy starkly into question; there is no evidence that local communities *are* being supported. The theory derived highlights the way in which the grassroots practitioners interviewed have to dig deep, drawing on their own resources, experiences, and connections to facilitate the work they are doing.

This raises questions about how smaller, individual, or community-based actors can compete with large, multi-million dollar industries not only in terms of getting on with their own work, but in exerting any influence on CVE policy or the agenda that is being set by governments. Funding is a significant and complex issue. Large amounts of funds are, ostensibly, being made available for CVE work. However, where exactly this money is going remains unclear. Rosen (2016) has noted this funding shortfall: '[t]oo many national governments continue not to provide local governments and communities with the resources needed to develop tailored community engagement programs to identify early signs of and prevent radicalisation to violence.' He goes on to point out the disparity between spending on the US military presence in Iraq of $11.5 million per day and 'the $10 million the Department of Homeland Security was given this year to support grassroots countering violent extremism (CVE) efforts in the United States, and nearly twice as much as the State Department's Bureau of Counterterrorism received this year to support civil society-led CVE initiatives across the entire globe.' In a 2015 report on CVE in America, Vidino and Hughes (2015: 18) find that '[r]esources devoted so far to CVE have been limited, and CVE units within each relevant agency remain understaffed.' One of their key recommendations is that more funding be provided, something which then-US President Obama recognised at the Washington CVE summit (White House Office of the Press Secretary, 2015): '[w]e're going to step up our efforts to engage with partners and raise awareness so more communities understand how to protect their loved ones from becoming radicalised…We've got to devote more resources to these efforts.' However, as has been made clear by this research, such efforts by one administration can be reversed in a heartbeat by another.

Questions regarding where the money is going are coupled with questions regarding who the relevant community and civic "leaders" are, and who determines this. While practitioners desire to remain independent and avoid the risks that accompany any association with government policy and agendas, they feel excluded and not fully trusted; they are stuck in an in-between space. For example, the role of "formers" within CVE is receiving attention among CVE commentators. Barnes and Lucas (2017), for example, suggest that they have a potentially unique role to play in the dissemination of online counter-narratives. Not only is the role of such individuals considered more and more within the literature, some are being increasingly called upon by the media in light of the rise of the "alt-right." This has led to questions regarding the 'lucrative careers' many formers now have as speakers and writers. This issue was raised when I presented my research at the conference 'Processes of Radicalisation and Polarisation in the Context of Transnational Islamist Terrorism: Interdisciplinary Research and Public Implications.'[149] Following the presentation, a question was received and subsequent discussion took place around the role of "formers," and the supposed lucrative careers they are now forging in the area of CVE. Considering the concepts developed, grounded in data, throughout this research, I would certainly question just how 'lucrative' these careers are. In some ways to make such a judgement is entirely subjective; I certainly did not ask about the amounts of money being earned. It is, however, worth bearing in mind the numbers of books someone would have to sell and the types of audiences they would have to be addressing on a reasonably regular basis for this claim to be justified. Based on my experiences, the groups they are addressing tend to be school groups, youth sports teams and those in prison. As speakers they are not in the league of former government ministers and former presidents, or corporation heads and tycoons, who often do have lucrative speaking careers. That such individuals are receiving so much attention for their work, in some cases, is due to the current preoccupation with violent extremism and violent extremist organisations. Attention, however, does not equate with receiving adequate funding, let alone making lucrative careers.

The idea that "formers" are forging careers out of their past violent experiences is not necessarily problematic; the difficulties those involved in violent organisations, or crime more generally, face upon release from prison or exiting gang life is well known. This includes problems finding *any* work, let alone establishing a career. In that respect, former

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[149] 'Processes of Radicalisation and Polarisation in the Context of Transnational Islamist Terrorism: Interdisciplinary Research and Public Implications.' Hanover, November 2016.

violent extremists and terrorists are not doing anything different from, for example, former drug addicts offering support to those struggling with drugs, or telling their stories in schools to raise awareness. There are many areas or issues about which the same could be said. It is not unusual for former alcoholics to offer support to those seeking sobriety, former gamblers offer support to those attempting to stop gambling, those with experience of coping with an illness often offer support to those who have been newly diagnosed, smokers offer advice and support to those seeking to quit. In all cases such individuals are drawing on their own personal experiences – *mining* them and *repurposing* them – to help others. It is also interesting to consider whether people view former loyalist and republican prisoners in Northern Ireland in a similar manner; organisations have been set up through which they act as tour guides around their communities. Again, these are individuals that, despite being released under the Good Friday Agreement, would struggle to find regular employment in many areas.[150] Former members of paramilitary organisations in Northern Ireland and ETA in Spain have been noted for their involvement and role in peace processes in each country (Alonso and Diaz Bada, 2016). The involvement of "formers"[151] in CVE work is neither unusual nor unprecedented.

The lack of funding backs-up the findings that community based initiatives, and individual practitioners in particular, are struggling to finance their work, needing to find ways to draw on their own resources and experiences to be able to carry it out. Even the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund – announced as such a significant element of CVE around the world – has struggled to secure funding. According to Rosen (2016) GCERF has only been able to raise $25 million from 12 donors.[152] Having been set up to address the funding shortfall, GCERF is now, as discussed at a 2016 meeting convened by the Prevention Project

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[150] One of the issues that came up in interviews with practitioners in Northern Ireland was this very problem, the fact that under legislation former prisoners cannot be employed in certain areas. According to one practitioner: '[t]he war is over and our problem is people attempting to retrospectively criminalise us. We [former republican prisoners in this case] can be prevented from getting jobs, we can be prevented from travel, we can't get into the United States, New Zealand, Canada, Australia. We can't join the police force, we can't join the emergency services, fire brigade, ambulances – there's this absolute legislation against us. Therefore, there are a lot of issues which result in unemployment, or underemployment. That stated we have people who are very professional; we have university lecturers, tutors, teachers, but they are the one end of the scale. At the other end of the scale are people who can't get employment 'cause they don't have those high level qualifications but they're well qualified for other work. But they can be legally discriminated against. So what we do is, we work on their behalf.'
[151] This shorthand for former extremists tends to be used in reference to former white supremacists and former jihadis only.
[152] This, Rosen (2016) notes, includes only $300, 000 for a "rapid response fund" to 'support grassroots projects linked to stemming the flow of fighters to Iraq and Syria – presumably a high priority for the more than 90 countries that have seen their citizens travel to the conflict zone.'

and GCERF (The Prevention Project, 2016: 1), 'confronting a situation where there is no "natural source" of financial support for this work.' At this meeting it was ascertained that 'GCERF currently receives funding from 12 governments and the European Union, but has yet to identify long-term funding sources in any of them.' The EU donated two million euro to the GCERF fund in December 2015. Google, in addition to the five-million-dollar innovation fund referred to in chapter one to support CVE work, is also investing one million GBP into projects seeking to tackle online extremism in the UK. Partnering with the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, those working to counter violent extremism can apply for grants to help facilitate the work they are doing. With a focus on 'technology-driven solutions, as well as grassroots efforts such as community youth projects that help build communities and promote resistance to radicalisation,' the applications will be judged by a panel of advisors which includes academics, policy makers, educators, representatives from creative agencies, civil society and the technology sector (Perez, 2017). As such, there is a tie in here with policy aims. Christian Picciolini announced via Facebook (24 September 2017) that he has applied for an Obama Foundation Fellowship, the funding that had been awarded to 'Life After Hate' under the government's CVE grant programme having been revoked under the Trump administration. This move highlights an interesting element with regard to CVE, namely the number and type of actors that have an influence. Here, for example, we see that despite the regime shift the former president of the USA, through his foundation, can still wield some influence and still has power through the funds he can bring. While alternative sources of funding may become available, these are few and far between. There is still fierce competition to get the resources in question, with who these go to entirely at the impulse of others. The funding that is available is tied to the desires and ideas associated with other CVE actors.

Clearly it is not only the lack of funding itself that is problematic. If a lack of funding were the only issue to consider, this could be relatively easily resolved; there would be a straightforward to solution to be found. However, the funding issue is further complicated by issues of credibility and the ability for community based practitioners and projects to remain independent. This calls recommendations such as that by Green and Proctor into question; their suggestion, in light of this research, can be conceived of as simplistic and not taking the complexities around this issue sufficiently into account. There is a lengthy list at the back of their report of those they consulted as part of their research. Perhaps more attention should have been paid to the agendas of the various types of actor consulted. This study suggests that

trying to reconcile the work and the issues of those operating at different levels within the CVE world is, at best, difficult, but potentially impossible. GCERF had been conceived of to speak to this issue, marking an attempt to make funding "neutral." The idea here is that the resources available would be from a 'blended fund' with contributions from governments and other donors pooled, with grants issued coming under a GCERF banner rather than coming from a particular government (Koser and Cunningham, 2016). The fact that all of the 12 donors thus far are governments, with no industry funding having been received, highlights the problems with this type of funding process. Practitioners are reluctant to take money from governments, feeling this would jeopardise their credibility, but other sources of funding are difficult to come by. The funds made available by Google, as detailed above, are also problematic, with industry and government actors remaining involved in determining which community-based practitioners are eligible to receive funding.

Beyond direct funding, Khan (2015) suggests that '[s]ome large corporations are starting to provide training and access to their services and facilities [for practitioners and NGOs], but no one is willing to run or sponsor initiatives yet.' Such partnerships are being encouraged, but again are yet to take off in any significant way. The struggle for resources, but also the negative impact that donor funding can have on the ability of grassroots activism was the subject of a July 2017 *Guardian* blogpost by Sunil Babu Pant.[153] Pant, an LGBTIQ activist in Nepal, argues that the professionalisation of the work of activists associated with donor funding is something to be resisted. Not only do attempts at professionalisation result in NGOs being deeply indebted to the donor, marking the 'start of submission to a system that repeatedly disempowers and controls,' it often renders local knowledge and experience worthless: '[t]he injustices, abuses and deprivation taking place may be a well-known fact to the local communities but without research carried out using a methodology acceptable to the donor, the local knowledge retains no value and is considered "anecdotal."' Such sentiment echoes the fears of the participants of this study: they need money to survive, but they cannot work effectively if viewed as indebted to the government or other funders. This suggests parallels between the individuals in this study and other small organisations and individuals working in other areas. Pant ends his *Guardian* piece emphasising the power associated with remaining independent:

> [m]y advice to human rights movements is to remain a grassroots and loosely organised movement for as long as you can. Don't become a

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[153] The blogpost was first published on *Medium.com*.

"professional" NGO for the sake of it. Becoming "professional and efficient" is becoming corporate. You will deliver much better if you stay a raw, innocent and effective activist. If not, you may as well shift to the corporate world.

CVE: a politicised agenda

We will reinforce old alliances and form new ones -- and unite the civilized world against radical Islamic terrorism, which we will eradicate completely from the face of the Earth.
(Donald Trump, Inauguration Speech, The White House, 20 January 2017)

deGraaf and deGraaf (2010: 268) assert that when counter-terrorism becomes 'the central issue in electoral campaigns,' the issue is politicised. The issue of Islamic violent extremism has been on the lips of politicians around the world throughout 2016 and 2017, along with the need to eradicate it. German Chancellor Angela Merkel, in her New Year address (Angela Merkel Chancellor, January 2017), claimed that 'Islamist terrorism' was one of the 'most pressing problems' Germany faced in 2016, the phenomenon having 'struck at the heart of our country.' This is despite reports suggesting that right wing groups pose a greater threat not only in Germany, but elsewhere: 'right-wing extremist groups all over Europe have been trying to instrumentalise the refugee crisis for their own ends' and Europol officials have registered a significant increase in right-wing extremist websites across the European Union (Von Hein, 2017).

The focus on this issue by politicians allows them to set the agenda and define the threat, ultimately setting the tone for the overall discourse (deGraaf and deGraaf, 2010). It is within this atmosphere that the practitioners in this study are seeking to find ways to make space for their own experiences and knowledge to be put to use, experience and knowledge that is often at odds with the line held by those in power. Giroux, writing in 2004, refers to Donald Trump in his role as reality TV star, his tag-line 'You're fired!' feeding into a celebration of hardness and masculinity, and exerting power over others. Since then we have witnessed the rise of 'Trumpism' and the 'radicalising' right-wing rhetoric of the reality TV star turned potential GOP presidential candidate, turned President of the United States. Subsequently Giroux (2015) argues,

> Trump gives legitimacy to a number of fascist policies through his appeal to hypernationalism and disdain of human rights, his portrayal of Muslims and immigrants as a racial and religious threat…his obsession with national security, his aggressive mobilization of a culture of fear, his targeting of dissent and individual groups…his invocation of an external enemy as a threat to "our way of life..."

