



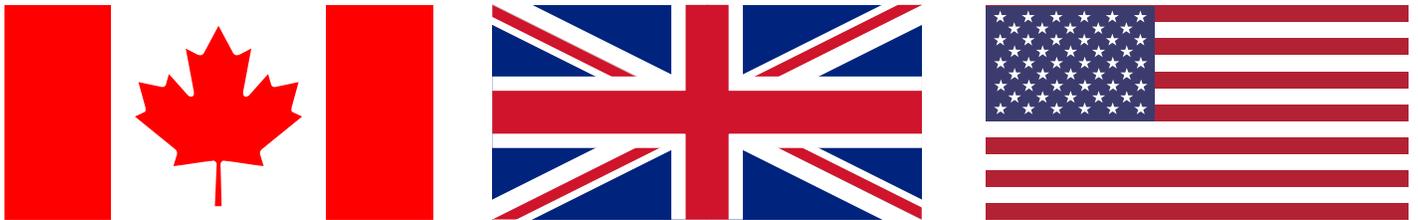
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National Institute of Justice

# **Radicalization and Violent Extremism: Lessons Learned From Canada, the U.K. and the U.S.**

Arlington, VA

July 28-30, 2015



Homeland  
Security



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# Foreword

For more than a decade, government agencies have worked with academic experts around the globe to explore violent extremism. The Kanishka Project in Canada, the Arc of Terrorism and Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism research programs in the United Kingdom, and sponsored research programs housed at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Directorate of Science and Technology and the Department of Justice's National Institute of Justice are examples of robust, multiyear efforts to deliver answers for practitioners trying to prevent and end violent extremism. As these programs grew, their managers and researchers remained in close contact with one another, sharing findings and comparing results.

This international collaboration set the stage for a conference that brought together some of the best researchers — from five robust programs — who delivered practical and timely results to the practitioners in laymen's language. The practitioners attending the meeting and working on preventing and countering violent extremism (in U.K. parlance, practitioners in the “prevent and pursue” spaces) included government officials at the local, state and federal levels of government, community partners and other nongovernmental officials. The international conference highlighted what each research program had to offer and demonstrated the impact each program has made on the field of terrorism studies. This report summarizes the findings presented at the conference, organized by major themes.

# Acknowledgments

None of this conference would have been possible without the help of numerous individuals. A special thanks is due to the organizing committee, who met numerous times and contributed financially and personally to the success of the conference. In particular, I would like to thank Brett Kubicek from Public Safety Canada, Paul Grasby from the U.K. Home Office, Emma Barrett and Charles MacLeod from the United Kingdom, and Rik Legault and Kathleen Deloughery from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security for all their help and support. This conference is as much theirs as it is ours. I would also like to thank Dr. Allison Smith for reviewing hundreds of pages of conference notes to produce this summary.

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# Executive Summary

From July 28 to July 30, 2015, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) of the U.S. Department of Justice hosted a conference that brought together practitioners working on countering violent extremism (CVE) programs in the United Kingdom (U.K.), Canada, and the United States (U.S.); researchers from Canada’s “Kanishka Project,” the U.K.’s “Arc of Terrorism” program, and the U.K. Home Office’s “Prevention Research” efforts; and research programs sponsored by NIJ and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. In addition to highlighting the latest results from scientific studies on radicalization to violent extremism, the conference provided researchers and practitioners with the opportunity to discuss how the findings may be applied in the field and to identify questions and challenges that remain to be addressed.

## Processes of Radicalization to Violent Extremism

Researchers at the conference discussed several facilitators of the radicalization process that were supported by their data and analyses. Among those most frequently mentioned were connections with violent extremists in an individual’s social network, identity processes, violent extremist belief systems and narratives, group dynamics, connections with violent extremists and violent extremist material via the internet and social media, and grievances. Researchers emphasized that the process of radicalization to violent extremism generally involves multiple facilitators and may vary by individual, group, type of belief system, and context. Because of this variation, questions remain regarding the best approach for developing models of the process, including whether it would be more helpful to develop (1) high-level models that can be used as general guides to help users identify the more specific factors at work in a particular situation or context or (2) specific models focused on different individuals, groups, types of violent extremist belief systems, and contexts. Also discussed was the importance of gaining a better understanding of whether certain factors, or combinations of factors, are more relevant at different points in the radicalization process.

**Table 1. Potential Risk Factors for Radicalizing to Violent Extremism**

Experiencing identity conflict
Feeling there is a lack of meaning in life
Wanting status
Wanting to belong
Desiring action or adventure
Having experienced trauma*
Having mental health issues or being emotionally unstable/troubled
Being naïve or having little knowledge of religion and ideology
Having strong religious beliefs
Having grievances
Feeling under threat
Having an “us versus them” world view
Justifying violence or illegal activity as a solution to problems*
Having engaged in previous criminal activity*
Stressors (e.g., a family crisis, being fired from a job)
Societal discrimination or injustice
Exposure to violent extremist groups or individuals
Exposure to violent extremist belief systems or narratives
Family members or other in violent extremist network*

\* Risk factor was identified by comparing individuals who did and did not engage in extremist violence.

## Factors That May Put Individuals at Risk of Radicalizing to Violent Extremism

Researchers discussed several factors that may put individuals at increased risk of radicalizing to violent extremism (see table 1); notably, they also discussed several protective factors that may put individuals at decreased risk of radicalizing. Protective factors include having self-esteem, strong ties in the community, a nuanced understanding of religion and ideology, and a diversity of nonviolent outlets for addressing grievances, among others.

In some cases, risk factors emerged from analyses that compared individuals who had and had not engaged in extremist

violence. In these cases, there is evidence that the hypothesized risk factors are more likely to be associated with violent outcomes than nonviolent outcomes. In other cases, the analyses did not include comparison or control groups, and risk factors were determined by focusing only on individuals who radicalized to violence; the scientific validity of risk factors derived without a comparison or control group is not clear. Similar questions arose for many of the protective factors identified at the meeting.

As in their discussion of the processes of radicalization to violent extremism, researchers emphasized the need to examine multiple risk and protective factors together and to take into account the fact that risk and protective factors may differ by individual, group, type of violent extremist belief system, and context. In response,

practitioners stated that it would be helpful for those developing and implementing CVE programs to know which risk and protective factors tend to be more common across a range of individuals and contexts and which tend to vary. From a practical perspective, it would also be useful to know how to distinguish between what is normal in a particular context or community and what is not.

## Preventing and Countering Radicalization to Violent Extremism

The practitioners presented information on various programs that have been developed in the U.K., Canada and the U.S., and they discussed some of the challenges they have faced in implementing the programs. The researchers then offered some guidance on best practices in implementing outreach and intervention programs based on current studies. For example, the researchers emphasized that it was important for government agencies to (1) try to engage with the entire community and not avoid those who disagree with their policies, (2) tailor outreach strategies to different groups in the community, and (3) take into account the stigma that can be attached to members of the community who

engage with the government. Also discussed was whether programs should be designed specifically to address radicalization to violent extremism or be focused more generally on preventing violence and other problematic behaviors. The attendees agreed that additional research focused on identifying the applicability of other prevention programs to countering violent extremism, as well as evaluations of existing and future CVE programs, would be required to answer this question.

Finally, the practitioners offered some observations on how research can be more useful to those working in the field. Both government and community practitioners argued that it would be helpful if researchers worked more closely with them. They were also concerned that research may not be getting into the hands of those who need it most and in a form that is usable. To this end, the practitioners recommended that findings be presented in new and innovative ways. Specifically, they recommended developing synopses and briefing materials that highlight key findings, using case studies and vignettes to illustrate them, and producing videos and podcasts to deliver them in a more user-friendly manner. They also asked that researchers provide more concrete recommendations that can be used in the field.

# Introduction

For more than a decade, government agencies in the United Kingdom (U.K.), Canada, and the United States (U.S.) have sponsored research on radicalization to violent extremism<sup>1</sup> and how it can be prevented and countered. From the beginning, the goal of these efforts has been to advance scientific understanding of this phenomenon in order to inform and support practitioners in the field. As such, the success of these projects depends on both the quality of the research being conducted and its relevance and utility to those who are developing policies and programs to prevent and counter violent extremism (CVE).<sup>2</sup>

From July 28 to July 30, 2015, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) of the U.S. Department of Justice hosted a conference that brought together practitioners working on CVE programs in the U.K., Canada and the U.S.; researchers from Canada's Kanishka Project, the U.K.'s Arc of Terrorism program, and the U.K. Home Office's Prevent and Pursue research efforts; and research programs sponsored by NIJ and the Science and Technology Directorate of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. In addition to highlighting the latest results from scientific studies on radicalization to violent extremism, the conference provided the researchers and practitioners an opportunity to discuss how findings may be applied in the field and identify questions and challenges that remain to be addressed.

