

Community Cohesion and Countering Violent Extremism in the United States:
A Case Study of Metro Detroit

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Abstract

Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) programs and policies are being developed and implemented across the country. CVE is being criticized by various community leaders and members due to its inherent criminalizing nature as it is currently put into place by the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). By exploring the various meanings of community in a multicultural community, various processes and practices can come to be analyzed as ways to prevent violent extremism without oversight from the DOJ and the DHS. Metro Detroit is a multicultural community that experiences statistically low levels of radicalization of community members who legitimize violent extremism. Even such cases can be delegitimized when considering the circumstances in which they exist. When examining the community cohesion that exists in Metro Detroit through various organizations, especially interfaith organizations, it becomes apparent that there is a strong attempt to create a cohesive community. The argument is not that community cohesion automatically leads to the absence of violent extremism, but that community cohesion builds relationships and practices so that potential causes for violent extremism can be addressed, lessened or diminished. It is suggested that the support of strengthening community cohesion in terms of CVE be dismantled from the DHS and the DOJ. Restructuring would best be supported as a joint effort between the Department of Education, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development, all of which are better equipped to deal with the causes of violent extremism.

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General Audience Abstract

Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) programs have recently been piloted in the United States in Boston, Minneapolis, and Los Angeles. Beyond that, federal funding is given to various non-profits or organizations across the country that aim to create a stronger community in order to decrease the level or threat of radicalization. Speculation regarding the role of the Department of Justice and the Department of Homeland Security and their involvement in CVE stems from the fact that their presence, specifically the Federal Bureau of Investigation, automatically criminalizes a marginalized or vulnerable community. Community leaders across the country are growing more concerned with how CVE programs and policy is are being implemented. Engaging communities and providing them with the necessary resources as a joint effort through the Department of Education, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development without the securitized branding of CVE would be a more efficient way to deal with issues related to violent extremism. Community cohesion and practices to build such cohesion can prevent potential extremism by reducing marginalization and encouraging communication between different communities. The argument here is not that community cohesion automatically leads to reduced extremism, but that community cohesion builds relationships and practices so that potential drivers for extremism can be mitigated. By using Metro Detroit as a case study it becomes apparent that a high level of community cohesion and social cohesion play an integral role in leading to a lack of violent extremism in a multicultural community.

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However, most importantly, I would like to thank my daughter Charlotte. Though too young to read and understand this, it is necessary to give her the credit for this. I pursued higher education so that she could have the importance of education as a focal point for her childhood. Without her presence in my life, this would not have been possible. Her constant reminders to do my homework and her claims to want to be a professor when she grows up serve as consistent motivation to continually pour all of my effort into education. I am continuously asked how I raise a child alone while in graduate school, but the truth is that I would not have been driven enough to do it without her. I am so blessed to be on this life journey with her and I cannot wait to see what our future together holds. She inspires me to incorporate and pursue the concept of a *beloved community* in our lives.

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Chapter One: The Community of Metro Detroit

Catherine leaned across the pew to face the young woman sitting next to me wearing a hijab and said “if there ever is a Muslim registry, I will convert and wear a hijab too.” The woman she was talking to—Amal—responded by saying “I appreciate that, but make sure it is a blue one so that it matches your glasses.”

This moment occurred during an Interfaith Thanksgiving service held at Christ Church Cranbrook in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan on November 22nd, 2016. Bloomfield Hills is a northern suburb located in Metro Detroit’s Oakland County and is the wealthiest city within Michigan. During this time, we were encouraged to turn to the people sitting next to us and express what we were thankful for. Amal had just previously expressed her gratitude for having the opportunity to be in a social setting where she felt safe and welcome after the outcome of the 2016 Presidential election which was won by populist Republican candidate Donald Trump. One of his most controversial and prominent campaign pledges was the call for “total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States.”¹ With the conversation turning towards recent politics, Catherine had chosen to interject an opinion she clearly held dear. I was caught off guard by the conversation as it is not necessarily commonplace to hear that said to Muslim people, more specifically from a person of Jewish faith. In this moment, it struck me that these two women had found common ground on the experience of shared persecution and used it not as a tool of further division but rather as a tool of fostering solidarity.

The Thanksgiving service was led by five people—a male and female Rabbi, an Imam, a Pastor, and a Priest. The Pastor spoke to the congregation about how his interfaith friendships were some of the most treasured he has ever had. He also said that every person is entitled to the

¹ Adam Liptak. “Campaign Pledges Haunt Trump in Court,” *The New York Times*, March 16, 2017.

birthright of joy. Most notably during his speech to the congregation he said “who knew that by coming together in this time, in this place, in this country, that we’d be being brave.” He was referring to the increase in hate crimes in recent years and the type of social atmosphere that these hate crimes can create.² In this sense, he was acknowledging that people in a multicultural community coming together is now described as brave—even though this should be a natural occurrence in a diverse community. He made it clear that religious tolerance was a priority in his community.

When I initiated my fieldwork, I had not known the stakes would consistently rise over the next few months. I had intended to start my research as a method for understanding on-the-ground perceptions and feelings on how current Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) programs were being set up and operated in the United States. I decided to conduct research in Metro Detroit for a number of reasons. Primarily are the facts that there is no official CVE program there, there are prominent Arab and Muslim populations, and there are statistically low publicized cases of radicalization. The most high profile cases of radicalization have either involved individuals who were radicalized outside of Metro Detroit and then relocated or resulted in sentencing not involving terrorism charges.^{3 4} Pinpointing exact numbers of DHS or DOJ statistics regarding radicalization in Metro Detroit is difficult as much of this information is not available to the public. Also, the one publicized case can be questioned on whether or not it occurred as part of FBI entrapment. During a time of media sensationalism and statistical disregard that creates a perception among the general public that Islamic terrorism one of the top

² Brian Levin. “Special Status Report: Hate Crime in the United States,” Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism; California State University, San Bernardino. 2016.

³ Robert Snell. “Detroit terror suspect part of broader group, feds say” *The Detroit News*. December 22, 2016.

⁴ Orlandar Brand-Williams. “Accused ISIS supporter gets 5 years on firearm charges” *The Detroit News*. April 6, 2017

threats facing the United States, I felt that this combination of factors justified asking a series of questions. The main research question that this thesis seeks to answer is how community cohesion can build relationships and decrease marginalization so that potential extremism becomes unlikely. When factoring in the topical study of Metro Detroit, two following questions emerge. First, why are there no legitimate cases of violent extremism in Detroit? Second, why are current CVE efforts not considering the success of Metro Detroit in terms of fostering a sense of community cohesion when designing CVE programs? It is through this thought process that I arrived at finalizing the framing for my research. It is the argument of this thesis that creating a sense of community cohesion through various methods would be more useful for counterterrorism efforts than the official branding and implementation of CVE programs by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) or the Department of Justice (DOJ). Community cohesion also builds a sense of multi and intercultural engagement and tolerance that goes beyond the security-related framing of CVE programs. Creating and implementing CVE programs through the DHS or the DOJ is in its very nature problematic for a number of reasons. First, it assumes that all potential subjects are or have the potential to be criminals and potential security risks that should be treated as such. Second, CVE efforts claim to be aimed at strengthening community, but this cannot possibly be true if some people and their communities that these programs are for are criminalized from the start. Therefore, CVE should be dismantled under the DOJ and DHS and reassigned as a joint effort to the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Education, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development. These three departments would be more readily able to address the issues facing vulnerable communities in a unique and non-securitizing manner.

Even more relevant is this topic given the recent announcement that President Donald Trump plans to restructure current CVE programs and instead focus them solely on Islamist extremism.⁵ This not only completely ignores other types of extremism which remain of concern in the US but also further enforces and strengthens what was previously an unofficial marginalization in a very official manner. For example, this proposed restructuring would ignore the violent extremism that stems from white nationalist or far-right wing Americans. Prior to the Orlando terrorist attack, the statistics were roughly the same regarding the number of deaths from far right-wing violent extremist crimes and Muslims committing violent extremist acts.⁶ It also enforces the notion that one religion is the problem instead of accurately addressing all forms of violent extremism.

Metro Detroit serves as an ideal framework for how community cohesion can and should be promoted and structured. It also has done remarkably well at establishing strong community organizations that provide its members with invaluable resources that allow them to engage in local community actions and interact with each other. In other words, “Detroit is exceptional...because of the power of a local community—with its own local history and political culture—to insulate itself from a national public culture that sees Arabs (and Muslims) as a problem.”⁷

The interfaith movement in Metro Detroit is impressive and is instrumental at creating a sense of community cohesion for residents who take part in some kind of religion. The service I attended consisted of various religious readings. The Imam read from the Quran, the Priest and

⁵ Julia Edwards Ainsley, Dustin Volz, and Kristina Coke. “Trump to focus counter-extremism program solely on Islam,” *Reuters*. February 2, 2017.

⁶ Robert L. McKenzie. “Countering Violent Extremism in America: Policy recommendations for the next president,” *Brookings Institute*. October 18, 2016.

⁷ Detroit Arab American Study Team. *Citizenship and Crisis: Arab Detroit after 9/11*. (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2009), 71

Pastor from the Bible, and the two Rabbis read from the Torah. Each reading enforced the notion of community or devotion. I paid close attention to an elderly white man who tried to carefully follow along with the reading from the Quran. I suspect that he did not necessarily understand the Arabic that was being spoken, but nevertheless he was open and curious about the passages being recited. I also took note of a Girl Scout troop running around before the service started that had a few little girls wearing hijabs in the mix. People in the congregation were asked to share things they were thankful for to the entire audience, in which an African-American woman stood up and said “I am thankful for the community of Metro Detroit.” A local slam poet conducted a reading about the Black Lives Matter movement which quickly became unapologetically honest. As she listed off victims of police brutality, the listeners gave their occasional supportive reinforcement by whooping or saying “amen.” Another local hip-hop artist, who is the child of immigrants, read a poem about the lessons to be learned from giving:

“So please, God;
Don’t lighten the load!
I know I can hold all you tie to my soul,
As long as there’s room in my heart, and light for my growth
I’ll fight to give all I’ve got, to help light up this globe!”

His energy and passion were strongly revealed by his body movements and facial expressions. During their performances I watched the people sitting around me and they were unanimously enjoying it and were actively engaged in listening and responding. I remember thinking how surreal it was to be watching such a diverse crowd of people enjoy variations of slam poetry.

Experiencing this was what I would imagine stepping into my ideal universe would feel like, except it was real and it was in Metro Detroit. This was the first interfaith event I had ever attended and perhaps that is why I found it so perplexing and amazing/inspirational/heartfelt. The

congregation was made up of multiple religions, ethnicities, and age groups which was something I have never experienced in a religious context. I come from a predominantly Caucasian village in a small, rural setting. The people there are typically Christian or non-religious. My first significant exposure to diversity was at the age of nineteen when I joined the Navy and went to basic training. Since leaving home, I have continuously been reevaluating my relationship to and within the communities in which I have lived. It is important to note here that I greatly draw my interpretation of community from feminist author and professor bell hooks when she writes a critique and therefore her variation of Martin Luther King's *beloved community*. She writes "*beloved community* is formed not by the eradication of difference but by its affirmation, by each of us claiming the identities and cultural legacies that shape who we are and how we live in the world."⁸ I have adopted this as a primary principle in which I live my life and I believe it to my core to be a worldview that would eradicate many of the social issues facing society today. Using this philosophy is how I situate myself in society and the lens through which I analyze how cohesive a community is or is not. In other words, I aim to exist in a world of beloved communities and it is my personal belief that the interfaith movement in Metro Detroit embodies and advocates this notion.

To conclude the service, the Rabbis encouraged the congregation to stand up and put their arms around one another while they read. The hip-hop artist had reseated himself kitty-corner to me, and I watched the same elderly man try to get his attention so that he could also link across the aisle separating the pews. The Rabbi's read The Wayfarer's Prayer in Hebrew, which can be translated as:

May we be blessed as we go on our way.
May we be guided in peace.

⁸ bell hooks. "*Killing Rage: Ending Racism*" (New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 1995), 265

May we be blessed with health and joy.
May this be our blessing, Amen.
May we be sheltered by the wings of peace.
May we be kept in safety and in love.
May grace and compassion find their way to every soul.
May this be our blessing, Amen.

I had unintentionally embarked down the path of interfaith dialogue by attending this service. I had reached out to the organization that coordinated it as an effort to try to better understand the role of community organizations in creating resilience. I did not initially understand that interfaith organizations in Metro Detroit had such a presence in the community. However, once I participated in various interfaith events, I found myself extremely intrigued by their message, methodology, and goals. Throughout the various interviews I conducted with interfaith leaders I always walked away feeling a little more hopeful and motivated than prior to speaking with them. The rendering of such feelings is ironic as I myself do not claim a religion. However, I have always had a keen fascination with religion and a consistent admiration for those who are capable of being unquestioningly devout or having something to believe in. I have had a long standing envy for people who have these strong religious beliefs and are able to turn to them for personal comfort. I believe it is likely that this combination of personal viewpoints is what made exploring the interfaith community in Metro Detroit so suitable for my research.

History and Demographics of Metro Detroit

Detroit is a former industrial powerhouse that was once one of the most prosperous cities in America and was symbolic of the American Dream. The automotive industry took root there, building the first Model T in 1908.⁹ Hundreds of thousands of people flocked to Detroit during

Note: All names have been changed to protect the identity of those involved in this study.

⁹ History. "Model T."

the first half of the 21st century in order work in industrial and automotive industries. ¹⁰

Immigration to Detroit has been a staple of its diversity starting as early as 1914 when Syrians started arriving after Henry Ford raised the daily salary to five dollars.¹¹ However, fast forwarding to the early 2000s, portions of the city of Detroit had become something completely different, resembling a scene of a post-apocalyptic science fiction movie. Warehouses that once served as integral parts of the industrial success are now vacant, overgrown, and crumbling. City blocks are abandoned, houses boarded up or burned, and graffiti covered. Detroit has suffered severe and complex crises, ranging from White Flight, political unrest and corruption, and high crime rates. Detroit had quickly deteriorated due to economic contraction, social and spatial abandonment, and loss of demographics. ¹²

This is changing. In late 2016, the *Toronto Star* published an article that proclaimed Detroit to be America's greatest comeback story. ¹³ In it was mentioned the vibrant and thriving urbanization through local art efforts. There are also expansive efforts underway for community planning with substantial creative entrepreneurship. People from all over the country are returning or relocating to Detroit in an effort to rebuild and reclaim a lost city.

I am not naïve enough to believe that Detroit is once more a thriving American city, but I am optimistic enough to believe that it is on its way. Being a Michigan native, I have high hopes that Detroit will surpass expectations and once again be an economic and social powerhouse. I am inspired to see development through urban projects such as community gardening that fuel local economy and provide local businesses with food. I admire the large youth population that

¹⁰ Ronit Eisenbach, "Fast forward, play back: Encouraging dialogue and reflection about Detroit." *Journal of Architectural Education*, 62:1 (2008): 56-63

¹¹ Detroit Arab American Study Team. *Citizenship and Crisis: Arab Detroit after 9/11*. (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2009), 5

¹² Michael Peter Smith and L. Owen Kirkpatrick. *Reinventing Detroit: The Politics of Possibility* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2015), 3

¹³ Jennifer Bain. "Detroit is America's great comeback story" *The Toronto Star*, September 10, 2016.

has relocated to Detroit in order to create art and revitalize a decaying city. It is a common Michigander attitude to adopt a protective stance over Detroit and for that I am biased; we believe that outsiders should not cast negative judgments without actually experiencing what Detroit has to offer and Detroit has a lot to offer.

The City of Detroit is situated within what is considered Metro Detroit, which consists of Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb counties. These counties range drastically in socio-economic status, ethnic demographics, and land structure between rural and city settings. As mentioned earlier, Metro Detroit is home to the wealthiest city in Michigan, Bloomfield Hills, and also home to some of the most impoverished areas of Michigan. Metro Detroit is known for an extremely large population of immigrants and their descendants and has been hailed as a city built by immigrants.¹⁴ The 2015 Census proclaimed that Metro Detroit is 67% white and 22% black, with the remaining population being composed of Asians and Hispanics.¹⁵ This representation does not factor in the complications of Arabs or Muslims who may identify as white.

The two communities that receive significant amounts of attention for their populations are undoubtedly Dearborn and Hamtramck. Dearborn houses large populations of Americans of Lebanese, Yemeni, Iraqi, and Palestinian backgrounds, of which the majority are Muslim.¹⁶ Hamtramck, which was traditionally Polish, has now become a municipality dominated by mostly by Yemeni-Americans. The diversity in Hamtramck is so great that while driving down Joseph Campau Street one can see eighteen foreign flags flying next to two American flags.

¹⁴ "Built by Immigrants; Foreign-born Workers Integral Part of Detroit's History, Economy." June 2014. *Crain's Detroit Business* 30 (22).

¹⁵ "Detroit, Warren, Dearborn, MI Metro Area" *Census Reporter*, 2015.

¹⁶ Detroit Arab American Study Team. *Citizenship and Crisis: Arab Detroit after 9/11*. (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2009), 5

These flags—from Bosnia, Yemen, Bangladesh, Poland, Romania, Russia, Armenia, Mexico, Ukraine, Albania, Iraq, Croatia, Ethiopia, Turkey, Lebanon and Macedonia—represent the largest populations of people that have resettled in Hamtramck.¹⁷ Symbolic to adopting an American identity, these flags are replaced once a year on the Fourth of July with an American flag. Recent experiences of Arab and Muslim immigration populations can be best understood in the context of economic and political instability that has occurred in the Middle East.¹⁸ The populations represent unusual inversions of their native countries demographics. For example, there are less than 5% of Christians in the Arab world but they account for roughly half of the population within Metro Detroit Arab populations.¹⁹

Given this unique demographic makeup, there is a very complex set of identities that exist within the Metro Detroit community. Given the diversity among and political atmosphere towards Arabs and Muslims this should not be surprising. There are individuals who will identify in reference to their native country or that of their ancestors, such as Lebanese-American. Some will do the opposite and not identify as Arab American at all.²⁰ Then there are others who will self-identify based on their religion, such as Muslim-American. Metro Detroit's Arab and Muslim community also does not consistently identify as nonwhite or white.²¹ These differences in identification can vary through generations of families, causing an even more multifaceted identity makeup.

It is important here to acknowledge two factors to be considered when discussing community cohesion in Detroit. The first is the Chaldean population and the second is Metro

¹⁷ Kristin Rose. "After years of non-use, Jos. Campau flagpoles come to life." *The Hamtramck Review*.

¹⁸ Sally Howell and Andrew Shryock. 2003. "Cracking down on diaspora: Arab Detroit and America's "War on Terror". *Anthropological Quarterly* 76 (3): 446.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 446.

²⁰ Detroit Arab American Study Team. *Citizenship and Crisis: Arab Detroit after 9/11*. (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2009), 14

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 14

Detroit individuals who pose a unique challenge for creating a cohesive community. It is necessary to address because without doing so would suggest that Metro Detroit is an undivided community, which is not accurate. As previously stated, Metro Detroit is quite expansive and covers three counties. It is expected that there will be individuals who are strongly against the Arab and Muslim populations rooted in this area. I argue that this sentiment is largely created and enforced by false media representations of Arab and Muslim peoples.²² I acknowledge that there are people, even significant populations within some suburbs, of Metro Detroit, who advocate for policies such as the recent travel ban, tightening immigration, and the prevention of further Arab and Muslim representations within society. This is where the core of this analysis is particularly useful due to the fact that it is arguing that movements such as interfaith workshops and diversity training can bring these individuals to the table in a meaningful way in order to participate in dialogue.