This focus on Islamic extremism feeds not only the idea that we are all in danger and extreme measures need to be taken for our protection – even if these infringe our human rights – it also continues to fuel the idea of Muslims being inherently dangerous. This marks one of the ways in which the practitioners in this study seek to move beyond CVE etiquettes, and shift understandings around the issues in question. The coverage of Islam and the way it is perceived is something that Edward Said wrote convincingly about in his book *Covering Islam* (1997/1981). Here he outlines the ways in which there has been 'a strange revival of canonical, though previously discredited, Orientalist ideas about Muslim, generally non-white, people – ideas which have achieved a startling prominence at a time when racial or religious misrepresentations of every other cultural group are no longer circulated with such impunity.' What is striking is that Said wrote these words in 1997, as an updated introduction to work originally circulated in 1981; the way in which Muslims are covered in the news media, by government and academic and corporate "experts" has long been problematic. However, the rise of the alt-right, and the fact that an individual who, at the very least, is slow to renounce this "movement" has managed to take the highest office in the USA suggests that things have worsened since Said wrote this updated foreword: misrepresentations of other groups, whether Mexican, Muslim, African-American or women, are increasingly circulated with impunity too, including by the President of the USA himself.

Politicians and policy makers are not the only ones who feed into this public discourse and create the climate that legitimates such ideas, and, indeed, feeds into the frustration experienced by those interviewed for this study. In a 2004 paper, Giroux writes of the role that media and popular culture have played in 'inspiring fear of Muslims and suppressing dissent regarding the US invasion and occupation in Iraq.' The situation certainly has not improved in the years since, with the media continuing to play a central role in inspiring an irrational fear of Muslims. Nasser-Eddine et al. (2011: 36, referencing Ansary, 2008; Dreher 2007; Pickering et al., 2007; and Zalman 2008) argue that the 'dominant frame of understanding violent extremism and terrorism through the lens of Islam and Muslim identity plays out in terms of concerns regarding media representations [which relate to] the demonisation of Muslim identities in the mainstream media through easy assumptions linking Islam and terrorism.' Indeed, it has been argued that this has contributed to the mainstreaming of far-right rhetoric, with the far-right themselves having 'begun to absorb

significant elements from official security narratives' with a move by some groups towards 'counter-jihadist' ideologies (Kundnani, 2012:1), and the creation of a "suspect community."

Academia is certainly not exempt from similar criticisms, particularly at a time when 'public education is being utterly privatized, commercialized and test-driven' (Giroux, 2004: 18). An increasing emphasis on global university rankings, measurable research outputs, and market accountability is replacing the democratic responsibilities of universities (Khoo and Lehane, 2008: 19). This includes, or has led to an increased focus on, or desire for industry-academia partnerships. These effects can be seen in the area of CVE, for example though the *Peer 2 Peer: Challenging Extremism* initiative outlined in chapter two. Run by private company EdVenture, supported by the US State Department, and partnering with Facebook, this project seeks to harness the power of millennials by working with university students across the world, and having them become 'educated influencers.' This initiative sees 'teams' from universities challenged to create social media campaigns to combat violent extremist propaganda and compete with each other to create the 'best' or 'winning' campaign. The students earn credit for participation in the project and receive money (USD 2,000) to implement their campaign. Education Venture group – EdVenture Partners –act as a go-between for their clients (in this case the State Department) and their 'network of academic institution and faculty partners to directly engage with the valuable and powerful Millennial market' (EdVenture Partners, 2016). The aim is to draw upon student innovation and harness the power of millennials as a social media savvy demographic. The claim of those involved is that it empowers 'the very people ISIL and other violent extremist groups are trying to recruit – young people.' Ultimately, however, this is a State Department programme that is outsourcing the work it wants done to a group it believes might have more credibility in the area, and a better, or more sanitized image. This raises significant questions not only about CVE, but calls into question the very role of the university itself. Via this project, students around the world are fulfilling the aims of the state without having any opportunity to challenge the state; they are presented with a de facto problem and solution, namely that ISIS are influencing young people through social media and that it is their responsibility to create online campaigns to counter this material.

The politicised nature of such an endeavour must be considered. Here there is a normalisation of the war on terror, contributing to the creation of an 'other' who is responsible for the current problematic situation. Adorno, in *Education After Auschwitz,* argues for a different

type of education: 'all political instruction…centred upon the idea that Auschwitz should never happen again…would be possible, only when it devotes itself openly, *without fear of offending any authorities*, to this most important of problems' (1998/1967: 203 – emphasis added). Considering the fact that the *Prevent* policy has been put on a statutory footing surely raises questions therefore about the ability of those working in education, particularly at third level, to engage in debate and discussion around issues and topics of relevance to CVE; they may end up having to report their students based on the ideas they express in a classroom. This is likely to lead to some educators being reluctant to engage with certain issues.

Academia is increasingly involved in setting the research agenda; Richards (2011: 143) points out that the emphasis on radicalisation has led to a policy focus on 'radicalisation studies' and an approach to investment and funding that has helped shape and determine research agendas accordingly. The European Union Seventh Framework Programme for European Research and Technological Development (FP7) and follow-up programme Horizon 2020 (H2020) funds academic research, including a number of projects that focus on "radicalisation"[154] and associated phenomena. At an EU Radicalisation Awareness Network Centre of Excellence (RAN CoE) event in Vienna in April 2016,[155] it was suggested that, regarding future funding available for projects in this area, projects adhering to the aims of the RAN group, an EU network, would be prioritised. The organisation's aim to set the research agenda has come to fruition. This highlights the complexity of the research scene, and the manner in which research is tied to the aims of funders. In our interview, Avila Kilmurray, discussing issues around funding noted:

> I'm sort of more easy with that ["conflict tourism"] than a lot of people to be honest. Partially in that it gives some of the ex-prisoners a bit of an extra income and also, to be honest, I sometimes get more annoyed with universities, with Queens' and UU, who've suddenly developed all these centres for conflict resolution but couldn't spell it during the Troubles. Who actually get a lot more money out of it.

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[154] FP7 security projects: www.safire-project.eu ; www.impacteurope.eu ; www.fp7-prime.eu/project ; http://voxpol.eu/. See http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/library/publications/2016/communication-preventing-radicalisation_en.pdf for further information about the specific projects.

[155] This was the Research Seminar 'Research on Radicalisation: From Theory to Practice' that took place in Vienna 12-13 April 2016. The seminar brought together the RAN editorial board, leading researchers and practitioners to discuss and debate the latest research findings and consider how these are relevant for practitioners.

There has been some push back against this; researchers at the University of Illinois at Chicago, for example, wrote to Members of Congress (2016), to express their concern regarding the questionable use of academic research to support policies, grant programs, and initiatives related to CVE. They referred specifically to a study conducted into the Montgomery County Model (MCM), developed by the World Organization for Resource Development and Education (WORDE), questioning the Department of Justice-funded evaluation carried out by Drs. Michael J. Williams, John G. Horgan, and William P. Evans and suggesting that its findings were flawed. They note that it is a study that is much referred to as an "evidence-based" and "empirically-driven" CVE prototype, used to justify CVE policies and programmes, despite the fact that the 'conducted evaluation does not indicate the model is effective in countering violent extremism' (Nguyen and Krueger, 2016).[156]

CVE involves far more than government policy makers. A whole industry, fuelled by large sums of money has built up around the concept, despite the fact that definitions and an evidence base remain elusive, despite some of the negative consequences associated with the concept, and despite the fact that those singled out in policy as best placed to have an effect have been rendered impotent by the systems that are in place. Githens-Mazer and Lambert (2010: 901) emphasise the effects that this has:

> [i]t is, in our opinion, telling that the insistence on a discourse reliant on an undefined "conventional wisdom" on radicalisation stems from both policy-making and the media. Both have much at stake – the one to make the general public feel more secure and therefore re-elect them, the other to sell newspapers and airtime. Together with academics who support the conventional wisdom, they create a feedback loop: politicians point to media and commentator support for their views, the media point to policy-makers and academics, and academics seek funding and 'impact' by towing the line of conventional wisdom.

The effects of this agenda were summed-up by a young Muslim woman speaking at a conference in early 2016.[157] She referred to 'accepting exclusion' during her schooling, explaining that when the people in charge are Islamophobic you do not have any other choice. When those in power encourage such a situation, it can only be reproduced, with no space, or very little space, within that system to step outside the hegemonic rules of society. Consensus, driven by the top down discourse of 'threats,' 'enemies,' and 'security,' and

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[156] The full text of the letter detailing the concerns is available at
https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/Nguyen%20Krueger%20WORDE%20final%20%284%29.pdf.
[157] The conference 'Understanding Anti-Muslim Racism in Ireland and Exploring Community Based Responses' took place in Dublin on 21 January 2016.

accepted by the majority of the population, gives way to 'polarisation, acceptance of the limitation of civil liberties and stigmatisation of radical ideas' (deGraaf and deGraaf, 2010: 267). This introduction of policies designed to "counter-radicalise" has 'been accompanied by the emergence of a government-funded industry of advisers, analysts, scholars, entrepreneurs and self-appointed community representatives who claim that their knowledge…enables them to propose interventions in *Muslim* communities to prevent extremism' (Kundnani, 2012: 3 – emphasis added). This has a knock on effect with regard to the creation of a "suspect community." That the practitioners in question are seeking to create their own space to operate within this government-funded and government led scene is significant. Much of what they are seeking to do is challenge the agenda set by those in power, but, given their lack of resources and means, they can only do this to a limited extent and remain, in many ways, subject to the whims of the larger, more powerful forces that are at play.

*The Creation of a **New** "Suspect Community"*

> *Terrorism, violent extremism and radicalisation have been liberally used as concepts in the post-9/11 environment. However, assumptions within the use of these concepts has led to a reductive focus on Muslims and Islam.*
> (Nasser-Eddine et al., 2011: 2)

> *So, a key aspect of our policy critique is that there is a clear need for the whole methodology [of preventing violent extremism] to be based on what frontline academics and practitioners – who have an evidence base of practice – are saying. This practice often goes back decades (a prime example is the Northern Ireland experience), and we don't seem to have learned any lessons from that in terms of how to deal with political insurgency.*
> (Karmani, quoted in Fitzgerald 2016)

That a "suspect community" has been created via government CVE policy and the effects of media and popular culture as outlined above is clear; the government fixation on the importance of CVE as a priority has far-reaching consequences, particularly for Muslim communities. This is discussed here firstly to highlight this issue, given the considerable impact it is having not only on billions of Muslims around the world, but also on the general public who are influenced by those narratives shaped by primary definers. Secondly, this discussion serves to highlight the fact that much of what is going on in the area of CVE is not new; here, the discussion of the notion of a "suspect community" serves as one example of this, drawing on the historical elements of this phenomenon.

CVE policy seeks to act on imagined future threats and intervene before these are even conceived of by the potential perpetrators. This, as Martin (2014: 5) observes, requires some form of action in the present. The action is justified by the emphasis placed on the idea of 'risk,' which is, Heath-Kelly (2011) suggests, that which makes terrorism knowable and governable, and ties in with longstanding arguments around the politics of fear and insecurity. The deployment and application of security measures 'evokes the threat to which they are considered a required response' (Nasser-Eddine et al., 2011: 59) and add to the public perception of risk. To legitimise action in the present, in this case intervening when a person may be a potential terrorist, there must be a perceived threat, or sense of danger that instils fear in the general public and allows for the action to take place. This raises many questions, which Kundnani (2014) summarises succinctly by asking 'But how do you identify tomorrow's terrorists today?'

Regardless of moves to recognise other forms of violent extremism within policy – a change which happened not least due to criticisms of the original policies (Powers, 2015) – CVE remains inextricably linked with Islamic extremism with the result that it is Muslims who are overwhelmingly singled out as potential terrorists. As part of the US' pilot CVE programmes in Boston, Los Angeles and Minneapolis, Muslim communities are the focus for outreach, a focus which, as noted by the Brennan Centre for Justice (2015), 'paints American Muslims as inherently suspect and alien from American society, feeding into the anti-Islam narrative that is becoming increasingly dominant in our public discourse.' Coppock and McGovern (2014) argue that the singling out of the Muslim community in the UK's CVE policy has led to young British Muslims in particular being rendered 'appropriate objects for state intervention.' Thomas (2016) argues that as a result of the Prevent Strategy, 'Muslim youth are viewed as both a risk to society and at risk of catching the terrorist disease.'

The policy preoccupation with Islamist extremism, the resulting focus on Muslims and this increase in anti-Muslim sentiment, has led critics to argue that they represent a new "suspect community" (Thomas, 2016; Awan, 2012; Nickels et al., 2012; Hickman et al., 2012; McGovern, 2010; Pantazis and Pemberton, 2009, 2011). The term "suspect community" was coined by Paddy Hillyard in his 1993 book *Suspect Community: People's Experience of the Prevention of Terrorism Acts [PTA] in Britain*. In this work he discusses the Irish as the main focus of the UK government's security agenda. For Hillyard (1993: 7), the concept 'suspect

community' described the process of identification of a threat that legitimated the politics of exception put in place by the state:

> a person who is drawn into the criminal justice system under the PTA is not a suspect in the normal sense of the word. In other words, they are not believed to be involved in or guilty of some illegal act […] people are suspect primarily because they are Irish and once they are in the police station they are often labelled an Irish suspect, presumably as part of some classification system. In practice, they are being held because they belong to a suspect community.