This report summarizes three days of robust information exchange. As is inevitable when dealing with a topic as complex and evolving as radicalization to violent extremism, what emerged from the conference presentations and discussions was not always characterized by complete consensus. The conference did, however, provide tremendous insight into the current state of the research and suggested directions for where it might go next.

The report begins by highlighting research findings and practitioners' perspectives on how the processes of radicalization to violent extremism occurs. It then discusses findings

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<sup>1</sup> Many different definitions of radicalization, violent extremism and terrorism can be used, but, for the purposes of this report, violent extremists are those individuals who support or commit ideologically motivated violence to further political, social, or religious goals. Radicalization is the process by which individuals enter into violent extremism. Although several practitioners at the conference expressed the need to also understand *nonviolent* extremism and how it is related to violent extremism, the research presented at the conference focused on the latter.

<sup>2</sup> In this report, the acronym CVE will be used to refer to policies and programs focused on preventing violent extremism and countering it after it has developed.

and perspectives on factors that may put individuals at increased or decreased risk of radicalizing, followed by findings and perspectives on how violent extremism can be prevented and countered. The report

ends with a summary of conclusions and a few observations on how research findings can be made more useful to those working in the field.

# Processes of Radicalization to Violent Extremism

Over the past two decades, several models of the process by which individuals are radicalized to violent extremism have been developed and debated by researchers and practitioners alike. These models — which by their nature attempt to simplify what most agree to be a very complex process — differ in terms of whom they cover (e.g., all types of violent extremists or those who embrace a specific ideology or tactic), how they represent the process of radicalization unfolding (e.g., in clearly defined stages or in a less ordered manner), and the dynamic forces they view as facilitating an individual’s movement toward supporting or participating in extremist violence (e.g., individual beliefs, social relationships, or societal conditions).

Although the researchers attending the conference did not question the value of models of radicalization to violent extremism, very few of them presented or discussed specific models in detail. On the one hand, this may have been due to time constraints or the desire to focus on only particular aspects of the radicalization process. On the other hand, it may reflect the challenges involved in identifying experiences that are common across the diverse range of individuals who radicalize to violent extremism.

Three of the four models that were discussed at any length were relatively new models that the researchers had developed based on their reviews of the research literature and analyses of their own data. The only established model presented — the New York Police Department’s (NYPD) four-stage model of radicalization<sup>3</sup> — was not treated as authoritative; rather, it was used to inform the hypotheses that one of the researchers was testing.<sup>4</sup>

Instead of focusing on presenting full-scale models of the process of radicalization to violent extremism, researchers tended to focus on specific facilitators of the radicalization

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<sup>3</sup> For more information on the NYPD model, see M. Silber and A. Bhatt, “Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat.” New York: New York City Police Department, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Jytte Klausen of Brandeis University examined the NYPD model using data she has collected as part of the Western Jihadism project.

**Table 2. Most Frequently Mentioned Facilitators of the Radicalization to Violent Extremism**

<b>Connections With Violent Extremists in Social Network</b>
Identity Processes
Violent Extremist Belief Systems or Narratives
Group Dynamics
Connections With Violent Extremists and Violent Extremist Material via the Internet and Social Media
Grievances
Search for Meaning
Threats or Perceived Threats
Triggering Events
Activities to Demonstrate Commitment

process that were supported by their data and analyses. The following list of specific facilitators are listed in descending order from those most frequently mentioned to those least frequently mentioned.<sup>5</sup>

**Connections with violent extremists in an individual's social network** were the most frequently mentioned facilitators of the process of radicalization to violent extremism. More than half of the researchers<sup>6</sup> stated that having friends, family members, or acquaintances involved in violent extremism can potentially lead individuals to become (or stay) involved in violent extremism. According to one researcher, these types of connections are fairly common even among U.S. lone-actor violent extremists, who are, by definition, not formally affiliated with any violent extremist group.<sup>7</sup>

More than half of the researchers also mentioned **identity processes** as facilitators

of the radicalization process. Some noted that experiencing identity conflict or confusion — whether because of a struggle to adapt to a new culture, to one's stage of life (e.g., adolescence), or to other challenges — potentially leaves individuals more open to adopting new ideas and behaviors, including those associated with violent extremism. One researcher pointed out that an individual's sense of identity can develop in association with a violent extremist group; when this identity is important to the individual and pervades numerous aspects of his or her life, it may lead to violence.<sup>8</sup>

Almost one-half of the researchers discussed **violent extremist belief systems or narratives** as facilitating the process of radicalization to violent extremism, and a few of them argued that adopting a religious or ideological belief system that justifies violence is central to the process of

<sup>5</sup> Only the facilitators of radicalization to violent extremism mentioned by more than one researcher are listed in table 1. It should be noted that researchers might have discussed additional facilitators — or the facilitators listed might have been mentioned more frequently — had there been no time constraints on their presentations.

<sup>6</sup> This fraction and those to follow are based on the number of researchers who discussed the process of radicalization to violent extremism.

<sup>7</sup> This statement was made by Mr. William Braniff of the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism and was based on analysis of the Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS) database.

<sup>8</sup> This statement was made by Dr. Brent Smith of the Terrorism Research Center and was based on analysis of the American Terrorism Study (ATS) database.

becoming a violent extremist. Along these lines, they also suggested that research on radicalization to violent extremism may benefit from closer examination of other research that focuses on the processes by which individuals adopt new belief systems (e.g., the literature on religious conversion). Other researchers, however, held that it is possible to engage in extremist violence without adopting an extremist belief system, which may be the case, for example, when individuals join violent extremist groups primarily because members of their social networks are involved.

Slightly less than one-half of the researchers pointed to **group dynamics** as a facilitator of the process of radicalization to violent extremism. Belonging to a tight-knit group was linked to individuals being more likely to accept their fellow group members' views, more likely to consider those inside their group more positively (in-group favoritism), and more likely to consider those outside their group more negatively (outgroup derogation). One researcher stated that there was evidence that as radicalization occurs, individuals surround themselves with radical peers and detach from their previous lives.<sup>9</sup>

Having **connections with violent extremists and violent extremist material via the internet and social media** was also identified as facilitating the process of radicalization to violent extremism by almost one-half of the researchers. In addition to potentially leading individuals to become more accepting of violence and fostering feelings of closeness with those who perpetrate it, virtual connections can provide individuals with practical guidance that may facilitate extremist violence. One researcher pointed out that connections

via social media may also lead individuals to see similarities between themselves and those currently engaged in violence, and some may experience this as empowering.<sup>10</sup>

Approximately one-third of the researchers highlighted **grievances** as facilitating the process of radicalization to violent extremism. Specifically, they argued that feeling that one or one's group has been treated unfairly, discriminated against, or targeted by others may lead to individuals wanting to seek violent revenge or engage in violent protest against those they view as oppressing them. One researcher argued that when there is equity, citizen engagement, and equal security, there is not much room for radicalization to violent extremism.<sup>11</sup>

Fewer researchers mentioned other potential facilitators of the process of radicalization to violent extremism. However, this does not imply that they are any less valid; rather, other facilitating factors may simply play a role in the radicalization process for fewer individuals or have been examined less frequently. These other facilitators include a **search for meaning**, which may leave individuals open to making big changes in their lives, including potentially sacrificing themselves for a cause; **threats or perceived threats** that may lead individuals to feel that their lives or the lives of their loved ones are in danger; **triggering events**, such as military attacks or political events that may lead to individuals feeling an increased pressure to act; and engaging in **activities to demonstrate commitment** to a violent extremist group or cause, which may help to solidify this commitment or make retreat from it more difficult.

<sup>9</sup> This statement was made by Dr. Jytte Klausen of Brandeis University.

<sup>10</sup> This statement was made by Dr. Peter Neumann of the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence.

<sup>11</sup> This statement was made by Dr. Ghayda Hassan of the University of Quebec at Montreal.

