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The Terror Experts: Discourse, Discipline, and the Production of Terrorist Subjects at a University Research Center

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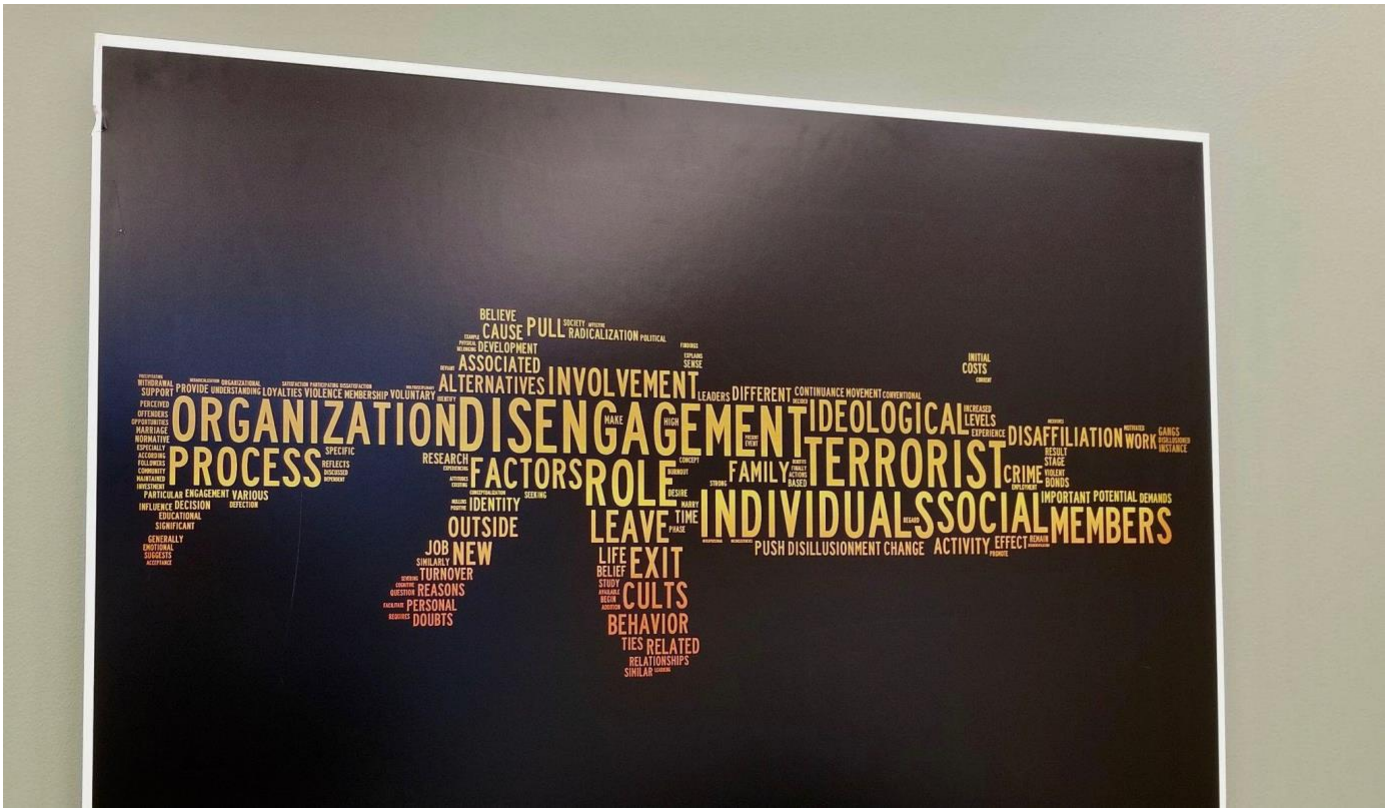

Plate 1: Poster in Counterterrorism Research Institute conference room. Photo by the author.

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Acknowledgements

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understand that any critiques of your work I make herein, I make with an earnest interest in building constructive dialogue to collectively pursue a better world.

Thank you to my parents, Lisa and Christopher McLean, for their unwavering support throughout not only this year-long project, but my four years at Oberlin College and my many more years as a learner. Mom and Dad, you have shaped and encouraged my curiosity from the moment I was old enough to perceive my place in the world. All of my intellectual endeavors since are incalculably indebted to you.

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Prologue

Imagining the depoliticized radical

A lean young boy, perhaps twelve or thirteen years old, with a patterned gray sweater and swooping bangs dyed fashionably blond, sits writing at a tidy wooden desk. Something apparently catches his eye in the window to his right, and he pauses in his work, craning his white neck to see. Downstairs, the boy's mother opens the front door for a tall, bearded Black man in a suit and dark sunglasses. In seeming slow motion, the man brandishes a badge, while mournful strings join an agitated piano accompaniment. The badge is followed by a warrant, issued by the U.S. District Court, which the man produces with grave stoicism, his lips moving. The orchestral score becomes louder and ever more tortured as the federal agent follows the mother up the staircase. On the landing, she turns to him, warrant in one hand and smartphone in the other, arms outstretched and eyes wide, imploring. The agent gently extends his own hands in a gesture that seems meant to be placating; and yet, there's a pair of handcuffs that dangles ominously from his waist as he continues backing the woman up the stairs. The agent's dark hand pushes open a door, and we see the boy slowly look up from his desk to take in the interloper, his pale face stricken.

This is not, obviously, a depiction of an actual arrest. It is the opening sequence of a film, though the $1600 that went into that film's production—a sizable budget for a three-and-a-half-minute movie helmed by undergraduate college students—was evidently invested with the aim of attaining a dramatic realism that would convince viewers of the sobering truth it strives to convey. The film's production values—the affecting performances of the two principal actors (a

real mother-and-son pair recruited through a local acting group who agreed to do the film for free) and the nuanced cinematography (the work of a professional videographer who, according to two of the students who worked on the project, accepted a significantly lower rate for his services than he typically would have because of his belief in the film's importance)—are undeniable. I have reviewed the movie dozens of times at this point, and the clear evidence of passionate and fastidious labor that went into its making never ceases to impress me. The film's consummate professionalism exceeds that which I have come to expect of a typical undergraduate group project.

Of course, this video is not the result of a typical college assignment. It is the culmination of a semester's worth of work sponsored by the Youth CVE Initiative (YCI),[1] which tasks teams of students with developing virtual campaigns aimed at countering extremist rhetoric and activity online, particularly among their college and adolescent-aged peers. Since 2015, the Counterterrorism Research Institute (the Institute) has offered students at the University of Waterbridge (UWB),[2] a public research university in eastern Massachusetts, the opportunity to participate in the program through a semester-long internship. YCI itself is administered by Millennial Solutions,[3] a contractor who connects third-party clients in both the public and private sector with faculty and students at a network of academic institutions, to sponsor student ideas and labor toward the development of viable products. It was Millennial Solutions who supplied UWB's fall 2016 team with a budget of $2000, $1600 of which were funneled into the production of the aforementioned film. EVP's third-party client, in the case of the YCI program, was none other than the United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

[1] Name changed.

[2] The names of both the research center and the university have been changed in this thesis.

[3] Name changed.

After the opening sequence of the film, an intertitle ushers in a flashback—"4 months earlier." Sans dialogue, with the sweeping piano and strings as the only sound, the film proceeds to tell the tragic tale of how this once-innocent adolescent was "recruited by radicals" (the title of the film). We watch him perform the rituals that any well-behaved, White suburban American preteen is imagined to perform: brushing his teeth in the mirror, hugging his mother before leaving for school. Yet despite his pale complexion and well-groomed blond hair—physical traits which would draw little attention in the typical middle-class, predominantly White U.S. suburb—our vulnerable protagonist is nevertheless "other:" a subsequent shot shows a close-up of a laptop Twitter feed cluttered with Cyrillic text.