As far back as 2009 Pantarzis and Pemberton argued that 'the focus on "Islamic fanaticism" as a threat to Western liberal democracies' and the ensuing political discourse has designated Muslims as the new "enemy within"—justifying the introduction of counter-terrorist legislation and facilitating the construction of Muslims as a "suspect community," a situation that continues today.

By looking at the work of Hillyard it is clear that there is a historical context to what is happening. This is echoed in comments by the participants in this study: '…looking at what's happening in the Muslim community now in the British context, the way that community is now being demonised by the British media was the way the Irish people during the conflict were demonised by the British media. And people just need to be very careful' (Conal McFeely). While governments and policy makers emphasise the idea that we are facing a new and unprecedented threat, the reality for those working on the frontlines is somewhat different. As Karmani notes in the introduction to this section, lessons are not being learnt from, for example, the experience in Northern Ireland. Considering the idea that the practitioners are mining the personal to create a space for themselves within the CVE industry it is certainly worth noting that in the majority of cases the participants have been doing this since before terms such as CVE came to exist. Much of the work discussed here predates the terminology, something that the participants are at pains to emphasise. Those drawing on very personal experiences of violent extremism, whether as perpetrators or survivors thereof, have been doing so since before the advent of the CVE industry. Rather than a CVE industry, practitioners in Northern Ireland refer to the ill effects of the "security industry," with one practitioner suggesting that a certain amount of violence is promoted and accepted, with threats being exaggerated by 'agents of the state.' 'There's an industry called security here,' he explains, elaborating further by highlighting the number of jobs reliant on this industry and the profits made on the associated equipment. The grassroots practitioners

interviewed shared the same issues and concerns; what they are dealing with is not unique to those seeking to prevent violence inspired by groups such as ISIS, despite what government and media would lead one to believe.

Historical implications are also worth noting with regard to the rise of President Trump; given the controversy around the Trump presidency and his actions in supporting – or failing to admonish – the "alt-right," there is a sense that his actions are unprecedented. In some ways they are; however, it is certainly worth noting the experiences of those operating in Northern Ireland and interviewed as part of this study. Given the shared concerns and challenges across time, context and geographical location, it would be a mistake to place too much emphasis on the "Trump effect." The "moral panic" associated with Muslims, and the resulting creation of a "suspect community" are far from new phenomena.

The designation "suspect community" has far reaching effects; a "suspect community," according to Hickman et al. (2012: 93), is something that can be conceived of as going beyond policing and "official" suspicion. It can also include a 'full range of everyday encounters in which an individual might become aware of being "suspected."' While it may be that the suspicion is initiated by the authorities – and here it is clear that CVE policies have a role to play – the process of detecting "suspect" individuals and behaviours can gradually expand and be reproduced by a range of people and social groups, including the media, the general public and the members of the communities under suspicion (Hickman et al., 2012: 93). The well documented rise and mainstreaming of Islamophobia (Morgan and Poynting, 2016 [2012]; Kundnani, 2014) can certainly be seen as tied into this idea, with Kundnani (2014), for example, arguing that Islamophobia is 'a form of structural racism directed at Muslims…sustained through a symbiotic relationship with official thinking and practices of the war on terror.' This is certainly something that should be of significance to the wider public, who rely on government and media for their understandings around issues of violent extremism. This issue ties in closely with the theory developed in this work; the agenda is one that the practitioners in this study seek to challenge as it hinders their work considerably. The creation of a "suspect community" is but one example of the ensuing problems with which they have to deal as a result of this agenda.

CVE Policy and Practice: The Gap Widens

The UK is throwing a good chunk of money at CVE. Unfortunately, the Prevent *programme,*
I think, is kind of ass-backwards. It causes more problems than it solves.
(Arno Michaelis)

What is abundantly apparent from the discussions above, and indeed this research more generally, is the yawning chasm between CVE policy and practice, and the negative effects that policy is having on the day to day work of grassroots practitioners. This gap is further discernible when considering CVE policy, and the preoccupations therein. Based on policy readings, it was expected going into this study that certain issues would be of significance to grassroots CVE practitioners. Through following the grounded theory methodology it was very quickly clear that those operating at grassroots level had very different concerns than those working for government or industry in the area of CVE. When integrating the theory developed into the bigger CVE picture, that which did not emerge is in many ways as telling as what did emerge.

Issues picked up on here include the way in which different extremisms are fuelling one another. This marks a significant way in which participants in this study are seeking to move beyond CVE etiquettes and not be restricted by poor policy, but is largely absent from policy documents. The enthusiasm around counter-narratives as the panacea, and the need to focus singularly on the internet are also discussed in relation to the theory developed, underscoring the very different preoccupations of government compared to those of grassroots CVE practitioners. Finally, the issue of gender is addressed, something that is at least being discussed more prominently within the area of CVE generally, but not necessarily being reflected in day to day practice.

Violent extremists fuelling violent extremists

I've covered Katrina, Bush and gun deaths. I've seen [America] divided. I've seen its racism.
But I've never seen it this bad.
(Younge, 2017)

If the summer of 2016 was the 'summer of hate,' the summer of 2017 was the 'summer of discontent' for the 'newly emboldened' far right (Younge, 2016). This may have culminated in the events at Charlottesville in August 2017, but the seeds were sown long before. Far Right terrorism cannot be limited to a single historical period; it is an ongoing movement that

often comes to the fore in reaction to other movements. Neumann (2016: 28-29) notes that this is one reason it is often absent from theories of terrorism; it does not fit neatly into a single wave, nor is it a single political movement. Following the election of Trump, the power and significance of the "alt right" should not be underestimated. The clean cut Richard Spencer, considered the leader of the movement, claims:

> [p]eople are now aware of the term alt right. They're now aware of my name, to a degree; I don't want to sound like a narcissist. They're aware that there's a whole other version of the right out there that is based on identity, that's based on race and nation. The average person in the United States wasn't aware that there's some other vision for the right. Now millions upon millions of people are aware of it. And it has a name. (Richard Spencer, interviewed by Younge, 2017).

There is not only an increased awareness of the alt right movement, in the US this has been accompanied by a growing acceptance of the movement. The election of Trump as US President has heartened the "alt right," and, given their ties with advisors in the government, it is certainly important to note that these people 'have the ear of the most powerful man in the world' (Younge, 2017).

The idea that there is a disproportionate emphasis on jihadist violent extremism within CVE policy documents is clear; it became clear very early on in this study that this was a problem for those being interviewed. In highlighting the disproportionate focus on Muslim communities throughout this work, this study seeks to, albeit at a very low level, have some effect on righting this. This became important not only based on the concerns of the participants, but also from a personal perspective and an ethical one. The importance of taking an ethical approach throughout a research journey, as opposed to a box ticking exercise at the outset, has been highlighted. To focus solely on one variety of violent extremism to the exclusion of others was not in keeping with the data and the emergent concepts. It also risks perpetuating stereotypes and further contributing to the idea of a "suspect community." There is a responsibility as a researcher not to simply buy in to the dominant agenda and further it, something that ties in with the concerns of the participants of this study.

These views and the fallout therefrom fail to take into account the way in which different varieties of extremism are fuelling each other. Such singular focus neglects the role that varieties of violent extremism play in fuelling one another, an issue that subsequently fuels

the practitioners of this study to seek to move beyond CVE etiquettes: they do not wish to be constrained by policy that restricts the objects of their work to a particular grouping. The actions and claims of one violent extremist organisation serve to legitimise those of another. Neumann (2016: 185) acknowledges the issue, albeit from a strategic position, writing that the narrow focus on Muslims within notions of prevention

> overlooks the danger posed to European societies by the prospect that jihadists and Far Right radicals will drive each other to further extremes. Jihadist terrorism is bad, but the political polarisation that could result from a confrontation between extremist Muslims and extremists on the Far Right would be an even more serious strategic threat.

It is not, as is clear from the theory developed in this study, only one variety of extremism fuelling another; government policy and media play a big role here too. The frustration that the participants of this study experience is in no small part down to what they say is a problem intrinsic to the misplaced focus of CVE policy on Muslim communities (Christian Picciolini):

> I would say the biggest challenge, up until now, is the fact that most policy makers, most government, haven't brought the far right problem into the discussion. It's been almost 100% dominated by radical Islam. Which I understand, I mean it's, you know, it's a way to rally Americans around a foreign threat.

The counter-narrative turn

> *A counter-narrative by definition fails because it calls itself a bloody counter-narrative already.*
> (Interview, Creator of Abdullah-X)

There is a focus on ideology and the idea that extremist "narratives" represent a 'material social practice by means of which ideological meaning formations are produced, maintained, and reproduced' (Mumby, 1987: 118). This turn to "counter-narrative" in CVE policy and scholarship as the *en vogue* response to extremist narratives assumes that 'there is a causal relationship between narratives and acts of violence and that governments can reasonably expect to reduce the potential for violence by advancing counter-narratives with this aim in mind' (Kundnani, 2012: 8). Given the focus on countering violent extremist narratives within CVE policy and literature, it is striking that it is not something that came up further within the interview data. Perhaps of particular note, and, as detailed above, is the issue around the narratives espoused by governments and media; this is a far more significant preoccupation for the grassroots CVE practitioners interviewed, and certainly seems to be having a larger

impact on their day to day work than the messaging of violent extremist organisations. That is not to suggest that these are unproblematic, or are having no effect. Rather, hindering practitioners' ability to deal effectively with these narratives is the messaging of government and media. This again highlights the gap between those developing policy in this area and those who are working on the ground, at community level, dealing with the issues, whatever these may be.

That counter-narratives are problematic is also backed up by the available literature. Such a focus suggests that ideology has a key role to play in the "radicalisation" process, and, indeed, that there is an identifiable "radicalisation" process. This is a notion that has been problematised considerably within research, with the acceptance that this is simply not the case. This is recognised even in some policy documents: 'There is no single model of radicalisation: the process is unique for each individual' (Home Office, 2015: 21). However, the directly following lines in the very same document proceed to summarise the elements that are present in the "radicalisation" process, the first being introduction to 'an extremist ideology.' This focus on ideology does not take into account the various reasons that people have for joining violent extremist organisations, not all of which involve ideology: 'there are many paths to radicalisation that do not involve ideology. Some join a radical group for thrills and status, some for love, some for connection and comradeship. Personal and group grievances can move individuals towards violence, with ideology serving only to rationalise the violence' (McCauley and Moskalenko, 2011, quoted in Schmid, 2013: 28). Taking this into account, then, why the emphasis on "counter-narratives" as a way to counter extremist ideology and messaging? There is little or no evidence to suggest that such an approach has any effect, having been subject to little research. As with attempts to evaluate CVE more generally, attempts to establish the effectiveness of this communicative approach are difficult to establish since, 'like other preventative efforts, if successful, the result is a non-event' (Schmid, 2014: 12). As with other concepts referred to throughout this work, definitions remain unconvincing: 'This term [counter-narrative] has come to be a catch all term for a wide range of activities with different aims and tactics, everything from public diplomacy and strategic communication by government to targeted campaigns to discredit the ideologies and actions of violent extremism' (Briggs & Feve, 2013: 2).

Discussing violent extremist narratives, Briggs and Feve (2013: 9) note that by mixing 'historical and political facts with half-truths, lies and conspiracy theories, these messages

often convey simplistic argumentation which promotes thought processes that include black-and-white thinking, de-sensitisation, dehumanisation, distancing of the other, victimisation and calls to activism and militancy' (Briggs & Feve, 2013: 9). However, given the issues faced by grassroots CVE practitioners, it can be argued that government and mass media are doing something similar. Marcuse, writing in 1971, explains that '[l]anguage not only defines and damns the enemy, it also produces him; and this product does not represent the enemy as he really is, but rather how he must be in order to fulfil his function for the establishment.' While violent extremist organisations may shape narratives to legitimise the use of violence as part of a virtuous struggle against an evil enemy, official narratives do the same. As detailed above, the "suspect community" *du jour* is made up of Muslims, coming about via simplistic renderings of complex world events. Nietzsche (1968 [1889]: 191) describes the power that ideas play in such simplifications: '[t]he word and the concept are the most obvious reason why we believe in this isolation of groups of actions: we do not merely *designate* things by them, we originally believe that through them we grasp what is *true* in things. Through words and concepts we are now continually tempted to think of things as being simpler than they are.' That the primary definers have the power to set the agenda and shape understandings around violent extremism has been emphasised above. That policy and practice differ so dramatically on which narratives they are countering again underscores the considerable gap between what is considered a priority at policy level compared to what is being dealt with by practitioners on the ground. This is echoed in the policy fixation with the internet and social media as tools of "radicalisation."