Although there clearly was some variation in what the researchers highlighted as facilitators of the process of radicalization to violent extremism, they were generally in agreement on two points. First, they all discussed multiple facilitators of the process as opposed to only one or two facilitators. This makes sense when considering that most people have experienced or been exposed to at least some of these facilitators (e.g., identity processes, group dynamics), and very few people radicalize to violent extremism.

Second, there was widespread agreement that the process of radicalization to violent extremism varies — whether by individual, group, type of extremist belief system, or context. As one researcher put it, people get on one of several pathways to radicalization for different reasons and experience it in different ways.<sup>12</sup> In other words, it is quite plausible that two individuals who belong to the same violent extremist group may come to it through different processes. For example, one may have connections with violent extremists in his or her social network, experience identity conflicts, and embrace a violent extremist belief system, whereas another may have grievances, connect with violent extremists on social media, and experience a triggering event. Similarly, it is not unreasonable to think that specific violent extremist belief systems, group recruiting practices, and political contexts may shape how the process of radicalization to violent extremism unfolds.

Given this variation — and the fact that it may be more accurate to refer to the processes (versus process) of radicalization to violent extremism — the question arises as to whether developing a single model that can represent these diverse processes is possible. One of the researchers at

the conference suggested that a way of addressing this issue would be through the creation of a higher level model (meta-model) that focuses less on specific facilitators of radicalization to violent extremism (e.g., connections with violent extremists in one's social network) and more on general categories of facilitators (e.g., exposure to violent extremism).<sup>13</sup> This model could then be used as a general guide to help identify the specific factors that facilitate or impede the process of radicalization to violent extremism in a particular situation or context. This approach would, however, require that those using the model be able to identify these specific factors. One researcher argued that much work still needs to be done on this front; research on violent extremism has just begun to move beyond studying violent extremists as if they are all alike.<sup>14</sup>

Another approach would be to develop different models of the processes of radicalization to violent extremism for different individuals, groups, types of extremist belief systems, and contexts as needed. To some degree, this is the approach that is currently being taken by models such as the NYPD model, which focuses specifically on the radicalization of individuals inspired by al Qaeda to conduct attacks in Europe, North America, and Australia.

The strength of these types of models is that they can include more information on the radicalization processes of specific subsets of violent extremists and, thus, do not require as much additional work by those researchers using the models. However, a potential concern is that even though models of this type are more detailed, the information may be limited to the violent

<sup>12</sup> This statement was made by Dr. John Horgan of Georgia State University.

<sup>13</sup> Dr. Noémie Bouhana of University College London presented the Individual Vulnerability, Exposure, Emergence (IVEE) Meta-Model, which takes this approach.

<sup>14</sup> This statement was made by Dr. Paul Gill of University College London.

## Current Findings on the Role of the Internet and Social Media in Radicalization to Violent Extremism

Online milieus can provide venues and support for people drawn to deviant communities, who otherwise would have trouble finding and communicating with like-minded others. (Dr. Garth Davies, Simon Fraser University)

From a psychological perspective, online relationships are as real as offline ones. (Dr. Kate Barrelle, Australian National University)

Social media is not predictive — many talk, but few attempt action. (Dr. Donald Holbrooke, Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence)

In some cases, a change in online activity parallels a shift in offline behavior; in some cases, it doesn't. (Dr. Lorenzo Vidino, Center for Cyber and Homeland Security)

Slick propaganda is not new. What is new is that people can talk to actual fighters on the ground in conflict zones via social media. (Dr. Peter Neumann, International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence)

State-level ideological counter-narrative messages may work only at the beginning of a person's radicalization process. Once a person commits to a radical agenda, one can only argue against violent acts, not the underlying ideology. (Dr. Paul Taylor, Lancaster University)

Simplistic thinking, overattribution, and ham-fisted CVE approaches are almost as dangerous as extremist use of social media. (Mr. Micah Clark, SecDev Group)

extremists upon which the models are based; it is not clear how much insight such models can provide into the radicalization processes of other groups. Further, it may be the case that even these more specific models are not detailed enough to address the needs of practitioners working with

individuals who may be radicalizing to violent extremism. According to one community practitioner at the conference, most models do not take into account the complexity of individuals' experiences; this complexity is important when working with people on the ground.

# Factors That May Put Individuals at an Increased (or Decreased) Risk of Radicalizing to Violent Extremism

While the previous section focused on research findings related to the processes of radicalization to violent extremism, this section focuses on what may put an individual at an increased or decreased risk of radicalizing to violent extremism. First, however, it is important to define risk and protective factors and to examine how they were identified by researchers. In the most basic sense, a risk factor is something that increases the likelihood that someone will radicalize to violent extremism. Conversely, a protective factor is something that decreases the likelihood that someone will radicalize to violent extremism. To date, there has been more research on risk factors than protective factors associated with radicalization to violent extremism, but several researchers emphasized the importance of assessing both. As one researcher stated, focusing only on risks can create generalities that are grounded in stereotypes rather than reality.<sup>15</sup>

Numerous risk factors and protective factors thought to be associated with whether an individual radicalizes to violent extremism were presented at the conference. In some cases, these risk factors and protective factors emerged from analyses that compared individuals who had engaged in extremist violence with control groups of individuals who had not. In these cases, there is evidence that the hypothesized risk factors (or the absence of protective factors) are more likely to be associated with violent outcomes and, equally important, the protective factors (or the absence of risk factors) are more likely to be associated with nonviolent outcomes. In other cases, no comparison or control groups were included in the analyses. Risk factors were determined by focusing only on individuals who radicalized to violence, and protective factors were determined by focusing only on individuals who did not radicalize to violence. The scientific validity of these risk and protective factors derived without a comparison or control group is not clear.

Tables 2 and 3 list potential risk factors and protective factors associated with radicalizing to violent extremism; each factor was presented by at least two separate researchers at the conference. It is important to note that these risk and protective factors emerged from different studies that focused on different samples of violent extremists; thus, it is very likely

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<sup>15</sup> This statement was made by Dr. Sara Thompson of Ryerson University.

**Table 3. Potential Risk Factors for Individuals Radicalizing to Violent Extremism**

	<b>Risk Factor</b>	<b>May Result in an Individual</b>
<b>Individual Factors</b>	Experiencing identity conflict	Being drawn to a strong group identity that can resolve this conflict.
	Feeling there is a lack of meaning in life	Being attracted to a belief system that purports to have all of the answers.
	Wanting status	Being drawn to opportunities to prove oneself to be heroic, brave and strong.
	Wanting to belong	Being drawn to joining a tight-knit group.
	Desiring action or adventure	Being drawn to participating in dangerous, illegal and/or violent activity.
	Having experienced trauma*	Being vulnerable to those who promise recompense or revenge.
	Having mental health issues or being emotionally unstable/troubled	Being vulnerable to others' influence.
	Being naïve or having little knowledge of religion and ideology	Being open to fringe religious and ideological interpretations.
	Having strong religious beliefs	Being drawn to those who claim to be guided by religion.
	Having grievances	Being drawn to those who promise to address these grievances.
	Feeling under threat	Being open to engaging in activities that purport to remove this threat.
	Having an "us versus them" world view	Being ready to view those outside one's group as enemies.
	Justifying violence or illegal activity as a solution to problems*	Being open to joining with those who engage in violence and illegal activity.
Having engaged in previous criminal activity*	Being open to joining with those who engage in illegal activity and justify it as part of a greater mission.	
<b>Contextual Factors</b>	Stressors (e.g., a family crisis, being fired from a job)	Being drawn to explanations that blame others for one's situation.
	Societal discrimination or injustice	Being drawn to those who promise recompense or revenge against those who discriminate or oppress.
	Exposure to violent extremist groups or individuals	Viewing violent extremists as less extreme.
	Exposure to violent extremist belief systems or narratives	Viewing violent extremist belief systems and narratives as less extreme.
	Family members or others in violent extremist network*	Identifying with violent extremists and viewing them as less extreme.

\*Risk factor was identified by comparing individuals who did and did not engage in extremist violence.