A substantial population of Chaldeans has settled in Metro Detroit and they can best be described as a “border community.”²³ Chaldeans are distinctive in how they self-identify as well as how they position themselves within a greater community. The vast majority of Chaldeans are Iraqi as well as Catholic and Detroit houses the largest emigrate population in the world.²⁴ It is necessary to understand the history of the Chaldean population in order to understand what constitutes them as a border community. Chaldeans have shared experiences with other Arabs and often speak Arabic, Syriac, and English.²⁵ Individuals within the Metro Detroit Chaldean

²² Nicole C. Andersen, Mary Brinson, and Michael Stohl. “On-screen Muslims: Media priming and consequences for public policy.” *Journal of Arab & Muslim Media Research* 4, 2 (2010): 203-21.

²³ Detroit Arab American Study Team. *Citizenship and Crisis: Arab Detroit after 9/11*. (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2009), 60

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 27

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 27

population may or may not identify as Arab and will often strongly reject a shared identity when being Arab can threaten them.²⁶ Chaldeans can also take offense when they are confused with Arab Muslims or when their history is ignored by greater society.²⁷

In order to create a more cohesive community, the Chaldean border community needs to be better understood by the larger Metro Detroit community. This presents a delicate situation due to the history of Chaldeans in Iraq, which involves both historical and modern campaigns of ethnic cleansing and genocide. Most recent is the targeting of Christians, such as Chaldeans, by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). A *Wall Street Journal* piece addressed the plight of Iraqi Christians in 2014 when it wrote an article about how the Christian population still exists, but only for now. The author wrote “today, targeted by ISIS for their Christian faith, Chaldeans and Assyrians are the victims of an unabashed ethnic-cleansing campaign. After seizing the northern city of Mosul in June, ISIS spray-painted the symbol for ‘Nazarene’ on the homes of Christians. Families had 24 hours to convert to Islam, leave the city or face execution.”²⁸ Understanding the historical and modern tensions between Chaldeans and the greater Arab community is necessary in order to call for programs to make them feel like they are a part of the greater community.

Given the anti-Muslim rhetoric that was perpetuated in the 2016 Presidential campaign, finding a sense of mutual understanding and respect can be challenging. During my fieldwork, it was announced that the US Justice Department would be suing the city of Sterling Heights over the rejection of a building proposal for a mosque.²⁹ Sterling Heights is situated in Macomb

²⁶ Detroit Arab American Study Team. *Citizenship and Crisis: Arab Detroit after 9/11*. (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2009), 60.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

²⁸ John Paul Kuriakuz. “Iraq’s Chaldeans still exist--for now; Christians who still speak the language of Jesus are targets of a genocide in the making.” *Wall Street Journal*. August 24, 2014.

²⁹ Sarah Cwiek. “U.S. sues Sterling Heights over denied mosque permit.” *Michigan Radio*. December 15, 2016.

County and is home to a substantial population of Chaldean immigrants. During an interview, I spoke to a local educator named Abigail who specializes in the Metro Detroit population, specifically within the Arab and Muslim communities. Abigail attended zoning hearings regarding the mosque and she reflected that

“it is unfortunate what is happening with this mosque because they are doing what mainstream Americans do and painting all Muslims with the same brush...the mosque that the lawsuit is about is a Shia mosque so it has many Iraqi members too who are here because they were also persecuted. I think that this is a classic example of a new immigrant group coming here and having to sort of fight for its place within whiteness. And how do they do that? They do that by attacking those groups that are being defined as nonwhite. It’s just ironic because I was at a zoning commission hearing...it was just so weird to be in a crowd where everybody was Middle Eastern and everyone was speaking Arabic, but how do you know who is Chaldean versus who is Lebanese?”³⁰

This lawsuit highlights the complexities that can exist due to the diversity in Metro Detroit. Aforementioned is the fact that Chaldeans prefer to distance themselves when identifying as Arab can threaten their community. It is possible that this is why there was such backlash over plans to build a mosque.

There are both Arab and Chaldean community members within Metro Detroit that want more unity and community gatherings.³¹ If Metro Detroit is to become more inclusive and therefore cohesive, these two separate but similar populations must come together. Grassroots social movements could be instrumental at creating unity and community gatherings for all people residing within Metro Detroit. This is particularly important today as anti-Muslim and anti-Arab rhetoric and policies are being perpetuated in mainstream media and politics.

³⁰ Abigail. Interviewed by Allison Miller, Ann Arbor, MI, 2017.

³¹ Detroit Arab American Study Team. *Citizenship and Crisis: Arab Detroit after 9/11*. (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2009), 61

Diversity in Metro Detroit

The diversity in Metro Detroit is represented by individuals from several different races, ethnicities, religious groups, sexualities, ages etc. Metro Detroit has a long history and has had its own share of institutionalized racism, legal segregation, and civil rights riots. It is necessary to understand the history of Metro Detroit when attempting to understand it as a community.

There are still evident racial separation and tension in Detroit today. Whites, typically dubbed young white “hipsters” are returning to Midtown Detroit. Black residents leave areas that many refer to as “ghettos” such as certain areas of the City of Detroit, Inkster, and Pontiac in hopes that they will have better educational opportunities for their children. Dickinson argues that partly due to their discomfort with the rising population of Black residents, White residents may then move.³² Communities are slowly becoming more blended as a result of various socioeconomic factors; some move to a place for better opportunity and some cannot afford to leave. Nonprofits are attempting to bridge the gaps that exist between races and religions. One example of such an organization is New Detroit, which describes itself as a catalyst for change able to solve specific community problems while also providing resources to community-based groups.³³ These types of nonprofit, grassroots movements based on community building and community advocacy are the driving forces behind the revitalization of Metro Detroit.

Justification of Research

There is a belief amongst Americans that the country is less safe now than it was prior to

³² James David Dickson. “All together now: Metro Detroit is in a period of unprecedented diversity.” *Journal of Law in Society* 15:1 (2013): 63.

³³ New Detroit. *Our History*.

9/11 due to the threat posed by Islamic extremism.³⁴ Along with this is the belief that international terrorism is the most critical threat that the United States is facing.³⁵ These thought processes are likely fueled by media sensationalism of homegrown Islamic extremism and of international terrorist attacks. The reality of violent Islamic extremism occurring in the United States from Muslim-Americans is that given the population, the statistics are quite low.³⁶

Americans have questioned why Muslim-American communities have been silent in regards to Islamic extremism since 9/11. This could not be further from the truth as Muslim-American communities have been extremely vocal in denouncing violent extremism.³⁷ Media outlets often fail to recognize Muslim-American involvement in speaking in press releases, expressing extreme outrage after terrorist attacks, and creating community organizations designed to advocate that violence is not a part of Islam.³⁸

In response to this growing yet statistically unwarranted fear, the United States has launched Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) pilot programs in Boston, Minneapolis, and Los Angeles.³⁹ The CVE programs are designed to “broaden the base of community leaders and key stakeholders involved at the local level in order to help eliminate conditions that lead to alienation and violent extremism...” while also encouraging youth to reject violent ideologies.⁴⁰ These programs lack transparency in the framework that they are using and how their goals are

³⁴ The Chicago Council on Global Affairs. *As Acts of Terror Proliferate, Americans See No End in Sight*. August 22, 2016.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Charles Kurzman, David Schanzer, and Ebrahim Moosa. “Muslim American terrorism since 9/11: Why so rare?” *The Muslim World* 101:3 (2011): 473.

³⁷ Charles Kurzman, David Schanzer, and Ebrahim Moosa. “Muslim American terrorism since 9/11: Why so rare?” *The Muslim World* 101:3 (2011): 473.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 473

³⁹ Department of Justice. “*Pilot programs are key to our Countering Violent Extremism efforts*.” February, 2015.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

being accomplished as not much information regarding them has been provided to the public.

As previously mentioned, news reports in early 2017 claim that the Trump Administration plans to refocus these programs specifically on the religion of Islam. Metro Detroit, especially Hamtramck, houses the largest Muslim population per capita in the country.⁴¹ This recent potential for restructuring is reason for concern given the substantial Arab and Muslim population within Metro Detroit. In January, A Dearborn based non-profit rejected a \$500,000 grant from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) citing its concern due to the “current political climate.”⁴² Following suit, three other organizations have recently rejected federal funding that fell under the DHS initiative for CVE. In February, Bayan Claremont, an Islamic school located in California, rejected \$800,000, of which \$250,000 had been earmarked for local nonprofits.⁴³

These rejections are a notable form of resistance to government policies that are perceived as discriminatory towards Muslim-Americans. Though many have criticized CVE programs for being discriminatory since their inception, this proposed framework is outright discriminatory and will do nothing to address other forms of extremism in the United States.⁴⁴ It is important to note that the anti-Muslim rhetoric being propagated by the Trump administration is leading to movements of solidarity, and the rejection of federal funding by organizations involved with CVE is another movement of solidarity. These groups appear to understand that by accepting federal funding during a time of increased Islamophobia would only undermine their

⁴¹ Sarah Pulliam Bailey. “In the first majority-Muslim U.S. city, residents tense about its future,” *The Washington Post*, November 15, 2015.

⁴² Julia Edwards Ainsley, Dustin Volz, and Kristina Coke. “Trump to focus counter-extremism program solely on Islam,” *Reuters*. February 2, 2017.

⁴³ Tami Abdollah. “Fourth Muslim group rejects federal grant to fight extremism,” *ABC News*, February 11, 2017.

⁴⁴ Julia Edwards Ainsley, Dustin Volz, and Kristina Coke. “Trump to focus counter-extremism program solely on Islam,” *Reuters*. February 2, 2017.

community based initiatives. In other words, the plan to restructure current CVE programs is backfiring.

It is necessary to acknowledge the interconnected relationship between Muslim community leaders and potential radicalization of young people. Leaders across the country are aware of the implications that are posed by potential radicalization and are taking several different steps to prevent it in their respective communities.⁴⁵ Imams and scholars play an important role in this by encouraging open dialogue pertaining to the threat of being swept into extremism and by dismantling this on theological grounds.⁴⁶ Rabiah Ahmed is a Muslim community leader in Los Angeles and he stated that there are “different sectors of our community, based on their expertise or leadership, responding to the issue where they can and where they can make a contribution, it’s a multifaceted approach, the problem cannot be solved with just one solution.”⁴⁷ Scholars have also argued that mosques are part of the solution rather than sites of radicalization.⁴⁸ Also, individuals in the United States that are vulnerable to the tactics of recruitment are not typically even hearing extremist ideologies in mosques, but rather from “unbound wanderers.”⁴⁹ When questioning and discussing mosques in terms of radicalization, it is necessary to understand that there are several factors that may lead to radicalization, including “predisposed and troubled youth, lack of effective communication

⁴⁵ Arwa Mahdawi. “The 712-page Google doc that proves Muslims do condemn terrorism,” *The Guardian*. March 26, 2017.

⁴⁶ Michael Kaplan. “Are Mosques Conduits For Extremism? How Muslim Leaders Are Fighting Terrorism,” *International Business Times*, December 05, 2015.

⁴⁷ Michael Kaplan. “Are Mosques Conduits For Extremism? How Muslim Leaders Are Fighting Terrorism,” *International Business Times*, December 05, 2015.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Jocelyn Cesari, Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich. Forschungsstelle für Sicherheitspolitik, and Rand Corporation. National Security Research Division. 2007. *The radicalization of Diasporas and terrorism: A joint conference by the RAND Corporation and the Center for Security Studies, ETH Zurich*. 1st ed. Santa Monica, Calif.;Zurich,: RAND National Security Research Division.

between young Muslims and non-radicalized Imams, perceptions of injustice due to foreign policy, and a lack of alternative voices.”⁵⁰ Scholars are arguing that mosques could and should be a part of the solution because they provide an outlet for safe dialogue for individuals that feel vulnerable or marginalized. This type of dialogue is occurring in Metro Detroit mosques. For example, it is viewable on the website of Masjid Mu’ath Bin Jabil in bold, bright letters “a warning against terror groups ISIS & al-Qaeda and the correct Islamic position regarding them.”⁵¹ This link takes the reader to a historically based and informative pamphlet that denounces ISIS and their violent acts as well as states that the terrorism of al-Qaeda and ISIS is the number one enemy to Islam.⁵²

Analyzing the role of mosques in preventing radicalization specific to the United States is quite difficult given that an abundance of the literature on this topic is focused on places such as the United Kingdom. This can potentially be attributed to the fact that Muslims in other countries may identify differently and have a more difficult time feeling like they are part of the mainstream culture. A number of things may factor into this difference in identity between American Muslims and European Muslims. Stronger and more established Islamic institutions, higher rates of education, and an overall higher socio-economic status some factors that create a stronger sense of belonging in the United States.⁵³ In a later part of this thesis, I will reflect upon my experience in a Hamtramck mosque as well as the dialogue that took place with an Imam.

⁵⁰ Angela McGilloway, Priyo Ghosh, and Kamaldeep Bhui. “A systematic review of pathways to and processes associated with radicalization and extremism amongst Muslims in western societies,” *International Review of Psychiatry* 27:1 (2015): 39-50.

⁵¹ Abu-Bakr Al-Siddique Islamic Center.

⁵² Abu-Bakr Al-Siddique Islamic Center. *A Warning against terror groups ISIS and Al-Qaeda and the correct Islamic position regarding them.*

⁵³ Jocelyn Cesari, Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich. Forschungsstelle für Sicherheitspolitik, and Rand Corporation. National Security Research Division. 2007. *The radicalization of Diasporas and terrorism: A joint conference by the RAND Corporation and the Center for Security Studies, ETH Zurich.* 1st ed. Santa Monica, Calif.;Zurich;: RAND National Security Research Division.

This thesis illustrates the significance the role of community engagement is in preventing violent extremism and shows how community cohesion among diverse groups can be formed. This will be done by analyzing Metro Detroit as both a single community and a group of coexisting communities within the three counties that create Metro Detroit. This study will focus on a religious yet diverse population in order to outline meanings of community engagement and social cohesion through multiple viewpoints.

Community Cohesion as a Method for Preventing Radicalization

Examining community cohesion as a preemptive method of preventing radicalization has been an overlooked approach at counterterrorism in the United States. The role of a community in preventing radicalization of its members should not be taken for granted because it is a micro-level approach to a global issue. It should also not be overlooked because this is an approach that should be happening naturally, outside of the contexts of counterterrorism, in order to create close-knit communities that offer a sense of belonging for every member. In terms of radicalization, an overwhelming amount of existing literature focuses on what aspects of society may cause an individual to radicalize. Schmid and Price sum this up when they write “radicalisation literature approaches the subject of socialisation to violence from several angles.”⁵⁴ They then provide an outline of radicalization focuses within the existing literature, including ideological and psychological recruitment, the argument of violent extremism being a worthy cause, and radicalizing groups that share a common experience.⁵⁵ Due to the literature of radicalization being largely focused on ‘why’ one radicalizes, it leaves a gap in scholarly

⁵⁴ Alex P. Schmid and Eric Price. “Selected literature on radicalization and de-radicalization of terrorists: Monographs, edited volumes, grey literature and prime articles published since the 1960s.” *Crime, Law and Social Change* 55:4 (2011), 338.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p 338.

literature that examines ‘why not?’ Therefore the overall objective of this thesis is to focus on aspects of a multicultural community that build community cohesion and make radicalization of community members less likely. For example, the role of interfaith events and practices can provide space for engagement and dialogue, which creates a more cohesive community that will be less likely to face a threat of radicalization.

It is a possible criticism to consider why engaging with Islam in relation to radicalization is necessary, given that an overwhelming majority of Muslims, especially Muslim-Americans, do not radicalize and engage in or embrace violent behavior. Before starting this project, it was my belief that CVE programs, to some degree, unofficially were targeting Muslim members of society. However, I no longer have to attempt to justify that thought because CVE programs are likely going to be restructured under the Trump administration to focus on Islamic extremism.⁵⁶ Policymakers for CVE programs are currently considering shifting from assuming Muslims are the only individuals susceptible to radical behavior to directly stating so. Surfacing reports are alleging that current CVE efforts will be rebranded as “Countering Islamic Extremism” or “Countering Radical Islamic Extremism” in light of the administration change.⁵⁷ Therefore, a study such as this is critical now more than ever, as a means to show that building a cohesive community is the best option for countering any form of extremism. Individuals would be less likely to radicalize if they feel as though they belong to a community, whether micro or macro, because they would want what is best for their community. Community-based approaches to counterterrorism are formed around the idea that the “the security of a community is closely

⁵⁶ Julia Edwards Ainsley, Dustin Volz, and Kristina Coke. “Trump to focus counter-extremism program solely on Islam,” *Reuters*. February 2, 2017.

⁵⁷ Erroll Southers. “The U.S. Government’s Program to Counter Violent Extremism Needs and Overhaul.” *Los Angeles Times*. March 21, 2017.

related to the degree of cohesion and resilience of that community. National counterterrorism policies, therefore, sometimes aim to build resilient communities that reject violent extremist, terrorist ideologies and propagandists.”⁵⁸

The case study for this thesis will be Metro Detroit because there is a large number of Muslim and Arab residents (specifically in Dearborn and Hamtramck) but an insignificant number of cases regarding Islamic radicalization.⁵⁹ Therefore, it is critical for the fields of terrorism and counterterrorism to have an understanding of why this community is thriving in terms of fostering inclusion.

The analysis of this topic is also important because of the amount of funding going into terrorism and counterterrorism, as well as the level of attention it receives, in the United States. It is also important given the recent substantial amounts of rejections of funding and it will be critical to monitor where that funding ends up going, if possible. Funding for CVE in 2016 was broken into five categories: developing resilience, challenging the narratives, training and engagement, managing intervention activities, and building capacity.⁶⁰ In June 2016 a Countering Violent Extremism Subcommittee within the Department of Homeland Security suggested that the current budget of \$10 million be increased to \$100 million.⁶¹ The subcommittee stated that the current funding is insufficient and an increase would be used in order to develop a nationwide infrastructure of federal support that could then be used by local

⁵⁸ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. *Preventing Terrorism and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism: A Community-Policing Approach*. 2014.

⁵⁹ Leonard M. Fleming. “Metro Muslims address radicalization worries within,” *Detroit News*, June 16, 2016.

⁶⁰ Department of Homeland Security. *Fact Sheet: FY 2016 Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Grants*. June, 2016.

⁶¹ Department of Homeland Security. *Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Subcommittee*. June, 2016.

communities, including grant funding for nonprofits and local governments.⁶² Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) programs are currently being piloted in the United States as an effort to establish methods that deter individuals from joining a violent extremist group. These programs are meant to bring together community leaders, health professionals, law enforcement, and educators in the effort to deter individuals from radicalization.⁶³ What the overall program and funding initiatives have failed to do is consider some multiethnic and multiracial communities where this problem is virtually nonexistent in an attempt to model societal structures and community involvement to expand on efforts of community development.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director James Comey has stated that as of May 2016 there were “north of 1,000” suspected cases of radicalization in the United States.⁶⁴ Between May 2013 and October of 2016, only 110 people were charged based on issues relating to Islamic extremism.⁶⁵ These cases, of which several were highly publicized, coupled with recent attacks in the United States have “shaken the American psyche,” which has caused Americans concern in attending events with large crowds or being more skeptical of people utilizing public transportation.⁶⁶ A 2016 poll conducted by The Chicago Council of Global Affairs concluded that 75 percent of Americans believe international terrorism is the most critical threat to the United States.⁶⁷ More specifically, 75 percent of self-identified Republicans and 49 percent of self-identified Democrats cited Islamic fundamentalism as a critical threat.⁶⁸ There is an extremely low number of open investigations being conducted specific to Islam

⁶² Department of Homeland Security. *Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Subcommittee*. June, 2016.