The boy's outsider status among his peers is confirmed in the following scene, when he returns from school with his face visibly bruised and his collared green shirt streaked with dirt. Shrugging off his mother's attempts at consolation, he heads upstairs to his room, where he sits with his face in his hands. Upon checking his iPhone, he sees a text: "That's what u get foreigner." His shame turned to anger, he flips open his laptop and dashes off an outraged, impulsive tweet: "I'm so sick of America. It's AWFUL here. #hateamerica #americasucks." Within seconds of posting, he receives a direct message from another Twitter user, whose profile photo is simply a red sports car. "Hey whats up?" the message reads. A close-up of the boy's face shows him hesitating; he evidently does not know this person. Nevertheless, he responds, confiding in this virtual stranger about the xenophobic bullying he has been dealing with at school, and his sense that his vision of the United States has been betrayed. "Not like they say it is here," he tells the mysterious sports-car stranger. "No one is nice. They hate 'foreigners.'" The next scene shows a later conversation with the same user, in which the boy laments that he "[has] no friends." His interlocutor, whose username at the top of the direct-message thread is revealed

to be "Rick Abdoul," insists that he is our protagonist's friend, and then proceeds to introduce him to some of his other "friends," including one who goes by the username "Tom Omar."

The montage of Twitter conversations continues: Rick Abdoul convinces the boy to quit his hockey team (where the other kids have been picking on him) and stokes his anti-American rage by sending him YouTube links to news broadcasts reporting the destruction of hospitals and civilian casualties from U.S. airstrikes in Syria. In a later conversation, we see Rick ask the boy, "Hey have you been thinking about what I asked you?" Our increasingly-radicalized youth responds enthusiastically, conceding that "this country is worse than I thought." He is uncertain how to proceed, however. "but what do I do now?" he asks, at which point Rick suggests that they switch to a more private messaging service. We get another close-up of the boy's face: he looks haunted, fraught, as though he's not sure he's made the right decision, but by now, it's too late. The scene cuts to a recap of the opening sequence, ending on the same shot of the boy staring in shock at the federal agent bearing a warrant for his arrest. The shot blurs out of focus, and three sentences of solemn white serif text, in all capital letters, fade onto the screen in sequence:

250 AMERICANS HAVE LEFT TO JOIN ISIS.

YOUTH ARE OFTEN THE TARGET OF EXTREMIST MATERIALS AND RECRUITERS ONLINE.

COUNTEREXTREMISM CORRECTIVE[4] PROVIDES A PLATFORM FOR EDUCATION ABOUT EXTREMISM AND ONLINE SAFETY

[4] Name changed.

As the strings crescendo and then fade out, the screen fades to black, and the text is replaced by the logo of Counterextremism Corrective—the title of the UWB spring 2016 YCI team's online counter-extremism campaign. Above the logo is the campaign's tagline—"EDUCATING TO PREVENT ANOTHER 250"—and beneath the logo, two hashtags: "#StopAnother250" and "#ChallengingExtremism."

Counterextremism Corrective won third place at the national YCI competition in Washington, D.C. in February 2016, a contest adjudicated by representatives of DHS, the National Counterterrorism Center, a handful of academic institutions, and Facebook, who sponsors the competition along with the federal government in a public-private partnership. Carl,[5] a former U.S. Marine and the student manager of Counterextremism Corrective--who graduated from UWB with an M.A. in Security Studies (concentration in homeland defense) in May 2017—expressed indignation that the team had not placed higher. He called Counterextremism Corrective a "phenomenal group," and particularly praised the film, "Recruited by Radicals," despite admitting to having harbored initial doubts about the idea when he acted as the team's manager. The film is only a single element of Counterextremism Corrective's campaign. Given the scope of the organization's mission, it is a relatively minor element, serving as the introduction for the team's website, which boasts a suite of resources with the stated aim of educating students, parents, and educators about the perils of online radicalization, and strategies for countering this danger.[6] Since Counterextremism Corrective's success in Washington, D.C., the campaign has only continued to expand: the team gleaned a

[5] All personal names that appear in this thesis are pseudonyms.

[6] For a more comprehensive illustration of Counterextremism Corrective's website and educational materials, see the second chapter of this thesis, "Save the extremist, save the empire."

$6,5000 grant at UWB's annual Vision Builders competition[7] in March 2017, with which it has sponsored increased outreach efforts to neighboring communities, culminating in a conference for regional educators that UWB hosted in March 2018.

Yet for all the campaign's ever-expanding scope, Blake Shepard, an assistant professor of terrorism and security studies and the current director of the Institute, who has supervised the YCI internship since its inception at UWB, maintains that it was the film, "Recruited by Radicals," that clinched Counterextremism Corrective's success in Washington, D.C. The film is striking not only in its adroit execution, but in the clarity with which it conveys the ideological underpinnings of Counterextremism Corrective's approach to "challenging extremism."

The film engages the audience in the story of a single individual: an adolescent boy who, in his innocuous middle-class Whiteness, embodies few of the traits that this imagined audience has come to associate with the word "terrorist."[8] And yet, over the course of a three-and-a-half minute montage, schoolyard bullying, reckless social media activity, and parental negligence have driven our protagonist to a decision that could destroy his life—and, implicitly, endanger our embattled democracy. In this compelling cinematic fantasy of terrorist "radicalization," systemic xenophobia is an instance of adolescent cruelty; destructive U.S. imperialism abroad is a trigger for personal rage; and terrorism is the act of a confused, tormented preteen preyed upon by a sinister cyber-menace. Moreover, this menace is racialized, bearing "foreign," "Muslim-

[7] UWB's Vision Builders competition (name changed) recognizes and awards grants to entrepreneurial ideas and projects by UWB students. In addition to the $6,500 grant, the Vision Builders program has also provided Counterextremism Corrective with $5,000 in legal services (in kind).

[8] In the U.S. context, terrorist is a highly racialized term. Popular, mass-mediated discourse readily labels Brown and Black perpetrators—and particularly those who are perceived to be Arab and/or Muslim—as "terrorists" even before motives have been confirmed, whereas White individuals who commit similar acts are more likely to avoid this ignominious distinction, even when a political motivation has been established. In recent years, the hesitation of authorities and news media outlets to call White men such as Dylan Roof (the confirmed White supremacist who massacred nine people at a Black Baptist church in Charleston, South Carolina in June 2015) and Mark Anthony Conditt (the suspect in the Austin, Texas serial bombings in March 2018) "terrorists" has prompted vigorous and outraged public discussion around the racist use of the word.

sounding" usernames like Rick Abdoul and Tom Omar. The vulnerable humanity that the video affords its youthful white protagonist is denied to his recruiters, their implicitly brown faces eclipsed by online avatars.

Depoliticizing the "radical"

In this thesis, I argue that the particular framing of terrorists that this film propagates is one which is fundamental to the research that the Institute conducts, and which ultimately divorces acts of so-called terrorism from systemic global inequities and the predations of U.S. empire. This framing presents terrorism, first and foremost, as the result of an individual decision; implicitly, a bad decision, rooted in psychological trauma and a sense of personal persecution that is largely decontextualized from broader geopolitical forces and thus, to some extent, delegitimized. A result of this discourse is the production of an imaginary figure that I have decided to call, with deliberate irony, the depoliticized radical. The figure of the depoliticized radical reiterates itself in the Institute through various media: research proposals, course syllabi, lectures, and federally-funded outreach campaigns such as Counterextremism Corrective and, most recently, Campaign CARE (Customized Anti-Radicalization Education),[9] the UWB spring 2017 team's YCI campaign. As my ethnographic work documents, these multi-actor processes of circulation, dissemination, and reception invest the object of the depoliticized radical with variable and sometimes contradictory meanings. Ultimately, I hope to demonstrate how, across these translations in meaning, the depoliticized radical retains its identity as a construction that localizes the "root" of terrorism within a single individual whose actions are framed less in social, economic, and political terms, and more in terms of morality and

[9] Name changed.

psychology. I also hope to demonstrate, particularly in the second chapter of this thesis, how the depoliticized radical is produced as a racialized specter that haunts the presumed vulnerable innocence of the White subject.

There are some key similarities between the depoliticized radical and the figure of the "terrorist-monster" that Puar and Rai (2002) deconstruct. Both are discursive constructions that isolate the terrorist from political forces; both are interested in the terrorist psyche; both are racialized; both implicate processes of corrective discipline on citizen bodies; and both have currency in academic discourses of terrorism.[10] However, for Puar and Rai, the figuration of the terrorist-monster in the field of terrorism studies is premised on the "reduc[tion of] complex histories of struggle, intervention, and (non)development to Western psychic models rooted in the bourgeois heterosexual family and its dynamics."[11] My ethnographic work suggests that this narrow focus on the terrorist-monster as a psychologically-pathologized figure—while an important intervention on heteronormative discourses of counterterror—is ultimately reductive itself, insofar as it erases academic constructions of the terrorist that either do not engage or explicitly reject patho-psychological explanations of terror. The depoliticized radical, as I imagine it, is a more nebulous configuration than the terrorist-monster, capable of accommodating interpretations that pathologize the terrorist psyche as well as those that see terrorist behavior as rationally motivated. In the following section, I discuss how this nebulousness enables the depoliticized radical to serve as a point of coordination among actors with diverse interests working within and outside the Institute.