Online versus offline CVE

We're losing a lot of people because of the Internet…We have to see Bill Gates and a lot of different people that really understand what's happening. We have to talk to them about, maybe in certain areas, closing that Internet up in some way.
(Donald Trump, December 2015)[158]

In the wake of terrorist attacks such as that in New York in October 2017, when a 29 year old man drove a rented truck into pedestrians and cyclists along the Hudson River, much attention was focused on the internet and the role of social media in the "radicalisation" process. That the perpetrator had a wealth of ISIS videos on his phone received much coverage; he was portrayed as being part of a "digital caliphate." Following grounded theory procedures, it emerged that online and offline worlds are not separated by grassroots

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[158] At a campaign rally aboard the USS Yorktown in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina.

practitioners in the same way that they are at policy level, suggesting that these practitioners have a more in depth understanding of the online world than those in government. Highlighting the gap between those working at policy level and young "digital natives," Alyas Karmani (quoted in Fitzgerald, 2016) states:

> [w]e've got to be more active in the online space. But, I don't think that the policy-makers understand what Generation Y is, how Generation Y operates, and the mind-set of Generation Y: I don't think they grasp it in any way whatsoever.

While some practitioners referred to the importance of social media and in some cases, were either concerned by what young people were viewing or were using it as a significant tool in their work, it was never the only approach adopted. Rather, this was viewed as simply one aspect of the wider work undertaken, or one tool at their disposal to facilitate their aims. Their overall work extends far beyond online messaging and, as above, is not focused predominantly on countering violent extremist online narratives.

The emphasis on countering violent extremist narratives, particularly online narratives, suffers from the same narrow focus as other elements of CVE policy. While the messages of jihadists have received much attention in policy and in scholarship, there is little mention of far-right narratives or counter-narrative strategies that might undermine them in some way. The *Prevent* Strategy (Home Office, 2011) notes that people can be drawn to right-wing terrorist ideology through the rhetoric and language of apparently non-violent right-wing extremist groups in just the same way as those influenced by jihadists, but perceive the threat to be far less significant, and to a large extent the policy neglects far-right extremism as an issue, despite evidence to the contrary. The focus on 'counter-narrative,' particularly the emphasis placed on online counter-narratives, as part of CVE intervention comes as a direct response to the sophisticated use of the internet by Islamists who, notes Stevens (2010: 114), 'are tapping into new media technologies as a very effective vehicle for their anti-Western narratives,' making particular use of videos which are 'circulated and widely distributed by…activists and sympathisers through forums, chatrooms and email, and onto high-profile sites like YouTube.' The widespread coverage that the slick online material, in particular that produced by ISIS, has been receiving has helped to fuel concern regarding the effects of these materials. However, it is important to consider other violent extremist organisations that are also making use of, and recognising the potential that the internet and social media offers. Conway (2016; 2012) and Bowman-Grieve and Conway (2012) outline the ways in which

Irish Republican groups and Extreme Right groups are also making use of the internet. Conway (2016) suggests that '[a]cademics, media, policymakers, and others have a tendency to lose perspective when it comes to violent jihadi online activity, particularly that of IS.' Indeed, Conway suggests (2016: 6) that in order to progress research in the area of the internet and its role in violent extremism, the scope should be widened 'beyond the present narrow focus on violent jihadi online content and interactions...academic research needs to extend to inquire into the whole range of contemporary violent extremists and terrorists and their online activities.' This is echoed in the data collected for this study, with those countering different varieties of violent extremism expressing concern regarding the use of social media.

When it comes to the internet, Conway (2016) notes that there has been no proven connection between 'consumption of and networking around violent extremist online content and adoption of extremist ideology and/or engagement in violent extremism and terrorism,' with scholars remaining divided regarding the issue. As emphasised by von Behr et al. (2013) the internet is not a substitute for in person meetings and the internet does not speed up radicalisation or lead to 'self-radicalisation.' In a recent in-depth study of the online behaviours of convicted UK terrorists, Gill et al. (2015: 9) find that radicalisation 'is not a dichotomy of either offline or online, but rather a dichotomy of interaction with others versus no interaction with others.' Following this it can be argued that separating the online and offline worlds, which CVE policymakers tend to do, is problematic.[159] While an earlier incarnation of this study was focused on those CVE practitioners creating online content, the reality for "digital natives" is that they naturally cross the border between real life and digital space (Mänyymäki and Riemer, 2014) in a way that those who have not grown up with the online world do not. This is something that is reflected in the data collected for this study; the online messaging by violent extremist organisations that receives so much attention is simply part of something bigger for the practitioners in question. It is not a standalone phenomenon.

This is not to suggest that an online focus within CVE is not part of the work that these grassroots practitioners carry out, some of those interviewed devote most of their time and efforts to online CVE, but rather the conception of this as something separate to other

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[159] For example, I attended a meeting 'Preparatory Discussions of the EU IT Forum – Countering Violent Extremism: Online Communications' in Brussels in October 2015. The meeting was organised by the European Commission and is one example of this separation of the on- and offline worlds.

elements of policy is problematic. Here it is certainly worth considering research regarding the online environment in other fields. For example, an LSE study into the relationship between online and offline risks has found that the strongest predictor of both online bullying and seeing sexual images online is the equivalent experience offline (Laurinavičius et al., 2012 quoted in Haddon and Livingstone, 2014) with the offline risk a much larger influence than socio-demographic and psychological factors. The same study finds that there is a complex relationship between online and offline bullying with the domains of offline and online not marking separate spheres but, rather, experiences of bullying intersecting both. Looking at such reports ties in with the assertion that there is a need to look to other realms when studying online violent extremism (Conway, 2016). The issues discussed here, coupled with the constant availability of online material, which is no longer restricted to bulky desktops – a near constant stream of information and images is enabled by mobile technology such as smartphones and tablets (Shiel, 2013: 77) – suggest that the online and offline worlds should not be treated separately with regard to CVE and CVE initiatives, something already recognised by grassroots CVE practitioners. This again offers further evidence that the world of CVE policy and that of practice are far from working in harmony with one another, with the preoccupations of one not that of the other.

On gender

> *His means his or her (or all people) throughout this book. This convenience of style does not imply that only men are sociological analysts, which is trite and obvious to all but a few readers.*
> (Glaser, 1978: 2)

This issue of gender is a particularly interesting one given both the approach of grounded theory towards issues of gender and also the increased focus within the wider CVE sphere on gender. Throughout this work I have chosen to add the pronouns she and her where Glaser, in his works, has chosen not to. While in the earlier grounded theory guides, being a product of their time, this may be somewhat understandable, much time has passed in which this could have been changed. Gender and power, with which gender is inextricably linked, are not considered relevant from a grounded theory perspective from the outset – as with anything else it must earn its way into the work developed. However, by refusing to acknowledge female researchers within his writings, Glaser is suggesting that language is unimportant and that representation does not matter.

The approach to gender issues within grounded theory has received criticism from feminist researchers for the way in which gender is approached as a 'face sheet variable,' as outlined by Glaser in a presentation on grounded theory and gender relevance.[160] Here he explains the difference between the researcher focused wholly on description, where 'face sheet data' such as gender or context appear as descriptively relevant, and research that is concept oriented, such as grounded theory, where gender must emerge as conceptually relevant to earn its way into the theory developed. From a grounded theory point of view, explains Glaser (2002: 786),

> [i]t is an empirical research matter whether it [gender] emerges as an issue.
> Before the research whether gender is neutral or not is not to be assumed.
> In order to study women using GT the researcher does not have to focus
> on them exclusively. If relevant gender will emerge.

This can be explained further by considering the notion of conceptualisation; categories from grounded theory studies are general to age, sex, gender, ethnicity, religion and so forth, but 'can be applied to any problem within these face sheet data' (Glaser, 2002: 790).

It is important to remember that grounded theory offers a flexible set of procedures that, while offering rigour also offer the opportunity to follow the path most suited to the research journey. Here, for example, I have presented the story of this particular research journey and have documented the issues I encountered along the way. The memo writing that is so central to the grounded theory process allowed for considerable reflection around issues associated with ethics and the interview process, for example, and the way in which I had to 'prove myself' to some of the participants. Such an account, in considering some of the 'micropolitics of the research process,' (Olesen, 2007: 421) could be considered bordering on feminist research. The choice to document the research this way, and include the voice of the participants in so far as was possible while still retaining grounded theory's focus on conceptualisation, was not taken at the outset of this study, but came together as the theory emerged. I felt this was the most appropriate way to document *this particular study.* That such an approach emerged as the theory did is not altogether surprising given the early decision to focus on individuals working at grassroots level. With concepts such as *resisting the CVE gaze, remaining independent* and *going beyond the (CVE) etiquettes* issues of power and gender are certainly significant.

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[160] The presentation, given at the Twelfth International Congress on Women's Health Issues, was subsequently published as 'Grounded Theory and Gender Relevance' (2002) in *Health Care for Women International,* **23***:786–79.

The core and sub core categories of this study, *mining the personal* and *carving a space of one's own* both have clear connotations with issues around power and gender, with a strong feminist bent within them. The realm of the private, the personal, has typically been associated with women within the wider sphere of international relations. Reminiscent of Elshtain's classic division of public man/private woman (1993 [1981]), the idea of drawing on something personal, *mining the personal*, can certainly be viewed as having feminist connotations, as does the use of the private and personal to have an effect in the public arena, which parallels the feminist slogan 'the personal is political.' This is echoed throughout CVE, where women are generally seen as having a unique position, that is they 'present an entry point to the private sphere of the home, through their role as mothers, wives, and sisters, enabling PVE/CVE programming to reach individuals and groups that are often difficult to access and influence them away from extremism' (Giscard d'Estaing, 2017: 106). The theory developed explains the interesting dilemma facing participants in this study and the interactions between the personal and the public; they draw on their personal experiences bringing them to the wider public while trying to remain free from undue influence from government via funding or policy direction. In this sense, in *resisting the CVE gaze,* they are also struggling with issues around power and control; there are obvious associations to be made with the concept *resisting the male gaze* (Mulvey, 1975). Relating to a lack of control, a lack of power, being the thing that is acted upon, the male gaze offers a certain perspective. Taking the example of cinema, the male gaze was typically associated with the idea that female audience members are required to see things from the male character perspective. While this theory has since evolved, I cite it here to highlight the manner in which understandings of CVE and the associated issues and concerns are generated by others; the perspectives of these grassroots actors are not widely represented when it comes to understandings of the issues in question. In many ways, they are the thing that is acted upon, the people whose work is directly affected, by those setting the agenda.

More men than women were interviewed for this study. While I was in touch with a number of women, practical issues – generally timing – prevented me from interviewing them officially for this study. Given that grounded theory is focused on theoretical concepts there is no requirement to have a gender balanced participant group. Theoretical sampling dictates where to go to look for further data. Gender issues are gaining much prominence within CVE literature, despite having been given little consideration up to this point. Conway (2016) includes 'paying more attention to gender as a factor in violent online extremism' as

important in progressing research in this area. Similarly such a focus is required when considering how to counter violent extremism, whether online or otherwise. Nacos (2016) notes the lack of a gender focus/component at the 2015 White House Summit on Combating Violent Extremism:

> [n]ot surprisingly, neither the president nor representatives of American Muslim communities addressed the question why some of the young women and men in the Western Muslim diaspora are more susceptible to jihadist propaganda than are others. Nor was there a discussion of possible gender differences in this respect.

The move to increase the focus on women has come about in light of increasing reports of young women having been "radicalised" to travel to Syria and other regions and become involved with ISIS and similar organisations. These "jihadi-brides" receive much media interest, and there is a striking difference in the way this is reported upon compared to the stories of men who travel. This issue was referred to during interviews, with many participants quick to point out – when asked – that women are involved in violent extremist organisations as well as men. Satnam Singh notes that the majority of 'Syria related' cases referred to their services in 2015-2017 were females, particularly females returning from Syria. Many of these women were pregnant, returning home to give birth. Many expressed a desire to return after having their child. That women have been involved in such organisations has been documented within the substantive literature: in a study of Al-Qaeda, Bloom (2013) highlights the importance of women as supporters, propagandists and recruiters, with women playing a vital part in spreading the organisations' message and raising funds. While there is a long history of women as leaders and followers in terrorist movements and groups, 'even in organisations that claimed to be shining examples of gender equality, females often followed their lovers or husbands into the terrorist underground' (Nacos, 2016). These are male dominated organisations where, regardless of what female members might be seen to be doing, this image is very much controlled by male leadership. Bloom (2013) notes that despite their involvement, women are, in fact, "reifying gender norms" and remaining within traditional female gendered roles.

This seems to be repeated in the growing literature focusing on the role of women in CVE. While acknowledging that women are potential perpetrators of violent extremism, the relevant literature focuses on women as purveyors of CVE. The emphasis is firmly on the

influence women have as mothers and within the home (UN Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee):

> [t]here is a growing awareness of the significant role played by women in countering and assisting in terrorism and violent extremism. Because women are often highly influential in families, communities, and Governments, their proactive participation in counter-terrorism efforts can effect positive change.