⁶³ Brennan Center for Justice. *Countering Violent Extremism (CVE): A Resource Page*. October 05, 2016.

⁶⁴ Deb Riechmann and Eric Tucker. “Homegrown Extremism” *The Associated Press*. October 11, 2016.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ The Chicago Council on Global Affairs. *As Acts of Terror Proliferate, Americans See No End in Sight*. August 22, 2016.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

(considering the overall population of the United States is 324.8 million) by the FBI with a high perception of threat level.

The purpose of elaborating on current funding and categories of CVE as well as the statistics relating to Islamic extremism are twofold. First, the funding that exists under CVE is problematic given that it simply falls under CVE. Funding should be reallocated to other initiatives that build community resilience and cohesion, especially if CVE is going to begin focusing on Islam only. This refocus will only officially marginalize a substantial amount of individuals and organizations. Second, it is important to understand the relationship between the amounts of funding going into CVE as it pertains to the statistics. The amount of funding being directed towards this is substantially high, given the low number of Muslim individuals actually radicalizing to a degree of using violence.

Given that there are current speculations that CVE will be refocused towards only Islamic extremism, this analysis is timely and necessary. Metro Detroit serves as an ideal community for exploring such a topic due to the multicultural population and low statistics regarding radicalization and violent extremism. In creating such an analysis, key concepts such as multiculturalism, interculturalism, and radicalization emerge and must be explained by exploring how existing scholarship have defined them.

Chapter Two: Radicalization, Community and CVE, and the Role of Interfaith Organizations and Dialogue in CVE

Scholarly literature pertaining to CVE in the United States has a significant gap where community cohesion is concerned. CVE programs are relatively new to the US which can explain why geographically relevant scholarly literature is limited to begin with. Research regarding focuses of terrorism (including radicalization and deradicalization) is often conducted via methods of social or political theories. While useful, using theoretical frameworks to deconstruct characteristics of terrorism, such as radicalization, violent extremism, or countering violent extremism, does not go as far as incorporating human accounts into the body of research. This explains why there is a lack in the literature using perspectives researched through ethnographic methods. Also, a significant amount of literature tends to focus on aspects of society that may in fact create communities or individuals vulnerable to violent extremism. Existing academic works focus on topics such as narratives that perpetrators and sympathizers use to justify violent extremism or the process of online and offline radicalization which are then used to justify suggestions for prevention and policies.^{69 70} While these types of analyses are important, it does not comprehensively address the gap in understanding what creates cohesive communities that are resilient to violent extremism. This is where an ethnographic study at a diverse community where violent extremism has been almost non-existent will be useful.

⁶⁹ Steven R. Corman. "The Narrative Rationality of Violent Extremism." *Social Science Quarterly* 97:1 (2016): 9-18.

⁷⁰ Susan Szmania and Phelix Fincher. "Countering violent extremism online and offline: Terrorist use of the internet." *Criminology & Public Policy* 16:1 (2017): 119-25.

Literature Review

This literature review will focus on four different elements—defining terms by examining existing debates, the process of radicalization, the current literature regarding community and CVE in the United States, and interfaith dialogue in relation to extremism. These four subsections allow for the creation of a framework that constructs why community-building serves as a method for CVE. Community-building is a holistic approach to CVE because a community that is inclusive will contain individuals that act in regards to a common goal in the best interest of that specific community. Central to community-building in Metro Detroit are interfaith programs that provide the people residing there with various interfaith societal aspects, such as the setting and tools to engage and learn with other faiths.

Definitions of Terms

Central to the topic of this thesis is the concept of community, multiculturalism and interculturalism, and social cohesion. Though these concepts may be heavily intertwined in preventing violent extremism, comprehensive definitions are necessary.

When analyzing the discourse and policies that regard violent extremism a pattern of interchangeable usage between extremism and violent extremism can emerge. It is important to have a clear understanding that the two are different and caution should be used when being used interchangeably. Extreme viewpoints within a community can occasionally be beneficial and therefore holding an extreme viewpoint should not necessarily be an issue.⁷¹ Furthermore, an individual can hold extreme viewpoints but not advocate for violent action. Borum differentiates

⁷¹ Basia Spalek, *Counter-terrorism: Community-based Approaches to Preventing Terror Crime* (New York;Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 5

the two by arguing that violent extremism occurs as part of the process of radicalization, and uses the term “radicalized into violent extremism.”⁷² This is a useful framework when attempting to understand the process at which an individual evolves from simply fostering extremist beliefs to legitimizing violence to compel or enforce these beliefs.⁷³ The distinction between extremism and violent extremism can be viewed as transgressing from thinking to action.⁷⁴ In terms of radicalization, this thesis defines the radicalization process as “a change in the views and behaviors of groups and individuals towards embracing more uncompromising political and ideological positions and ideas, with willingness to take unusual and concrete actions to see them implemented. This does not necessarily mean violent actions.”⁷⁵

Defining “community” at a micro or local level has been contested within scholarly debates. The definition of community at this level becomes further complicated when considering that it is being analyzed regarding CVE efforts. Kenney and Roudometof conceptualize the notion of community as units of belonging in which the members share moral, expressive, or cognitive meanings which create a sense of group and personal identity.⁷⁶ They also argue that communities are organic; they are constantly being reconstructed and membership is not necessary,⁷⁷ however members are responsible for constructing the various social relationships that exist within a specific community.⁷⁸ Counter to this sociological approach, Spalek offers an approach that is reflective of policy making. She argues that

⁷² Randy Borum. "Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories." *Journal of Strategic Security* 4, 4 (2011): 7-36.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁷⁵ Hamed El-Said and Jane Harrigan, *Deradicalizing Violent Extremists* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 5

⁷⁶ Paul T. Kennedy and Victor Roudometof. *Communities across borders: New Immigrants and Transnational Cultures* (London, Routledge, 2002), 6

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p 11

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p 6

community can often be used “as a catch-all phrase used by the government as a way of simplifying, merging, and combining complex social identities and groupings for the purposes of policy development and implementation.”⁷⁹ She also argues that communities serve as the basis for constructing and understanding the social world and they may be specific to a geographic location.⁸⁰ The issue that this thesis seeks to explore requires a combination of the aforementioned definitions. Therefore, community can be conceptualized as a geographic location in which an individual constructs an understanding of the social world (both internal and external to their location). Individuals who exist in a geographically specific community may not feel as though they are a member and this marginalization is responsible for creating a fragmented community that makes individuals susceptible to legitimizing alternative worldviews, such as violent extremism. In simpler terms, individuals in a community need to share a sense of belonging in order to prevent extremist views from taking root.

It is necessary to understand the concept of community cohesion is similar to that of community in the sense that this is organic; it is subject to reconstruction and membership is not necessary. However, the higher the membership, or the amount of individuals that identify with a community, the higher the level of cohesion will be. Community cohesion is not a fixed system but rather a system that can be high or low, weak or strong. An example of this came forth when interviewing Rabbi Jonah as he discussed the nature of the relationships between Arabs, Muslims, and Jews breaking down during times of domestic trauma, such as 9/11, or international conflict such as the strenuous relations between Israel and Palestine.⁸¹ These may cause tension in the community of Metro Detroit that impacts the level of community cohesion

⁷⁹ Basia Spalek, *Counter-terrorism: Community-based Approaches to Preventing Terror Crime* (New York;Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 31

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 32

⁸¹ Jonah (Rabbi, Metro Detroit), Interviewed by Allison Miller, Bloomfield Hills, MI, December 2017.

on a temporary basis, but religious leaders in the interfaith community are consistently attempting to bridge these gaps and focus on the community in which is closest to them.

Community cohesion can thus be understood as “the ability of communities to function and grow in harmony together rather than in conflict. It has strong links to concepts of equality and diversity...”⁸² This definition allows community cohesion to be understood as a complex concept as it addresses there are both possibilities of harmony and conflict. Communities that function in harmony will have higher levels of community cohesion than communities that exist in conflict. Though there are several ways to increase the level of cohesion, three of the most notable are to develop a vision and values for the community, to engage communities, and to challenge and change perceptions.⁸³ The last point is perhaps one of the most important aspects of creating a cohesive community in a multicultural community.

There are many different risk factors within communities that could make that community more vulnerable to higher statistics of individuals becoming radicalized. Mirahmadi references five categories from a model created by the World Organization for Resource Development and Education (WORDE) which are economic factors, sociological motivators, political grievances, psychological factors, and ideology, beliefs, and values.⁸⁴ Within each category are various attributes of that category further deconstructed to attempt to explain factors of community that increase vulnerability. Such attributes include, but are not limited to, group dynamics, a lack of protective resources, a quest for significance, mental illness, an “us versus them” narrative, unpopular foreign policy, poverty, and unemployment.⁸⁵ These types of

⁸² “Community Cohesion: Seven Steps” *Office of the Deputy Prime Minister*, March 2005.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Hedieh Mirahmadi. “Building resilience against violent extremism.” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 668:1 (2016): 132.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 132-137.

indicators further demonstrate why CVE needs to be truly community based instead of security based. The Department of Homeland security simply is not equipped with the resources to address this spectrum of issues, such as an individual at risk of radicalization because of a mental illness like Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, or encourage positive group dynamics when securitization of an entire population is occurring.

In terms of radicalization occurring in vulnerable communities, it is worthwhile to consider the case of Minneapolis. Though the levels of radicalization are statistically quite low given the size of the population, there have been few key cases that have received a significant amount of media attention in recent years. Statistics from 2015 indicate that over 250 Americans had attempted to join ISIS and that one in four of them were from Minnesota.⁸⁶ One factor that Mirahmadi identified which is applicable in this case is the unemployment rate. The unemployment rate among the highly Somali populated Cedar-Riverside community in Minneapolis is 17% in comparison to the 4% of the greater Minneapolis community.⁸⁷ If a high unemployment rate is found within an already vulnerable community, the members of this community may feel a higher sense of being marginalized if they are not contributing back to the greater community. This is one way in which ISIS has been successful at targeting vulnerable individuals with their methods of online recruitment.

Minneapolis is taking steps to address the threat of radicalization that stems from Mirahmadi's categorizations regarding unemployment as well as a quest for significance. One productive way is the recent opening of a \$1.5 million job-training center aimed at helping residents, mostly Somalis, find jobs in Minneapolis. The funds for this were raised by the city,

⁸⁶ Jamie Yuccas, "Minneapolis community struggles with ISIS recruiting tactics," *CBS News*, November 2015.

⁸⁷ Alexia Fernandez Campbell, "When Refugees Can't Find Work," *CityLab*, October 24, 2016.

the county, and local contributors. It is important to note that funds from the Department of Justice were turned down because of fear of law enforcement targeting the Somali community.⁸⁸ Community leaders recognize the vulnerability of young, unemployed Somali men. Mubashir Jeilani is the director of the West Bank Community Coalition and he stated that “unemployed Somali men are susceptible to extremist ideologies, but that it’s no different from other disenfranchised youth turning to crime when they can’t fit into society or the formal economy. When you don’t have a job or go to school, you are going to want to find a sense of belonging...kids are joining extremist groups for the exact same reasons that kids join gangs.”

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Fostering a sense of belonging within a community can be particularly difficult when the community is multicultural. Furthermore, given the rise of Islamophobia in the West, promoting the notion of community can be even more challenging.⁹⁰ The meanings and roles of defining multiculturalism and the role it has within the framework for policy making has been contested within academia. One approach has been constructed to view multiculturalism through two different frames; as a fact and as an ideology. As a fact, multiculturalism can be understood as the presence of people with diverse ethnic or racial existing in a single polity.⁹¹ As an ideology, multiculturalism is defined as a political response that assumes cultural differences, regarding beliefs, values, habits, and observances accompany the demographic diversity.⁹² In contrast to this two sided approach, Bloemraad and Wright suggest four different categories that can

⁸⁸ Alexia Fernandez Campbell, “When Refugees Can’t Find Work,” *CityLab*, October 24, 2016

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ “Islamophobia: Understanding Anti-Muslim Sentiment in the West,” Gallup, Inc. 2016, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/157082/islamophobia-understanding-anti-muslim-sentiment-west.aspx>

⁹¹ Jack Citrin, David O. Sears, Christopher Muste, and Cara Wong. “Multiculturalism in American Public Opinion,” *British Journal of Political Science* 31:2 (2001): 249

⁹² Ibid., p 249

deconstruct the meaning of multiculturalism; “multiculturalism as a demographic fact about a population; as a political philosophy of equality or justice; as a set of policies to recognize and accommodate ethno-racial and religious diversity; or as a public discourse recognizing and valorizing diversity.”⁹³ This thesis is primarily concerned with the idea of multiculturalism as it pertains to demographic facts regarding a specific population as well as the creation of a public discourse that recognizes diversity. Multiculturalism as a public discourse is of importance given that it has been successful in “advancing narratives of pluralism” that reflect “discourse adopted by governments or institutions to signal recognition and valorization of diversity.”⁹⁴

Central to the debate of multiculturalism is another debate regarding interculturalism. The use of terminology regarding policy formation has become highly contested in recent scholarship. The focuses tend to fall on whether multiculturalism has produced poor policies, how multiculturalism and interculturalism compete with one another, or what level (macro or micro) each is or is not appropriate for. Therefore, a distinction between the two is important to understand when attempting to conceptualize the notion of community. Modood and Meer have contributed a great deal to the debate and suggest examining interculturalism as positively contrasted to multiculturalism.⁹⁵ They propose four ways of conceptualizing their argument in regards of political implications and practices. First, they offer that interculturalism is greater than coexistence and rather understanding that interculturalism is geared towards dialogue and interaction in contrast with multiculturalism.⁹⁶ Second, interculturalism is portrayed as less

⁹³ Irene Bloemraad and Matthew Wright. “‘Utter failure’ or unity out of diversity? debating and evaluating policies of multiculturalism,” *International Migration Review* 48 (2014): 294

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 299-300

⁹⁵ Tariq Modood and Nasar Meer “How does Interculturalism Contrast with Multiculturalism?” *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, (2011): 1.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3

‘groupist’ and yields more synthesis than multiculturalism.⁹⁷ Third, interculturalism is committed to fostering a stronger sense of the whole when it comes to conceptualizing things such as social cohesion.⁹⁸ Lastly, they argue that where multiculturalism has been relativistic, interculturalism is more critical of illiberal cultural practices.⁹⁹ A positive contrast is therefore necessary in moving forward regarding the use of the two terms in the political and cultural realm. Regarding the aforementioned arguments surrounding the terms, it can be argued that a community, state, nation etc. may be multicultural and adopt multicultural policies. Within this multicultural community may exist a degree of interculturalism. The third point presented by Modood and Meer then becomes critical in investigating the role of interculturalism in multicultural communities when countering violent extremism. An important aspect of interculturalism is the role of communication.¹⁰⁰ Modood and Meer point out that the role of dialogue and reciprocity are also foundations of multiculturalism.¹⁰¹ This argument can be extended by applying positive interculturalistic dialogue which in turns fosters a greater sense of community.

The role of social or societal cohesion within a community is important to consider when examining CVE approaches. A strong sense of societal cohesion may actually render CVE approaches and programs unnecessary. Social cohesion can thus be defined as the quality of interaction between members of a given community.¹⁰² Taking this approach leaves room for

⁹⁷ Tariq Modood and Nasar Meer “How does Interculturalism Contrast with Multiculturalism?” *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, (2011): 3.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 3

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁰⁰ Tariq Modood and Nasar Meer. “Interculturalism, multiculturalism or both?” *Political Insight* 3:1 (2012): 30

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p 31

¹⁰² Georgi Dragolov, *Social cohesion in the western world: What holds societies together: Insights from the social cohesion radar*. (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2016), VIII

understanding that there may be different levels of social cohesion occurring within different communities. Dragolov offers three different foundations that should be considered when analyzing the quality of interactions and relationships amongst members of a community. First, how resilient social relationships are within a horizontal network of members and groups in society. Second, positive emotional ties that individuals have towards their community and the institutions within. Third, focusing on the common good of the community through actions and attitudes of individuals.¹⁰³

Within this framework, individuals serve as the micro level focus in a macro level community. Friedkin furthers this analysis by arguing that social cohesion theories must be grounded in explaining individuals' group membership, attitudes, and behaviors, and then how this is distributed amongst the group.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, social networks within communities need to be studied more as a method for understanding how individuals develop their attitude or behavior.¹⁰⁵ Social cohesion can then be understood as examining the relationship individuals have within a community, how that relationship is formed and distributed, and the quality of that relationship. With this definition, there is room to analyze whether a community fosters a high or low level of social cohesion by examining member attitudes and behaviors especially what they themselves consider to be community-building practices and cohesion. Other indicators of cohesion can be noted by observing intercultural exchanges and communications, and by analyzing government and community policies and programs. This is what this thesis plans to do.

Various Processes of Radicalization

¹⁰³ Georgi Dragolov, *Social cohesion in the western world: What holds societies together: Insights from the social cohesion radar*. (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2016), VIII-IX

¹⁰⁴ Noah E. Friedkin. "Social cohesion". *Annual Review of Sociology* 30:1 (2004;2003): 422

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p 422

Radicalization has been defined in several different ways in scholarly literature. It is necessary to understand that becoming radicalized does not necessarily lead to violent extremism. Throughout history, radical beliefs or ideologies have often yielded successful and positive social change. Thus, radicalization should not be consistently viewed as a “pernicious, dangerous, or destructive way of achieving social change.”¹⁰⁶ Within the specific context of terrorism, radicalization can become conflated and lead to the false interpretation that radicalism is inherently violent. Equating radicalization and violent extremism does little to address the issue of radicalization itself. When focusing on radicalization, it often leads to “implying that radical beliefs are a proxy—or at least a necessary precursor—for terrorism. We know this not to be true. Most people who hold radical ideas do not engage in terrorism, and many terrorists—even those who lay claim to a “cause”—are not deeply ideological and may not “radicalize” in any traditional sense.”¹⁰⁷

A longstanding example of this notion is the Hizb ut-Tahrir transnational organization. This organization can be defined by Western standards as radical, though it poses a “difficult challenge to Western and Muslim governments, since it aims at a radical Islamic goal—the restoration of the Caliphate—but openly rejects violence as a tool of political change.”¹⁰⁸ There is a process that takes place in an individual that has become radicalized that determines whether or not he or she will embrace violent extremism. Dearey argues that the emphasis should not be focused on political agency or potency of the individual, but instead on the weakness or

¹⁰⁶ Melissa Deary, *Radicalization: The Life Writings of Political Prisoners* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 3

¹⁰⁷ Randy Borum. 2011. "Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories." *Journal of Strategic Security* 4, 4 (2011): 7-36.

¹⁰⁸ Emmanuel Karagiannis, and Clark McCauley. “Hizb ut-tahrir al-islami: Evaluating the threat posed by a radical Islamic group that remains nonviolent.” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 18 (2006): 329

fragmentation of their respective community that has made them vulnerable in the first place.¹⁰⁹

This argument is central to the framework of this thesis because it emphasizes that the community should be the focus of radicalization and not the individual. Rather, we should be questioning and examining what factors within a community allowed for someone to become radicalized so much so that he or she engages in violent extremism.