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[10] Jasbir K. Puar & Amit Rai. "Terrorist, Monster, Fag: The War on Terrorism and the Production of Docile Patriots," *Social Text 20*, 3 (2002): 118-125.
[11] Ibid, 124.

The depoliticized radical as boundary object

By foregrounding my analysis of the depoliticized radical in the prologue of the thesis, I by no means intend to imply that it is the only discourse under which Center faculty and students conceive the figure of the terrorist. To the contrary, I hope that my ethnography continually underscores the complexities and contradictions inherent to multi-actor processes of knowledge production, particularly in the highly contested epistemological and institutional domains to which my analysis pertains. These processes generate myriad configurations of the radical and the terrorist that resist reduction to any singular discursive trope.

Despite this caveat, I emphasize the figure of the depoliticized radical because of its versatility as an imagined type that, throughout the course of my fieldwork, proved adaptable to the interests of actors traversing and straddling disparate terrains of knowledge and practice. In this sense, I understand the depoliticized radical to be a discursive construction that functions as what Star and Griesemer call a "boundary object:" that is, internally heterogeneous but nevertheless conventionalized representations that enroll meanings from different social worlds, and thereby serve as "bridges" among actors with different interests and investments.[12] We shall see, throughout the following chapters, how the depoliticized radical serves variously as an idealized subject of psychological analysis within a Center research project (chapter 1); as a morally corrupted but redeemable figure within counter-extremist intervention projects (chapter 2); as a threatening proxy for intimate family, friends, and the self (chapter 2); and as a body on which disciplinary power can be enacted (chapters 1 and 2). As a generic and portable container for diverse inquiries, anxieties, and narratives pertaining to the figure of the terrorist, the

[12] Susan Leigh Star & James R. Griesemer, "Institutional Ecology, 'Translations' and Boundary Objects: Amateurs and Professionals in Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, 1907-39," *Social Studies of Science 19*, 3 (1989): 408-13.

depoliticized radical serves to translate the interests of diverse actors sharing the resources of the Institute.[13] Though these translations are often contested and produce distinctive and contradictory valences, the fundamental contours of the archetype—as a (potentially) violent, ideologically-motivated subject whose ideas and behavior are abstracted from the political circumstances of their subjectivization—remain stable.

The consolidation of the depoliticized radical as a boundary object carries political consequences that demand serious interrogation. What does it mean to excise the terrorist from the structures—violent, oppressive, exploitative, colonial—within and against which they enact terrorism? In the following chapters, I engage speculatively with this question and related inquiries. In truth, though, the answers exceed the scope of this ethnography.

Beyond "interests" and the double meaning of discipline: boundary objects as integrating modes of objectification

As I have discussed, Griesemer and Star's original concept of the boundary object is principally concerned with the disparate "*interests*" of various actors sharing finite resources. They emphasize how boundary objects—general enough to enroll different meanings and conceptually durable enough to retain their identity—represent a common resource that these actors can draw upon according to their interests. This understanding of the boundary object is essential to my conception of the depoliticized radical, as I have now discussed at length. However, throughout the analysis of my ethnographic data, I have come to understand that the ways in which different actors—academics, government agencies, counter-extremist intervention projects—deploy the figure of the depoliticized radical, and the effects of that deployment, do not inevitably correspond to their readily-discernible interests and intentions. Taking a cue from

[13] Ibid,

Ferguson (1994), I propose to "demote intentionality" from its privileged position as the determinant of how actors use boundary objects and the ramifications of that use, and to understand the figure of the depoliticized radical, in particular, as circulating within "a larger 'machine,' an anonymous set of interrelations that only ends up having a kind of retrospective coherence."[14]

In framing the "interrelations" that implicate the depoliticized radical as boundary object, I turn to Foucault's (1983) essay, "The Subject and Power."[15] Here, Foucault parses three "modes of objectification" by which human beings become subjects to power. The first mode of objectification, Foucault states, are the "modes of inquiry which try to give themselves the status of sciences" that take the human being—as a speaking, laboring, and living subject—as their object of analysis. I understand academic inquiries that purport to analyze the terrorist as invoking this mode of objectification, through which they transform complicated human beings into terrorist subjects to be studied. We might consider this transformation as a process of *disciplining* the so-called "terrorist," in the sense of making the terrorist legible to an academic *discipline*, and thereby subject to a particular regime of expertise. The second mode of objectification, according to Foucault, constitutes "dividing practices," whereby "the subject is either divided inside himself (*sic*) or divided from others." This mode is active in practices that distinguish and quarantine the mentally ill from the sane person, the sick from the healthy person, and, indeed, the terrorist from the normative civilian. This mode, too, we can consider *disciplining*, in the Foucauldian sense of imposing on the individual a set of normative

[14] James Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 275.

[15] Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 2nd ed., eds. Hubert Dreyfus & Paul Rabinow (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

regulations that distinguish between "the permitted and the forbidden"[16]—or, to invoke the moral register that Stampnitzky (2013) argues so often attends the discourse of terrorism,[17] the good and the bad.

I hope to demonstrate in the following chapters that the depoliticized radical can function to construct the terrorist as a subject according to either or both of these modes of disciplining. In abstracting the terrorist from their political milieu, the discourse of the depoliticized radical makes them into an individual subject of analysis well suited, for example, to the discipline of psychology, as we shall see in chapter 1. That same abstraction constructs the terrorist as a psychologically, behaviorally, and morally deviant subject to be corrected through normative discipline, as we shall see throughout the thesis and particularly in chapter 2. Crucially, these two modes of disciplining implicate each other—the division of the terrorist from the normative civilian generates the terrorist as a problematic figure to be subjected to academic discipline, just as expert analyses of the terrorist are incorporated into regimes of corrective discipline. The depoliticized radical, then, serves as a crucial point of integration between these two modes of disciplining the terrorist. Of course, following Foucault, we must also understand these modes as relations of power, that is "a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions," prescribing and foreclosing certain possibilities of being to the subjects brought under their regimes.[18] The depoliticized radical, then, is an object through which power is channeled.

Understanding the depoliticized radical in this way—as an object which not only translates disparate interests but also integrates distinct modes of objectification and their

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[16] Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College de France, 1977-1978* (New York, NY: Picador, 2007), 46.
[17] Lisa Stampnitzky, *Disciplining Terror: How Experts Invented terrorism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 65-66.
[18] Foucault, "The Subject and Power."

attendant relations of power—is ultimately more useful to my analysis than an approach which emphasizes solely the intentions of individual actors. Specific interests, of course, often align themselves with one or the other modes of disciplining—i.e., an academic *interested* in consolidating their expertise as a scholar of terrorism would tend to *discipline* the terrorist by making it a subject legible to their academic inquiry—but the processes that these modes set into motion do not lead to an inevitable and predictable outcome. Throughout my ethnography, then, I hope to show how the interests of actors, while certainly relevant, is in the final calculus less significant than the discourse and practice by which they make "terrorists" subjects, and the relations of power that imbricate those processes and affect their outcomes.

Before turning to the above in the two central chapters of this thesis, I will take some space in the following introduction to summarize the relevant anthropological literature on security and (counter)terrorism, describe my research methods, and outline the structure of this thesis and the theoretical interventions I stage therein.