**Table 4. Potential Protective Factors Against Individuals Radicalizing to Violent Extremism**

	<b>Protective Factor</b>	<b>May Result in an Individual</b>
<b>Individual Factors</b>	Having self-esteem	Being confident in one's own views and less likely to be easily influenced by others.
	Having strong ties in the community*	Feeling one is a member of a community and has someplace to turn when facing difficulties.
	Having a nuanced understanding of religion and ideology	Being less accepting of religious or ideological interpretations that are simplistic or dogmatic.
<b>Contextual Factors</b>	Parental involvement in an individual's life	Feeling one's family is present, cares and is ready to help in times of difficulty.
	Exposure to nonviolent belief systems and narratives	Being able to identify a range of alternatives to violent belief systems and narratives.
	A diversity of nonviolent outlets for addressing grievances	Feeling one's grievances are acknowledged and respected as well as believing in the possibility of their being resolved in a lawful manner.
	Societal inclusion and integration	Feeling one's group is a valued member of society and is treated fairly.
	Resources to address trauma and mental health issues	Feeling that help is available when facing cognitive and emotional difficulties.

\*Protective factor was identified by comparing individuals who did and did not endorse extremist violence.

that some of the risk and protective factors are specific to the particular types of violent extremists being studied.<sup>16</sup>

Focusing on both risk and protective factors may not only improve the accuracy of risk assessments; it may also provide further avenues for designing successful interventions that prevent and counter radicalization to violent extremism. Specifically, in addition to mitigating risk factors, programs can work to strengthen or leverage protective factors.

A related topic of discussion at the conference concerned whether it is possible to identify useful indicators that an individual is radicalizing to violent extremism. In spite of the fact that the terms were sometimes used

interchangeably, it is important to note that “risk factors” and “indicators” are not the same thing. While a risk factor increases the likelihood that an individual will radicalize to violent extremism, an indicator may provide information on whether an individual is radicalizing to violent extremism. To give an example not related to radicalization, having a weakened immune system is a risk factor for catching a common cold, but having a cough may be an indicator.

Several researchers and practitioners expressed concern that the number of proposed indicators of radicalization had been multiplying over the years and that the search for indicators seemed to be becoming a fixation. In addition, many emphasized that the proposed

<sup>16</sup> Samples varied in terms of the individuals' ideologies, whether they belonged to formal violent extremist groups, whether they went abroad to fight or attacked at home, and other attributes.

**Table 5. Potential Behavioral Indicators that an Individual Is Radicalizing to Violent Extremism**

Seeking out information on a violent extremist ideology
Withdrawing from society or existing relationships
Engaging in conflict with family or others (e.g., teachers, religious leaders )
Making dramatic lifestyle changes (e.g., unexpectedly quitting work, leaving home)
Immersing oneself with violent extremist peers*
Joining or staying in a violent extremist organization*
Making public statements about violent extremist beliefs
Expressing threats or the intent to engage in terrorist activity
Engaging in preparatory activities related to an attack (e.g., training, obtaining weapons and materials, conducting surveillance)*

\* Indicator was identified by comparing individuals who did and did not engage in extremist violence.

indicators focusing on general underlying characteristics of individuals and contexts (as opposed to specific behaviors) were at best unhelpful and at worst might be viewed as discriminatory.

As seen in table 4, in some cases the potential indicators of radicalization to violent extremism identified by researchers are related to one or more of the risk factors listed earlier; for example, the proposed risk factor “justifying violence or illegal activity as a solution to problems” could potentially manifest in the behavioral indicator “expresses threat or intent to engage in terrorist activity.” In other cases, the indicators are more focused on behavioral manifestations of the group dynamics that may be associated with radicalization to violent extremism (withdrawing from society or existing relationships) or specific preparatory activities conducted in advance of an attack.<sup>17</sup> All of the potential indicators listed

in table 4 were identified by at least two researchers at the conference.

The desire to uncover indicators that an individual is radicalizing to violent extremism is understandable; indicators can help practitioners target interventions to those who may need them the most. At the same time, identifying valid indicators faces a challenge similar to the one involved in identifying valid risk and protective factors: It is important to ensure that indicators distinguish between individuals who do and do not radicalize. Several researchers and practitioners expressed concern about checklists of indicators that currently do not meet these standards.

Similar to the observation that the processes by which individuals radicalize to violent extremism vary, numerous researchers emphasized that the risk and protective factors associated with radicalization to violent extremism may

<sup>17</sup> Some argue that the latter should be distinguished from behavioral indicators associated with radicalization to violent extremism because preparatory activities take place after individuals have decided to act and, thus, have already radicalized to violent extremism. Others contend that some of these preparatory acts also serve to increase individuals’ commitment to violent extremism and that, until an attack is conducted, it still may be possible for them to back out of their own volition. This report does not take a position on this issue but, for ease of presentation, has included all of the indicators in the same table.

differ by individual, group, type of violent extremist belief system, and context. To give just a few examples, “having strong religious beliefs” may be a risk factor associated with radicalizing to violent extremism motivated by a religious ideology but not a secular ideology; the risk and protective factors associated with radicalizing to violent extremism in a prison may be different from those associated with radicalizing to violent extremism on a college campus; and whether “parental involvement in an individual’s life” serves as a protective factor against radicalization to violent extremism may depend on whether the parents support or are against violent extremism.

Another point made by several researchers concerned the need to examine multiple risk and protective factors together as opposed to looking at them in isolation. The idea that the presence of any one risk or protective factor on its own would be enough to determine that an individual was likely to radicalize to violent extremism was viewed as overly simplistic and potentially dangerous. For example, whether “having strong religious beliefs” should even be considered a risk factor for radicalizing to violent extremism would seem to be heavily dependent on the presence of another risk factor, “having little knowledge of religion and ideology.” If instead an individual has “a nuanced understanding of religion and ideology” (a protective factor), then “having strong religious beliefs” would arguably be a protective factor. One researcher presented evidence that certain risk factors — in this case, a desire for action, immersion with violent extremist peers, and engaging in training related to an attack — tend to appear in conjunction.<sup>18</sup>

Practitioners raised several questions and concerns about risk and protective factors associated with radicalization to violent extremism. One question related to the fact

that risk and protective factors were said to vary across individuals, groups, types of violent extremist belief systems, and contexts. One practitioner mentioned that it would be helpful for those developing and implementing CVE programs to know which risk and protective factors tended to be more common across a range of individuals and contexts and which tended to vary. Although research is ongoing to address this issue, the ability to make these kinds of determinations is complicated by the fact that even when studying similar types of violent extremists, different researchers often use different samples and examine different characteristics and behaviors. Efforts to identify findings that are — and are not — consistent across different studies are challenging but necessary.

Practitioners also asked whether some of the risk and protective factors identified by the researchers may also be associated with potential for becoming involved in gang activities or other problematic behaviors. This is a subject of current research funded by NIJ and has implications for whether efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism can learn from programs focused on preventing gang activity, violent crime, suicide, and related topics.

A more concrete practitioner concern focused on how, once identified, risk and protective factors could be assessed taking context into account. In other words, how can practitioners distinguish between what is normal in a particular context or community and what is abnormal or problematic? Arguably, one way to do this would be to work with individuals from the context or community to make this determination. This approach is consistent with policies and programs in the U.K., Canada and the U.S. that emphasize the important role that the community plays

<sup>18</sup> This statement was made by Dr. Jytte Klausen of Brandeis University.

## Current Findings on Individuals Who Leave to Fight in Foreign Conflicts

There have been different waves of foreign fighters traveling to Syria. The initial wave was focused on both religion and politics; the second wave is focused more on religion and building a state. (Dr. Amarnath Amarasingam, Dalhousie University)

In Europe, peer-to-peer networks are still decisive as to who gets recruited. One or two people go over to fight, stay in touch, and then people follow them. If no connection exists, no one will trust you. (Dr. Peter Neumann, International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence)

Women are used to recruit male foreign fighters, retain male foreign fighters, and reward male foreign fighters. (Dr. Mia Bloom, Georgia State University)

Foreign fighters who return to the U.S. may not be more dangerous than those who choose to stay. (Dr. Michael Jensen, National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism)

Prosecution makes families and communities less likely to cooperate or come forward. Prosecution may also deter people from returning. (Dr. Alastair Reed, International Centre for Counter-Terrorism)

Foreign fighters have a long history, and we'll see more conflicts that attract them. We need to live with the problem of foreign fighters, and part of that is living with the risks, not overstating them in a way that forces a response. (Dr. Andrew Glazzard, Royal United Services Institute)

in preventing and countering violent extremism.