It is not enough to simply question why one individual becomes radicalized so much so that he or she engages in violence. Instead, it is necessary to consider *why* that individual felt compelled to do so within the context of their community. When analyzing violent extremism from a community based perspective, it should be understood that a “cohesive society is characterized by resilient social relations, a positive emotional connectedness between its members and the community, and a pronounced focus on the common good.”¹¹⁰ An individual that feels a strong level of cohesion exists within his or her community will not engage in violent extremism because they would want what is best for the community. A strong level of cohesion would be reflected by a community that is working towards a common good, which can be understood as “actions and attitudes of the members of society that demonstrate solidarity, responsibility for others and engagement for the community as a whole.”¹¹¹ When violent extremism becomes a reality, it represents a breakdown of the cohesive level within the community. It is useful to consider the relationship between individual, community and terrorism as such: “terrorism requires a combination of three things: an alienated individual, a legitimizing ideology (engaged through radicalization), and an enabling environment. Of the three, it is the

¹⁰⁹ Melissa Deary, *Radicalization: The Life Writings of Political Prisoners* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 10

¹¹⁰ Georgi Dragolov, *Social cohesion in the western world: What holds societies together: Insights from the social cohesion radar*. (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2016), 6.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

environment that is most susceptible to positive influences...indeed, working with communities, we have the potential to disrupt the radicalization pathway altogether.”¹¹²

There are multiple theories and processes that explain why an individual might become radicalized which may or may not then lead to violent extremism. To clarify, violent extremism and terrorism are used interchangeably in the following analysis. As previously stated, radicalization does not always lead to violent extremism or terrorism. It is necessary to understand what processes an individual might engage if they personally view violent extremism as legitimate. The following section provides an overview of some of the theories which explain how Islamic extremists may become radicalized.

Some experts in the field have argued that there may be times where violence is the best available rational response.¹¹³ This means that it may be possible “that terrorists are not necessarily terrorists for the sake of terrorism, but rather select terrorism from a range of alternatives as the tactic considered most likely to achieve their aims.”¹¹⁴ Other alternatives may be violent or non-violent protesting or guerilla warfare and it is rational in the mind of an individual to determine that adopting terrorist (or violent extremist) tactics is much more desirable because it gets more attention. The issue with applying this theory is that it is suggesting that an individual only becomes radicalized enough to engage in violent extremism due to the fact that it is the best rational option. It does not address any other reasons as to why an individual becomes radicalized, which implies that the process of radicalization is one that is simple as opposed to complex.

¹¹² Erroll Gregory Southers. “Homegrown violent extremism: Designing a community-based model to reduce the risk of recruitment and radicalization.” (PhD Diss., ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2013), 9.

¹¹³ Jamie Bartlett & Carl Miller. “The Edge of Violence: Towards Telling the Difference Between Violent and Non-Violent Radicalization.” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 24:1 (2012): 12

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 12

Many organizations and researchers have made an effort to break down radicalization into phases that an individual goes through. One specific arrangement of how an individual may become radicalized was developed by the New York Police Department and it suggests that a person goes through four stages: pre-radicalization, self-identification, indoctrination, and Jihadization.¹¹⁵ Overall, this arrangement is not acceptable as a basic understanding for radicalization because it falls short of addressing other aspects of radicalization and suggests that it is a clearly defined process. It also gives utilizes the vague description of “jihadization” defined as “phase in which members of the cluster accept their individual duty to participate in jihad and self-designate themselves as holy warriors or mujahedeen.”¹¹⁶ This is problematic for a number of reasons. First, it makes it seem as though every radicalized individual engages in acts of violent extremism and second, it implies that all violent extremism is a result of Islam. This approach, which was released in 2007, was widely criticized by both academics and advocacy groups due to the fact that it encourages a method of targeting a large number of people who are otherwise innocent.¹¹⁷ This 90 page report made baseless claims, such as stating that “radicalization incubators” exist and serve as venues that provide an atmosphere for “extremist fodder or fuel for radicalizing.”¹¹⁸ These venues could be “mosques, more likely incubators include cafes, cab driver hangouts, flophouses, prisons, student associations, nongovernmental organizations, hookah (water pipe) bars, butcher shops and book stores.”¹¹⁹ This report accentuates why approaching CVE and radicalization through a securitized perspective may be damaging; it assumed such things that every group of Muslims who hang out

¹¹⁵ Jamie Bartlett & Carl Miller. “The Edge of Violence: Towards Telling the Difference Between Violent and Non-Violent Radicalization.” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 24:1 (2012): 13

¹¹⁶ New York Police Department. *Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat*. 2007.

¹¹⁷ Mike German. “Debunked NYPD Radicalization Report Just Won’t Die,” *ACLU* (2013)

¹¹⁸ New York Police Department. *Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat*. 2007.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

together in a book store might be signs of radicalization. This type of approach in understanding radicalization does more harm than it does good and it can be used as a divisive tool in multicultural communities. It is important to note that the outcome of this report resulted in two different lawsuits against the NYPD regarding unlawful investigations on Muslims and the NYPD had to remove the report from their website.¹²⁰

Viewing radicalization in the west as a counterculture provides a unique viewpoint as to how citizens in the west become radicalized. It is possible that by utilizing this counterculture theory and expanding it to other geographic locations outside of the west an understanding for how youth or potentially at-risk populations around the globe become radicalized could be gained. A counterculture addresses multiple issues that may cause an individual to become radicalized. Hemmingsen utilizes the concept of a cultic milieu which she defines as “something which exists at all times in literally all modern societies. It is a minority position in contrast to a majority which has the right to define ‘normality.’”¹²¹ By addressing that there is a cultic milieu existing at all times and in all societies it provides an understanding for the emergence of a counterculture. A counterculture is going to emerge as a population who recognizes certain mainstream status-quos and rejects it as being acceptable within a given society. Once there is an established counterculture, different reasons for joining it become possible. There are four archetypes that may cause an individual to be drawn to Jihadi counterculture and they are action, social belonging, intellectual challenges, and being counter.¹²²

Individuals that are seeking action will only be satisfied by what they perceive as being

¹²⁰ Brian Michael Jenkins and Richard Daddario. *A Symbolic Purging of the NYPD Radicalization Report*. RAND Corporation. January 26, 2016.

¹²¹ Ann-Sophie Hemmingsen. *The Attractions of Jihadism: An Identity Approach to Three Danish Terrorism Cases and the Gallery of Characters around Them*. (PhD diss., University of Copenhagen, 2010), 77

¹²² Ann-Sophie Hemmingsen. *The Attractions of Jihadism: An Identity Approach to Three Danish Terrorism Cases and the Gallery of Characters around Them*. (PhD diss., University of Copenhagen, 2010), 108

active, which in this case is violent extremism or being engaged in violent jihad. Social belonging suggests that an individual becomes radicalized because s/he is seeking the feeling of belonging or friendship and finds it within a counterculture. The need for an intellectual challenge can be stimulated when belonging to a counterculture because an individual will be subject to discussions and debates as well as responsible for studying aspects that represent the counterculture, such as the ideology pertaining to it. Lastly, being counter implies that there are individuals attracted to a counterculture simply because it satisfies the need to be a part of something that rejects the mainstream status-quo in a way that cannot be ignored.¹²³ The theory of a Jihadi counterculture existing in the west (and arguably anywhere else in the world) provides a clear and applicable understanding for why an individual becomes radicalized. However, it is important to note that the complexity lies in the fact that an individual may be attracted to the Jihadi counterculture for more than one of the previously listed reasons. This theory, too, focuses on individual motivations for radicalization instead of examining the role played by communities in engaging and fostering connections.

Social movement theory is another framework that can be applied in an attempt to understand the radicalization process. In the case of extremist behavior, social movement theory is defined as the idea “that people are drawn into movements for reasons other than those directly related to the aims of the group itself.”¹²⁴ This could also tie into the concept of social belonging as it implies that an individual may become involved in a terrorist network before they are fully aware of what the network actually represents. Social movement theory explains that there four concepts within the radicalization process that can aid in the comprehension of what is

¹²³ Ibid., p. 108-110

¹²⁴ Jamie Bartlett & Carl Miller. “The Edge of Violence: Towards Telling the Difference Between Violent and Non-Violent Radicalization.” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 24:1 (2012): 13

happening, which are feeling an emotional pull, the excitement and thrill that comes with Jihad, possessing a certain status or honor code, and peer pressure.¹²⁵ Emotional pull suggests that individuals are susceptible to feeling emotional towards the idea of being a Muslim that is oppressed. This ties into the formation of a counterculture in the sense that emotional individuals that form a group can then manifest emotions of anger together. Excitement and thrill seeking accurately addresses how some extremists become radicalized, but it especially is applicable to home grown extremists. In this type, the motivation for radicalization is not purely ideological, rather it is viewed as being cool, which is arguably similar to being counter. Status addresses the fact that individuals seek a higher status and that violent jihad provides an individual with what they are seeking.¹²⁶ Lastly, peer pressure acknowledges that an individual may become involved in a violent organization due to feeling pressured, but it also explains that an individual may actually become violent within that organization as a result of peer pressure. Also, when status and peer pressure become intertwined it can be understood that individuals feel peer pressure amongst the group to achieve a higher status and therefore they are more willing to act violent.¹²⁷

The utilization of these theories allow the radicalization process to be understood on a level that surpasses the notion that radicalization is solely ideologically based. To adapt that way of thinking would be inaccurate in both understanding non-violent radicalization as well as radicalization that leads to engaging in violent extremism. Crone argues that “ideology is not necessarily a precondition for violence... violence can, conversely, be a precondition for

¹²⁵ Jamie Bartlett & Carl Miller. “The Edge of Violence: Towards Telling the Difference Between Violent and Non-Violent Radicalization.” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 24:1 (2012): 13

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 13

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 13

engaging with extremist ideology.”¹²⁸ She also differentiates among categories of extremists based off of fieldwork conducted in Copenhagen among groups she terms ‘extremist milieu.’¹²⁹ Crone writes that “extremist milieus are heterogeneous, including people of various kinds: some are interested in Islamism as a visible sign of opposition; others are attracted by action and violence.”¹³⁰ Thus, there are several contributing factors that could lead an individual to radicalize initially, but it is important to understand the reasons why this person is at risk for radicalization in the first place.

Determining how to measure radicalization can be difficult. However, there are suggestions for how to measure it at a community level. First, it is necessary to note that there may be some communities that possess characteristics or qualities that make individuals more vulnerable to radicalization, thus increasing the rate of radicalization.¹³¹ Certain characteristics may be living in a Diaspora Community where an individual is caught between integration and traditional norms, living in a deprived community (lacking resources or opportunities), or fostering a disrupted view of real or perceived norms within that community.¹³² Regardless of characteristics that make a community susceptible to radicalization, there needs to exist some framework for measuring this. One suggestion has been to focus on three aspects; the amount of terrorist activity in a community, the amount of ideologically motivated crimes (either financial or violent), and the number of attempted (thwarted) terrorist attacks.¹³³ Measuring the amount of terrorist activity when trying to measure radicalization is problematic simply because of the term

¹²⁸ Manni Crone. “Radicalization revisited: Violence, politics and the skills of the body.” *International Affairs* 92:3 (2016): 592

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 591

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 592

¹³¹ Shira Fishman, *Community-Level Indicators of Radicalization: A Data and Methods Task Force*, College Park, MD, START 2009: 19

¹³² Ibid., p. 20-21

¹³³ Shira Fishman, *Community-Level Indicators of Radicalization: A Data and Methods Task Force*, College Park, MD, START 2009: 21

‘terrorist activity’. This assumes that all levels of radicalization are violent, which is a severe misconception. This will therefore be excluded when analyzing radicalization (or lack thereof) in a specific community for this project. Instead, measuring radicalization will be done by considering the latter two points, as well as measuring the amount of activity related to radicalization by examining existing legal cases for those accused of radical behavior. Also, qualitative indicators based on interviews and participant observations will help to build a context regarding whether existing community members regard radicalization as an issue of concern.

Community and CVE

Scholarship regarding the relationship between community and CVE is limited, and even more limited when considering the context of US policy and practice. Most of the existing debates are occurring between few key scholars and various institutes and organizations involved in CVE. In light of the recent allegations of shifting CVE to focus solely on Islamic extremism, the Brookings Institute responded with an article stating that fixing CVE will require more than just a name change.¹³⁴ The article goes on to explain that many programs have refused to use the name CVE for fear of community-backlash and that organizations associated with CVE prefer terms such as “building community resilience.”¹³⁵ It is critical here to consider the implications of refusing to use an official name as well as the recent rejections of funding.¹³⁶ These two factors together could indicate a decline in community cooperation with current CVE efforts.

¹³⁴ Eric Rosand. “Fixing CVE in the United States requires more than just a name change.” *Brookings Institute*. February 16, 2017.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Tami Abdollah. “Fourth Muslim group rejects federal grant to fight extremism,” *ABC News*, February 11, 2017.

Rosand also discusses the implications of DHS being so heavily involved with CVE, such as creating a community fearing entrapment and the FBI's incapability to move beyond traditional law enforcement tool kits.¹³⁷ Most importantly, Rosand states that CVE should have been controlled by the Department of Education or another appropriate NGO.¹³⁸ Rosand suggests that federal involvement building with local, community based partnerships is problematic in the sense that there may be a growing distrust of Washington within communities utilizing CVE.¹³⁹ It is clear that there is an increasing awareness that the current framework for CVE is questionable. An important takeaway from this article is that the balance between law enforcement involvements in CVE is a grey area. Law enforcement should be refocused on the bettering of the community without the context of CVE, as CVE delegated and operated solely by law enforcement, DHS, or DOJ can automatically criminalize marginalized individuals within a community.

The United States Institute of Peace (USIP) is a D.C. based institute that was founded by Congress. They analyze current CVE efforts in the US through a peacebuilding perspective. They address the securitization of civil society in a special report released in September of 2013. The report states that:

“Civil society has a role in the prevention of extremist violence independent of engagement with the security sector or other state actors. In certain fragile environments, it may be dangerous or counterproductive or inappropriate to collaborate with police in identifying groups of individuals who are at risk of radicalization or pose a security threat.”¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Eric Rosand. “Fixing CVE in the United States requires more than just a name change.” *Brookings Institute*. February 16, 2017.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Georgia Holmer. “Countering Violent Extremism: A Peacebuilding Perspective,” *United States Institute for Peace*. September, 2013.

The role of law enforcement in an official capacity pertaining to CVE should be limited. CVE efforts could be negatively impacted by the presence of law enforcement due to concerns of tactics such as profiling. A peacebuilders approach is more suitable for CVE efforts because peacebuilding is better suited to working within “grey environments in which roles, identities, and relationships can change rapidly and significantly.”¹⁴¹ Since peacebuilders and their organizations define violence within a broader context, they are likely more suited to deal with topics such as CVE in which violence can fall into the grey environment of violent intent or action. Peacebuilding also operates within a framework of a ‘do no harm methodology’ in which they consider the long term implications and possible unanticipated negative consequences of programs.¹⁴² This is critical for CVE because unanticipated negative consequences must constantly be considered, such as the potential negative consequence for communities when community-based organizations rejected CVE funding. A peacebuilding perspective utilizing the do no harm methodology would have been useful here because it could have foreshadowed how these critical, community based organizations would be impacted by not accepting government funding.

The argument that community engagement is the best way to address the threat of radicalization appears to be growing. The role of law enforcement seems to be one of the more recently contested factors to this argument. It is increasingly acknowledged that law enforcement would be more effective by embracing community policing, which is what is happening in Metro Detroit.¹⁴³ This type of policing gets law enforcement out of their traditional role and more involved with the community they serve which ultimately builds stronger relationships. During

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Dustin Walsh. “New Focus for Officers: Community Policing.” *Crain’s Detroit Business*. July 10, 2016.

the fieldwork analysis this will be further discussed. Going forward, it would be best to “embrace a more holistic, community-based effort. Counterterrorism and law enforcement professionals have limited resources...those with the greatest capacity to identify and help disrupt the path to violent extremism are the very communities from which potential terrorists arise.”¹⁴⁴

Interfaith Dialogue

The role that interfaith dialogue can have on countering violent extremism has been widely overlooked in academia. Again, this seems to be a topic that is being more carefully considered by independent institutes and non-profits across the globe but less prevalent in academic literature on CVE. When attempting to find scholarship on this topic search results brought back various efforts from Kosovo, the Netherlands, and Pakistan. More notable is the result of a 2016 posting on the US Department of State’s website for a \$600,000 grant for CVE and Interfaith programs in Tanzania.¹⁴⁵ This project was funded by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor and the project description states that it sought organizations that could “mitigate religious tensions between communities and address drivers of marginalization that exacerbate religious tensions and may contribute to conditions that could lead to violent extremism in Tanzania.”¹⁴⁶ Similar to this, the Organization of Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) held a meeting in Vienna in April 2016 to discuss the role that interfaith dialogue had on CVE. Their conclusion was that “interfaith dialogue and co-operation are key to

¹⁴⁴ Erroll Gregory Southers, “Homegrown violent extremism: Designing a community-based model to reduce the risk of recruitment and radicalization.” (PhD Diss., ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2013), 10.

¹⁴⁵ Deepika Singh. “U.S. Department of State Bureau of DRL: Countering Violent Extremism and Interfaith Program in Tanzania,” *Funds for NGOs*. February 16, 2016.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

fostering cohesion and preventing violent extremism.”¹⁴⁷

The lack of scholarship regarding interfaith dialogue as a method to counter violent extremism specific to the United States is concerning. It is evident that there is an understanding that religious leaders are key in countering violent extremism, but the dialogue needs to also extend past the religious leaders and be inclusive of the community. Religious leaders in the interfaith circle are already often highly educated and in agreement that their religion can foster community-building and coexist with other religions. Their work is important, but it is more important to consider how interfaith dialogue can bring together a group of diverse individuals and make them feel as though they are part of a broader community. Through this setting, extremist narratives, if they emerge, can be challenged in a nurturing manner and with people that vulnerable individuals trust and have a relationship with.

Interfaith dialogue and organizations without the context of violent extremism have been critiqued, praised, and criticized through many different perspectives within academia. Criticisms often target the actual content of the dialogue, such as addressing the fears of non-Muslim Americans regarding Islamic extremism or contentious topics such as Jerusalem and who actually has legitimate claims to the Holy City.¹⁴⁸ However, this does not necessarily matter in the context of creating a cohesive community. If community members can coexist with one another and bond over other things, they do not need to agree on every topic. Rather, individuals are allowed to disagree with one another on things and they can still have relationships with one another despite this.

¹⁴⁷ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. “Interfaith dialogue and co-operation key to fostering cohesion and preventing violent extremism” April 2016.

¹⁴⁸ Jane Idleman Smith. *Muslims, Christians, and the Challenge of Interfaith Dialogue*. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007), 85.