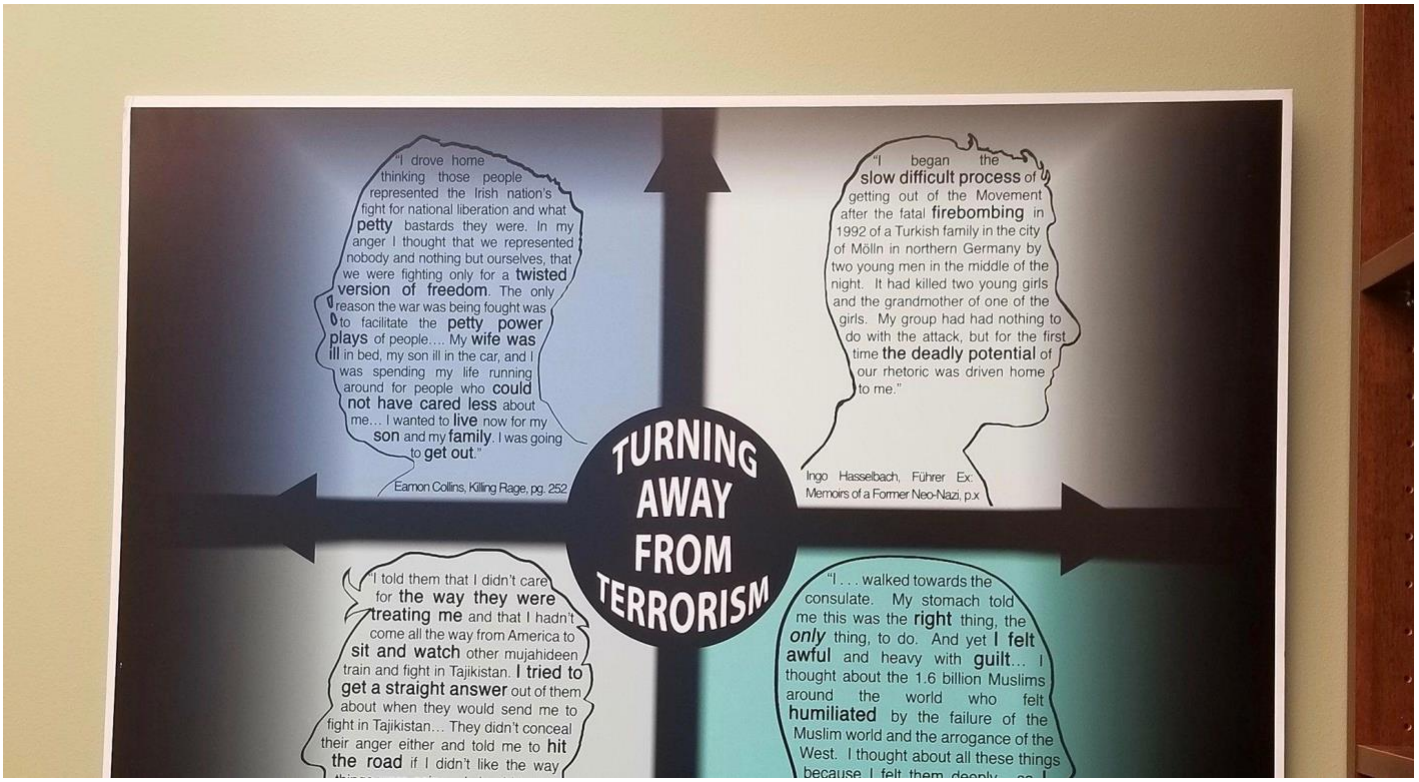

Plate 2: Poster in Counterterrorism Research Institute conference room. Photo by the author.

Introduction

Forging an ethnography of terrorism expertise

Dr. Joseph Woods reclines in his desk chair, his hands in his lap, thinking. I sit across from him on the opposite side of the desk, waiting. To my left, a shelf displays the twenty books that Dr. Woods has published, on subjects ranging from counterinsurgency to terrorist radicalization to weapons of mass destruction. Though his prolific accomplishments are apparent to any visitor to the professor's office on the fourth floor of the Health and Social Sciences Building of UWB, where he has taught since 2011, Dr. Woods strikes me as a man not inclined to self-aggrandize. About forty-five minutes into our interview, I've just asked him if he sees his work as a scholar and an educator of terrorism studies as an intervention into a heated public discourse around terrorism which he suggests is grounded more in ideology and emotion than in facts and evidence, and which is reflected in draconian and counterproductive counterterror measures on the part of the U.S. government. His answer, after a heavy sigh and a short pause, seems to confirm my sense of his fundamental humility.

"If I had a superhero complex, I would say that," he tells me, meeting my eyes. He sounds resigned, but not bitter. I laugh, feeling somewhat disarmed by his honesty. "But I don't. I'm a realist when it comes to my impact on the world. I'm not here to save the world, or save anybody from their own stupidity…I study it (terrorism), I try and educate people about it as much as I can based on what I've learned and what the research suggests, but…it's kind of one of those fields of study where you're gonna end up with more questions than answers, so I'm no better at predicting terrorism than anybody else."

This admission of relative powerlessness to both "predict terrorism" and influence counterterror policy is striking, coming from a scholar who is not only a member of the faculty at the Counterterrorism Research Institute (the Institute) at UWB, but who also directed the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point for nearly a decade. For me, Dr. Woods' answer triggered something of a revelation—and concurrent crisis—in the midst of an ethnographic investigation of the Institute which had increasingly challenged my ideological presuppositions. When I first learned of the Institute a year before my conversation with Dr. Woods, my immediate reaction was of suspicion and scorn. Highly critical of the United States' ongoing campaign of counterterror—the military occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq, the brutal torture of detainees at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay, the terrorization of alleged insurgents and civilians alike through drone strikes in Pakistan and Yemen—I saw the existence of a "terrorism research center" at a public university as the product of an unholy and opportunistic alliance between the political, military, and corporate interests behind that campaign, on the one hand, and U.S. academia, on the other. The Institute, in my initial imaginings, would be less an autonomous academic institution than an appendage of U.S. government counterterrorism, generating "expertise" that ultimately only serves to confer legitimacy on violent state discourse and practice.

My preconception is not entirely without precedent in the social-scientific literature on the relationship between national counterterrorism interests and expert knowledge production. Burnett and Whyte (2005) and Miller and Mills (2009) both invoke a "nexus" of powerful terrorism experts that links academia to the military-industrial complex and the mainstream

media and produces a dominant discourse of terrorism that ultimately upholds state power.[1] Jackson (2012) contends that the field of terrorism studies is relatively proximate to state power compared to other academic disciplines, and applies Foucault's concept of "subjugated knowledges" to argue that those terrorism experts most embedded in the state have systematically suppressed and excluded knowledges from both within and outside terrorism studies that would contest the discipline's dominant pro-Western discourse of terrorism. These exclusions and suppressions, Jackson asserts, "allows the [terrorism studies] field to perform its key legitimising (*sic*) role in maintaining state hegemony."[2] Masco (2014), though he does not directly address the role of academia in the national counterterrorism apparatus that he outlines in *The Theater of Operations,* nevertheless alludes to a growing industry of "security experts" whose commitment to speculative "disaster calculation" goes hand in hand with the militaristic designs of an increasingly omnipresent counterterror state.[3] Lowen (1997), writing in the decade between the fall of the Soviet Union and the September 11th attacks, offers a compelling narrative of Stanford University's transformation into a "Cold War university" dependent on government patronage that demands research relevant to national security interests; a narrative which seems to beg comparison to the situation of terrorism research centers in the contemporary landscape of U.S. counterterror.[4]

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[1] Johnny Burnett and Dave Whyte, "Embedded Expertise and the New Terrorism," *Journal for Crime, Conflict and the Media 1*, 4 (2005): 11-18; David Miller and Tom Mills, "The terror experts and the mainstream media: the expert nexus and its dominance in the news media," *Critical Terrorism Studies*, *2*, 3 (2009): 414-437.

[2] Richard Jackson, "Unknown knowns: the subjugated knowledge of terrorism studies," *Critical Terrorism Studies, 5*, 1 (2012): 11-29.

[3] Joseph Masco, "Introduction: The 'New' Normal," in *The Theater of Operations: National Security Affect from the Cold War to the War on Terror* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 12-14.

[4] Rebecca S. Lowen, *Creating the Cold War University: The Transformation of Stanford* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997).

These analyses are certainly not without merit, and point to the vital necessity of further critical scholarship on the troubling entanglements between academic expertise and the U.S. government in an era in which "counterterrorism" has served as the organizing creed for state projects of securitization which, as several scholars have noted, ultimately serve to further *insecuritize* marginalized populations.[5] My thesis attends to that necessity. Drawing from ethnographic data gathered from a single small, fledgling terrorism research center at a public university in northeastern Massachusetts, I do not attempt a sweeping analysis of the field of terrorism studies and its relationship to state power at large, but rather document the daily and quotidian practices by which a small group of professors and students receive, revise, produce, and disseminate knowledge about (counter)terrorism. These practices often bring them into contact with the U.S. government and the larger military-industrial complex—through grant applications, conferences, internships, and course readings—but, contrary to my initial assumptions, the outcomes of these interactions are by no means predetermined by the dominance of state power, and seldom constitute a facile alignment of academic with government interests.