This concern also points to the need for more research that uses comparison or control groups. As stated above, to be considered valid, there must be evidence that risk factors are more likely to be associated with radicalizing to violent extremism than not radicalizing, and that protective factors are more likely to be associated with not radicalizing to

violent extremism than radicalizing. To help validate risk and protective factors, one government practitioner suggested developing a sample that includes information on known violent extremists and on extremists who are not violent. He also suggested including individuals with various ideologies and connections to formal violent extremist groups in order to get a better sense of whether risk and protective factors were common across a range of individuals.

# Preventing and Countering Radicalization to Violent Extremism

After discussing the various processes by which individuals may radicalize to violent extremism — and the risk and protective factors potentially associated with them — the conference turned its focus to several of the programs developed to prevent and counter violent extremism in the U.K., Canada and the U.S., and to how research can inform these efforts.<sup>19</sup> These programs vary in several ways:

- Whether they focus on strengthening protective factors, addressing modifiable risk factors, or both.
- Whether they emphasize outreach to members of a wider community or focus on interventions tailored to individuals who are potentially at higher risk of radicalizing or who have radicalized already.
- Whether they include an ideological component that includes a focus on violent extremist belief systems and narratives.
- Whether they are led by the government, nongovernmental organizations, or both.

There is much to say about all of these programs, but they will only be briefly summarized here.

U.K. practitioners discussed four CVE efforts. Two are focused on outreach to community members who may be targeted by violent extremists. The **Research, Information and Communications Unit** (RICU) is a U.K. government agency that seeks to reduce the threat of violent extremism through effective communication. It works to address potential risks associated with exposure to violent extremist belief systems by confronting their underlying weaknesses, exposing their proposed solutions to be false, tackling the illusion that life as part of violent extremist organization is glorious, and promoting a positive alternative to violent extremism. **Inspire** is a nongovernmental organization working to prevent and

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<sup>19</sup> One way that research can and has informed these programs is through ongoing efforts to understand the processes of radicalization to violent extremism and the types of risk and protective factors discussed earlier. This section, however, will focus specifically on research related to the implementation and evaluation of CVE programs.

**Table 6. Training Programs for Preventing and Countering Radicalization to Violent Extremism**

Program	Focus	Audience	Ideological Component	Led by
<b>Research, Information and Communications Unit (RICU)</b>	Mitigating Risk Factors	Wider Community	Yes	Government
<b>Inspire</b>	Mitigating Risk Factors/ Strengthening Protective Factors	Wider Community	Yes	Nongovernment Organization
<b>Channel Program</b>	Mitigating Risk Factors/ Strengthening Protective Factors	Individuals at Risk	Yes	Government
<b>Healthy Identities</b>	Mitigating Risk Factors/ Strengthening Protective Factors	Individuals who have already Radicalized	No	Government
<b>Deepening the Dialogue Initiative</b>	Strengthening Protective Factors	Wider Community	No	Government
<b>Integrated Ctr. For Health and Social Services</b>	Mitigating Risk Factors/ Strengthening Protective Factors	Wider Community	Yes	Government
<b>Calgary ReDirect</b>	Mitigating Risk Factors/ Strengthening Protective Factors	Wider Community/ Individuals at Risk	No	Government
<b>Correctional Service Canada</b>	Mitigating Risk Factors	Individuals Who Have Already Radicalized	Yes	Government
<b>U.S. Attorney's Office</b>	Strengthening Protective Factors	Wider Community	No	Government
<b>Department of Homeland Security</b>	Strengthening Protective Factors	Wider Community	No	Government
<b>State and Local Anti-Terrorism Training Program</b>	Strengthening Protective Factors	Law Enforcement	Yes	Government
<b>World Organization for Resource Development and Education (WORDE)</b>	Mitigating Risk Factors/ Strengthening Protective Factors	Wider Community/ Individuals at Risk	No	Nongovernment Organization
<b>Boston Framework</b>	Mitigating Risk Factors/ Strengthening Protective Factors	Wider Community/ Individuals at Risk	No	Government and Nongovernment Organizations

counter violent extremism by strengthening protective factors in the community and, specifically, by empowering women to take the lead in creating a more democratic and peaceful society. The organization believes that resilience needs to start at home and that mothers can help to instill values in children so that they will be less likely to be swayed by violent extremist arguments when they are older. Inspire also seeks to address risk factors by providing training on how to counter violent extremist narratives.<sup>20</sup>

The other two U.K. programs are focused on interventions tailored to those potentially at higher risk of radicalizing or those who have already radicalized. **Channel** is a U.K. government-led program that focuses on providing support to people who are identified as being vulnerable to being drawn into violent extremism. The program uses a multi-agency approach to identify individuals at risk, assess the nature and extent of that risk, and develop support plans focused on strengthening

<sup>20</sup> For more information, please see: <http://www.wewillinspire.com/>.

protective factors and addressing risk factors associated with radicalizing to violent extremism. The types of support offered may include working on life skills and social skills, cognitive behavioral therapies, education and training, and others. In addition, when it is determined that an individual needs theological or ideological support, approved intervention programs provide mentoring focused on increasing the individual's understanding of the theology or ideology and challenging the ideas used to legitimize extremist violence. The **Healthy Identities Program** focuses on addressing risk factors and strengthening protective factors associated with radicalizing to violent extremism among individuals convicted of offenses related to their engagement or identification with violent extremist groups. This government-led program includes sessions aimed at promoting a positive identity and self-image, reducing “us versus them” thinking and identification with violent extremist groups, and improving individuals' perceptions and beliefs about people outside of their identity groups. The program discusses offenders' beliefs but does not focus on ideology.

Canadian practitioners discussed two programs focused on members of the community who may potentially be targeted by violent extremists. The **Deepening the Dialogue Initiative** is a government-led effort that aims to strengthen protective factors in the community using a series of first-person narratives that detail an individual's pathway to violent extremism. These narratives are used to initiate conversations with community groups about violent extremism in the context of their life experiences and to discuss opportunities for individual and community action. The **Integrated University Center for Health and Social Services** (CIUSSS) of the Central West Island of Montreal (part of the Province of Quebec's Health and Social Services Department) is working to stop radicalization to violent

extremism by addressing risk factors and strengthening protective resources in the community. Program activities include improving family ties to the community, developing alternative ideological narratives, fostering a more complex and nuanced understanding of religion, promoting nonviolent outlets for expressing grievances, and conducting intercultural training sessions for professionals who work with youth and communities.

Canadian practitioners also discussed two programs focused on interventions tailored to those potentially at higher risk of radicalizing or those who have already radicalized to violent extremism. The municipal government-led **Calgary ReDirect Program** is a prevention and education effort focused on strengthening protective resources and addressing risk factors associated with radicalization to violent extremism. ReDirect is a voluntary program that asks for community involvement in identifying individuals who may be at risk so that they can be referred to resources to help them. Practitioners at **Correctional Service Canada** (CSC) also discussed their efforts to develop a program to address risk factors for radicalization to violent extremism among ideologically motivated offenders. While they mentioned that more work is required to determine the applicability, reliability, and validity of various approaches, CSC currently uses cognitive behavioral programs that target violence and the influence of antisocial associates as well as interfaith counseling and ethno-cultural services to counter violent extremist ideology.

U.S. practitioners discussed two government-led efforts focused on strengthening protective factors by providing outreach and support to members of the general community. The 94 **U.S. Attorney's Offices** engage in a number of outreach efforts to provide the public — including marginalized groups — access to justice officials and to

build trust. These include efforts focused on youth and preventing violence. The **Department of Homeland Security** conducts community roundtables that focus on a range of issues, including countering violent extremism, and has worked with other government agencies in leading exercises with community members that examine a situation in which a young adult is radicalized to violent extremism. In addition, the **Department of Justice** funds the State and Local Anti-Terrorism Training Program, which focuses on the prevention of extremist violence in the United States by providing information and tools for state, local, and tribal law enforcement officers to understand, detect, deter, and investigate potential acts of extremist violence.