Metro Detroit has an expansive interfaith movement that is key to bringing together various community members for community events. Kate McCarthy addresses this type of occurrence when she writes that “around folding tables in church basements, synagogue libraries, or community centers in cities and towns across the country, Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Hindus, Muslims, Mormons, Baha’is, Buddhists, Unitarians, Sikhs, and others come together on a regular basis to learn about each other, coordinate soup kitchen staffing, lobby local leaders on social justice issues, organize multifaith prayer services, coordinate staffing of prison and hospital chaplaincies, or respond to a community crisis.”¹⁴⁹ This is the type of community based work that can counter violent extremism because it is bringing people together to do things for the good of the community. It imparts a sense of belonging. Interfaith organizations also help foster a sense of religious cohesion. Religious cohesion is critical in the overall level of social cohesion and community in multicultural communities. Religious cohesion can be understood as relationships among individuals of different religions, and “it is clear that faith groups can, with sufficient physical and human resources, make an effective contribution to community cohesion.”¹⁵⁰

Addressing the gaps: Community, Social Cohesion, and their relationship to Countering Violent Extremism

It is now evident that a central argument is that a socially cohesive community will be resilient to violent extremism. As stated previously, social cohesion can be understood as the quality of interaction taking place between community members. Social cohesion can be

¹⁴⁹ Kate McCarthy. *Interfaith encounters in America*. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 85

¹⁵⁰ Andrew Holden. *Religious Cohesion in Times of Conflict*. (London, England: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2009), 21.

strengthened by community gatherings, interfaith organizations, community outreach and development, policies reflecting a multicultural population, etc. Members of a strong socially cohesive community will have positive emotions to its members and institutions and will thus act in the best interest of the overall community.¹⁵¹ This thesis addresses a substantial gap in existing scholarship by engaging a strong socially cohesive community within the context of violent extremism, or lack thereof.

Scholarly literature regarding the role of community cohesion in CVE efforts is limited. Preexisting literature largely focuses on various European nations and it is difficult to draw comparisons between these nations and the US for a number of reasons. First, CVE in Europe has existed for a longer period of time and, because of this, programs and policies look different. Second, and previously addressed, the identity of Arabs and Muslims in the US is much different than their counterparts in Europe.

This analysis will contribute to existing scholarship by analyzing how a socially cohesive community creates conditions where causes of extremism can be addressed if necessary. It builds a sense of belonging and trust among communities. Thus, potential extremism becomes unlikely. It will approach this by analyzing the meaning of community as well as key themes that emerged during interviews and participation observations during fieldwork in the Metro Detroit area in November and December 2016.

Methodological Approach

This thesis will utilize an ethnographic approach in order to gain a more comprehensive perspective on the role of community engagement in creating social cohesion. An ethnographic

¹⁵¹ Georgi Dragolov, *Social cohesion in the western world: What holds societies together: Insights from the social cohesion radar*. (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2016), 6.

approach will engage with community members and allow for a deeper understanding of how the relationships within a multicultural community are constructed and how cohesion is built through these relationships. By hearing from members of a community about their insights on community, interfaith dialogue, and violent extremism, a new perspective regarding how intercultural dialogues work to create meanings will emerge. This approach allows for a study of the conditions of possibility which can contribute to the reduction of social problems, including radicalization, but does not presume a linear causation model.

There have been few scholars who have examined issues within the field of violent extremism and terrorism by approaching it ethnographically. Ethnographic field research is defined as the study of groups and people in their everyday lives.¹⁵² Central to this type of research and this thesis are two methods that are part of ethnographic research; participant observation and interviewing. Participant observation occurs when a researcher enters a social setting, gets to know the people within it, and observes what is happening.¹⁵³ Relatedly, interviewing is useful when the subject is willing and able to describe aspects of social life.¹⁵⁴

Harmonie Toros has been at the forefront in conducting fieldwork for scholarship pertaining to terrorism. Toros advocates that “field research can restore the much needed ‘before’ and ‘after’ to the study of terrorism. It incorporates into the study human beings, relationships, and processes that exist and have significance outside and beyond the acts of terrorism.”¹⁵⁵ Conducting fieldwork in the Philippines to study various armed groups allowed Toros to redefine

¹⁵² Robert E. Emerson, Rachel I. Fretz, ad Linda L. Shaw. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes: Second Edition*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 1

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 1

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 14

¹⁵⁵ Harmonie Toros, “Terrorists, scholars and ordinary people: Confronting terrorism studies with field experiences.” *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 1:2 (2008): 289

terrorism, or rather increase the complexity of conceptualizing the term. For example, Toros found that armed groups were or were not designated as terrorist organizations on the basis of the government deciding whether they would or would not engage in dialogue with them.¹⁵⁶ Adding this kind of perspective to the understanding of terrorism is invaluable because it provides a way to understand the role of government in creating the narrative for an organization.

In order to curb future violence, the myths surrounding terrorism can also be deconstructed by utilizing ethnographic approaches.¹⁵⁷ Mahmood argues that there is a myth surrounding the construction of who and what a terrorist is, and that this is most apparent in the attitude of academics and policymakers' unwillingness to approach such characters.¹⁵⁸ This presents a problem when trying to comprehend social issues such as radicalization and deradicalization. If the alleged perpetrator of violence cannot even be approached in an attempt to gain insight on their thought process, then the cycle of violence becomes more difficult to combat. Mahmood has conducted extensive fieldwork within the Sikh community in Punjab.¹⁵⁹ She acknowledges that studies of violence that directly engage the perpetrator are quite rare and an overwhelming amount of literature focuses on the perspective of the victim.¹⁶⁰ This is something that future literature that focuses on violence in terms of terrorism or extremism needs to challenge.

There have been a limited number of academics researching radicalization by conducting ethnographic fieldwork. Crone acknowledges this when she writes that while researching

¹⁵⁶ Harmonie Toros, "Terrorists, scholars and ordinary people: Confronting terrorism studies with field experiences." *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 1:2 (2008): 283-284

¹⁵⁷ Cynthia Keppley Mahmood. "Terrorism, myth, and the power of ethnographic praxis," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 30:5 (2001): 520

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 525

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 528

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 525

radicalization (in Europe) “we are confronted with a huge problem: the lack of independent, in-depth, ethnographic knowledge about extremist environments.”¹⁶¹ Research tends to rely on already existing bodies of work based off of open source material which causes the literature to become redundant.¹⁶² Some academics have even been critical of the breakdown between academics and the intelligence community when it comes to data sharing. Sageman states that most of the data regarding terrorism is held within the intelligence community which is then not shared with the academic community.¹⁶³

The research done regarding radicalization by Hemmingsen is invaluable when trying to understand what makes an individual vulnerable to radicalization. Her fieldwork was conducted over the course of two years in Denmark and includes narratives of individuals convicted of planning terrorism in conjunction with individuals who had not been in trouble with law enforcement.¹⁶⁴ She is able to analyze her research and fill a gap in literature by suggesting that radicalization be considered as a counterculture. This is perhaps one of the most useful conceptualizations when attempting to understand radicalization in the West.

Ethnography is able to draw in the critical foundations of culture and society in ways that traditional research cannot do. It is one thing to research a topic and suggest a new way to improve it or a new policy, but it is a completely different thing to engage with the actual subjects of research. Zulaika and Douglass highlight this importance when reflecting on a ‘study’

¹⁶¹ Manni Crone. “Radicalization revisited: Violence, politics and the skills of the body.” *International Affairs* 92:3 (2016): 591

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 591.

¹⁶³ Marc Sageman. “The stagnation in terrorism research.” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 26 (2014): 572.

¹⁶⁴ Ann-Sophie Hemmingsen. *The Attractions of Jihadism: An Identity Approach to Three Danish Terrorism Cases and the Gallery of Characters around Them*. (PhD diss., University of Copenhagen, 2010), 11.

of violence done by ‘experts’ in the autonomous Basque region in 1985.¹⁶⁵ These experts were “never seen in public, did not interview the people, made no presentations of their results during or after the research, and consulted no Basque scholar or political activist.”¹⁶⁶ The result was conclusions such as the problem was terrorism and there was a terrorist group in Southern France—which was not true.¹⁶⁷ Zulaika and Douglass are here able to highlight the importance of context; experts’ expertise is questionable if there is no engagement with the field that they are studying. The lack of cultural, political, or social exposure is especially alarming when it ends with false claims. Also important to note is the conclusion that Zulaika and Douglass make that these experts dedicated a significant amount of their analysis to other European terrorist organizations.¹⁶⁸ They write that “their fundamental assumption about Basque violence is that it *is* terrorism and therefore belongs to a particularly heinous category of behavior.”¹⁶⁹ This is particularly concerning because it brings forth the Western obsession with terrorism and how the very definition of terrorism can be problematic because it can be misused and improperly categorize a type of violent behavior. In this context, this group of experts knew there was violence occurring but could not be bothered to try to understand the risk factors that were leading individuals to engage in violence in the first place.

Ethnographic approaches to studying violence, either through participant observation or interviews, are necessary to gain a better understanding of how communities and individuals make sense of violence and other issues. Theories that are drawn from conjectures about the way individuals get to the point of legitimizing violence could possibly be lacking in full

¹⁶⁵ Joseba Zulaika and William A. Douglass. *Terror and Taboo: The Follies, Fables, and Faces of Terrorism*. (New York: Routledge, 1996), 49.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

comprehension due to the lack in interaction with the perpetrator. Likewise, an ethnographic approach in a (as society defines it, vulnerable) community that has continued to prevent violent extremism from gaining hold deserves to be examined as well. Learning from the individuals directly involved in cultivating or preventing violent extremism provides context and in-depth meanings of their actions. When considering CVE in the United States and ethnography, it is evident that more field based research is needed.

One of the primary uses of narratives within the subfield of security studies (and in International Relations more generally) is autoethnography. Autoethnography is defined as “an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno).”¹⁷⁰ This approach treats research as a political, socially-just, and socially-conscious act and therefore ultimately results in both process and product.¹⁷¹ The process is derived from being a part of the culture and sharing experiences which then lead to the creation of the product.¹⁷²

The purpose of autoethnography is to engage in the culture that is being studied in order to provide a more comprehensive analysis and interpretation.¹⁷³ Therefore, researchers who utilize an autoethnographic approach are attempting to construct an understanding of the social and political by analyzing the role of the interaction of self with others.¹⁷⁴ Simply stated, autoethnography can be understood as a cultural analysis through personal narrative.¹⁷⁵ This methodological approach allows the researcher to reflect on their feelings and emotions in

¹⁷⁰ Carolyn Ellis, Tony E. Adams, & Arthur P. Bochner. "Autoethnography: An Overview." *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 12:1 (2011)

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Marie Breen-Smyth, “Theorising the “suspect community”: counterterrorism, security practices and the public imagination” *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 7:2 (2014): 224.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 224

¹⁷⁵ Robin M Boylorn and Mark P. Orbe. *Critical autoethnography: Intersecting cultural identities in everyday life*. (Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2013), 17

connection to political and social context. It also allows the researcher to discuss self in light of political and social issues. These types of observations are useful in security studies because they allow for a deeper analysis to be formed, in this case regarding a controversial topic.

In Chapter 3, ethnographic fieldwork is combined with an autoethnographic method in order to present information regarding how interfaith communities in Metro Detroit perceive extremism, and related issues. Similar to the research of Toros, Zulaika and Douglass, Mahmood, and others, my research utilizes ethnography, especially analyzing the narratives of various community members, as well as my own experiences. Research and analysis for this thesis will rely on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Metro Detroit. This will occur in two different manners; indirect and direct. Indirect fieldwork is based on participant observation and will be conducted by observing interfaith events. Direct fieldwork is based on interviews conducted with community members in Metro Detroit. Interviews were conducted with religious leaders, educators, interfaith activists, law enforcement, and general members of the community.

Concerns

Concerns for conducting the research for this thesis are the securitization and marginalization of one population; Islamic community members in the United States. However, it is extremely important to include the viewpoint of this marginalized population when attempting to engage with successful methods of preventing radicalization. It is also important to note that this thesis is not exclusively interviewing Muslim community members. Instead, I will interview community members representing several demographics in order to determine what the role of community means to them, how they actively engage in participating within their community, and their views on radicalization and violent extremism both internal and external of their community.

The limitations of this research involve questioning why other cities across the United States have not looked toward a successful model as an attempt to better integrate marginalized populations. Coupled with this limitation is the selecting of a site where Islamic radicalization has not been much of an issue. In doing so, it is possible that individuals within this community may not have much to contribute towards the study of radicalization itself. Since there is not much pre-existing scholarship regarding this question from this perspective to refer to, conclusions will have to be drawn by an in-depth analysis of the fieldwork.

The key themes of community, law enforcement and their relationship within the community, and interfaith activism are best explored by a fieldwork-based ethnographic approach. By engaging with both the social and political of Metro Detroit, important analyses regarding how community cohesion plays a role in CVE can be formed. By talking with individuals in the community and observing both behavior of community members and community events, it becomes apparent that there is a high level of community cohesion in Metro Detroit that has likely contributed to the low levels of violent extremism or radicalization.

Chapter Three: Analysis of Community Cohesion based Fieldwork in Metro Detroit

I conducted the fieldwork for this thesis over the course of November and December 2016. Following the presidential election, this was an important and challenging time to be embarking on such a topic in Metro Detroit. The attitudes toward the election of Donald Trump varied person by person; some were scared for what the future would look like and others were pleased and hopeful. This was evident from conversations I had, such as with Amal who spoke of how much anxiety she had been experiencing, to an interview with an interfaith activist mentioning that some of her Muslim neighbors had voted for Trump.

Several themes began emerging when I was conducting interviews; community, the relationship between citizens and law enforcement, interfaith activism, civic engagement, and the perception of Arabs and Muslims in mainstream media were the most common. The analysis portion of Chapter three will focus on these themes in an attempt to shed light on how each factor contributes to creating a cohesive community. I will also discuss the interfaith events I attended as a means to demonstrate the importance of interfaith activism in a multifaith community. Thus, this chapter will summarize and analyze the ethnographic research I conducted for this thesis. It will draw upon my participant observations and interviews with community members

For the purpose of clarity, I will introduce the individuals that were interviewed by listing their pseudonyms and a brief description below.

- Abigail is an educator at a Metro Detroit educational institution. She specializes in several areas, but pertinent to this thesis is her specialization in various topics regarding Arab and Muslims living in Detroit.
- Rabbi Jonah is in charge of Social Action at a Reform Temple in Metro Detroit.
- Imam Omar is an Imam at one of the many mosques in Hamtramck. He is Yemeni and speaks limited English. His interview was translated by a member of the mosque named Yasser, who also participated in the same interview.

- Officer Smith is a Michigan State Police Officer in Metro Detroit. He handles media contact, public relations, and recruiting.
- Linda is a prominent interfaith activist involved with several different interfaith organizations and initiatives in Metro Detroit. She is of the Jewish faith.
- Reverend Betty is a pastor and social worker that is involved in interfaith work across the globe.
- Marwan is a Dearborn lawyer and political activist

Reflections on Reception

Metro Detroit is notorious for high crime rates. Though these rates are steadily decreasing, their implications still affect the way that outsiders frame narratives regarding the areas within these localities.¹⁷⁶ Given that this covers quite a large and diverse geographical location, there are several different narratives that exist about Metro Detroit. They can be positive, such as Dearborn being a cultural hub for inclusion, or negative, such as Hamtramck being the city in the United States that “forces Sharia Law on American citizens.”¹⁷⁷ The thing about these outside narratives is that they are largely created and shaped by individuals who have not actually visited the places they are speaking of, but instead chose to rely on media sources who have clear goals of spreading hateful propaganda. This false narrative phenomena was evident in the reaction of some people who I spoke with about my research, with many of these people being within my own family. I will share a few examples that highlight this.

A member of my family resides in a “nicer” part of Metro Detroit and to my knowledge does not explore the “bad” parts. Her partner is from Hamtramck and refuses to let my family member travel there alone, citing how dangerous it is. When I shared that I would be going to Hamtramck for my research, I was subject to constant pestering because of “how dangerous it

¹⁷⁶ Citi-Data: Crime in Detroit, Michigan. <http://www.city-data.com/crime/crime-Detroit-Michigan.html>

¹⁷⁷ Traylor, Signey. “First Muslim Ruled City Council Forces SHARIA LAW on American Citizens” *US Herald*.

is.” During an interview with Rabbi Jonah, who resides in an affluent part of Metro Detroit, I shared tales of these encounters with my family member with him. Rabbi Jonah frequents Hamtramck and his response was utter laughter, stating that he “takes his kids to Hamtramck all the time and that it is perfectly safe.” These interactions serve as evidence for the idea that people create a vision of a location, without taking the time to go there and experience it for themselves. The unwarranted concerns did little to deter me and mostly just served as a temporary source of annoyance and frustration. It did not make me the least bit concerned and upon actually visiting Hamtramck I found the concern for my safety to be comical and unnecessary. However, it is worth considering how perceptions about places and peoples shapes people’s behavior (like that of my family member) and thus legitimates certain actions (not going to “bad” parts of Detroit).

Another example of a false narrative that I experienced was that of a family friend. This woman had been involved in the identification of a wanted person attempting to flee the United States through the Detroit airport. She worked at the airport during the time and her diligence led to the arrest of this man who was suspected of terrorism related charges. This one interaction with a Muslim had called into question the role of the greater community. This family friend warned me of how dangerous it could be to do what I was doing, stating that “you never know about people and what their intentions are.” This, once again, indicates how people judge others based on their perceptions and how the actions of one individual can be taken as examples of entire groups or communities. For multicultural communities, such attitudes towards each other can lead—and have led—to increased tension and divisions, such as increases in hate crimes.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁸ Brian Levin. “Special Status Report: Hate Crime in the United States,” Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism; California State University, San Bernardino. 2016.

The last example comes from another member of my family. When sharing my research with him, he brushed it off impassively and seemed uninterested. This is a person that regularly watches biased media sources notorious for having extremist right-wing perspectives. When I shared that I would be travelling to Hamtramck to speak with an Imam, he responded by complaining about it being the place with the “Muslim call to prayer” and immediately dismissed the conversation. Ironically enough, this call to prayer in no way affects him, given that he lives about an hour north of Hamtramck. Parallel to this was unwarranted complaint was an observation I witnessed in a Hamtramck coffee shop. I was watching a group of people, three older Caucasians and one middle aged accented African man, exchange newspapers. It was interesting to watch this multiracial group interact and exchange newspapers and it is something they clearly do often. They were on a first name basis and happily chatted while reading. During this interaction, a person walked into the coffee shop and asked if the church bells went off like they were outside regularly. A woman in the group joked, and said “yes, they do, but it’s a good way for you to keep track of the time if you’re out walking around.” This exchange showed me how individuals residing in Hamtramck adapted to the diverse religious groups occupying the city. Instead of complaining about having to be subjected to church bells or the call to prayer, this woman had come to rely on it as a method for telling time. These examples also indicate how perceptions of those outside of Hamtramck are different to those living in the area. Furthermore, they indicate some challenges regarding building intercultural dialogue, especially among individuals who are resistant to listening and hearing different points of view.

These types of internal and external reactions are important when defining the role of community in countering violent extremism. Outside perceptions that are false or negative could possibly be damaging to the internal community. This is evident in places like Dearborn, where

outsiders travel to hold protests of Islam and Sharia Law. This type of “pilgrimage to Dearborn has become a rite of passage for opponents of Islam in America.”¹⁷⁹ Rather, individuals who have nothing to do with Dearborn travel there already having it in their minds that it is a place of Sharia Law, instead of taking the time to experience the vibrant community. However, this also seems to enforce some level of community cohesion as residents of Dearborn come together and develop, in conjunction with law enforcement there, the best way to deal with these protestors. A key example of this was a 2011 protest by Pastor Terry Jones who travelled to Dearborn to protest radical Islam. Jones had previously burned a Quran in Florida that caused rioting across the world—which notably resulted in the death of 12 people in Afghanistan. So, his visit to Dearborn was a great security concern for the community.¹⁸⁰ Law enforcement, members of government, and members of legal institutions were able to legally block Jones from actually protesting outside of the Islamic Center, which drew mixed emotions from community members. There was discourse on free speech but also concern for the burning of a Quran and that it would incite violence. Regardless, Muslims in the community were “supported during this crisis by institutions of the larger society.”¹⁸¹ This serves as a key example of how Dearborn has integrated its Arab and Muslim members into greater society and to some degree, are willing and able to protect them from outside harm. It is also important to note that during this time, the interfaith community rallied strongly behind their Muslim neighbors and presented a unified front that was likely unexpected by Jones.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ Carl W. Ernst. *Islamophobia in America: The anatomy of intolerance*. (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) 151

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 151

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 153

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 152

It is evident that there is a multilayered relationship between external frames or narratives surrounding Metro Detroit. They can be divisive, or they can actually drive a community closer together. With the help of savvy logistical work, legal, law enforcement, political, and interfaith establishments are able to foster a sense of inclusion and belonging in their communities. As Dragolov argues, this is one way of focusing on the common good of the community through actions of individuals. It also reflects positive emotional ties to the institutions within a community by the members of that community.¹⁸³ This is necessary for an area like Dearborn, which is constantly linked with terrorism and extremism by outside sources.