Dr. Joseph Woods' response to my query represents one emic perspective on the relationship between academic expertise on terrorism, on the one hand, and public discourse and government policy, on the other. His "realist" outlook on the relative powerlessness of the academic is not universal, even within the small research center (as of this writing, the Institute has four permanent faculty members, four PhD students, and between thirty and forty graduate

[5] Stuart Croft, "Constructing Ontological Insecurity: The Insecuritization of Britain's Muslims." *Contemporary Securiy Policy, 33,* 2 (2012): 219-235; Harsha Walia, "What is Border Imperialism?" in *Undoing Border Imperialism* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2013), 37-38; Masco, "The 'New' Normal," 27; Alexandra Schwell, "Compensating (In)Security," in *The Anthropology of Security: Perspective from the Frontline of Policing, Counter-terrorism and Border Control* (eds. Mark Maguire, Catarina Frois, & Nils Zurawski) (London: PlutoPress, 2014), 86.

and undergraduate students affiliated with the Institute through internships and research assistantships) where I conducted my fieldwork. Dr. Blake Shepard, the Director of the Institute, suggested that some experts studying terrorism, through a combination of credentials, connections, and circumstance, can find themselves in a positon to directly influence the shaping of government policy, but that he himself—lacking that access to the upper echelons of governance, as well as a strong body of completed research—finds that he can make the most impact by working at "the lower levels," conducting trainings with law enforcement and the military that apply findings from his ongoing investigations in the field of military psychology. Dr. Adam Peretz described the relationship between the government and the academy in the grant application process as a "dance," with each party cognizant of the others' independent interests and invested in finding common ground for research. This characterization challenges framings that understand the relationship of the government to terrorism research centers as strictly hierarchical and invariably productive of discourse that reflects state interests. Briana and Andrew, former participants in the fall 2016 Department of Homeland Security (DHS)-sponsored YCI competition, acknowledged that their multimedia program to educate students, teachers, and educators about the perils of online radicalization began as a government-sponsored project entangled in the Obama-era state Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) initiative. They also noted, however, that now that their project has evolved into an independent nonprofit organization (Counterextremism Corrective), they are no longer wedded to that initiative, and feel that they are shaping the trajectory of the organization's development—and making an impact-- largely independent of government funding and interests.[6]

[6] The second chapter of this thesis, "Save the extremist, save the empire" elaborates on Counterextremism Corrective's ambivalent relationship to the CVE initiative.

In parsing the complicated and constantly contested relationships between my interlocutors and the U.S. government, I follow Lisa Stampnitzky's superb (2013) sociological study of the emergence of terrorism studies as an academic field and the concurrent effort to consolidate terrorism expertise as a coherent body of knowledge. Stampnitzky's fastidiously-researched book analyzes these twin developments as fraught and ongoing processes shaped as much, if not more, by the tensions between the interests of the U.S. government and those of academic experts as by their convergences. Her attention to the (variably successful) strategies by which academics have sought to contest morally-charged and politically-opportunistic state framings of terrorism and to establish an unbiased scholarly discourse on the subject were instrumental in edifying my overly deterministic perspective on the relationship between government agendas and academic research, and her broad historical overview of the subject resonates productively with my fine-grained ethnographic data. Although I engage a variety of secondary scholarly sources throughout the course of this study, I am especially indebted to Stampnitzky's singular work, and hope that my thesis builds on her important efforts to apply serious social-scientific critique to the relationship between state counterterrorism and academic expertise.[7]

Anthropology and security: A retrospective

Anthropology's historical engagements with security as an object of analysis have evolved in accordance with the theoretical trajectories of the discipline as a whole. A functionalist approach dominates the earliest anthropological treatises on the nature of security. Malinowski (1944) identified "safety" as one of his seven "basic (biological) needs" that cultural

[7] Lisa Stampnitzky, *Disciplining Terror: How Experts Invented terrorism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

institutions and practices develop to fulfill, and posited that the "cultural response" to this innate human necessity for safety was "protection," a nebulous term that encompassed myriad culturally-specific forms of defense against "bodily injuries" from diverse threats. The construction of houses on stilts to avoid flooding and the organization of an army both constituted "protection" in Malinowski's conception. Moreover, he suggested a correlation between the forms that protection takes and a society's degree of "evolution;" among "primitive cultures," he contended, adult males may carry weapons to defend against outsiders, but the emergence of elaborate military institutions is typically only a feature of more "developed" societies.[8] In a similar but more overtly Darwinian vein, Leslie White (1943) argued that "culture" as a whole constitutes an "instrument with which to provide *security of life*" (emphasis added) and that a given "culture's" level of "development" can be mathematically gauged according to how efficiently said "culture" expends energy to ensure security (White even supplies a handy formula for the purpose of calculation).[9]

Other contemporaneous anthropologists turned their scrutiny to cultural variations in perceived sources of insecurity. Leighton and Leighton (1942), for example, surveyed members of a New Mexico Diné community to determine what kinds of threats they understood to be most salient. After tabulating and reviewing their results, the ethnographers concluded that the preponderance of anxieties associated with threats believed to stem from religious transgressions (such as disease) could be attributed to the "elaborateness of [the Diné's] religious culture," and that, as such, religious rituals conferred "comfort and security" to the community.[10] Thus, for the

[8] Bronislaw Malinowski, "Basic Needs and Cultural Responses," in *A Scientific Theory of Culture and Other Essays* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1944): 91-119.
[9] Leslie A. White, "Energy and the Evolution of Culture," *American Anthropologist, 45*, 3 (1943): 335-356.
[10] Alexander Leighton & Dorothea Cross Leighton, "Some Types of Uneasiness and Fear in a Navaho Indian Community," *American Anthropologist, 44*, 2 (1942): 194-209.

functionalists, "insecurity" and "security" both represented natural, innate features of human existence, the former a condition and the latter a necessary response to that condition. Both, moreover, are biological in origin even as they are culturally mediated.

The midcentury ascendancy of A.R. Radcliffe-Brown's structural functionalism (a moniker he famously rejected) and its analytic emphasis on the "network of relations" that constitute a "social structure"—and the "social personalities" that individuals manifest by virtue of their position within this network[11]--is reflected in ethnographic studies of secure institutions, such as prisons, governed by rigid and prescriptive social orders. Gresham M. Sykes' (1958) ethnography of a New Jersey maximum-security prison is an example of one such study, which took the social relations between and among inmates and prison custodians as its principal object of inquiry. Despite Sykes' conviction in the domineering influence of social structure on individual behavior, his analysis was not wholly deterministic; he suggested that the strict regime of social control envisioned by the prison's administration was not a fixed reality but a constructed ideal that prison custodians must constantly endeavor to materialize. Moreover, the materialization of this ideal, Sykes contended, was routinely contested by the actions and social allegiances of the inmates themselves. Sykes' work is significant in its treatment of "security" as a processual phenomenon realized through the exercise of power[12], that which later theorists might term "securitization."[13]

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[11] A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, "On Social Structure," *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, 70*, 1 (1940): 1-12.

[12] Gresham M. Sykes, *The Society of Captives: A Study of a Maximum Security Prison*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1958).

[13] Mona Fawaz, Mona Harb, & Ahmad Gharbieh, "Living Beirut's Security Zones: An Investigation of the Modalities and Practice of Urban Security," *City & Society*, *24*, 2 (2012): 173-195; Paul Amar, *The Security Archipelago*: *Human-Security States, Sexuality Politics, and the End of Neoliberalism*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013); Mark Maguire, Catarina Frois, & Zurawski Nils, "Inroduction," in *The Anthropology of Security: Perspectives from the Frontline of Policing, Counter-terrorism and Border Control* (eds. Mark Maguire et. al) (London: PlutoPress), 1-17.