Despite these documents stating otherwise, and reminding us that it is important 'not to essentialise women and assume that there natural disposition will be towards peace simply because they are mothers,' they continually point to the fact that 'the traditional roles ascribed to women in many societies as wives and mothers often uniquely position them to act as powerful agents of prevention' (Permanent Mission of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations and the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, 2014). This mirrors much of the talk around gender in the interviews conducted as part of this study. Despite the increasing focus in the literature, the role of women within CVE, or CVE for women did not come up unless I asked about it. Once asked, many participants were emphatic about the importance of a focus on women, both as purveyors of CVE and as objects of CVE interventions. Some referred to projects bringing mothers together to discuss issues, suggesting they were best placed within families to deal with such issues. Others spoke of having get-togethers and meetings specifically for young females in youth groups and so forth. Beyond this, there was little explanation about how this worked, what the differences were, and how this impacted their daily work. This again is potentially interesting when considering where next to go with research in this area; how is the focus on gender issues playing out at grassroots level and within communities? Again, the gap between CVE policy and CVE commentators and those working on the frontlines is worth highlighting. In the same way that women joining terrorist organisations are expected to fulfil traditional gendered roles, so too are those women who are becoming involved in CVE. It is also important to acknowledge the way in which the fallout from CVE – the creation of a suspect community in particular – is affecting women disproportionally. A project by the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) that covers eight 8 countries (i.e. Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Sweden and United Kingdom), chosen to get a representative picture of the situation of Muslim women in the European Union, seeks to 'document the disproportionate effect of Islamophobia on Muslim women' with Muslim women, according to the report, the main targets of Islamphobic violence (ENAR, 2016). The

government responses to acts of violent extremism, from banning veils, headscarves, and hijabs, to burkinis at the beach are all about policing what women, in this case Muslim women, wear and reducing their visibility. This is another way in which gender issues are significant when it comes to broader CVE issues.

Of course it is important to note here that considering gender, and following feminist approaches is not all about ensuring a focus on women. Issues of masculinity and hyper-masculinity did come up throughout the data, including the effects of this on women: 'certain narratives, particularly what's going on in Syria and Iraq, they do play on masculine narratives around jihad and struggle, armed struggle, and as such one thing's also been proved around, narratives around masculinity with the ISIS issue is its impact on females' (Creator of *Abdullah-X*). While this did not pattern out enough to be a main concern, or a central part of the theory developed, it does, again, suggest that gender issues are worth pursuing in future research. As Nacos (2016) notes regarding CVE and why some young people are influenced by the messages of violent extremist organisations: '[s]ince there are no sure explanations, we need research that utilizes all kinds of research areas, including those focusing on propaganda, fandom, para-social interaction, gangs, soccer hooligan groups, and gender studies.'

Here, Nacos opens up avenues for future research within the area of CVE, with the research thus far in this realm inadequate and lacking in an empirical base. This research, in highlighting the gap between policy and practice, contributes greatly to these suggestions for options for CVE research in the future. Having taken a grounded theory approach, the focus is on those who are often overlooked in studies of policy areas; this study offers considerable insights into not only the effect that CVE policy is having on the practitioners in question, but also shows how the elements deemed so important to policymakers are not necessarily those playing out as priorities on the ground. This study offers insights into what is happening on the frontlines of CVE practice. In detailing the main concerns of those working in the area much can be gleaned about the field as a whole, or at least how it is perceived by those working in the area. The study in general offers something by focusing on non-governmental actors: Dolnik (2013: 3) observes that much of the research within the field of terrorism studies relies on a government angle which brings its own biases, with research skewed by the comparatively easier access to government data and the one-sided nature of research funding. So simply gaining insight on their issues and challenges, and indeed who they are

and what they do, via this grounded theory study, into the way in which non-government aligned actors are operating within this area is significant. Furthermore, this research goes some small way towards redressing this balance. The fact that the main concern of the participants is so tied to issues around this government perspective underscores the problem with this government-centric approach to research.

Mining the Personal to Carve a Space of One's Own: Judging the Theory

Does the theory work to explain relevant behaviour in the substantive area of the research? Does it have relevance to the people in the substantive field? Does the theory fit the substantive area? Is it readily modifiable as new data emerge?
(Glaser, 1998: 17)

Glaser emphasises *fit*, *workability*, *relevance* and *modifiability* as the criteria for judging grounded theory, all the while underlining the fact that ultimately grounded theories speak for themselves. Given grounded theory has its own set of requirements for evaluating the work produced, these are considered in evaluating the theory developed in this study. When examining a grounded theory in this manner, the process itself is important to bear in mind; rigour has been built into this research through adherence to the inbuilt procedures such as constant comparison and memoing. This continuous checking – comparing incidents to new data, to the literature, to experiential data – and using theoretical sampling and deduction to test whether concepts and ideas are patterning out, is a central component of the methodology. This ensures an inherent trustworthiness, with memos offering a path through the analysis and work that has taken place to arrive at the emergent theory.

That the theory is grounded in data and relates tightly to the data collected, coupled with this close adherence to the grounded theory process offers *product proof* when considering the theory developed. This helps to fulfil the criterion of *fit* in Glaser's schema; the concepts adequately express the pattern in the data. Fit is another word for validity; the theory should fit the data. This is a criterion that 'is automatically met' since categories of grounded theory are generated directly from the data (Glaser, 1978:4). In detailing the focus on emergence and discovery throughout this work, I have indicated that the motivation throughout this research journey was on following the data, being led by issues of concern to the participants and remaining open minded when approaching this, thereby producing a theory where fit is certainly accounted for when determining the worth of the work produced.

Before taking a more in depth look at Glaser's further criteria for judging a grounded theory and how they relate to the work in question, it is important to note that a grounded theory offers one way of looking at the issue in question; there is no suggestion that this is the only way of looking at a given issue. Glaser (1998: 16) writes, '[a]fterall grounded theory is merely appropriate to a research task, not the only methodology.' In this instance, using grounded theory to look at the micro-level issues experienced by grassroots CVE practitioners offers not only significant insights into the way in which they approach their work, but also into the wider implications of CVE policy. This ties in with issues around *workability;* this theory *works* to explain the behaviour taking place in the substantive area of research. Here, the way in which the participants deal with the frustration they experience, which comes from a variety of powerful sources, is accounted for. By *mining the personal* they draw on their own experiences to *carve a space for themselves* as individuals within the system that contributes to their main concern. A theory is not a finished end product; it is part of an ongoing process under constant development. All knowledge is provisional, and theory can always be replaced by better theory. However, the work here certainly adequately 'explain[s] relevant behaviour in the substantive area, predict[s] what will happen and interpret[s] what is happening in the area of enquiry' (Glaser, 1978: 4).

Regarding *relevance,* a central premise of grounded theory: this research is clearly of import to those in the substantive area. Having remained open to the concerns of the participants and adhering to grounded theory procedures, this work deals with issues of significance to those in the substantive field. It provides concepts that offer insight and understanding to the participants regarding that which they may already know on another level. Glaser (1978, 12 – emphasis in original) suggests, '[t]o act as if a sociologist knows more, is an affront to the knowledgeable person. But he [she] can contribute a great deal by providing the man [woman] in the know with substantive theory.' These participants know what it is they do in terms of description; they are already the descriptive experts. As a grounded theorist, I have worked with the data provided to conceptualise and theorise about what it is they are doing. This research offers a different way of looking at what they are facing and how they are dealing with it. It is a form of 'conceptual empowerment' (Glaser, 1998: 17). By eschewing preconceived frameworks and allowing for the emergence of concepts relating to the issues of the participants in this study, I have developed a theory that explains the latent patterns of behaviour taking place. This is not only significant for the practitioners in question, but also offers a different level of understanding for those operating in the wider CVE world and to

the general public, for whom issues around violent extremism remain of significant concern given the vast amounts of media coverage they attract.

The final criterion in the grounded theory assessment framework is *modifiability*, which concerns the effect that new data has on the existing theory. Grounded theory is about theory generation rather than verification; the work here offers a clear and sound explanation and understanding regarding the way in which the group of individuals studied resolve their main concern. That is not to say that this is a final point and that what is written here marks some kind of finality in the study of grassroots CVE practitioners, rather new data, offering a further analytical challenge, may be introduced and compared to the present theory causing it to be modified (Glaser, 1998: 18-19). Part of the significance of this research is also that it offers a range of possibilities to consider for future research in this area. Before these are discussed in the concluding section of this thesis, the issues around the limitations of this particular study and those of grounded theory studies in general are considered.

Limitations

The theory developed within this work, and the associated categories and concepts, capture one aspect of the work of those grassroots CVE practitioners interviewed for this study. No claim has been made that this is representative of something wider; the theory does, however, offer interesting avenues for future research, discussed in the concluding chapter. Within this research the development of the theory was taken as far as possible with the available resources, the available participants and the available time. The decision on when theoretical saturation has been achieved is a matter of personal judgement. There is nothing to confirm that additional data collection would not throw up something new or different that goes beyond variations in the theory as presented. It is also important to note that this theory remains at the descriptive level.

Some of the practical limitations include context and geography. One of the chief limitations when undertaking research in the area of CVE is a challenge also faced by practitioners. Satnam Singh outlines the difficulties in keeping up to date with what is going on and the evolution of different violent extremist organisations and their tactics. Given the amount of time that is invested in research, findings can soon become out of date, even a short time after they are discovered. In this way, adopting a grounded theory approach offers a focus on conceptualisation rather than description. As such, concepts are independent of time and

place, something that is potentially of significance in future studies in this area. While an effort was made to test the theory developed across those seeking to counter different varieties of violent extremism in different locations, the theory was also tested across time by interviewing those working in the context of Northern Ireland. Of course, by focusing on the USA, the UK, Northern Ireland and the EU context, while not entirely the same, are not entirely dissimilar. How this theory would work regarding those operating in other regions of the world is thus up for question.

In seeking to speak with grassroots CVE practitioners, those I was in touch with and ultimately interviewed are people who are known, or becoming known for their work. While in one or two instances I was put in touch with people that I would not have come across via my own inquiry, it must be noted that there are likely many people working in a very low key way in this area, or carrying out work that might fit under the heading "CVE" while not referring to it using this terminology. Those I did interview are trying to have an effect on the area of CVE or certainly feel that they wish to challenge, to the degree possible, the primary definers in the area. As such, there was a great deal of discussion during interviews on proving what they know and emphasising what should be done. This is, in itself, a type of data and has been incorporated into the theory developed. However, it is worth noting that the participants are reporting on what they do, I have not observed what they do. As such, it is of course possible that there is a gap between what has been reported to me and what is actually being done on a frequent basis. These practitioners are, as with anyone else trying to establish themselves as an authoritative voice within a specialty, choosing how they present themselves not only to me, but to the world more generally. As noted, many of these practitioners have a reasonably active social media presence. That we all choose to present ourselves a certain way, highlight a certain version of ourselves in the online world is well documented (Brems et al., 2017 and Deckers and Lacy, 2017, for example). As with anyone using social media for their work, this is a type of marketing.

In addition to perhaps working quietly and receiving, or wishing to receive, attention for their work, the question 'what is CVE?' is worth considering here. As a concept, 'CVE' remains unclear; this study offers little by way of clarification. As such, those interviewed here are those who acknowledge their work to be CVE work, or those who refuse to use the term but acknowledge that their work fits with this study. That understandings and definitions are so

contested is an issue that is difficult to get around when researching in this area. There is also the shifting political climate and the effects that this has on understandings of CVE.

Having discussed gender above, it is also worth noting that the majority of those interviewed were male. While I was in touch with a number of women, for various practical reasons these interviews did not take place. As noted, gender is not an issue in grounded theory studies unless it emerges as one. However, it would be interesting to extend the participant base and determine if there are any differences that pattern out in the data, based on gender and offer an insight into the work carried out from the perspective of those women working in the area and avoid the issue of instrumentalisation (Giscard d'Estaing, 2017). This is not the only way to incorporate a gender dimension into work in this area; building on the ideas around hypermasculinity that emerged in this study is also important, as noted by Ezekilov (2017).

CONCLUSION

> *In a substantive grounded theory the integrated set of hypotheses account for much of the behaviour seen in a substantive area.*
> (Glaser, 1998: 3)

In focussing on grassroots practitioners, this research details the way in which they are seeking to bypass the frustrations they experience as a result of poor policy and media depictions of issues that affect their work. These are individuals who, for personal reasons, feel compelled to act. This personal aspect feeds into all that they do, and determines the manner in which they approach their work. Throughout this work they *mine the personal,* drawing on their skills and experience to *establish their credibility and authority* in a field that is populated, indeed colonised, by an increasing number of powerful and well-resourced actors. By *mining the personal* these practitioners are *carving a space of one's own;* they are seeking to create the conditions whereby they can work on their own terms and bypass those elements of CVE policy and practice that they find so troublesome.