Explaining this research to potential interviewees was an interesting experience each time. I was worried that if I said something in a wrong way, it would come off as offensive. I believe I felt this way because I was concerned that I could potentially fall into the category of being one of the people marginalizing an already marginalized community. However, on looking back, these concerns did not come to fruition and people generally were extremely interested in my research. Rabbi Jonah even went as far as saying that he thought I should be pursuing social action pursuits instead of academia. Interestingly enough, when I initially was explaining the basis of my research to Yasser, his response was that people might not have much to say about it because radicalization and violent extremism does not really happen in Metro Detroit. His answer indicated that it is not a top concern for community members and that a lot of people would not necessarily have strong opinions.

Community

When I first began reaching out to potential interviewees, I was also inadvertently

¹⁸³ Georgi Dragolov, *Social cohesion in the western world: What holds societies together: Insights from the social cohesion radar*. (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2016), VIII-IX

exploring the community networks, nonprofits, and religious establishments that exist in Metro Detroit. I was surprised by how many different organizations exist and it appears that there is something for everyone. They can all easily be found by visiting one website that lists “nonprofit organizations and community foundations” by breaking them all into seven categories.¹⁸⁴ Each category then lists and links the organization’s website, with topics ranging in animal support, community development, social issues, health, and many more.¹⁸⁵ The significance of this website is that it provides an extremely easy platform for community based organizations in one location. It is easily accessible and straight-forward, making it simple for anybody to use. It is also significant because it shows just how many organizations exist for people within Metro Detroit. There are ample organizations available for people who go out and seek them. This matters a great deal in terms of countering violent extremism. A community needs to have several different things, but one important thing to have is foundations to support the people of the community. These foundations, such as nonprofits, play a bigger role by providing people with a means to have their needs met, be it joining a group of likeminded people to talk about greenspace in the city or joining a group of survivors to have support after experiencing domestic violence. These foundations can increase the level of community cohesion because they help form resilient social relationships within a network of members in a society.¹⁸⁶ I would argue that fostering a sense of community cohesion in such a diverse community is directly impacted by the strength and number of nonprofits in existence. Communities with weak or a lack of community based nonprofits are more likely to have a lower level of cohesion.

¹⁸⁴ Guide 2 Detroit. *Metro Detroit Nonprofit Organizations and Community Foundations*.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ Georgi Dragolov, *Social cohesion in the western world: What holds societies together: Insights from the social cohesion radar*. (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2016), VIII-IX

There are complex intricacies within communities in Metro Detroit that create a sort of multi-level community. For example, there is a Jewish community within the greater community of Metro Detroit. This could be said for any type of sub-group based on their identity, sexual orientation, religion, race, etc. These individual communities also have varying levels of cohesion. The Jewish and Muslim communities are strong, and brought together by the interfaith community. A person can also belong to multiple communities, such as being a part of both the Jewish and interfaith communities. It became evident throughout speaking to the individuals I interviewed that there are micro and macro communities. A micro community could be the members of the Hamtramck Muslim community compared to the macro Metro Detroit Muslim community, or it could be the micro LGBTQ community situated within the macro Metro Detroit community. These communities are interconnected and complex as members may identify with more than one micro community. For example, when asking Rabbi Jonah to define his interpretation of community, he responded by saying:

to the community of Metro Detroit or the Jewish community? Because obviously I serve both in the role of religious leader of this Jewish community and then there is sort of a global Jewish community out there where I have a role.¹⁸⁷

However, the important thing to note is that it is important to foster a sense of inclusion in the macro community of Metro Detroit and that these various micro communities play a role in doing so. The individuals that I interviewed had fairly similar sentiments on what community is. Through these multiple yet similar perspectives, the way in which community is viewed becomes clear. I also asked them what their role in the community is and how this impacts the levels of cohesion in the community.

¹⁸⁷ Jonah (Rabbi, Metro Detroit), Interviewed by Allison Miller, Bloomfield Hills, MI, December 2017.

Reverend Betty defined community in quite an interesting manner. She utilized Martin Luther King's concept of beloved community as the framework for how she views community.

Betty said that:

My main thing is just love, which means showing up, being present, and being selfless and dedicated to my neighbor's success...I really love the idea of the beloved community, that we create a space where everyone is welcome and cared for. I was recently reading about urban planning and how when communities work for the elderly and children they work for everyone. It is kind of a rule of thumb in urban planning and I've been thinking about that a lot in terms of community. I find community threatened when people draw lines and exclude people, and corruption, this can make the community break down.¹⁸⁸

Betty was the only person who mentioned the idea that community can be threatened. This reaffirms the idea that community cohesion exists and that it operates on a fluctuating system. In her definition, she made it clear that cohesion can decrease when community members start to exclude people and create boundaries. Cohesion can also decrease because of political and social corruption.

To appreciate the importance of the work that Betty does, it is necessary to have a mental picture of what she looks like. She is an older Caucasian woman, probably approaching or in her 60s, that is petite and has a generally inviting nature to her. However, through listening to her speak and hearing her stories, it is clear that she can be, when necessary, a force to be reckoned with. Betty is involved in some extremely important work, such as teaching English to refugees and immigrants, and conducting conflict resolution workshops on a global level. As for how she views her role in the community, she said:

My role in the community, as a police chaplain, as a nonprofit leader, I am vocal in the media. When people want to do an activity or bring the community together...people see me as an organizer and convener, someone that can be an advocate if necessary. Because I've been in the community long enough, people see me as someone to talk to if someone else needs talked to and they don't know how to do it. I get called on a lot to be a mediator. As far as cohesion, people know my values and concerns. Sometimes I will get

¹⁸⁸ Betty (Reverend, Metro Detroit), Interviewed by Allison Miller, Hamtramck, MI, December 2017.

asked to show up at places so people will behave better. People know I am a pastor so they won't swear in front of me, and people just behave better when I am around, I don't know why that is.¹⁸⁹

While the conclusion to that statement was humorous in nature, it highlights the importance of having a person in a community like Betty. She is a person that everyone knows that they can rely on and also a person that can serve as third party during a contentious event. Having a mediator is extremely valuable in a community as culturally diverse as Hamtramck because it provides a safe and neutral outlet for reaching resolutions when there are disagreements or disputes.

Rabbi Jonah identified himself as being a member of the Jewish community, Metro Detroit community, and global community. He also went as far as breaking the Jewish community into different groups based on their denomination. He acknowledged that the Jewish community has very challenging divides regarding things such as religious understandings and political values. He identified that there are far right and far left beliefs within Judaism and that the people on opposing sides rarely talk to one another, even though they share a common identity regarding things such as being Jewish, the Hebrew language, having a shared history, or sharing a connection to Israel and the people of Israel. Rabbi Jonah is a Reform Jew so he is on the far left of the spectrum. He said the people of his Temple can be viewed as people who take a liberal approach to being American and Jewish in equal parts. However, the more Orthodox Jews in Metro Detroit are significantly different and though they can have a shared identity, such as being "Michiganders," if they start to dig any deeper the sense of a shared community based on religion can begin to dissolve.

¹⁸⁹ Betty (Reverend, Metro Detroit), Interviewed by Allison Miller, Hamtramck, MI, December 2017.

Rabbi Jonah is the Rabbi in charge of Social Action at his Temple. This involves active membership in several different initiatives that the Temple is involved with. For example, he is in charge of overseeing a food pantry that bimonthly donates 12,000 pounds of donated food to 150 families in the community. Rabbi Jonah explained that there are food pantries located throughout Detroit, but once in the suburbs they are smaller in number. He said that “well we know our neighbors and if someone lost a job that likely means they are struggling to put food on the table, even if they live in a bigger house. We partnered with another organization and did not expect much turnout. The first week we had forty families and the second a hundred. These are Jews and non-Jews that live in the community.” This is one essential example of the kind of necessary foundational aspects that a healthy community needs to serve its members. On the surface, the importance of a food pantry may be overlooked. However, a community that comes together and donates food in order to feed other members of their community is sending an important message of support and inclusion.

In regards to social cohesion, Rabbi Jonah explicitly stated that he believes one of the biggest challenges is the relationships between the Jewish and Muslim community. He said:

Prior to 9/11 there were dialogues happening, there were things going on where people were saying ‘we can’t live this way, this is not a healthy community.’ Post 9/11 those conversations stopped, absolutely stopped. The Muslim community became insular, the Jewish community became insular. There was no conversation and there were all sorts of excuses. People put all sorts of red flags out and said ‘unless this happens I cannot be a part of the conversation.’ I was one of those people. I said ‘unless somebody is willing to say Israel has a right to exist, I am not going to have the conversation.’ And the Imams disappeared, there were none. There was not a single religious leader in the Muslim community that would say this publicly. At that point, everybody stopped talking and it was absurd. I am now beginning to feel that this is changing and we are at a turning point right now.¹⁹⁰

¹⁹⁰ Jonah (Rabbi, Metro Detroit), Interviewed by Allison Miller, Bloomfield Hills, MI, December 2017.

Acknowledging that there can be aspects within a community that challenge the concept of cohesion reaffirms that cohesion is not a fixed measurement. As Rabbi Jonah points out, significant world events may directly impact the level of social cohesion. The goal is to find a way to overcome these challenges, which Rabbi Jonah discussed in his segment regarding interfaith activism. No community will be flawless in its essence, but it is desirable to consistently reassess what could increase the level of cohesion and then take the steps necessary to arrive at that point.

Rabbi Jonah is not the only religious leader within Metro Detroit that situates a religion as a sub-community. When speaking with an Imam in a Hamtramck mosque, it became apparent that he also situated himself first as a member of the Muslim community, and then as a member of larger society. For this interview, I travelled to the mosque and came in right as Friday prayers were coming to an end. It is important to note that many mosques in the Metro Detroit region are not necessarily what one would expect in the sense that they are often not a traditional looking mosque. The one that I visited is located right next door to a tax preparation business in a series of connected buildings.

I arrived at the mosque feeling quite anxious as it was the first time I had ever been inside one. In the days prior to the interview, I had stressed over what I should wear and what I should do to cover my hair. It was important to me that I respected the values of the people that I was going to be engaging with, but in hindsight, I think it mattered more to me than it did to the Imam and his translator. The Imam is from Yemen and spoke very limited English, but it was often easy to read emotions on his face. When I asked him for how he defined community, he said “when somebody comes to speak to me about community, I view it as the Muslim community. When someone comes to speak to me about society, I take it in the broader context.”

The Imam was the only person to give an answer that viewed the Muslim community as a separate entity within a greater society. This could be explained in a number of ways, such as the fact that Hamtramck has a large Yemeni population and these people are able to have all their basic needs met within this one small city. Another reason could be that the Imam just views Metro Detroit as a larger society and the Muslim community exists within this society. This is not necessarily a negative viewpoint, it is just a different one. However, during the interview when we were discussing the meaning of community Yasser referred to a verse in the Quran.

The verse reads:

O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Aware. ¹⁹¹

Yasser and the Imam both agreed that this verse means that there are different people and tribes within their community and that they should know one another. This reinforces that they can exist as Muslims within a Muslim community but that the community is a space in which they should get to know others.

This particular mosque is still involved with interfaith events and sponsors community gatherings to teach interested members about Islam. This interfaith involvement could only lead me to conclude that the specific mosque advocated religious teachings that did not foster any degree of dangerous fundamentalism or extremism, and that the members cared about being a part of the community. When asked about how his role impacted community cohesion, the Imam said:

There are a lot of things that we do together. We have had many times where we have had to deal with the city, whether its roads or sanitation, where we have met with other places, local churches, local groups. Every year we host an interfaith event, for the last four years, where Jews, Christians, the Mayor, Judges, the Fire Chief all come. We invite

¹⁹¹ Quran 49:13.

them during Ramadan, we have a dinner, we talk to them, any questions they have we try to answer. We have groups of university students which come. We discuss what Islam is and answer questions. Whenever we can work with other people to benefit society, we try to do that.¹⁹²

The interview with the Imam shed light on other aspects of community that might not necessarily be what is initially considered when discussing community cohesion. While community focus tends to zero in on relations among members, it is important to consider things that bring those people together. Oddly enough, in Hamtramck, it can be something as small as getting community members involved in addressing road conditions to the city. It might seem of little importance, but in reality it provides community members with a common goal to work towards, which is bettering the appearance and safety of the community. It also provides a way for people to engage in dialogue and get to know one another.

The rest of the people interviewed shared similar sentiments about community. Linda, the interfaith activist, was a person I was told time and time again that I needed to talk to. The interfaith community in Metro Detroit is networked quite well, with different organizations and leaders knowing one another. Linda defined community as:

To me community, my community, is Metro Detroit. When I look at community it is all the contacts I have made over the years which are so important to me. But community is also the people out there that I don't know very well and we may differ very greatly on our politics, but one of the things I really want to do—well I feel like my community is preaching to the choir and I have found a lot of people in my choir and I am very happy with all those people—but I want to start making an effort to reach out to people who are different from me or think different from me. Especially after this election.¹⁹³

When speaking about her role in creating community cohesion, Linda said that:

Well luckily, I know when my name comes up, people say “Oh yeah, Linda, she is involved with interfaith” so I get a lot of referrals. I feel good about that because at least I am known for trying to bring people together, different faith traditions together. I am not

¹⁹² Omar and Yasser (Imam and Translator, Metro Detroit), Interviewed by Allison Miller, Hamtramck, MI, December 2017.

¹⁹³ Linda (Interfaith Activist, Metro Detroit), Interviewed by Allison Miller, Bloomfield Hills, MI, December 2017.

trying to pat myself on the back, but I do feel like for all the years that I have put into my passion in some way it has made a difference. There are initiatives that are out there working.

An interesting part of Linda's interview was when she identified her biggest challenge as an interfaith activist. She said:

I think my greatest challenge has really been getting my Jewish community involved. Detroit is incredible, I think we have the most unified, coordinated Jewish community here in the whole country. We have agencies for everything, a Jewish agency for the mentally ill, and a Jewish agency for those who have disabilities, the Jewish center, and the Jewish theatre. There is something for everybody here. As a Jew, I know any day I can go to a lecture, a film, a book group, because there is something going on in the Jewish community. That being said, I think in some ways you can be rather insular as a Jew here because everything is going on in your community so you don't have to look outside. So I think sometimes it is a little hard to get the Jewish community to sit down with Muslims or go to other areas in Detroit.

This statement provides a unique and critical viewpoint into community cohesion. A well-equipped community should ideally be a cohesive community, but if a community is over-equipped then the members may become insular. This is definitely possible across Metro Detroit where there are numerous agencies with one demographic in mind. These agencies are of course a good thing, but becoming too insular in a diverse community may not necessarily be beneficial to the level of cohesion. That is why interfaith activism (or other acts of cross-cultural engagement) are so important in a diverse community.

The perception of both community and community cohesion are critical in challenging violent extremism and the various circumstances that allow it to take root in a community. How individuals perceive their role in a community will contribute to their overall perception of that community. It is beneficial for individuals to have a positive role in the community, either by employment, volunteer work, or social ties. An individual needs to, in some way, feel connected to their community and the members that he or she shares it with. When addressing the role of

community in preventing radicalization and violent extremism, all my interviewees agreed in some variation that *feeling* like a community member is important. Linda said:

If you've never had a conversation with a Muslim and then you hear 'oh look they are all extremist Muslims that are doing horrific things' but there are extremist Jews in Israel who I don't particularly care for because of how they treat others, their views on Arabs, their views on women... I think you need to sit down at the table and have a conversation, one on one, break bread, and then you see that they are not the enemy, they are human. It is that fear that is taking over all of us.¹⁹⁴

Although not new, this reemerging culture of fear is exactly why fostering community cohesion is of extreme importance in terms of preventing violent extremism. The presence of fear in society creates a legitimized space for irrational acts, such as hate crimes, to emerge. Strong communities will be cohesive enough to either deter such acts or stand in solidarity when they do happen. A culture of fear also will marginalize individuals who already feel marginalized, which could potentially lead to radicalization toward violent extremism. Hemmingsen addresses this when she writes that "the experience of being rejected and feared can be humiliating and ostracizing... but there are other ways to deal with the experiences...it can also be narrated as an experience of being an important and awesome individual whom others fear and would never dare challenge."¹⁹⁵ Marginalized members may experience the feeling of being rejected and feared and then interpret it as them being important and unchallengeable. This process could lead to self or group radicalization, so it is necessary for communities to have a stronger framework of inclusion that aims to make all members feel welcome and valued through various platforms.

Law Enforcement and Citizens: Community Policing

¹⁹⁴ Linda (Interfaith Activist, Metro Detroit), Interviewed by Allison Miller, Bloomfield Hills, MI, December 2017.

¹⁹⁵ Ann-Sophie Hemmingsen. *The Attractions of Jihadism: An Identity Approach to Three Danish Terrorism Cases and the Gallery of Characters around Them*. (PhD diss., University of Copenhagen, 2010), 196

The role of law enforcement in CVE efforts is becoming a more contentious topic. As previously mentioned, there is push back from local community leaders that believe that law enforcement involvement often criminalizes people who may be otherwise innocent. Discussion is occurring about whether CVE efforts can be connected with entrapment because of occurrences such as placing informants within Muslim communities or emotionally manipulating vulnerable individuals.

This lack of trust was noted during a discussion with The Department of Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly in Dearborn in March 2017 to discuss the role of federal law enforcement in the area. Secretary John Kelly threatened to leave a meeting with community members after one advocate accused his department of targeting their community.¹⁹⁶ Two different meetings were held, one with Arab and Muslim community members and another with immigrant, Latino, and Chaldean advocates. Both meetings had members of the community that were criticizing the role of federal law enforcement in Dearborn. Community members raised issues such as profiling and inquired whether or not there could be a way to statistically account for the number of Arab-Americans and Muslims that are stopped at the nearby Canadian border.¹⁹⁷ Secretary Kelly allegedly refused to fully answer questions or address concerns and said “I’m not going to put my men down” in reference to the work of DHS employees. This kind of attitude is problematic in addressing CVE efforts because it portrays a lack of interest with the concerns of community members. It also substantiates that CVE efforts may be better left to the local law enforcement members and other community members that know and engage with the communities that they work in.