The poststructuralist turn of the 1970s constituted a sea change in the ways in which theorists across the social sciences conceptualized security and its relation to power. Concerned as he was with developing a critical genealogy of the techniques by which Western governments have deployed power over their subjects, Michel Foucault was keenly interested in theorizing the nature and origins of "security." Foucault (1978) formulated security as a set of "apparatuses" that began to emerge as dominant technologies of state power in Europe and the United States during the eighteenth century, evolving from and incorporating—rather than replacing—earlier mechanisms of power, namely the law and discipline.[14] Security, according to Foucault, comprises those technologies of power that operate on the circulation of "material givens"—water, air, disease, goods, people, etc.—rather than on the constructed and artificial spaces—for example, the prison or the school—that constitute the domain of discipline.[15] Moreover, because of this imperative to integrate ever-expanding material circuits, the security apparatus, by Foucault's reckoning, is fundamentally centrifugal—that is, constantly broadening its scope—whereas the disciplinary mechanism is centripetal, delimiting a proscribed space in which its authority is operative.[16] Furthermore, Foucault suggested that while both the law and discipline function by prescribing a code that designates, in the case of the former, that which is forbidden, and, in the case of the latter, that which is obligatory, the security apparatus manages phenomena "at the level of their effective reality" in an effort to attain the most desirable outcome.[17] In the calculus of security that Foucault lays out, famine and disease are conceived of not as eradicable scourges, but as inevitable developments that can nevertheless be "normalized"—that is,

[14] Michel Foucault, "11 January 1978," in *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College de France, 1977-1978* (trans. Graham Burchell) (New York, NY: Picador), 6-11. (Original work published 2004).
[15] Ibid, pp. 19.
[16] Michel Foucault, "18 January 1978," in *Security, Territory, Population*, 44-45.
[17] Ibid, pp. 46-47.

regulated such that they are normally distributed throughout the *population*.[18] This claim is thus linked to arguably the most important distinction that Foucault made between the security apparatus and earlier technologies of power: that while law and discipline seek to control individual bodies, security endeavors to regulate a population.[19]

Foucault's theorization of the apparatuses of security specifically and technologies of power more generally have continued to resonate in contemporary anthropological engagements with security, even as the current era of global counterterror has prompted scholars to adapt and edify his theories. Caton and Zacka (2010) take up Foucault's notion of the centrifugal security apparatus to reconfigure the infamous Iraqi prison of Abu Ghraib—the site of a series of grisly abuses committed by U.S. Army and Central Intelligence Agency personnel against detainees during the invasion of Iraq—not as a deviation from an ideal, mechanistic bureaucracy intended to prevent such violence, but as a "nodal point" in a security apparatus that exercises power not according to a rigid disciplinary scheme but in an "improvisatory," "arbitrary" fashion adapted to manage circulations of emergent, uncertain threats.[20] Caton and Zacka's intervention is significant, not only for its trenchant critique of the foundations of the U.S. "War on Terror," but also for positing a particular example of the routine processes—to which Foucault mostly only alludes--through which the security apparatus operates to manage uncertainty. By centering the "improvisational" actions of individual personnel in this operation, Caton and Zacka offer an alternative to the coordinated instruments of security that characterized Foucault's original

[18] Michel Foucault, "25 January 1978," in *Security, Territory, Population*, 62-63.
[19] Ibid, pp. 66-67.
[20] Steven C. Caton & Bernardo Zacka, "Abu Ghraib, the security apparatus, and the performativity of power," *American Ethnologist, 37*, 2 (2010): 206.

argument—price controls on wheat to manage famine[21], vaccination campaigns to contain epidemics[22]--and invoked a chaotic apparatus contingent on the creativity of individual actors. [23]

Alternatively, Masco (2014) theorized that what Foucault understood to be the security apparatus of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries— those technologies of power which operate through the normalization of statistical indicators of a population's well-being, wherein that population is defined by its existence within a discrete national territory—has been superseded, at least in the context of the U.S. "War on Terror," by an apparatus that takes the consolidation and protection of a "critical infrastructure"--consisting of "experts, technologies, [and] capabilities"—as its principal *raison d'être.*[24] This apparatus, Masco argued, construes everything from historic landmarks to nuclear power plants to post offices as potential targets of catastrophic terrorist attacks, thereby "flatten[ing] risk across radically different objects and domains."[25] In its tendency to assimilate new infrastructures into an ever-expanding field of vulnerable entities, Masco's counterterror security apparatus maintains the essential centrifugal character of Foucault's formulation, relying upon the speculative construction of an "endless spectrum of threat" to justify the mobilization of a militarized counterterror formation that is by no means confined by national boundaries.[26] Contrary to Foucault's conception, however, this apparatus is concerned principally with the circulation not of disease, sustenance, or wealth among the population of citizen-subjects, but of *affect*. In Masco's estimation, the counterterror security apparatus maintains public support by ensuring the proliferation of particular structures

[21] Foucault, "18 January 1978," 36-43.
[22] Foucault, "25 January 1978," 57-63.
[23] Caton & Zacka, "Abu Ghraib," 208.
[24] Masco, "The 'New' Normal," 30.
[25] Ibid, 31.
[26] Ibid, 16-17.

of feeling in regard to the prospect of national destruction, thereby extending its sovereignty to the domain of the human nervous system.[27] Critically, Masco's counterterror state "insecuritizes" its subjects by neglecting and actively aggravating non-terror-related threats—global climate change, economic inequality, war, resource scarcity, etc.—and exploits the resultant insecurity to marshal support for continued counterterrorist militarization.[28] Masco's interest in security as materialized in the affect and behavior of citizen-subjects resonates with other recent works, such as Julian Ochs' (2011) ethnography of securitization in Israel, that describe security regimes in the embodied daily practice of individual subjects.[29]

Masco's theories propagate a state-centric understanding of the security apparatus that other anthropologists have complicated. A dominant conceptual framing in the anthropology of security today is that of the *securityscape.* Hugh Gusterson (2001) originally used this term to describe the "asymmetric distributions of weaponry, military force, and military-scientific resources among nation-states and the local and global imaginaries of identity, power, and vulnerability that accompany those distributions"[30]; a definition which, much like Masco's delineation of the security apparatus, privileges the role of the state in securitization processes. Finding this framework deficient in describing the complex, dispersed networks of agents that characterize contemporary securitization projects, Albro et. al. (2012) expanded Gusterson's concept to refer to "a broader geographic and institutional expanse of heterogeneous, hybrid, interconnected state and nonstate, public and private, agencies and resources, which variously

[27] Ibid, 17-21.
[28] Ibid, 27.
[29] Julian Ochs, "Introduction: The Practice of Everyday Security," in *Security and Suspicion: An Ethnography of Everyday Life in Israel* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 1-18.
[30] Hugh Gusterson, "The Virtual Nuclear Weapons Laboratory in the New World Order," *American Ethnologist, 28*, 2 (2001): 418.

organize professional expectations, notions of expertise, activities, and goals, through which technology and training are distributed, and knowledge circulates, often but not simply in relationship to the interdiction of threats to the nation-state."[31] Albro et. al.'s securityscape resembles Amar's similarly bricolaged "parastatal formations," though Amar deploys this term particularly to describe a coalition that exists in relation to his "human-security state" of the Global South.[32] While I worry that contemporary theorists have broadened the potential referents of "securityscape" to such an extent as to render it virtually incoherent as an analytic category—encompassing everything from Albro et. al.'s heterogeneous assemblages, to state-centered military and imperial formations in the classic Gustersonian sense,[33] to the embodied experience of securitization,[34] to simply highly (in)securitized geographical spaces[35]--I find Albro et. al.'s specific usage of the term to be helpful in understanding the position of my own ethnographic site—an academic research center--within a broader network of counterterror actors.

amenable to securitization projects as security studies and terrorism studies. Indeed, these multidisciplinary fields often incorporate techniques of knowledge production developed within the social sciences, including anthropology—one of my interlocutors at the Institute, Dr. Adam Peretz, has used ethnography in his research on right-wing domestic terrorist groups in the United States.

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[31] Robert Albro, George Marcus, Laura A. McNamara, & Monica Schoch-Spana, "Introduction," in *Anthropologists in the SecurityScape: Ethics, Practice, and Professional Identity* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2012), 11.
[32] Amar, *The Security Archipelago*, 18.
[33] Michael R. Duke, "Neocolonialism and Health Care Access Among Marshall Islanders in the United States." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly, 31,* 3 (2017): 436.
[34] Patricia Noxolo, "Towards an embodied securityscape: Brian Chikwava's *Harare North* and the asylum seeking body as site of articulation," *Social and Cultural Geography, 15,* 3 (2014).
[35] Yarin Eski, "The port securityscape: an ethnography," PhD thesis, University of Glasgow (2014); Schwell, "Compensating (In)Security."