While this work is not concerned with specific policy recommendations, it certainly has implications for policy makers. That there is a gap between CVE policy and CVE practice is clear. In fact, many of the participants feel hindered in their work due to the negative effects of policy. The practitioner insights here are something that should be considered by those working within CVE more broadly. The concepts discussed are also of significance for practitioners themselves, as they seek to further their work in this area, and identify ways to do this. There are also implications for the wider public in considering the way in which understandings and dominant narratives around issues of violent extremism are created.

Through this focus on grassroots CVE practitioners, this study offers insights into what is happening on the frontlines of CVE practice. In detailing the main concerns of those working in the area much has been gleaned about the field as a whole. Their perception of CVE policy colours the work they do and the way in which they approach this work. By placing the focus on non-governmental actors and their concerns, this study has highlighted the problems CVE policy brings for those working on the frontlines. The use of grounded theory, a methodology that is not widely used in the fields of terrorism studies or international relations more generally, particularly facilitated this.[161] This study, by being methodologically innovative,

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[161] While some studies may claim to have used grounded theory, it is soon clear that they have not, in fact, adhered to the principles of grounded theory to develop a theory that accounts for behaviour in the substantive area. See Ahmad, Yunos and Sahib, 2012, for example.

offers a new perspective regarding what is happening in the area of CVE. The fact that the main concern of the participants is so tied to issues around government perspectives underscores the problem with typically government-centric approaches to research. It is impossible to ignore the perception that the participants in this study have towards policy and media, and those seeking to "do CVE" but who have, in the views of these practitioners, questionable amounts of credibility. Regardless as to whether they label their work CVE or not, whether they were doing this work prior to the fetishisation of the term CVE or not, or whether they receive sufficient funding or not, these participants are facing the same challenges around government actions, with CVE policy directions having the same ill effects on their work.

While this research accounts for the behaviour of grassroots CVE practitioners, it offers little by way of clarifying the question 'what is CVE?' Despite having examined policy documents and interviewed frontline practitioners, it is fair to say that I cannot account for what constitutes CVE, or in fact, if a concrete definition or explication can exist. Those interviewed for this research are engaged in such a variety of types of work with different people at the receiving end of their CVE "products." Ultimately, CVE remains an area where an empirical research base is lacking. Not only is there no clear understanding regarding its effectiveness, there is no clear understanding of what exactly it is. As with counter-terrorism more broadly, it is an area in which evidence of "what works" is 'in short supply' (Legrande, 2017: 217). For me, this suggests that CVE is simply a label, something un-concrete, an "empty signifier," even. For Laclau and Mouffe (2014/1985) an empty signifier has a meaning that is temporarily fixed, repeatedly contested and reformulated in a political setting determined by power struggles. This can certainly be argued in the case of CVE policy.

That is not to suggest that the work these practitioners carry out is invalid, or non-existent; their work would exist regardless and would simply fall under another term, for example, these practitioners are involved in social work, intercultural education, human rights education, peacebuilding, arts education, media literacy, the list could go on. As Mohamud Noor notes, if he were working with a different constituency his work would not be CVE, it would simply be considered regular youth work. There were certainly a number of occasions where I could see similarities and parallels with my own previous experiences of working

within the education sector, most notably with regard to arts education, human rights education and development education. John Horgan (2016) notes:

> radicalisation remains, and rightly so, a deeply contested concept. That will not change anytime soon, but those who care about the extraordinary social and psychological toll associated with terrorism cannot sit idly by while academics and politicians pontificate on whether we are using appropriate definitions, language and terminology.

These issues make it difficult to offer CVE policy recommendations as part of this research. It is difficult to see, when it is viewed so negatively by those operating within the CVE field, how it could be improved. Given the political climate, it is unlikely that the preoccupation with CVE is going to disappear anytime soon. While approaches to the issue may change with changes in regimes and administrations, it remains firmly on government agendas. It is certainly not necessary that all research in this, or any, substantive area be policy driven; that there are issues around the setting of research agendas is clear, with universities and their funders being part of that agenda-setting circle. At the outset of this study, given its focus, I had assumed that policy recommendations would be a reasonably likely outcome. It was not a stretch to imagine that the concerns of those working in a given area would link to policy concerns, illustrating the way in which these play out "on the ground." Indeed, this was something I included in funding applications and discussed in presentations during the early stages of the research process.

At one point in this research journey I received an interesting invitation to be involved in a day of short panels at a university in UK, organised to offer further academic engagement to those working on an update of the *Prevent* policy. The idea was to put together 'a range of people who are critical but have suggestions' as opposed to those who are simply critical. The organiser, emphasising the complicity of academia in setting the agenda, noted that, in putting the event together, he was keen to have people outside the usual feedback circuit within academia present.[162] While I had a prior commitment and was unable to attend that particular event, I was, at the time starting to wonder about the likelihood of policy recommendations transpiring as a result of the emergent theory. As the research progressed, the theory developed pushed the research in question further into the wholly critical camp. Based on the findings of this research, I would struggle to offer recommendations that would

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[162] As the event in question was a closed session, I have chosen to leave the details regarding people and location anonymous.

be of benefit to the practitioners interviewed and help towards any resolution of the main concern focused upon herein. This research journey has proven that an attempt to offer policy recommendations in the light of the theory derived and, in particular, the main concern that the participants are seeking to resolve, seems somewhat futile. It could, perhaps, be argued that issues around funding could be discussed with a view to making recommendations around ways to offer support without interfering with their work, whether practical training in fundraising, alternative sources of funding, or increasing access to networks that the participants certainly seem to require. However, they would still remain very much at the mercy of the system; they are not in control of the agenda.

The theory developed does offer the practitioners in this study a framework through which to reflect on their work and those they work with. By considering the concepts presented, participants can identify the specific ways in which they are combining these within their own approach. In doing so, the CVE practitioners interviewed here can continue to identify opportunity spaces in which to operate. These are spaces based on their own experience, knowledge and local connections, within which they can build on the their work. The idea of operating within an 'in between' space is worth considering further for practitioners. This is an important element that practitioners can potentially exploit when highlighting the unique position they are in to deal with and be accepted by a variety of people that those working in another area may not have. It is from this position that these practitioners are carrying out their work and challenging the dominant narratives around violent extremism. Given the power of the mass media in this area, and the proliferation of "fake news" which is readily shared on social media, bringing an element of media decoding to the work they do, to enable young people to assess these messages themselves. This is something that if not personally equipped to deal with, the practitioners can again draw upon their personal connections to make happen. This is to contribute to the ways in which they are already seeking to reframe the dominant narratives. The manner in which the participants in this study are drawing on personal connections already, suggests this is possible in many cases. It also emphasises the power of such connections as something that the participants should continue to build upon and forge.

The wider public: implications of this research

> *Some public airing of the theory (usually publication) is a must so as not to commit the theory to the privatising and precious use of a clique.*
> (Glaser, 1978: 7)

The pontification to which Horgan refers is important. It contributes to the way in which the general public come to know and understand issues around violent extremism. That these understandings are filtered through government and media sources, and are having an effect on the work of grassroots CVE practitioners is clear. Given that grounded theory tends to focus on those working in a particular substantive area, or seeks to offer recommendations for policy and practice, the importance of research findings for the wider public can often be overlooked. In this case, the outcomes of this research are important for the general public. Given the vast amounts of media coverage that violent extremism receives, and the continuing government enthusiasm for CVE policy, it is important to acknowledge the ways in which this research can contribute to a broader understanding around these issues for the wider public. Throughout this research I found that everyone has a view on violent extremism. I thus regularly found myself skirting the truth when it came to discussing my research. I was not seeking to be dishonest about my work; sometimes I simply needed a break from the fact that everyone had something to say on the issue and opinions, more often than not, strong opinions, that they wanted to air. The anecdotes I draw on mirrored the concerns of the participants in this study. I received negative comments about Muslims, and was asked, for example, 'what is it about their religion that makes them so violent?' This question, or variations thereof, was asked in a variety of places and by a variety of people. Perhaps the most striking example was a man I met at St Patrick's Well in Clonmel, County Tipperary.[163] As I was staying in the area, I decided one afternoon to take a walk over to this site. Once there, I looked around, then sat down silently enjoying the peace and the sunshine. A gentleman who was also there started chatting to me. We exchanged pleasantries about the site and he asked about my own beliefs. He then, having only met minutes previous, told me in no uncertain terms that the greatest threat we are all facing is from Islam, which he described as 'an ideology of violence and totalitarianism.' He went on to explain how Muslims are blowing up planes and driving vehicles into people every week, killing

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[163] According to *Discover Ireland* (n.d.)*,* '[t]he picturesque site is a popular destination for pilgrims and tourists alike. It features one of Ireland's largest holy wells, which flows into a pool with an interesting early-Christian, Celtic-style cross at its centre. The area also has a small church that dates from the 17th century and houses the altar tomb of the White family.'

hundreds. Furthermore, he suggested that these attacks in Europe are being 'covered up' by the media, using the example of the Manchester bombing.[164] When I suggested that this incident had received copious media coverage, he insisted that it wasn't enough, more should be done to give people a real sense of what such incidents mean, to really 'bring it home to people.' He moved on to tell me how in Sweden immigrants have been raping women for years and the media is covering it up; Sweden, he explained, has the highest level of rape in Europe, but there is an *en masse* cover up taking place. This echoes the singer Morrissey's assertion that 'Berlin is the rape capital of the world.' Making the claim in a November 2017 interview with Juliane Liebert of *Der Spiegel,* he goes on to suggest that the open border policy championed by Merkel in the early stages of the "refugee crisis" is to blame. While Morrissey may have been ridiculed for this claim, it seems to be a viewpoint that exists and is strongly believed in certain quarters. The findings of this study suggest that without a doubt we, the general public, should give more consideration to the media we consume and who is setting the agenda regarding what we see and what we hear, in this instance about violent extremism. The fact that there are different varieties of extremism fuelling one another is a major factor affecting the work of the practitioners in this study, something that does not seem to be reflected more generally in public opinion.

In addition to the fact that people raised questions about Muslims, many expressing their Islamophobia openly to me, others were fascinated by the idea that there are people working to counter violet extremism, and working to break down the barriers that are dividing people. People often expressed surprise that this was happening, questioning why they didn't know more about such people. Again, this raises questions about how we receive information about what is going on in the world, and the ways in which the media covers certain events. Daisy Khan, for example, speaks of being invited on to TV shows to comment on news segments. Invariably she is given a very short amount of time – thirty seconds, one minute – to discuss a complex issue, or to comment thereon. The idea that there are people working to break down the barriers that have been constructed between communities is one that many people are happy to hear about, as they find it reassuring and affirming. For example, I was shortlisted to present my research at Inspirefest 2017.[165] With three minutes speaking time and no slides allowed, I chose to focus the presentation on the way in which the clash of violent

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[164] The Manchester Arena bombing took place following a concert by singer Ariana Grande on 22 May 2017. Killing twenty-three people and injuring hundreds, the attack was carried out by a suicide bomber and claimed by ISIS.
[165] See https://inspirefest.com/ for full event information.

extremisms is dividing people, this clash and the subsequent divisions being an important element of the frustration experienced by the practitioners in this study. Given the audience and the aim of the event, I drew on examples of the work being done by CVE practitioners to highlight the way in which each and every one of us has a role to play in bringing people together, and in spreading and supporting the work of practitioners such as those in this study. After the talk a number of people expressed an interest and specifically asked how they can become involved in such efforts. This suggests, albeit here on a small scale, that there are people interested in doing something; they simply do not know how to go about it or who to contact to offer their support.

A woman at a seminar in Mill Valley said hearing about my research was important for the simple fact that she was so glad to hear people are taking action on what she felt was an important issue and something that was a big threat to people in the USA and Europe. Such comments shed considerable light on the way in which violent extremism is perceived by the general public, and the extent to which they see this issue as a considerable danger to themselves and to people like them. This goes some way towards understanding the fetishisation of CVE policy by governments, and its promotion as a solution to the dissemination and spread of violent extremist ideologies. Governments need to be seen to be doing something, regardless as to whether it is having an effect or not, something that, as can be seen in this study, is not having the intended or claimed effects. Rather, it is exacerbating the issues that are being dealt with by community based practitioners, complicating their work and adding to the problems they face.

The domination of headlines by violent etremism continued into 2017. While much of the focus throughout 2016 was on ISIS and their allies, 2017 saw the far right grow brazen. The "summer of discontent" for the far right saw some 60,000 nationalists and far right activists march in Poland on Independence day (Taylor, 2017). In November 2017, Richard Spencer and a number of other white nationalists, including English Defence League founder Tommy Robinson, and Jason Kessler, organiser of the Charlottesville rally, lost their "verified user" status on Twitter. The company revoked this status – generally given to high profile individuals to confirm that the account in question actually belongs to that person – in a bid to make Twitter safer, stating that verification was increasingly perceived as endorsement. While not generating the same sensationalist headlines as the attacks claimed by ISIS, there is an increased awareness of right wing violent extremism. The question is whether this

attention has come too late and the international far right movement has been allowed to grow and consolidate virtually unimpeded up until this point.