U.S. practitioners also described two efforts that focus on both outreach and intervention. The **World Organization for Resource Development and Education** (WORDE) is a nonprofit organization that works with communities to address the causes of violence. Among other efforts, WORDE seeks to strengthen protective factors and address risk factors associated with violent extremism by bringing together county officials, social agencies, faith communities, public safety officials, and others; conducting workshops and fostering public awareness of the signs of violent extremism; and providing tailored interventions to address the different types of risk factors that may lead to violent extremism.<sup>21</sup> Finally, the **Boston Framework** was developed by a collaborative of nongovernmental, governmental, and academic participants to increase the capacity of the community and government to protect vulnerable individuals from violent extremism. It

focuses on identifying existing prevention and early intervention strategies that can be enhanced, as well as new strategies, to strengthen protective factors and address risk factors associated with radicalization to violent extremism. In doing so, it builds on efforts implemented by the public health and mental health communities, nonprofit organizations, private partnerships, government, and others. Los Angeles and Minneapolis-St. Paul have also developed CVE frameworks as part of a three-city pilot program supported by the U.S. government.<sup>22</sup>

One of the fundamental questions raised by practitioners and researchers regarding outreach and intervention efforts was whether such efforts should be designed specifically to address radicalization to violent extremism (CVE-specific) or be focused more generally on preventing violence and/or other problematic behaviors. There were arguments for and against each approach. Those arguing for CVE-specific programs focused their arguments on two themes. The first theme was based on the view that ideology is central in the process of radicalization to violent extremism (but not other types of violent activity) and needs to be addressed in order to prevent and counter it. As discussed above, there was some debate among researchers on whether embracing a violent extremist belief system was a prerequisite for becoming a violent extremist, but exposure to such ideologies was often considered to be a facilitator of the radicalization process. Further, research on disengagement from violent extremism has also shown that in certain cases, changes in an individual's belief system may facilitate re-engagement in other, non-criminal roles. Once more, data are

<sup>21</sup> For more information, please see: <http://www.worde.org/>.

<sup>22</sup> For more information on the Boston Framework, please see <http://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/usao-ma/pages/attachments/2015/02/18/framework.pdf>. For more information on the Los Angeles and Minneapolis-St. Paul frameworks, please see <https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/Los%20Angeles%20Framework%20for%20CVE-Full%20Report.pdf> and <http://www.justice.gov/usao-mn/file/642121/download>.

available on the impacts of programs that do and do not focus on changing violent extremist belief systems, and it may be clearer whether it is important to develop programs that address this arguably unique characteristic of violent extremism.

The second theme concerned researchers' widespread agreement that the radicalization process varies by individual, group, and context, and as a consequence, programs focused on preventing and countering radicalization to violent extremism need to be tailored to these different individuals, groups, and contexts. This high degree of variation may decrease the likelihood that programs developed to prevent and counter other types of violence can be used to prevent and counter radicalization to violent extremism.

Those arguing for taking a broader approach tended to emphasize the importance of working with communities, whose concerns encompass a broad array of issues. Further, they stated that programs focusing exclusively on preventing and countering radicalization to violent extremism may not only fail to generate widespread interest; they may actively alienate communities by seeming to imply that they are at greater risk of radicalizing to violence. Researchers and practitioners pointed out that even the phrase "countering violent extremism" can arouse concern and suspicion in many of the communities with whom the government hopes to partner. On the other hand, some argued that being transparent is most important and that describing the goals of programs in more general terms, such as improving community resilience, can also arouse concern and suspicion if the programs are actually focused on countering violent extremism.

Finally, several researchers and practitioners stated that while one-size-fits-all programs designed to prevent and counter radicalization to violent extremism, as well as other types of violence and problematic behaviors, will never be viable, it may be the case that certain approaches to preventing and countering other types of crimes and violence are applicable to preventing and countering radicalization to violent extremism. For example, one practitioner highlighted the relevance of lessons that can be learned from gang prevention activities, including approaches to community engagement, disengagement and desistance, risk assessment, and measuring performance. Others mentioned the possibility of learning from efforts focused on preventing suicide, supporting people leaving new religious movements, and deterring organized crime. As knowledge of the processes, risk factors, and protective factors associated with radicalization to violent extremism has advanced, the possibility of borrowing strategically from these other efforts has increased. One researcher, however, cautioned that these lessons need to be applied carefully and be based on empirical research, much of which is ongoing.<sup>23</sup>

Researchers and practitioners also discussed several more specific challenges and questions related to CVE outreach and intervention activities. For example, one government practitioner asked how to determine with whom to engage in a community and whether it may not be the case that those least willing to meet with the government are those with whom the government needs to meet most. One researcher emphasized that it was important for government agencies to try to engage with the entire community and not avoid those who disagree with their policies.<sup>24</sup> Another researcher

<sup>23</sup> This statement was made by Dr. John Horgan of Georgia State University.

<sup>24</sup> This statement was made by Mr. David Schanzer of Duke University.

pointed out that outreach strategies need to be tailored to different groups in the community, including those who are socially disengaged.<sup>25</sup> Practitioners also brought up the importance of taking into account the stigma that can be attached to members of the community who engage with the government. One community practitioner shared that her organization is subject to daily attacks on its reputation because it works with the government on issues related to preventing and countering violent extremism.

Researchers offered some additional guidance for government practitioners in conducting outreach to communities. For example, based on past evaluations, one researcher offered the following lessons learned regarding community engagement efforts: Know your audience, avoid stigmatization, send clear messages, engage on a broad range of topics, and partner strategically.<sup>26</sup> Other participants stated that focusing too much on risk (versus resilience) can have the effect of increasing risk<sup>27</sup> and that it is important to keep in mind that government agencies and communities often want to talk about different things, use different language, and define terms differently.<sup>28</sup>

Regarding intervention activities, practitioners asked for guidance on who should conduct interventions. Researchers emphasized that establishing trust is the key to success. Many argued that community members may be more able to establish this trust, but others pointed out that expecting communities to take on

preventing and countering radicalization to violent extremism requires that they have the necessary skills<sup>29</sup> and that parents and community practitioners should be taught how to make initial contact with youth who are potentially heading toward violent extremism.<sup>30</sup> This led to several follow-up questions from practitioners regarding best practices for training community members — as well as law enforcement personnel, mental health practitioners, and others — about violent extremism and prevention strategies, and understanding who needs to know what.

In addition, researchers highlighted the importance of conducting interventions at the individual, family, and community levels and ensuring that individuals with different backgrounds (e.g., educators, social workers, and mental health practitioners) be involved in interventions as needed. When intervening at the individual level, one researcher emphasized the need to focus on the person as a whole. For example, to support disengagement from terrorism, it may be helpful to encourage individuals to broaden and develop positive social relations, develop or strengthen their personal identities, transition to other (nonviolent) methods, modify their ideologies to reject illegal activity, and seek mental health or vocational counseling.<sup>31</sup> When intervening at the family level, researchers highlighted the importance of taking into account family members' interactions with each other, the family's context and resources, and the larger community<sup>32</sup>; they also highlighted the importance of remembering that in certain

<sup>25</sup> This statement was made by Dr. Heidi Ellis of Boston Children's Hospital/Harvard Medical School.

<sup>26</sup> This statement was made by Mr. Jason Ipe of the Global Center on Cooperative Security.

<sup>27</sup> This statement was made by Dr. Sara Thompson of Ryerson University.

<sup>28</sup> This statement was made by Dr. Daniel Hiebert of the University of British Columbia.

<sup>29</sup> This statement was made by Dr. Shandon Harris-Hogan of Australian National University.

<sup>30</sup> This statement was made by Ms. Vidhya Ramalingam of the Institute for Strategic Dialogue.

<sup>31</sup> This statement was made by Dr. Kate Barrelle of Australian National University.

<sup>32</sup> This statement was made by Dr. Linda Liebenberg of Dalhousie University.

situations family members may constitute protective factors against radicalizing to violent extremism, while in other circumstances they may constitute risk factors. Finally, when intervening at the community level, researchers discussed the need to help certain communities — for example, those made up of refugees who experienced conflict in their homelands — deal with their collective trauma. Several researchers also emphasized the importance of learning from those within the community who have demonstrated resilience in the face of difficulties and challenges.

Finally, several researchers and practitioners discussed the need to conduct evaluations of existing and future CVE programs in order to identify what works and what does not work. Although some of the programs described at the conference have been evaluated, because of the relative newness of these programs, these evaluations have generally focused on how the programs were implemented and what they have produced (i.e., process evaluations) as opposed to the programs' short-term and long-term effects or impacts

(i.e., outcome evaluations). There were questions regarding what types of measures could be used to assess the impacts of programs — given that acts of extremist violence are thankfully rare. The methods mentioned included surveys, focus groups, interviews, and social media analysis to understand attitudes toward specific programs and whether attitudes differ before and after participation in a program. Many practitioners also highlighted the lack of resources for evaluating intervention programs and, often, even implementing them. However, until such evaluations can be conducted routinely, many of the other questions practitioners asked in relation to CVE interventions will remain difficult to answer. These included questions regarding when and where interventions will be most successful and with whom; the stage of the radicalization process at which it is best to conduct interventions (early on or once an individual has already committed to violence); and whether best practices for interventions vary by the context in which they are conducted. It will also be more difficult to improve programs and to ensure that, to the extent possible, negative unintended consequences are avoided.