Contextualizing expertise: a brief history of security studies and terrorism studies

The Counterterrorism Research Institute, as its name suggests, situates its knowledge production practices within two overlapping, interdisciplinary, and highly contested academic fields: security studies and terrorism studies. This study is neither intended nor well equipped to offer a comprehensive critical perspective on these fields, taking instead a much narrower ethnographic approach that attends to particular politicized practices of knowledge production and the performance of expertise, and how those practices reflect and reproduce contemporary regimes of security and discipline, particularly those that fall under the rubric of "counterterrorism." Of course, any analytically rigorous study must acknowledge these practices as articulating within the broader institutional, epistemological, and historical dynamics of security studies and terrorism studies. In this thesis—particularly in chapter 1, "Daily dramas of expertise"—we shall see how expert practices at the Institute implicate, negotiate, and participate in the tensions and historical developments that characterize these two fields. To contextualize these practices, I offer here brief histories of security studies and terrorism studies, and indicate some of the dilemmas with which their practitioners have had to contend.

Security studies,[36] as my interlocutors at the Institute would likely attest, is a vast and amorphous field, the boundaries of which, as Buzan and Hansen (2009) describe, have long been under contestation but have only recently been subjected to serious critical and historically-attentive reflection.[37] Buzan and Hansen, in their exhaustive and inclusive review of security studies literature, date the emergence of the field to the end of the second World War in 1945,

[36] The nebulousness of security studies is reflected in the field's variable nomenclature. Although my interlocutors at the Institute tended to prefer "security studies," Buzan and Hansen (2009) use "international security studies" (ISS), and identify "strategic studies" and "peace research" as alternate monikers, although each of these terms indexes distinct emphases and political/epistemological alignments within the field. See Barry Buzan & Lene Hansen, *The Evolution of International Security Studies* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1.
[37] Ibid, 8.

and locate the field's geographical origins in North America, Europe, and Australia—that is, the so-called "Western world." They identify antecedents to security studies in earlier literature on war, defense, and military strategy—what might be characterized as "war studies, military and grand strategy, and geopolitics"[38]—but note that the earliest "security studies" literature—which, importantly, did not identify itself as such at the time—was characterized by a theoretical attention to *security*, rather than war or defense, as an expansive concept which incorporated not only military but also non-military threats to the nation-state, a holistic perspective which grew out of the "total war mobilisations (*sic*)" of Great Britain and the U.S. during World War II.[39] The state of "total war" demanded that warring states attend not only to battlefield tactics but to the political, economic, social, and technological dynamics of both their own societies and those of their allies and opponents. Because of this, whereas war studies and geopolitical literatures were dominated by military tacticians, security studies, from its inception, was a "civilian enterprise" that incorporated expert perspectives from physics, economics, sociology, anthropology, political science, psychology, and myriad other academic disciplines.[40] Security studies, then, began as "a category of work at the intersection of military expertise and university based social science."[41]

While "security" was conceived of in this nascent literature as encompassing a broader spectrum of concerns than conventional military tactics, the onset of the Cold War in the 1950s prescribed a narrow research agenda of nuclear weapons management and bipolar geopolitical strategy that conceptually contracted the emerging field of security studies,[42] even as enthusiastic

[38] Ibid, 1.
[39] Ibid, 2.
[40] Ibid, 2.
[41] Ibid, 66.
[42] Ibid, 3, 9.

government investment, particularly in the United States, dramatically expanded the field's research output.[43] Buzan and Hansen suggest that it was not until the 1970s, when the United States and the Soviet Union entered into a period of détente and a global economic crisis shifted geopolitical priorities, that security studies turned its critical attention to non-military threats. During the latter part of the Cold War, economic and environmental security came under the field's purview (though not without controversy), and the 1990s witnessed security studies' further expansion (or, alternately, fracturing) to encompass issues of health, development, and gender—an expansion which, as Buzan and Hansen document, has been continually contested.[44] At stake in these intra-field debates are not only questions about the "sectors" with which security studies should concern itself, but also whether the state should retain its privileged position in security studies literature as the object to be secured, or whether alternative referents (the individual, the ethnic group, the environment, the planet as a whole, etc.) might be centered.[45] The expansion and contestation of the concept of "security" in the recent history of security studies served as a source of consternation and epistemological anxiety for the Institute's Director, Dr. Blake Shepard. I address this at length in chapter 1, "Daily dramas of expertise."

Buzan and Hansen note that the September 11th, 2001 al-Qaida attacks and the Bush administration's subsequent declaration of a global "War on Terror" exerted contradictory effects on the development of the field of security studies. On the one hand, the U.S.-led coalition invasions of first Afghanistan and then Iraq and the ongoing conflicts that those invasions incited renewed the field's traditional interest in military force as a central element of

[43] Ibid, 67.
[44] Ibid, 12.
[45] Ibid, 10-11.

"security."[46] On the other hand, traditionalist, state-centric approaches within the field have been compelled to recognize non-state and para-state actors—such as al-Qaida and other terrorist organizations--as significant threats to the security of the nation-state.[47] The very existence of the Counterterrorism Research Institute is an obvious manifestation of this paradigmatic shift, in which the research agenda of security studies has come to intersect significantly with that of the field of terrorism studies.

As a recognizable field of expertise, terrorism studies has a shorter history than security studies. Stampnitzky (2013) identifies the incident at the 1972 Munich Olympics—when eight members of the Palestinian nationalist Black September Organization killed two and took hostage nine Israeli athletes, demanding the release of 236 Palestinian political prisoners and several members of Germany's Red Army Faction—as a pivotal event for the formation of terrorism "as a problem in the public sphere and as an object of expert knowledge."[48] The spectacular theatricality of the Munich incident (aided and abetted by global media coverage) and its transnational character (as an that targeted not only the state in which the insurgent group principally operates (i.e., Israel), but other governments, as well (i.e., Germany)) constituted an innovation in political violence, around which public, government, and expert interest coalesced.[49] terrorism—until then a sparsely-used moniker—was the word that came to define this new kind of theatrical, transnational political violence, a nomenclature which, through the

[46] Ibid, 231.
[47] Ibid, 230.
[48] Stampnitzky, *Disciplining Terror*, 21-23.
[49] Ibid, 24-26.

crystallization of terrorism as a generic social problem, has been subsequently broadened and applied retrospectively to pre-Munich guerilla and revolutionary movements and events.[50]

Throughout the 1970s, terrorism expertise solidified as a new field of knowledge in the United States through government-sponsored research and conferences. Whereas the earliest experts were not primarily interested in terrorism *per se*—their backgrounds tended toward the study of collective behavior, social movements, and social psychology—by the end of the decade, a coterie of specialized terrorism experts had begun to emerge.[51] Stampnitzky contends that the nascent discourse of terrorism that developed during the 1970s drew on an earlier discourse of "counterinsurgency." However, where the discourse of counterinsurgency regarded insurgents as rational actors with legitimate political motivations—operating in parallel to the states against which they fought—the emerging discourse of terrorism put the rationality, legitimacy, and, crucially, the *morality* of terrorist behavior into question.[52] Throughout her book, Stampnitzky traces how terrorism experts have continually grappled with the connotations of irrationality, illegitimacy, and immorality—often reinforced by government and media framings—that have come to characterize the discourse of terrorism, in their efforts to forge an "objective" terrorism expertise. In my fieldwork, the striving for objectivity emerged as a constant theme in the work of my expert interlocutors.

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[50] Ibid, 25. For example, David C. Rapoport, one of the foremost contemporary terrorism experts, has advanced a genealogy of modern terrorism characterized by four distinct "waves:" an "anarchist wave" that lasted from the 1880s-1920s, an "anti-colonial wave" that lasted from the 1920s-1960s, a "New Left wave" that spanned the 1960s-1990s, and an ongoing "religious wave" that began with the Iranian Revolution and the Soviet-Afghan War in 1979. See David C. Rapoport, "The Four Waves of Rebel Terror and September 11," *Anthropoetics 8*, 1 (2002). Rapoport's "wave" model has become canonical in the field of terrorism studies today, and was often cited by my interlocutors at the Institute.

[51] Ibid, 27, 40.

[52] Ibid, 49-82.