Directions for future research

> *Directions for future research is a paragraph at the end of your study.*
> Barney Glaser, Seminar, Mill Valley, May 2015.

This research, having followed the grounded theory methodology, has opened many interesting avenues for further research, some of which have already been alluded to. Following Glaser's advice, I add them here, at the end of the study, to highlight the possibilities that have arisen as a result of this project. One of the most obvious answers to 'where next?' regarding this research is to look at those working at different levels within the CVE industry. Given the variety of actors, comparing the concerns of those studied here to those working in other ways and at other levels within the industry would certainly prove fruitful. While this was an aim at an earlier stage in the research process, the groups were too disparate. However, having now focused on one group it would certainly be worth revisiting some of these other actors. The impact of different democratic structures on grassroots CVE activity may also be worth exploring further. The beginnings of some patterns indicating some variation between grassroots CVE practitioners based in Sweden and Denmark compared to those operating in the UK and the USA began to emerge from the data. This is worth pursuing further, particularly the effects that different governance arrangements have on the actors in question and their ability to get on and do their work.

This study also opens avenues for the comparison of CVE practitioners to those working in other policy areas and to activists who are working in an area very heavily influenced by policy conditions. The words of Sunil Pant, for example, an LGBT activist, resonate with the experiences of the practitioners interviewed here. It would certainly be worth considering grassroots practitioners in other fields to see if and how there are variations on the patterns discovered in this research. I was in touch with Diane Benscoter who was most keen to be interviewed as part of this research. This contact came via a recommendation from a grassroots CVE practitioner who suggested that there were parallels in the work they are both doing. As a former Moonie Benscoter has spoken about how being in a cult 'rewired her brain.' She likens her experience of 'being an extremist' to that of those who follow other extremist leaders, like Osama Bin Laden, for example (Benscoter, 2013). There is certainly

potential to open out understandings around violent extremism and further compare varieties of extremism, expanding the research focus. This research goes some way towards this by, for example, including those who work with violent gangs in the research Sammy Rangel and Will Keeps are both former gang members, now working to counter violent extremism; Robert Örell and EXIT Sweden have also started to work with this constituency. While definitions of violent extremism remain fluid, it is certainly worth exploring other types of violence associated with different movements. Similarly, Malin Melius suggests viewing violent extremism as part of something broader, explaining that while they have no methods and tools for working specifically in this area and that those working at national level have not built any theories that she can trust, there is work elsewhere to draw upon, for example, anti-social behaviour and how that is dealt with.

Following on from this a further interesting question is 'what is it that causes some people to act on a certain issue?' Considering the personal motivation of the practitioners in this study, in particular those experiencing *bystander motivation,* why do they step up to take action while other members of society do not? It is an issue of concern to many, so what is it that prompts certain individuals to mobilise? It is worth considering Elie Wiesel's 'The Perils of Indifference,' wherein he states: '[i]n the place that I come from, society was composed of three simple categories: the killers, the victims, and the bystanders. During the darkest of times…we felt abandoned, forgotten. All of us did.'

That there is considerable scope for feminist research approaches in this field is clear from the discussion in chapter four; this includes a focus on gender and how this is actually playing out "on the ground" and including more women in the research itself.

Finally, the idea of CVE as an empty signifier is worth exploring. That there is so much focus within the literature – albeit lacking an empirical base – around terminology and understandings is apparent. Shifting the research to consider why there is such a focus on CVE, and whether it really means anything at all might fuel an interesting conversation. Such an approach offers a 'framework for analysis that can be used to explain the process by which a term comes to both identify and propel a whole policy field or development' (Wullweber, 2014).

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1. Creator of *Abdullah-X*
   Preferring to remain anonymous, the creator of the online *Abdullah-X* animation is a former extremist who also has experience of working in an "official" counter-terrorism role.
   Interview dates and locations: 26 August 2014 and 6 March 2015, coffee shops in London, UK.

2. Colleague/supporter of the creator of *Abdullah-X.*
   Also preferring to remain anonymous, this gentleman offers practical support to the creator of *Abdullah-X,* having known him for a considerable amount of time. Under different circumstances he would happily work full time on the project. However, funding issues and the associated practicalities ensure that this is not possible.
   Interview date and location: 11 April 2015, Coffee Shop, London, UK.

3. Abdul Haqq Baker, PhD.
   British Muslim convert and former chairman of Brixton Mosque, in south London. Co-Founder of STREET (Strategy To Reach Empower & Educate Teenagers). Academic and practitioner. Author of *Extremists in Our Midst: Confronting Terror.* Blog: http://abdulhaqqbaker.com/
   Interview data and location: 21 September 2015, via Skype. Haqq Baker was based in Saudi Arabia for work reasons when we spoke.

4. Shayk Dr Umar Al Qadri
   Imam, Al-Mustafa Islamic Centre, Blanchardstown, Dublin, Ireland. Founding Chair of Irish Muslim Peace & Integration Council www.impic.ie, an NGO promoting Peace and Integration in Ireland.
   Creator of the website www.jihad.info set up to provide 'authentic information on the Islamic concept of Jihad' (Jihad Info, 2017).
   Interview date and location: 28 September 2015. Participant's office at the Al-Mustafa Islamic Centre, Blanchardstown, Dublin, Ireland.

5. Michael Culbert
   Director of *Coiste na n-Iarchimí*, an umbrella organisation of the Republican ex-prisoner network throughout Ireland. An ex-republican prisoner.
   Interview date and location: 2 October 2015, *Coiste* Offices, Belfast, Northern Ireland.

6. Barrie Phillips.
   Director of Getting on Together Project in Cardiff. Former school principal, he also has a job with PREVENT. Here he is quoted solely in his capacity as Director of Getting On Together.
   Interview date and location: 19 December 2015, Coffee Shop, Cardiff, Wales, UK.

7. Will Glendinning
Coordinator of 'Diversity Challenges,' set up to provide services and training to facilitate ways of dealing with the past conflicting Northern Ireland. This includes facilitating the development of family friendly events at parades and demonstrations leading to changes in the nature of parading and reducing tension and other projects that give various communities a voice and the skills to develop good relations.
Former politician, former Chief Executive of the Community Relations Council of Northern Ireland.
Interview date and location: 5 January 2016, Hotel in Dublin, Ireland.

8. Dr Avila Kilmurray
Has worked in the voluntary/community sector in Northern Ireland since 1975, focusing on community development, women's issues and peacebuilding. Appointed Director of the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland (1994-2014), Kilmurray now with the Global Fund for Community Foundations, a grassroots grantmaker working to promote and support institutions of community philanthropy around the world. Founder, and active, member of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition.
Interview date and location: 8 January 2016, Hotel in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

9. Conal McFeely
Founding member and Development Executive for Creggan Enterprises (CE), a social enterprise providing retail space, community services and workspaces. McFeely also holds board membership/social economy advisory roles for the following:
- The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland
- Ireland Committee Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust
- Local Strategy Partnership (Derry City Council Area)
- North West Peace III Partnership Board
- Founder member of Maydown Precision Engineering, Creggan Enterprises, John Hewitt Co-op Bar and Restaurant, Social Economy Solutions, Social Economy Agency, and voluntary director, The Playhouse, and Bloody Sunday Trust.
Interview date and location: 11 January 2016, participant's office at Rathmór Centre, Derry, Northern Ireland.

10. Paul Gallagher
An independent councillor representing the Sperrin area of Belfast. He is connected to *Teach Na Fáilte*, a nonprofit organisation concerned with the social reintegration and social inclusion of former Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) prisoners, combatants & their families. Paul, a former member of the INLA himself, has been arrested on a number of occasions. He remains a dissident republican – he is opposed to the Belfast Agreement – but does not condone violence.
Interview date and location: 11 January 2016**,** Offices for Independent Councillors at Harbour Building in Derry, Northern Ireland.

11. Sean Feenan
Community Development Officer, Community Foundation for Northern Ireland. This organisation was established in 1979 as the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust, and acts as a bridge between donors and community based individuals and groups who are seeking to effect change within communities in Northern Ireland.
Interview date and location: 12 January 2016, Derry Community Foundation Offices, Rathmor, Derry, Northern Ireland.

12. Darren Richardson
Community Development Officer with Sperrin Cultural Awareness Association, an organisation established in 2011 that works to resolve disputes related to parades, raise mutual understanding of cultural traditions, engage with marginalised young people and develop communities. Richardson is a former loyalist prisoner, having spent time as part of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF).
Interview date and location: 12 January 2016, Derry Community Foundation Offices, Rathmor, Derry, Northern Ireland

13. Kenny Blair
Ulidia Training Project Worker, a Peace Impact Project based in Ballymoney in Northern Ireland set up to engage young people in culturally relevant activities that encourage learning and community development through a range of traditional crafts including banner and drum head painting, embroidery and leatherwork. Kenny is from the Protestant Unionist Loyalist community and spent time in prison having joined the Ulster Defence Association (UDA).
Interview date and location: 12 January 2016, Derry Community Foundation Offices, Rathmor, Derry, Northern Ireland

14. Mohamed Amin
A Somali-American gas station manager who created the online animation *Average Mohamed* to encourage debate, dialogue and embrace diversity.
Interview date and location: 21 March 2016, Park Bench, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA.

15. Mohamud Noor
Executive Director of the Confederation of Somali Community in Minnesota. Running for Minneapolis City Council for the democrats.
Interview date and location: 21 March 2016, foyer of his apartment building, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA.

16. Arno Michaelis
Former violent racist and lead singer of white power band 'Centurion.' Now a speaker, and author of 'My Life After Hate,' Michaelis works with Serve2Unite, an organisation that engages young people of all backgrounds as peacemakers.
Interview date and location: 25 March 2016, Collectivo Coffee Shop, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA.

17. Sammy Rangel

Former gang member and founder of Formers Anonymous. Speaker and author. With a Masters in Social Work, he consults with law enforcement agencies and other service providers on reducing violent extremism

Interview date and location: 26 March 2016, Ms Katie's Diner, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA (with Amar Singh Kaleka).

18. Amar Singh Kaleka

Film Director, "survivor" – his father was killed at Sikh Temple shooting in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, 2012. In 2014 Amar Singh Kaleka ran for local government in the democratic primaries. He is a strong supporter of gun control and, among other work, is one of the victim representatives of past mass casualty crimes for the National Compassion Fund.

Interview date and location: 26 March 2016, Ms Katie's Diner, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA (with Sammy Rangel).

19. Christian Picciolini

A television producer, public speaker, and a reformed extremist. Co-founded Life After Hate, a non-profit organisation dedicated to helping communities and organisations gain the knowledge necessary to implement long-term solutions that counter all types of racism and violent extremism. In 2015, he published his memoirs, 'Romantic Violence: Memoirs of an American Skinhead.' This is being republished in December 2017 with Hachette as 'WHITE AMERICAN YOUTH: My Descent into America's Most Violent Hate Movement—and How I Got Out.'

Interview date and location: 28 March 2016, Saweda Coffee Shop, Chicago, Illinois, USA.

20. Junaid Afeef

Junaid M. Afeef was named director of the Targeted Violence Prevention Program at the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA) in February 2016. Prior to this appointment, Afeef was working on the issue of CVE in his spare time, around his day job as acting general counsel at ICJIA. He co-founded the Muslim Bar Association of Chicago in 1998 and served as the executive director of the Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago in 2008 and 2009 where he focused on promoting civic engagement and interfaith dialogue.

Interview date and location: 29 March 2016, Afeef's office in Chicago, Illinois, USA.

21. Dr Bambade Shakoor-Abdullah

A mental health professional and activist based in Chicago. Her background is in gang work and gang prevention. She is now using this experience in the area of CVE.

Interview date and location: 29 March 2016, McDonald's, Chicago, Illinois, USA.

22. Frankie Meeink

A former SkinHead leader and Neo-Nazi recruiter, Meeink had his own cable-access TV show, "The Reich". He was finally arrested and convicted of kidnapping and beating a member of a rival SkinHead gang.

Now a speaker, author and founder of *Harmony Through Hockey*.

Interview date and location: 31 March 2016, Coffee Shop, Des Moines, Iowa, USA

23. Will Keeps

A former Chicago gang member, Des Moines based rapper Keeps now works with local youth in the public school system, creating music with them and engaging them through speaking events and music performances.

Interview date and location: 31 March 2016, Skate Rink, Des Moines, Iowa, USA

24. Daisy Khan

Executive Director of the Women's Islamic Initiative for Spirituality and Equality (WISE), a women-led organization committed to peacebuilding, equality, and justice for Muslims around the world.