## Conclusions and Next Steps

Judged by the amount and quality of research presented and the discussions generated between researchers and practitioners over the course of three days, the conference was a success. In numerous plenary and breakout sessions, researchers highlighted the latest findings on the processes of radicalization to violent extremism, the risk and protective factors associated with radicalization to violent extremism, and how violent extremism may be prevented and countered. In turn, practitioners discussed the programs they have developed and implemented and some of the challenges they face. The result was a better understanding of the state of current research and the identification of questions that remain to be answered.

Although few researchers at the conference presented full-scale models of the process of radicalization to violent extremism, they did discuss specific facilitators of the radicalization process that were supported by their data and analyses. Among those most frequently mentioned were connections with violent extremists in an individual's social network; identity processes; violent extremist belief systems and narratives; group dynamics; connections with violent extremists and violent extremist material via the internet and social media; and grievances. Researchers also emphasized that the process of radicalization to violent extremism generally involves multiple facilitators and may vary by individual, group, type of belief system, and context. Because of this variation, questions remain regarding the best approach for developing models of the process of radicalization to violent extremism, including whether it would be more helpful to develop (1) a high-level model that can be used as a general guide to help users to identify more specific factors at work in a particular situation or context or (2) specific models focused on different individuals, groups, types of violent extremist belief systems, and contexts as needed. Also discussed was the importance of gaining a better understanding of whether certain factors, or combinations of factors, are more relevant at different points in the process of radicalization to violent extremism. These are important topics for future research.

Researchers provided scientific insights to what may put individuals at increased risk of radicalizing to violent extremism. Importantly, in addition to these risk factors, researchers also provided information on protective factors that may put individuals at decreased risk of radicalizing to violent extremism. Similar to their observations on the processes by which individuals radicalize to violent extremism, numerous researchers emphasized the need to examine multiple risk and protective factors together; they also emphasized the fact that risk and protective factors may differ by individual, group, type of violent extremist belief system,

and context. In response, practitioners stated that it would be helpful for those developing and implementing CVE programs to know which risk and protective factors tend to be more common across a range of individuals and contexts and which tend to vary. From a practical perspective, it would also be useful to know how to distinguish between what is normal in a particular context or community and what is abnormal or problematic. To address these needs and to validate the risk and protective factors that have already been identified, it will be necessary to conduct additional research using control groups — for example, comparing individuals who vary by group, type of connection to groups, type of extremist belief system, and context, or comparing individuals who do and do not engage in extremist violence.

On the topic of preventing and countering radicalization to violent extremism, practitioners presented various programs that have been developed in the U.K., Canada, and the U.S. and some of the challenges they have faced in implementing these programs. Researchers then offered some guidance on best practices in implementing outreach and intervention programs based on current studies. The need to continue conducting systematic evaluations of CVE programs was highlighted by the fact that sometimes these studies focused on CVE programs and sometimes they focus on countering other types of violence or problematic behaviors. Further, questions concerning whether programs should be designed specifically to address radicalization to violent extremism or be focused more generally on preventing violence and other problematic behaviors underlines the value of conducting additional research to identify the applicability of other violence prevention

programs to preventing and countering violent extremism.

Practitioners also offered some practical observations on how research can be more useful to those working in the field. Both government and community practitioners argued that it would be helpful if researchers worked more closely with them. For example, one government practitioner hoped that researchers could work directly with the government in evaluating CVE programs (versus coming in as advisors or independent evaluators). Similarly, a community practitioner argued that it was important to have researchers more deeply involved in actual program development. On the government side, there was also interest in researchers conducting analyses using investigative data or classified data — either through the government granting them the necessary clearances or working to sanitize operational data.

Finally, there was concern that research may not be getting into the hands of those who need it the most and in a form that is usable. Community practitioners on the front lines of developing and implementing CVE programs said that they often do not receive research findings. However, even those practitioners who do receive them recommended that findings be presented in new and innovative manners. Few practitioners have the time to read the long papers often favored in the research community, and they recommended alternatives such as developing synopses and briefing materials that highlight key findings, using case studies and vignettes to illustrate them, and producing videos and podcasts to deliver them in a more user-friendly manner. Practitioners also asked that researchers provide more concrete recommendations that can be used in the field.

# Appendix A: Agenda

All sessions in the Potomac Ballroom unless otherwise noted

## Tuesday, July 28: Identifying Radicalization

**8:00 AM**      **Registration and Check In**  
*Potomac Ballroom Foyer*

**8:30 AM**      **Welcome / Keynote**  
**TBD**

**9:00 AM**      **Plenary 1 - Setting the Stage: Violent Extremism in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom**

In this opening plenary session, the speakers will outline the current trends in violent extremism in these three countries, including a discussion of the role online social media plays in radicalization and the complexities the extremist traveler issue raises for radicalization.

- Lorne Dawson, University of Waterloo and Canadian Network for Research on Terrorism, Security and Society (TSAS)
- Bill Braniff, National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), University of Maryland
- John Horgan, Georgia State University
- Matt Collins, Office of Security and Counterterrorism (OSCT), UK Home Office

Moderator: John Picarelli, National Institute of Justice (NIJ), U.S. Department of Justice

**10:15 AM**      **Break**

**10:45 AM Plenary 2 - Can We Identify Radicalization As It Happens?**

What do we know about the trajectories of individuals radicalizing to violent extremism within our countries? How is this different from those radicalizing to travel to Syria or Somalia? Is it possible to identify behavioral indicators of radicalization to violent extremism?

- Jytte Klausen, Brandeis University
- Amarnath Amarasingam, Dalhousie University
- Peter Neumann, International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation
- Paul Gill, University College London

Moderator: Seamus Hughes, George Washington University

**12:00 PM Lunch on Your Own****1:30 PM Breakout Sessions**

***Breakout 1: Politically-Motivated Radicalization to Violent Extremism (Salon A)***

This panel explores radicalization to violent extremism wherein the grievance is rooted in ultranationalism, ethnocentrism, anti-capitalism or other political sources of grievance. The panel will consider how the radicalization process occurs in these settings and the primary drivers of radicalization.

- Anna Tan, University of California - Irvine
- Gary LaFree, START, University of Maryland
- Paul Joosse, University of Alberta
- Joel Busher, Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations, Coventry University

Moderator: Pete Simi, University of Nebraska-Omaha

***Breakout 2: Lone Wolves and Lone Actors: Patterns of Radicalization (Salon B)***

This panel will explore the phenomenon of radicalization among lone wolves and lone actor terrorism. The panel will consider the degree to which these phenomena are related to other forms of radicalization to violent extremism. The aim of the panel is to provide practical advice to practitioners on lone wolves and lone actors.

- Mark Hamm, Indiana State University
- Paul Gill, University College London
- Shawn VanSlyke, Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Raffaello Pantucci, Royal United Services Institute (RUSI)

Moderator: Kathleen Deloughery, Directorate of Science and Technology, U.S. Department of Homeland Security

***Breakout 3: Mobilization to Violence: How Radicalization Shifts to Violent Extremism (Salon C)***

This panel will discuss the ways in which research is identifying new patterns and trends in the ways in which individuals radicalize, mobilize and engage in violent extremism.

- Brent Smith, University of Arkansas
- Lorenzo Vidino, George Washington University
- Lorne Dawson, University of Waterloo
- Scott Flower, University of Melbourne

Moderator: Brett Kubicek, Public Safety Canada

***Breakout 4: Violent Extremism or Extreme Violence? The Utility of Comparative Approaches (Salon D)***

Solutions for radicalization to violent extremism are often promulgated in analogous programs, such as anti-gang or violence reduction programs, or from historical lessons. This panel will examine the veracity of these analogies and what, if anything, we can draw from them.