¹⁹⁶ Niraj Warikoo and Kathleen Grey. “Arab, Latino leaders have tense meetings with Homeland Security chief” *Detroit Free Press*. March 27, 2017.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

Metro Detroit has not had many public cases of violent extremism or radicalization. However, it is necessary to address and explain the mainstream cases that are often tied to Metro Detroit. One such case is that of Sebastian Gregerson, who is also known as Abdurrahman Bin Mikaayl, and his plot to use grenades to kill people in order to wage violent jihad.¹⁹⁸ Gregerson had confided to an undercover informant that he was amassing a large arsenal of weapons that he intended to use to kill ‘infidels.’¹⁹⁹ He also expressed support for ISIS and was allegedly planning to move his family to ISIS controlled territory.²⁰⁰ Gregerson has recently cut a plea deal with the federal government and could spend up to five years in federal prison for charges relating to purchasing illegal explosive devices.²⁰¹ However, it is extremely crucial to recognize that prosecutors are claiming that Gregerson is part of a larger group of individuals who support the Islamic State and are led by Maryland Imam Suleiman Bengharsa, who is also under FBI investigation.²⁰² Gregerson was a resident of Windsor Mill, Maryland from 2011 to 2014 and during this time met Bengharsa at a local mosque.²⁰³ This draws the conclusion that Gregerson was not even radicalized in Detroit, though it can appear that way if media sources do not refer to the fact that he relocated to Detroit after meeting the Imam in Maryland.

The most high profile case regarding violent extremism in Metro Detroit was recently settled. As of April 5th, 2017 Khalil Abu Rayyan was sentenced to five years in prison on federal firearm charges, which is significantly higher than federal guidelines that call for 15 to 21

¹⁹⁸ Robert Snell. “Detroit terror suspect part of broader group, feds say” *The Detroit News*. December 22, 2016.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Tresa Baldas. “Detroit terror-linked suspect cuts plea deal with feds on explosives” *Detroit Free Press*. March 7, 2017.

²⁰¹ Robert Snell. “Detroit terror suspect strikes deal in federal court” *The Detroit News*. March 30, 2017.

²⁰² Robert Snell. “Detroit terror suspect part of broader group, feds say” *The Detroit News*. December 22, 2016.

²⁰³ Justin Jouvenal. “Maryland imam’s advocacy of ISIS lands him at center of terrorism probe” *The Washington Post*. December 7, 2016

months in prison.²⁰⁴ Rayyan is a 22 year old from Dearborn Heights that talked about attacking a local church and claimed to support ISIS. Rayyan recently was at trial for two gun charges and marijuana use but has not been charged yet with any terrorism related crime.²⁰⁵ Rayyan’s case is drawing substantial media attention due to the allegations of federal police using methods of entrapment. Two separate FBI agents, who posed as love interests, were involved in Rayyan’s case and are being accused of emotionally manipulating an already vulnerable man.²⁰⁶ Rayyan appeared to be depressed and had spoken of suicide over the phone to who he thought was a 19 year old Iraqi-American, who was actually an undercover FBI employee.²⁰⁷ Rayyan’s case exemplifies why CVE efforts would be better if operated as a joint effort between the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Education, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Rayyan was not able to get the mental health help that he needed, and instead was allegedly pushed towards considering how suicide for a larger religious cause would be a more legitimate approach.²⁰⁸ The role of the FBI in Metro Detroit when it pertains to CVE efforts has community members worried. There is concern from local Muslim leaders who believe that “they have nothing to hide but are concerned about the FBI going after young men who might be mentally unstable or have emotional problems who can be manipulated.”²⁰⁹ During the interview with Marwan, he mentioned the Rayyan case. As a lawyer, he has knowledge of the mechanics of the case. He stated that Rayyan was not charged

²⁰⁴ Orlandar Brand-Williams. “Accused ISIS supporter gets 5 years on firearm charges” *The Detroit News*. April 6, 2017

²⁰⁵ Niraj Warikoo. “Sentencing postponed for Dearborn Heights man accused of ISIS support” *Detroit Free Press*. March 13, 2017

²⁰⁶ Niraj Warikoo. “Use of informants in Muslim-American communities sparks concern” *Detroit Free Press*. October 15, 2016

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

with terrorism and implied that the informants capitalized on his mental instability by manipulating him and pushing a violent extremist narrative and agenda. He said:

At first it was alarming to think that there was someone in our community that wanted to kill thousands of Christians...but it turned out at the end of the day that he did not really want to kill anyone. He was just trying to impress her [FBI informant] by saying 'I'm this, I'm a tough guy' and he was just looking for a female friend.²¹⁰

While there are concerns over the FBI and its role in Metro Detroit, there have been encouraging signs of increasing importance given to community policing. Metro Detroit is a city that utilizes community policing on what appears to be on both local and state levels. Police Chief James Craig launched this initiative in 2014 with the assignment of Neighborhood Police Officers. These officers primary focus is to engage with community members outside of dealing with crime, serve as public liaisons, and serve as a gateway for members of City Council to address concerns over policing.²¹¹

Though there may be wider concerns regarding law enforcement in the United States, steps are being taken in Metro Detroit to build bridges. Officer Smith is a Michigan State Police Officer who is involved in media and public affairs. His interview demonstrates how local police are better equipped to deal with CVE because they are involved with the community as well. Officer Smith spoke about the primary concerns of local law enforcement in Metro Detroit and he expressed that while radicalization via social media is not high on the list, it is still important. He claimed, however, in reality violent crime is the primary focus. He stated that community members are not going to be concerned about the threat of a terrorist carrying out a violent act

²¹⁰ Marwan (Lawyer and Political Activist, Metro Detroit), Interviewed by Allison Miller, Dearborn, MI, December 2017.

²¹¹ Gus Burns. "Detroit Police Chief James Craig: 'We will institutionalize community policing' in Detroit" *MLive*. March 18, 2014.

but instead that they are more concerned about members of their own community committing violent crimes.²¹²

When it comes to Metro Detroit, there is still a degree of segregation that occurs. This can be challenging when trying to discuss how people integrate into their community. It can also be challenging to integrate individuals into a larger community when their primary identifying community provides them with all the resources that they need, such as the aforementioned Jewish community in Metro Detroit. Regarding integration, Officer Smith commented that:

I think we are ahead of the game compared to other areas, but I think that it would be foolish for us to say that everything is just great. It's not, there is racial tension in the Metro Detroit area, we see every once in a while where something will rise up...and every time there is a terrorist attack people look towards Dearborn. So I think we are ahead, we talk about it. We aren't afraid to talk about race, we have to talk about things like this, about religion, understanding someone's religion.²¹³

In regard to this, understanding the community that law enforcement is responsible for policing is of extreme importance. If an officer does not understand the members of the community he or she is assigned to, a lot of problems can arise. In Metro Detroit, there are religious and cultural aspects that need to be taken into consideration when dealing with the community members.

When I asked Officer Smith about the relationship with law enforcement in Metro Detroit and their community members, I asked specifically about Hamtramck and Dearborn. He agreed that the relationship between law enforcement and the community is overall positive. He said:

You have to get into the neighborhoods. You have to talk to people and when something bad happens you cannot just curl up and say you are not going to talk about it... You will see this with the Detroit Police Department. They hold precinct meetings, they have Neighborhood Police Officers, and they have Community Service Troopers. Their whole role is to deal with the community, to speak with them and find out what they need. We did Light up the City, where we just went around neighborhoods and gave them

²¹² Officer Smith (Michigan State Police, Metro Detroit) Interviewed by Allison Miller, Metro Detroit, December 2017.

²¹³ Ibid.

lightbulbs to put in their front porch. At the time when a trooper is giving someone a lightbulb, they also get to talk to them about what is going on in their neighborhood.²¹⁴

Officer Smith also spoke about how law enforcement gets involved with the community in ways that might not seem obvious. He stated that:

There is a huge heroin epidemic here, just like across the country. Last month we went into an Arab community and spoke with them about heroin because it is something that is just not talked about in their community. If you are a female and you are involved with heroin or another drug, you cannot go seek treatment because it is disrespectful and embarrassing to the family. So sometimes you have to go in there and say culture is important, but you need to allow people to get treatment.²¹⁵

This statement authenticates the fact that local law enforcement is aware of the ways in which culture can impact not just the community, but the ways in which families within the community operate. This is a necessary foundation if law enforcement truly wants to engage in a positive manner with the communities that they serve. Officer Smith also stated that law enforcement officers receive training that makes them more sensitive to the cultural and religious aspects of their community. It is a dynamic of relationship building that should not be overlooked or underestimated in multicultural communities, especially in terms of creating a more cohesive community. This approach to conducting law enforcement operations acknowledges that the minority community does not have to conform in a multicultural community. Community policing is an intercultural effort that brings together different groups of people, including law enforcement, by getting them to engage on a more personal level. It shifts attention away from thinking of radicalization as concentrated on individual motivations and goals, to an overall focus on community-building by engaging different stakeholders.

²¹⁴ Officer Smith (Michigan State Police, Metro Detroit) Interviewed by Allison Miller, Metro Detroit, December 2017.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

Overall, Officer Smith had a fairly positive perception on the relationship between law enforcement and community. His personal views definitely reinforced the conceptual framework that in order to create a more cohesive community, it is critical for law enforcement to engage on a community level. This can be complicated in a multicultural community, but as he stated, Metro Detroit is further advanced and takes steps to engage with the community they serve. Neighborhood Police Officers who are tasked with actually getting to know the members of a community may alleviate other tension that multicultural communities can experience with law enforcement officers.

During the interview with the Imam, I asked him what the relationship was like between law enforcement and the Muslim community as well as religious leaders. He said that:

There is mutual respect, we do not have any issues. People might get tickets and say ‘oh it’s because I am Muslim’ but other than that there is never anything major. We even have a Chaplain at the Police Department. The Police Chief did a lot of stuff for the Muslim community to close the gap. As Muslims, the Prophet teaches to respect authority. We always follow authority, as long as the authority does not tell us to do something against Gods commands.²¹⁶

Fostering a sense of mutual respect can significantly improve the level of cohesion in a community. This relationship can be created by having programs that are based on the principle of community policing as well as having law enforcement play a role in the interfaith scene. By normalizing the presence of law enforcement and legitimizing their role as community police by having them actually engage with their community, mutual respect can be gained. If members of a community do not feel as though they have a negative relationship with law enforcement, they will be more likely to work together in a mutually beneficial manner.

²¹⁶ Omar and Yasser (Imam and Translator, Metro Detroit), Interviewed by Allison Miller, Hamtramck, MI, December 2017.

Marwan also spoke about how the community handles what they perceive to be threats. He spoke on his personal involvement with Federal law enforcement over threats he had received from people outside of Metro Detroit. He also stated that:

The understanding in the community is that we cooperate. If there is something in the community we find out, we inform the FBI or the local police. Whether it's a threat against the community, or a threat within the community. Either way, if someone is trying to attack our community we inform the police. We have a pretty good working relationship as far as that. I would not be surprised if every single family in Dearborn has somebody that has contact with either the FBI or local police that they could reach out to and say 'hey, I want you to keep an eye on this person.' Sometimes the informants do prey on the weak in our community and those are the sad parts. And sometimes, instead of going after real threats, our government spends money and resources on these people who have kind of no desire or ability to perform acts of terrorism and only have that because they have been pushed into it.²¹⁷

This statement again substantiates the notion that the role of federal law enforcement can create a sort of slippery slope within the community. Marwan seemed to agree that the FBI can play some role in CVE, but that their role can become less transparent and of concern when it comes to their involvement with vulnerable youth. Again, methods of community policing could help to avoid such instances of possible entrapment because the officers in charge are going to know the community member and they would know more about his or her mental stability. Community policing in partnership with the Department of Health and Human Services would be best equipped to deal with individuals like this by providing them with the medical assistance that they need rather than arresting them.

Interfaith Activism

It is evident now that interfaith activism plays a critical role in developing community cohesion when it comes to multicultural communities. As discussed in the literature review, there

²¹⁷ Marwan (Lawyer and Political Activist, Metro Detroit), Interviewed by Allison Miller, Dearborn, MI, December 2017.

is a significant gap in scholarly literature in regards to the role that interfaith activism has on countering violent extremism. There essentially is no existing scholarship on this subject that is specially tailored to CVE efforts in the United States. This is problematic because the role of interfaith activism deserves to be considered when taking methods of countering violent narratives and generating cross-cultural dialogue into consideration. The interfaith community in Metro Detroit, I would argue, would be highly equipped to challenge violent narratives if the issue arose. The role of interfaith nonprofits, events, or activists should not be taken for granted or underestimated when it comes to building community cohesion and therefore countering violent extremism.

A leading interfaith nonprofit located in Metro Detroit is doing something phenomenal and arguably vital in terms of solidifying a cohesive and tolerant community within a multicultural community. There is an initiative referred to as Religious Diversity Training that began as a way to teach Metro Detroit children about the many religions in this area. At first, this program began teaching only seventh graders who learn world religion, but it quickly spread to a second program that was tailored for adults. The adult program was created due to the demand and inquiries of parents who were accompanying their children on these religious diversity field trips. The program essentially takes groups of seventh graders to different religious sites—such as a Hindu Temple, an Islamic Center, or a Jewish Temple—and for the entire day children are completely submerged in another religion while learning about historical and modern teachings.

I had the opportunity to attend one of these events take place at a Temple. The group of students who attended were Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Christian and various other religious and non-religious groups. The day was spent learning about the Jewish religion and culture and also in engaging with and breaking down stereotypes. One of the event organizers began by asking

the students what they thought of when they heard the word Jew. Various students responded by saying Hebrew, Kosher, Holocaust, Old Testament, Jesus, Star of David, Hanukkah, and Anne Frank. Rabbi Jonah also asked them what they expected to see a Rabbi wearing, to which they responded by saying “wearing a black little hat” “wearing a robe” “being barefoot” and “having a beard.” This interaction between roughly 100 seventh grade children, event organizers, and Jewish Rabbis from the Temple provided the children with a safe place to explore a religion and culture that might be different from their own. This was incredible to watch because the children were extremely engaged in learning about Judaism and clearly had a fun time doing so. This training is successful largely because it is directed towards children who are learning about world religion in school. Therefore, the children are likely going to be more receptive to learning about religions by experiencing a first-hand account of them.

The Religious Diversity Training that day also incorporated key themes that are methodologically integrated into how the training works. The organizers and religious leaders put a lot of focus on what kind of commonalities exist among different religions. For Jews and Muslims, these commonalities often delved into the fact that both religions have faced periods of displacement, forced migration, and intolerance within the international community. What this essentially does is encourage the children to find common ground with one another stemming from experiences of discrimination. The importance of this cannot be emphasized enough, especially when considering the larger context of CVE efforts. If an individual has radicalized to the point of legitimizing violent extremism, it is possible that he or she has experienced something that has led to feelings of marginalization.²¹⁸ If children can be taught at a young age that there are other people outside of their own religion being marginalized, it can be a powerful

²¹⁸ Ann-Sophie Hemmingsen. *The Attractions of Jihadism: An Identity Approach to Three Danish Terrorism Cases and the Gallery of Characters around Them*. (PhD diss., University of Copenhagen, 2010), 95

mechanism to increase cohesion and discourage a feeling of isolation. The interactions between different religions also builds up a practice of interaction and dialogue that can be helpful if and when individuals experience isolation and alienation.

Another thing that was emphasized was music in religion and the children absolutely loved this. They had the chance to listen to a Cantor sing in Hebrew and many of them drew comparisons to the music of their own religion and culture while expressing how fundamental music was in their life. The Cantor of this Temple described his position as “bringing music to the community and bringing music to prayer.”²¹⁹ This resonated with these children because they adopt similar practices either through worship or at home. During the session with the Cantor, the children eagerly were flipping through the prayer book and seemed genuinely curious about the Hebrew written in it.

Perhaps one of the most awakening experiences of this training was being able to witness a mock Jewish wedding. The children were unanimously excited to be participating and watching as seven boys and seven girls were picked to play out the roles in a traditional Jewish wedding. The Rabbi explained how Jewish weddings work and the children actually ran through a wedding and then entire audience was enjoying this. I specifically watched a group of Muslim mothers’ reactions to this, and their laughter and smiles indicated to me that they were both learning and enjoying the spectacle. Though it was designed to bring different children together to show them how their faith may do weddings differently, it also allowed the children to see a part of Jewish culture. At the end, I overheard a parent saying that “everybody needs to do this” in reference to the training.

²¹⁹ Religious Diversity Training Event, Observed by Allison Miller, Bloomfield Hills, MI, November 2017.

As an observer and a participant of this training, I was constantly taking note of how it made me feel and the reactions of people around me. I have never been to an actual Jewish wedding, but seeing it acted out by a diverse group of children was moving. It was spiritually enlightening to watch the children engage with one another, to laugh with one another, and most importantly to be learning about a new tradition from a different religion with one another. Jewish weddings incorporate a lot of tradition, such as the breaking of a glass, which the Rabbi explained but did not do.

As previously mentioned, this program grew so large that the demand for an adult version followed shortly after the creation of it. There is now the option for adults to complete this Religious Diversity Training. Though the methodology is similar, the subject matter is at a deeper level and the goal is to increase awareness of each other's religions and counter stereotypes. In terms of CVE, this is an under-developed method to approach how to successfully combat potential violent extremism. If adults are willing and wanting to attend this type of training, they are likely going to be taking it home to their children and teaching them about it as well. This naturally creates a trickle-down effect of disseminated information which focuses on inclusion, tolerance, and cohesion. This also serves as an example of how interfaith dialogue can be used as a tool to combat extremism, even if extremism is not what is being discussed. By having religious leaders and community members engage in dialogue which leads to some type of relationship or understanding, common ground can be reached. This assists in decreasing the level of marginalization that occurs. If interfaith activism and programs are given the resources and tools to model what is happening in Metro Detroit, it could prove to be an incredibly useful approach to let the community counter violent extremism in a holistic manner.

During my interview with Reverend Betty, she said something that seemed very important. She was sharing a story about visiting a church in Columbus, Ohio which has a large population of Somali Muslims. She said that:

I went to speak in a church and they were just down the road from this huge residential complex that houses a lot of Somalians. The people in this church told me ‘we do not like them, we do not want anything to do with them. They are aggressive, they are mean, and they treat our kids bad in school.’ And I said to them ‘shame on you! You are just down the road from these people who need to be welcomed into your community and people act out in response to what they receive.’ So I just totally shamed them and said ‘how can you not care? In the name of Christ, love your neighbor! That is a pretty major teaching of Jesus.’ And they said ‘oh, we did not really think of it like that.’²²⁰

Reverend Betty also mentioned that she would look for radicalization more in areas like Columbus where the people live in a suburban area but are totally isolated without something such as basic transportation. She spoke about how people in that situation have a responsibility to engage with the people who are isolated by doing something like a picnic or a potluck in order to get to know the culture and to invite the isolated groups to be part of a larger community. She also said she offered to come down and teach her Columbus counterparts and mentioned that “all you have to do is show up with a pan of food and knock on a door!”²²¹ This exemplifies the importance that an interfaith activist can have in a multicultural community. If one person can bridge the gap between different cultures, it could open the door for more productive and inclusive dialogue.

It was during my fieldwork and after the rejection of an interview inquiry with a Somali-American that I became much more critical in the efforts of current government-led CVE programs. This potential interviewee has studied similar topics and was wary of a Caucasian person attempting to research and analyze CVE programs which she felt targeted a vulnerable or

²²⁰ Betty (Reverend, Metro Detroit), Interviewed by Allison Miller, Hamtramck, MI, December 2017.

²²¹ Ibid.

marginalized population. She cited cultural appropriation as the reason for rejection and this led me to understand at a deeper level just how the attitude towards CVE was being shaped. This rejection highlighted problems within CVE research, policies, and programs in many different ways. First, it showed that there can be a genuine lack of trust for Caucasian individuals who are involved in CVE. Second, it is problematic if a Somali individual is not willing to engage in research because many individuals involved in the CVE community are in fact Caucasian. It is necessary to address the common misconceptions on both sides of this spectrum by building trust within these types of communities. This rejection also caused me to question the legitimacy of CVE efforts on a more serious level because it forced me to consider how individuals can feel targeted just because of their identification with one or more marginalized communities.