Interview date and location: 5 April 2016, WISE Offices, New York City, USA.

25. Thorleif Link and colleagues at the Aarhus Police Force.

The 'Aarhus Model' has received much praise for the way in which it approaches issues of "radicalisation." This is a multi-agency, bottom up approach that seeks to build trust between the authorities and those young people with whom they seek to work. The focus is very much on prevention, drawing on experiences in crime prevention over years of police work.

Interview date and location: 3 October 2016, Offices, Aarhus, Denmark.

26. Jens Tang Holbek

EXIT-Coordinator and Social Worker based in Nykøbing Falster in Denmark.

Interview date and location: 4 October 2016, Office, Nykøbing Falster, **Denmark.**

27. Malin Martelius

A member of the consultation team for the municipality of Malmö, Sweden, Martelius works for the local government – the municipality – focusing on civil society groups. This is a bottom up approach that sees her involved in projects such as 'Coexist Malmö' which consists of representatives from different faith communities in Malmö coming together to create opportunities for interfaith dialogue between faith communities, public authorities and Malmö residents.

Interview date and location: 5 October 2016, Office, Malmo, Sweden.

28. Henrik Melius

Founder and CEO of Spiritus Mundi, an NGO focused on intercultural dialogue, creating meeting grounds for young people from different parts of the world to come together.

Interview date and location: 8 October 2016, Spiritus Mundi, Malmo, Sweden.

29. Robert Örell

Former member of a white power group, now a director at Exit Sweden, a project launched by NGO Fryshuset to help members safely leave racist, violent, and extremist groups. He has over thirteen years of experience in disengagement from political extremism and criminal gangs. He also has experience in social work, supporting victims of crime, parental support, networking and management. Robert has studied social pedagogy, has basic psychotherapy training, and has a certificate in Terrorism Studies from the University of St. Andrews.
Interview date and location: 10 October 2016, Café, Stockholm Sweden.

30. Satnam Singh

Employed in a unit in the Copenhagen Municipal Offices set up in 2009 to deal with the issue of politically motivated violence in the city.
Interview date and location: 13 October 2016, Offices, Copenhagen, Denmark.

APPENDIX B: EARLY CODING SAMPLES

Interview 1: August 2014

- Influencing
- Competing
- Using/Drawing on Personal Experiences
- Toeing a policy line
- Being restricted
- Taking control
- Moving beyond officialdom
- Mentoring/engaging
- Redeploying skills
- Encouraging/fostering critical thinking
- Learning from personal experience
- Playing catch up
- Distorting Islam
- Creating us and them
- Engaging young people online
- Providing a Platform
- Recognising self
- Breaking down process
- Identity and belonging
- Filling a vacuum
- Making the mainstream appealing
- Developing jihadi masculinity online
- Converging of local and global
- Putting policy into practice
- Being defeated from the outset
- Targeting young Muslims
- Speaking the right language
- Being unique
- Innovating
- Remaining *en vogue*
- Spreading the word
- Encouraging dialogue/debate
- Defining terminology
- Tension with government actors
- Refusing to bow to power structure
- Respecting the needs of the oppressed and marginalised
- Lack of resources
- Remaining credible
- Sustaining the product
- Drawing on personal influences
- Drawing on popular culture
- Gap between policy and practice
- Others claiming a stake
- Remaining radical
- Embracing subculture
- Differentiating between an extremist and someone who is vulnerable
- Diverting someone vulnerable
- Identifying what young people recognise
- Encouraging critical thinking
- Fitting, filling a need
- Educating, engaging
- Jumping on a band wagon (others)
- Interfering with product (others)
- Being governed by policy
- Putting noses out of joint, not toeing policy line
- Policy saying one thing doing another
- Being bound by policy, stakeholders hindering process
- Responding immediately to world events
- Balancing relationships, ensuring relationships are appropriate
- Lack of understanding/awareness from governments and policy makers
- Gap between grassroots and top down – not meeting in the middle, at odds
- Trying to be community led counter-extremism

Interview 5: September 2015

- Countering
- Influencing
- Providing (alternative) information
- Promoting/being mainstream Muslim
- (Re)Defining extremism
- Overcoming barriers, limitations
- Reaching the wider public
- Education non-Muslims
- Seeking belonging
- Using personal knowledge
- Using facilities/spaces available
- Bringing people together
- Engaging appropriate actors
- Identifying opportunities
- Learning from others, from previous experiences
- Integrating – breaking down the us and them created by extremists and the media
- Volunteering
- Removing media created ideas
- Widening reach

- Educating, providing information
- Role of government and authorities
- Integrating, removing divide between communities
- Putting people on the right track
- Role of government and authorities in creating divisions
- Identifying effective actors
- Countering the creation of an enemy, us v them
- Protecting a whole community from disproportionate focus
- Correcting, rebalancing
- Protecting a community (de-suspecting)
- Lacking resources
- Lacking supports
- Fuelling extremism – undoing
- Fuelling extremism – media
- Creating/breaking down mindsets
- Questioning understandings
- Seeking/providing information
- Preventing divisions

Interview 6: October 2015

- Tension with state
- Mitigating state discrimination
- Volunteering
- Lacking resources and support
- Learning from experience
- Sharing experience
- Humanising the 'enemy'
- Creating space for engagement
- Highlighting similarities
- Breaking down stereotypes
- Challenging narratives, understandings
- Interacting with variety of people
- Providing opportunities
- Media manufacturing myths
- Rejecting categorisation
- Lumping people in together
- Rejecting labels

- Maintaining unity within community

- Educating public
- Humanising, encountering the "other"

- Creating space and opportunities for dialogue
- Challenging terminology / Branding by policy and terminology
- Dealing with security apparatus/security industry
- Offering perspective, learning from the past
- Media simplifying issues, creating us and them
- Policy creating suspect community

Memo – Considering the Participant Group

It is becoming very apparent that there is a big issue with Muslims as a "suspect community" throughout the early interviews. There is a strong sense that the practitioners are annoyed with the way in which their community is portrayed and mush of what they are doing is attempting to deal with this, or challenge the ideas that are being put out there. There is a sense that they are de-suspecting their community, trying to protect it but also trying to find ways to present what the "real Islam" is. This has the potential to create, or fuel intra community divisions. It also raises questions as to how this issue plays out for those working to counter other varieties of extremism. Do they face the same challenges and issues? Or does it mean that their issues and concerns would be different? There are certainly people who work in other areas of extremism and have different backgrounds, many are reasonably well known for this work. This to me suggests a strong argument for exploring the early concepts that are coming out by expanding the participant group to those who focus on other extremisms. The fear is that everything would be too different, as with those working at different levels. However, this in itself would be an interesting comparison.

It also makes me question the appropriateness of focusing solely on those working to counter violent jihadism. While in grounded theory it is important to follow the data – which I am – this also raises ethical issue. If I focus my research solely on this group, am I somehow contributing to this 'narrow reductive focus' that CVE policy seems to have on Muslim communities.

So it is worth considering at this point where to go next for interviewing – who would offer this grassroots CVE work, but from a different ideological perspective and offer the comparison in this way.

Memo – Perhaps it's all about Space

There is a way of considering all of this research by thinking about different ways of conceiving of space. This is something that occurred to me as I was piecing together some of the categories such as: *creating opportunities, collapsing the difference, bringing people together* and *sharing stories.* There are different ways at looking at all of these as being related to space of some description. But how they all tie together is the question. Creating opportunities is about creating spaces to do the work that they want to do. These can be physical spaces in some cases, or spaces in the sense of entry points – an entry space, a space to create a way in to work with someone (or groups of people). So here space works on more than one level, or can be defined in more than one way. They are also working to break down the spaces between people, breaking down stereotypes. I have been calling this *collapsing the difference,* which is about breaking down stereotypes, humanising "the other," and highlighting the similarities that we all share. The spaces that are building up between people are being removed, cancelled, lessened by the participants. Or at least that is what they are trying to do. This goes back again to physical spaces and bringing people together in these physical spaces – a community hall, anything. A simple example of this is Avila Kilmurray talking about different ways in which she managed to get members of the communities on either side of the divide together. Those she worked with were, she explains, curious about the "others" on the other side of the so-called peace walls. 'We wanted to see what type of houses they had,' they told her. 'Were they better than ours?' Another example of practitioners creating a space to collapse the distance between people: A former member of the US military, worried, got in touch with two US based practitioners. 'I hate Muslims,' he said. I'm afraid of what I might do.' The practitioners travelled to meet him, spent time with him, spoke with him, and, drawing on personal contacts, arranged for him to meet an Imam at a local mosque. The pair met for over two hours; they shared their stories, their ideas. Through this the man in question came to see that their ideas and beliefs were not all that different, something that he had never realised and that no one had ever made clear to him before. In this case, the meeting was enough to shift the man's perspective, to allow him to think about things in a different way. This created the situation whereby the invisible barriers that had been built up started to come down. Similarly, in the example from Northern Ireland, steps were taken to break down a similar set of invisible walls – if not the physical ones in this instance – that had been constituted between members of the different communities. It is not that the practitioners themselves can dismantle these walls; they can create the conditions under which those with whom they work have the opportunity to see things differently and

start to pull down these walls themselves. Will Keeps, a former gang member turned educator in Des Moines Iowa uses his music and music videos to the same ends. In his music video 'We Fight,' released in February 2016, Keeps is joined by Des Moines Police Chief Dana Wigert to highlight the divisions in society and the need for individuals to take responsibility for their actions. 'All our lives will be shattered of we keep dividing all our problems,' raps Keeps, going on to explain that these divisions are a 'set up' and that those who are orchestrating this situation are the only winners. Describing the video, he explains: 'it's basically talking about how, you got good cops, you got bad cops, you have a bad life, you know what I'm saying, the good, the bad, everything.' Through the video he is seeking to complicate an issue that is generally portrayed in very simplistic us and them terms, emphasising that things are not always as straightforward as they might seem. Filming with the local police chief marks a very visible attempt at bridging the gap between the police force and the local community, which, over recent times in the USA has been very problematic. By humanising the police chief – he is seen on the phone on his way home saying he will stop for milk to bring home to his family – there is a clear effort to lead to a greater understanding of the other, and the difficult choices that face them (in this case he has to decide whether to shoot someone who may, or may not, be a danger).

Sharing of stories in this case is also about the *sharing of space:* This contributes to an increased understanding and recognition of others, breaking down boundaries and stereotypes and collapsing the differences between people. Here, picking up on the idea that space represents a sphere of coexistence, a sphere of multiplicity, and a sphere of plurality, the space being created is one where these various stories can coexist; there is space for the recognition of multiple trajectories. Here, through the sharing of stories, space is created to recognise these various stories. It is not about who is right or wrong, but rather acknowledging that people feel a certain way and taking it from there. Space is not something fixed; space is constantly changing. The participants in this study are seeking to reconstruct space through shifting interactions and creating the possibility for relations between people to change. This involves starting with the individual and creating the opportunity for them to recognise that their world, their space, can be different. By creating situations in which people are brought together and stories are shared and recognised, there is a shaping, or reshaping of space taking place. If space is conceived of as a product of inter relations, by shifting these relations the practitioners in this study are reconstructing space.

Memo – The _Personal_, but Not _Personal Entrepreneuring_

I have been thinking a lot about the category thus far called _personal entrepreneuring_. The name still is not quite fitting for me. While there is something very personal about what it is that the participants are doing, entrepreneuring just isn't working. There are connotations with the words that, yes, I am not sure that I really like. But more than that, these associations imply elements that are not here in the data, that are not actually representative of what is happening. The personal is certainly there and that is clear from the outset with the category focused on motivation, this motivation being personal. But it is not only the motivation that is personal. The personal continues throughout everything else. Hence the terms _personal entrepreneuring_ and _local entrepreneuring._ But they don't capture the full extent to which people in this study are drawing on their own personal experiences and life stories. Everything they put to use is personal to them, they draw on the personal. It is not that they do this with business ends in mind, or taking financial risks to do their work. There are financial implications for them, yes, and they are, in the main setting up their own way of working. There are risks, but these are not financial; they do not have money to invest. They are looking for money. In using this term I am thinking more about personal skills and experiences as the investment rather than money. Part of the risk, or the difficulty, is digging deep within themselves and having to access their own experiences – in many cases arising from difficult issues in their lives that they have to frequently revisit and use to get their point across, or to do their work effectively. So how do I capture this personal element without adding something different to it – currently it is diluted by the term that follows in many way. I need something that signifies the extent to which that what they are drawing upon is something deep within and very personal to them. This is different to the repurposing of skills and capacities that they have learned or developed elsewhere, this is more about the idea that the participants are repurposing their own life stories so that they take on a different meaning, they have a different purpose, they are using these to really drive and inform their ideas around CVE. And this is more than using a place or space that they have access to because of connections, or their work experience or anything like that. I need to consider what it is that describes the way in which this is so personal to them and this element is significant throughout everything they do.