- Andrew Glazzard, Royal United Services Institute
- Lucie Léonard, Public Safety Canada
- John Horgan, Georgia State University
- Carys Keane, National Offender Management Service, HM Ministry of Justice

Moderator: John Picarelli, NIJ, U.S. Department of Justice

**3:00 PM Break**

**3:30 PM Roundtable 1 - The View from the Field- Countering Radicalization in Our Communities**

Translating research into practice is a significant challenge. This panel seeks to bridge the gap between the two communities through a frank discussion of the requirements the field has when thinking about preventing violent extremism. The panel will also explore the demands placed on practitioners due to contemporary forms of radicalization and violent extremism, including extremist travelers, foreign fighters and social media campaigns.

- Brandy Donini-Melanson, U.S. Department of Justice
- Brian Murphy, Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Asif Rashid, Calgary Police Services
- Matt Collins, OSCT, UK Home Office

Moderator: Martine Fontaine, Royal Canadian Mounted Police

**5:00 PM End**

## Day 2: Prevention and Disengagement

9:00 AM

### Plenary 3 - Preventing Radicalization and Constructing Resilience

An alternative to identification and countering of radicalization to violent extremism is to prevent radicalization in the first place. The emphasis on prevention ranges from the construction of more resilient communities to the countering of ideological recruitment.

- Steve Weine, University of Illinois-Chicago
- Ghayda Hassan, Université du Québec à Montreal
- David Schanzer, Duke University
- Kalsoom Bashir, Inspire

Moderator: Steven Strang, Royal Canadian Mounted Police

10:00 AM

### Break

10:30 AM

### Breakout Sessions

#### *Breakout 5: Communities and Resilience (Salon A)*

What makes a community a resilient one? What is the “right” mix of intangible (e.g., inclusiveness, trust) and tangible (e.g., geography, socioeconomic factors) foundations for prevention of radicalization.

- Sara Thompson, Ryerson University
- Sabin Khan, Research, Information and Communications Unit (RICU), UK Home Office
- David Schanzer, Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security, Duke University
- Martin Innes, Cardiff University

Moderator: Kalsoom Bashir, Inspire

#### *Breakout 6: Immigration, Communities and Resilience (Salon B)*

What is the link between immigration status and resilience? Is the construction of resilience in communities with strong ties to countries of origin any different than in other sorts of communities? How does this differ for those with longer histories of integration?

- Dan Hiebert, University of British Columbia
- Steve Weine, University of Illinois-Chicago
- John Monahan, Mosaic Institute
- Amanjot Sandhu, University of British Columbia

Moderator: Brett Kubicek, Public Safety Canada

***Breakout 7: Ideological Resilience and Counternarratives (Salon C)***

This panel will examine the ways in which ideology can serve both as a source or reinforcement for radicalization and also resilience. This includes the potential for the messaging of violent extremists to backfire, polarizing the community against them. The panel will also explore the ways in which countering narratives of hate can occur.

- Paul Taylor, Lancaster University
- Ghayda Hassan, Université du Québec à Montreal
- Amarnath Amarasingam, Dalhousie University
- Waqar Ahmed, Birmingham City Council

Moderator: Sabin Khan, RICU, UK Home Office

***Breakout 8: Resilience and the Family (Salon D)***

Resilience is not just a concept that resides at the community level. Increasingly, advances in behavioral science are leading us to understand the importance of individual and family level dynamics as vectors for radicalization.

- Heidi Ellis, Boston Children's Hospital
- Vidhya Ramalingam, Institute for Strategic Dialogue
- Linda Liebenberg, Dalhousie University
- Shandon Harris-Hogan, Australian National University

Moderator: Kate Barrelle, Australian National University

**Noon**

**Lunch on Your Own**

**1:30 PM**

**Plenary 4 - Deradicalization & Disengagement**

The question “why do they join?” is important, but equally important is the lesser asked question of “why do they quit?” and “why do they re-engage?” This panel will explore what we know about disengagement and what that might hold for fashioning prevention programs, as well as examine the utility and veracity of deradicalization programs. The panel will also engage the topic of recidivism.

- John Horgan, Georgia State University
- John Morrison, University of East London
- Yvonne Stys and Rick McEachran, Correctional Service Canada
- Kate Barrelle, Australian National University

Moderator: Allison Smith, Independent Consultant

**3:00 PM**

**Break**

**3:30 PM      Roundtable 2 - What Works to Construct Resilience and Counter Narratives?**

Numerous programs exist that seek to construct resilient communities and counter the narratives that feed radicalization to violent extremism. How do we know what works? Moreover, what is needed to move these promising practices forward into new communities?

- Mehreen Farooq, World Organization for Resource Development and Education (WORDE)
- Carmen Ortiz, U.S. Attorney for the District of Massachusetts, U.S. Department of Justice
- Sabin Khan, RICU
- Ehsan Zaffar, National Protection and Programs Directorate, U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Moderator: Anna Gray-Henschel, Public Safety Canada

**5:00 PM      End**

## **Day 3: What's Now and What's Next?**

**8:30 AM      Plenary 5 - Extremist Travelers and Foreign Fighters**

The conflict in Syria, the rise of ISIL and the continued instability in various parts of Africa have all introduced new dynamics into both radicalization and violent extremism. While the foreign fighter issue has largely captured the attention of many, the shift to those willing to travel and join “the Caliphate,” especially women and young girls, has introduced a new dimension into the analysis. This panel will explore the contemporary situation as it pertains to radicalization and violent extremism.

- Mia Bloom, Georgia State University
- Michael Jensen, START, University of Maryland
- Paul Willis, OSCT, UK Home Office
- Alastair Reed, International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, Leiden University

Moderator: Peter Neumann, International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation

**10:00 AM      Break**

**10:30 AM Breakout Sessions*****Breakout 9: Establishing Requirements and Assessing Practice: A Grounded Discussion of What Works (Salon A)***

As more programs come online that are designed to prevent or counter violent extremism, questions are arising about whether these programs work and how to replicate them. This panel will draw on the experience of ongoing and completed evaluations of CVE programs to identify how to establish meaningful program measurements, how to identify promising practices and how to demonstrate what works

- Mick Williams, University of Massachusetts-Lowell
- Todd Helmus, RAND Corporation
- Jason Ipe, Global Center on Cooperative Security
- Matt Sexton, Home Office Science

Moderator: Paul Grasby, OSCT, UK Home Office

***Breakout 10: Legal Avenues to Respond to Violent Extremism (Salon B)***

There have been and continue to be a number of legislative changes designed to target various aspects of violent extremism (e.g., providing material support, advocating for terrorism, travelling to conflict zones). This session will examine the behavioral impacts of such changes to laws and what further research is needed.

- Kent Roach, University of Toronto
- Tufyal Choudhury, Durham University (UK)
- Ron Levi, University of Toronto
- Alastair Reed, International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, Leiden University

Moderator: Brett Kubicek, Public Safety Canada

***Breakout 11: Using Research to Inform Risk Assessment (Salon C)***

Given the relatively low frequency of cases of domestic violent extremism, the evidence base for risk assessment tools is limited. While recognizing such constraints, there is significant demand for more and better support to help prioritize among potential cases, and inform when and how to appropriately intervene. This panel will explore recent examples of work to develop and improve how research informs risk assessment.

- Noemie Bouhana, University College London
- Steven Strang, Royal Canadian Mounted Police
- Jeff Gruenewald, University of Arkansas
- Monica Lloyd, Birmingham University

Moderator: Kathleen Deloughery, U.S. Department of Homeland Security

**Noon Lunch**

**1:30 PM****Plenary 6 - The Internet and Social Media**

The role of the Internet and social media campaigns with high production values increasingly play a role in the recruitment and radicalization of violent extremists. This panel will explore the evolution of online influences for violent extremism with an eye towards predicting future trends and making recommendations on responses for practitioners.

- Donald Holbrook, CSTPV, University of St. Andrews
- Garth Davies, Simon Fraser University
- Micah Clark, SecDev Group
- Tom Drew, RICU

Moderator: Brett Kubicek, Public Safety Canada

**3:00 PM****Closing Roundtable: Translating Results into Practice**

The proliferation of research on violent extremism is not always reaching the audience that needs to understand it. This roundtable will draw on examples to show how researchers and practitioners can work together to ensure that information obtained from science has an impact in the field.

- John Picarelli, National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice
- Paul Grasby, OSCT, UK Home Office
- Kathleen Deloughery, U.S. Department of Homeland Security
- Brett Kubicek, Public Safety Canada

**4:00 PM****End of Conference**