The common themes of community, the role of law enforcement in community, and interfaith activism are important to consider when analyzing CVE efforts. Though separate themes, they all can intertwine when it comes to building a more cohesive community in a multicultural demographic. For example, law enforcement can engage in community policing by being present at interfaith events, which happens in Metro Detroit. Also, interfaith activists can engage and strengthen the community by providing necessities such as food pantries to individuals or families regardless of their religion. These are just two methods that can strengthen the overall community and make it a more cohesive place to reside in. The implications of such connections are that it should essentially make individuals feel less marginalized, and feel more welcome in their community, and therefore less likely to engage in or support violent extremism.

Chapter Four: Analysis of Fieldwork and Suggestions for Future Research

Analysis of the field research conducted in Metro Detroit highlighted several important themes. The most important would be how individuals perceive community, the role of law enforcement in community, and interfaith activism. These three themes allow for a better perception of how CVE could impact community cohesion. If CVE is as community based as it claims to be, reflections from these findings for future policy implementations would be useful. In other words, CVE programs and policies would best be implemented by disengaging from a DHS and DOJ aspect and being restructured by Departments that do not assume a criminalizing or a “security” standpoint in their very nature.

There are still several different aspects to community cohesion and CVE that should be considered in future research. Another large theme that interviews revealed was about the negative stereotypes of Arabs and Muslims in the mainstream media. There is a consistent and constant narrative in the media that enforces the notion that terrorism is only perpetrated by Arabs or Muslims. The dynamics of how terrorism is defined in the media should be clarified and possibly expanded to include instances such as hate crimes committed by white individuals against minorities. There has to be consistency in the usage of the label “terrorism” to describe acts of violence. Often times such crimes are not perceived as terrorism, though if the situation were reversed and the act carried out by an Arab or Muslim it would instantly be dubbed as an act of terrorism or violent extremism. A prime example of this phenomenon is the mass shooting in Charleston, South Carolina by white male Dylann Roof²²² and the mass shooting in San Bernardino, California by Muslims Syed Rizwan Farook and Tashfeen Malik.²²³ Roof is most

²²² Meg Kinnard. “Dylann Roof to please guilty to all state charges” *WCNC*. April 10, 2017

²²³ “Everything we know about the San Bernardino terror attack investigation so far” *Los Angeles Times*. December 14, 2015

often referred to as a white supremacist, whereas Farook and Malik are referred to as terrorists.

The propagated false narrative that frames Arabs or Muslims as the only people capable of committing acts of violent extremism represents an external threat to the community of Metro Detroit. This was evident during the fieldwork I conducted when an individual that has never been to Hamtramck warned me that I needed to take great caution because “Hamtramck is where all the terrorists are.” Having a large Yemeni population had obviously allowed for this individual to construct some version of a false reality about an entire town that was likely reinforced by false claims that Sharia Law had taken over.²²⁴

When considering CVE, the ways in which greater society perceives Arabs and Muslims can become problematic when a substantial amount of people are being framed as radicals, as violent extremists, or as terrorists on the basis of their ethnicity or religion. These types of sweeping generalizations can in fact further marginalize an already marginalized or vulnerable population. This notion was extremely evident in Reverend Betty’s experience in Columbus, when the entire Somali population was being generalized as being aggressive, mean, or self-isolating. In fact, this population was isolated and the greater community was perpetuating this isolation, which essentially further marginalizes individuals. As Reverend Betty pointed out, this is where radicalization could occur. If communities are being isolated or inadvertently targeted, individuals might seek out other methods of education such as the internet, where they can easily fall prey to the elaborate tactics of online recruiters for terrorist organizations. This also becomes a vicious cycle when the individuals that do radicalize are constantly being exploited for media ratings which inherently substantiates the greater population’s opinions about them. Further research concerning the how the media portrays Arabs and Muslims would be useful for future

²²⁴ Signey Traylor. “First Muslim Ruled City Council Forces SHARIA LAW on American Citizens” *US Herald*.

CVE programs and policies. Research regarding Arabs and Muslims in the media exists and would be useful as a basis for tying it to CVE efforts. It is important to note that Western societies derive much of their knowledge about Islam and Muslims from mainstream media, and also that over three quarters of people in these societies get their information from the media.²²⁵ With the media overemphasizing extremist acts by Muslims and Arabs, these become linked with Islam and shape popular perceptions of what Islam is.²²⁶ This same logic can be applied to how media reports terrorist attacks, which is by providing disproportionately high coverage to terrorist attacks involving Muslims than others.²²⁷ This is problematic when a large majority of people rely on the media for their interpretation of Arabs and Muslims because it creates two frameworks: all Arabs are Muslims and all Muslims are extremists. If the Department of Education were involved in CVE, they could engage in countering these false narratives and therefore combat the marginalization of Arabs and Muslims within their respective communities.

International Approaches to CVE

There are a number of international organizations, in the form of NGOs, Think Tanks, or grassroots movements with philosophies of countering violent extremism through different means. As far as research shows, the United States does little to extract methodologies from these organizations in order to implement them into US policy or program making. Future US programs should do this. These organizations are redefining the meaning of community as they create complex networks by internationalizing and intertwining with one another towards a

²²⁵ Halim Rane, Jacqui Ewart, and John Martinkus. *Media Framing of the Muslim world: Conflicts, crises and contexts*. (Basingstoke;New York;: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) 29

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

²²⁷ Erin M. Kearns, Allison Betus, Anthony Lemieux. “Yes, the media do underreport some terrorist attacks. Just not the ones most people think of,” *The Washington Post*. March 13, 2017.

common goal of de-radicalization and CVE. Some of the most noted are Mothers for Life and FATE (Families Against Terrorism and Extremism).

Mothers for Life is a global network of mothers who have experienced violent extremism in their life and have made the decision to come forward to raise awareness, provide support, and advocate against extremism. This organization offers a new and unique experience in the world of violent extremism as they have lost sons, daughters, or husbands to violent extremism, often in Iraq and Syria.²²⁸ In considering the perspective of the families that are impacted, or left-behind, due to violent extremism, new methods and approaches to the issue may be developed. This particular organization operates in eight different countries, including the United States, Canada, Germany, France, Belgium, The Netherlands, Denmark, and Sweden.²²⁹

FATE is a self-identified family of organizations that aims to create a better future by advocating against extremism in order to keep families together.²³⁰ This organization helps set up CVE programs, hosts events, and coordinates with charities that have similar goals.²³¹ FATE essentially exists as a communication network that has the capacity to connect organizations and activists in order to work towards the common goal of ending violent extremism.

Future Research

The future of US based CVE programs and policies should incorporate both methodologies and approaches from the aforementioned organizations or others similar to these. These organizations provide different viewpoints and experiences into how CVE can be

²²⁸ German Institute for De-Radicalization Studies. "Mothers for Life Network," <http://girds.org/mothersforlife/mothers-for-life-network>

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Families Against Terrorism and Extremism. <http://findfate.org/en/about/>

²³¹ Ibid.

implemented, especially by bringing it down to a familial level with reliance on mothers. Future research should further explore the role that mothers and families can have, both in their family and in their community, on countering violent extremist narratives and actions.

Overall, future research could explore several different routes, including but not limited to:

- A more comprehensive analysis of underexplored but recurring themes—such as how the perception of Arabs and Muslims in the media can impact CVE efforts and how religious organizations that do not participate in interfaith events are perceived by the greater community
- Fieldwork within the United States, primarily in a city such as Columbus, Minneapolis, Los Angeles, or Boston—where CVE efforts are concentrated or there are populations that are facing difficulties with integration
- Fieldwork abroad in cities such as Brussels, Birmingham, or Paris—where terrorist attacks have occurred or where there is contestation regarding integration of Arabs and Muslims
- Fieldwork in other domestic and international cities where there appears to be a high level of community cohesion—regarding perceptions of extremism and ways in which CVE and community resilience have been promoted
- A more comprehensive analysis of the role of religion in CVE programs—specifically how interfaith organizations can strengthen community cohesion in a multicultural community
- An analysis on how multicultural representation in institutions (such as government, education, or law enforcement) promotes inclusion and lower levels of radicalization

Concerns and Limitations

It is necessary to address that this account is not fully representative of attitudes towards CVE and community cohesion, but rather serves as a snapshot of the community of Metro Detroit. The interview with Reverend Betty highlights this best when she speaks about the attitude towards the Somali community in Columbus. She spoke about how her own religious community there was alienating the Somali population with no legitimate reason, and that the people within the church she attended had not even attempted to build a relationship with any Somali in their community. It is a limitation of this thesis that inclusion from other key cities was not possible. However, this is a direction for future research to consider. By repeating this study in a city like Columbus or Minneapolis different results could be possible which would allow for a more thorough understanding on how community cohesion can counter potential violent extremism. It would also be necessary to analyze different community based non-profits that are providing resources to community members as well as the strength, or lack thereof, of the interfaith community.

It is possible that religious organizations would not be receptive to organizing interfaith events and training. It is also possible, as Reverend Betty exemplified, that hostility towards Muslims could occur. If this were to happen it would be worth bringing external interfaith leaders, such as Reverend Betty, into the community on a short term basis to talk to people. This would be possible for renowned leaders like Reverend Betty who are engaged in both their local community as well as global training for topics relating to interfaith activism. Rather, one individual could make a big difference if that individual is able to connect just a few members of adverse communities and create constructive dialogue. Other than this, community based non-profits could prove to be another resource for creating constructive dialogue in an attempt to

bring people together. As Reverend Betty stated, it really is as simple as bringing a plate of food and just talking to one another. This is also a positive platform for law enforcement to engage in a more community based approach. For example, local law enforcement entities could hold community cook outs as a method for bringing people together. Though not guaranteed to succeed, it is an aspect of building interactions within and across cultures.

There is still much to be done regarding research for CVE and community cohesion. One possible future direction is to incorporate those who have actually been convicted of terrorism into the programs after they have served their sentence or completed a deradicalization program. A possible gateway for implementing this in the future would be to utilize the two defendants, Abdullahi Yusuf and Abdirizak Warsame, who received light sentences when facing charges related to terrorism in Minneapolis.²³² Yusuf and Warsame both cooperated with the investigation of a larger group, received short sentences, and are viewed as being the most likely to complete rehabilitation and be suited for integration back into society.²³³ If both men complete their sentences without trouble and do integrate back into society, they could prove to provide a useful narrative for CVE efforts within their community if community organizations are willing to give them the platform to share their stories.

CVE in the US has a significant amount of catching up to do compared to the efforts being launched in the international community. Those in charge of CVE could benefit from incorporating the viewpoints or methodologies of other international organizations, such as the aforementioned Mothers For Life or FATE. US based CVE programs, that are independent from the DHS and the DOJ could greatly serve the wider society. These types of programs could also

²³² “Minneapolis Terror Sentences Expected To Set National Standard,” *CBS Minnesota*, November 16, 2016.

²³³ *Ibid.*

provide a platform to build and maintain trust within multicultural communities.

Final Conclusion: The Legitimacy of Current CVE Efforts

It is evident from my research that the current framework for CVE is grossly misinformed and counterproductive. By creating programs under the umbrella of homeland security and law enforcement, community members rightfully feel targeted. Feeling targeted, especially within the context of law enforcement, is going to make someone less likely to seek help for themselves or a friend or family member and will further marginalize them. CVE should be dismantled and reassembled under another department, specifically as a joint effort between the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Education, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Together, these departments would be able to address issues such as mental health and stability and community development. CVE programs also should not, under any circumstance, target one religion or group of people. Doing so criminalizes the group as a whole, which is counterproductive when attempting to strengthen levels of community cohesion. Furthermore, the fact that available funding exists under the blanket of CVE efforts is problematic, especially with the recent allegations of restructuring programs to only focus on Islam. Funding for strengthening community resilience and cohesion should exist outside of CVE because it would draw more participation, strengthen community resources, and not embrace or encourage discriminatory policies.

If CVE efforts are to be restructured to focus solely on Islam, several current CVE programs and policies will lose funding. A prime example is Life After Hate, which is an organization run by a former white supremacist with the aim of providing assistance to neo-

Nazis, KKK members, and far right radicals when disengaging from their group.²³⁴ This group was awarded a \$400,000 grant in 2016 to continue with its programs but now fears that they will lose future funding if programs shift to focus on Islamic extremism.²³⁵ These types of programs are vital in addressing, combatting, and finding a solution to violent extremism. These types of programs are also necessary to truly create a *beloved community* because they aim to delegitimize violent extremism and integrate former extremists back into their respective community.

The United States could better their CVE approach by turning to methods utilized by the international community. Though some have flaws, there are interesting and useful methods being implemented across the globe. First, US CVE should expand to incorporate deradicalization efforts. For example, there seems to be an agreement amongst the community of scholars, counterterrorist organizations, and researchers that Saudi Arabia has created the best deradicalization programs across the globe. Therefore, Saudi Arabia has been dubbed the “master of deradicalization.”²³⁶ Saudi Arabia’s program, Prevention, Rehabilitation, and Aftercare (PRAC) has been developing since the early 1990s and has become a model for other countries across the world that seek to establish deradicalization programs.²³⁷

The three part program was designed to address different aspects that involve extremism starting from radicalization, and this is likely a reason why it has been successful. The prevention portion of the program counters the initial radicalization process by engaging the public in

²³⁴ James Wilkinson. “Meet the former white supremacists who are helping extremists escape from hate groups like the KKK—and their tattoos” *Daily Mail*. February 21, 2017.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Hamed El-Said and Jane Harrigan. *Deradicalizing Violent Extremists*. Abingdon, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2013.

²³⁷ Ibid.

conversation with the factual basis of Islam as well as explaining the threat faced by living as an extremist.²³⁸ The prevention portion also heavily stresses that extremists exploit Muslims in order to achieve their own agendas, which is a useful tactic in dissuading radicalization. The rehabilitation program in PRAC has developed based on doing extensive research into the demographic background of participants.²³⁹ The first study that was conducted involved 639 subjects who claimed to have engaged in domestic political violence in Saudi Arabia, but also some may have participated in international political violence. The second study included 60 subjects that were active in terrorist roles until 2006. The study concluded that an overwhelming majority of subjects were not properly educated in terms of religion during childhood.²⁴⁰ This study served as the foundation for the rehabilitation portion of the program. By determining that an improper religious upbringing made an individual much more susceptible to radicalization, rehabilitation sought to reteach Islam in moderate way which was done by conducting religious dialogue, giving the individual social support, and providing psychological counseling.²⁴¹ As part of the aftercare, the government has been active in providing financial assistance for many different venues, such as weddings, dowries, and apartment furnishing.²⁴² This financial assistance is a critical tool that will aide a former extremist in developing new social networks as well as promoting a new healthy and positive alternative lifestyle.²⁴³

Another example of deradicalization is happening in Nigeria. Boko Haram is an Islamic extremist terrorist organization based in Nigeria that has gained recent attention for their ruthless violent tactics in the region. The group has claimed allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and

²³⁸ Angel Rabasa, Stacie Pettyjohn, Jeremy Ghez, and Christopher Boucek. *Deradicalizing Islamic Extremists*. Santa Monica: RAND, 2011.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Allison Miller. "Deradicalization of Islamic Extremists." Term Paper, Virginia Tech, 2015.

Syria and appears to be adopting several of the same strategies with the aim of establishing a caliphate of their own. Some might insist that deradicalizing extremists of this level is impossible, but nevertheless an attempt to do just that is taking place in Kuje Prison right outside of the capital, Abuja. An officer of the prison by the name of Malam Tata sees deradicalization as his religious duty and is attempting to deradicalize 43 militants within the prison.²⁴⁴ Tata leads a team of Imams (who are also officers in the prison) in spiritual discussions that challenge the militants' acceptance of violent ideology. Some of the militants are illiterate and not able to read the Quran and some are literate but do not have even a basic understanding of Islam.²⁴⁵ The lack of ability to understand Islam makes individuals more susceptible to falling into the process of becoming radicalized because they will just accept what is told to them about the religion as the truth. The prison system has taken an entirely new approach at attempting to deradicalize the jailed extremists. Though they do engage in ideological discussion in an attempt to realign beliefs in a more moderate way, they also encourage participation in sports, provide schooling, therapy, and vocational training.²⁴⁶ This is done with the hope of being able to modify ideological beliefs and extremist behavior so that these individuals will someday successfully reintegrate back into society in a peaceful manner. Another city, Onitsha, houses a prison with 100 militant inmates that surrendered and a deradicalization program modeled off of the Kuje prison will soon be implemented for the extremists.²⁴⁷ Participation in the deradicalization program is strictly voluntary and there are incentives for joining it, such as being able to live in a single cell with only one cellmate.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁴ "Road to Redemption? Unmaking Nigeria's Boko Haram." *Integrated Regional Information Networks*. October 1, 2015

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Allison Miller. "Deradicalization of Islamic Extremists." Term Paper, Virginia Tech, 2015.

Though the individuals participating in these programs are not necessarily on par with the individuals in the United States needing support from CVE programs, they provide valuable ideals and tools for bettering US CVE efforts. These types of approaches are valuable because they provide frameworks for what to do with individuals who have been charged with terrorism related crimes, both while they are in prison and when they finish their sentence and get out of prison.

There is also an important dialogue and practice happening regarding CVE and Metro Detroit. The College of Literature, Science, and Art at the University of Michigan advertised in January 2016 seeking graduate students capable of monitoring social media posts associated with violent criminal intent.²⁴⁹ The advertisement was placed in coordination with the Detroit Crime Commission and boasted of being able to expand to include monitoring of CVE related content, such as terrorist messaging and recruitment attempts.²⁵⁰ Counter to this, the Council on American-Islamic Relations-Michigan (CAIR-MI) has stated that CVE programs are a “controversial government initiative that seeks to use members of the American-Muslim community to work with law enforcement to counter radicalization in the Muslim community.”²⁵¹ Dawud Walid is the Executive Director for CAIR-MI and he believes that if CVE is to be truly community focused, it should be overseen by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, “not under a law enforcement framework. By nature it is criminalizing the Muslim community.”²⁵²

The analysis of CVE efforts in the US is likely more important now that it has ever been. It is recommended that CVE efforts be disengaged from control of the DHS and the DOJ and

²⁴⁹ University of Michigan. *Detroit Crime Commission Internship*. LSA Honors Program.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Mark Hicks. “Forum panel criticizes tactics in extremist fight,” *Detroit News*. October 19, 2016.

²⁵² Ibid.

reallocated to the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Education, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development. These three departments, working together, could form one of the strongest approaches to CVE among the international community. Each has unique and valuable resources that would address the current issues and concerns of CVE in relation to DHS and DOJ involvement. The three suggested departments would also be better at identifying community needs, providing resources to address these needs, and engaging with community members from a non-criminalizing perspective.

Beloved community as defined by hooks can be more realistically achieved by removing the securitization aspect of CVE. By genuinely restructuring CVE to focus on the needs of the community by utilizing the aforementioned departments, individuals who are at risk of radicalization towards violent extremism may receive the proper attention that they need. These needs may include, but are not limited to, mental health care, educational support, housing support, or an increase in community involvement. By reframing religion as a positive contribution to a community through interfaith organizations and dialogues, marginalized individuals or groups within a community can begin to bridge gaps that might exist.

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