Anthropology as security: A critical caveat

In outlining the history of anthropology's critical engagements with "security" as a cultural, social, and political phenomenon, as well as the historical developments of the fields of security studies and terrorism studies, I would be remiss not to acknowledge the extent to which the discipline itself has aided and abetted in projects of securitization and surveillance. Given its robustly-documented roots in European and U.S. colonial projects,[53] it should come as little surprise that anthropologists have long collaborated with the state to gather intelligence on and develop strategies for the management and control of populations, particularly those that are racialized or otherwise "othered." Maguire et. al (2014) offer a frank summary of this history.[54] Ruth Benedict, a student of Franz Boas, lent her ethnographic insights to the U.S. government during the second World War, and collaborated with psychologist Abraham Maslow in his study of the Blackfoot people; research which spawned his "hierarchy of needs," a foundational theory in the field of security studies. Alexander Leighton—whose ethnography of the Blackfoot I cited in the preceding literature review—went on to help manage a Japanese internment camp. Anthropologists helmed myriad ethnographic projects in the service of Cold War military interventions, including the Vietnam War. In a different vein, Simone Browne (2015), citing Ferguson (2004), recounts how early canonical sociology, a sister discipline of anthropology, deployed surveillance of Black bodies in the post-Emancipation United States—methodologically framed as "statistics gathering" and "ethnography"—"as a population

[53] Talal Asad, *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter* (Dryden, NY: Ithaca Press, 1973).

[54] Maguire et. al, "Introduction," in *The Anthropology of Security*, 7-8.

management technology of the state" that relied on distorting, gendered caricatures of Blackness.[55]

This tradition of anthropological collaboration with the security state, as Maguire et. al acknowledge,[56] is accompanied by a parallel tradition of vigorous anthropological critique of disciplinary complicity with militarization and securitization projects. Rancorous debates around the extent to which anthropologists should participate in such projects, and what that participation should look like, are ongoing in professional anthropological circles, as Albro et. al indicate.[57] Despite widespread condemnation of such collaborations within the discipline, contemporary anthropologists continue to lend their services to military operations, most notably the development of a so-called "Human Terrain System" for the collection of "ethnographic intelligence" in the U.S.-led missions in Afghanistan and Iraq.[58]

I write this caveat not to frame my own work as an apology for anthropology's ongoing entanglements with regimes of security, but to qualify my foregoing critiques of security studies and terrorism studies with the important acknowledgment that no social science—and, arguably, none of the academic disciplines, more broadly speaking—can claim absolute ethical "purity" in this regard. Certainly, security studies and terrorism studies—given their histories as fields of knowledge that coalesced, through extensive government funding, around problems of strategic importance to the security state—are more obviously entangled than most fields in such projects. Expertise, however, is invariably embedded in particular political and institutional contexts, and

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[55] Simone Browne, "Introduction, and Other Dark Matters," in *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 10-11.

[56] Maguire et. al, "Introduction," in *The Anthropology of Security*, 7.

[57] Albro et. al, "Introduction," in *Anthropologists in the SecurityScape*.

[58] Nicola Perugini, "Anthropologists at War: Ethnographic Intelligence and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq and Afghanistan," *International Political Anthropology 1,* 2 (2008): 227.

its ends and impacts are always contingent on such context, not an inherent property of the expertise itself. As history has demonstrated, anthropological expertise, properly situated, can be just as amenable to securitization projects as the expertise of security studies and terrorism studies. Indeed, these multidisciplinary fields often incorporate techniques of knowledge production developed within the social sciences, including anthropology; one of my interlocutors at the Institute, Dr. Adam Peretz, has used ethnographic methods in his research on right-wing domestic terrorist groups in the United States.

Methods

I conducted formal ethnographic research at the Counterterrorism Research Institute at the University of Waterbridge during a three-month period from November 2017 through January 2018. Such research consisted primarily of ethnographic interviews, as well as participant observation in several courses instructed by Center faculty and documentary analysis of research proposals, course syllabi, and research grants. Over the course of my fieldwork, I conducted semi-structured interviews with the four permanent faculty members at the Institute, in addition to six students (four undergraduate, two graduate) affiliated with the Institute through their participation in the DHS-sponsored YCI internship that I discuss in the prologue of this thesis. I also spoke to the Institute's Grants and Budget Manager, as well as the Dean of the College of Fine Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Waterbridge, of which the Institute is part. In addition to this formal ethnographic research, I draw also on personal experience as a student enrolled in an online introductory summer course on terrorism offered by UWB. Finally, my thesis incorporates digital ethnographic methods as I parse the discourses and representational practices at work in the websites and social media presence of

Counterextremism Corrective and Campaign CARE, the two student-led counter-extremism intervention programs that I discuss in chapter 2, "Save the extremist, save the empire."

Objectives and chapter overview

My principal objective in this thesis is to use ethnography to describe the professional practices, discourses, and human actors that constitute terrorism expertise at the Counterterrorism Research Institute, and to theorize the location of these practices, discourses, and actors within the large securityscape of contemporary (trans)national counterterrorism. The small size and the particularity of the single research center where I conducted my fieldwork obviously limits the conclusions that can be drawn from my ethnographic data. I thus frame this thesis not as a definitive ethnography of transnational terrorism expertise and the political, financial, and discursive circuits in which it is embedded, but rather as an invitation for further research and a suggestion of the particular problems that that research might address. Despite an ample body of social scientific literature on the construction and enactment of expertise in general[59] and a handful of recent anthropological engagements with the representational practices that undergird the so-called "War on Terror,"[60] there has been little commitment to long-term ethnographic engagement with the institutions and individuals that produce, disseminate, and circulate contemporary expertise on terrorism. I have already referred to Lisa Stampnitzky's exceptional study of the development of terrorism studies; her exhaustive survey and astute historical analysis lays important groundwork for my work here, but lacks the descriptive particularity and attention to the daily practices of individual human actors that fine-

[59] Dominic Boyer, "Thinking through the Anthropology of Experts," *Anthropology in Action* 15, 2 (2008).

[60] Adam Hodges, *The "War on Terror" Narrative: Discourse and Intertextuality in the Construction and Contestation of Socipolitical Reality* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011); Masco, *The Theater of Operations*.

grained ethnography can provide. My thesis thus begins to fill a significant gap in the existing social scientific literature on counterterrorism and terrorism expertise.

In the first chapter of this thesis, "Daily dramas of expertise: Performative boundary-work and the disciplining of terrorist subject/objects in the life of a security expert," I describe the daily professional practices and performances of expertise that one of my principal interlocutors at the Institute, Dr. Blake Shepard, enacts. I draw extensively on literature from the field of science studies to examine how these practices and performances manifest anxieties around the uncertain epistemological boundaries of security studies and terrorism studies, and attempt to delineate Dr. Shepard's own expertise in relation to those fields. I conclude the chapter with a close reading of a white paper proposal that Dr. Shepard submitted to the DoD-affiliated Minerva Research Initiative to examine how the proposed experiment deploys the figure of the depoliticized radical—discussed in the prologue—to coordinate distinct interests and modes of disciplining the terrorist subject.

In the second chapter, "Save the extremist, save the empire: student-led counter-extremism interventions and the politics of redemption through education," I turn my ethnographic attention to Counterextremism Corrective and Campaign CARE, two student organizations that, through participation in the DHS-sponsored YCI competition, have developed educational programs that purport to deter radicalization among U.S. adolescents. I explore the fraught connections between these organizations and the Obama-era CVE (Countering Violent Extremism) initiative, and suggest that both campaigns mobilize redemption narratives to frame their interventions as rescuing the (would-be) extremist and reforming U.S. counterterror policy. These redemption narratives, I contend, uncritically valorize the saving power of education and the "unbiased facts" that such education imparts. I examine how this discursive framing

mystifies the structural causes of terrorism and ultimately upholds militarized formations of counterterror.

The conclusion of this thesis, "On being terrorized," meditates on the connections between Cherríe Moraga's narration of the September 11th, 2001 attacks in her essay, "From Inside the First World: Foreword, 2001," and one of my interlocutors' descriptions of his own experience of that pivotal incident to gesture toward the possibility of a terrorism expertise that takes seriously the affective experience of terror and the worlds of being that terrorization projects: what I call the "ontologies of being terrorized." I use the notions of affect and ontology to advance a theoretical understanding that takes terrorism not as an analytical problem unto itself but as an unstable and destabilizing phenomenon that reflects and reproduces particular affectively- and politically-inflected modes of being in the world that are inextricable from structures of imperial violence. Ultimately, I interrogate how the insistence of terrorism expertise on treating terrorism as a bounded and stable object-to-be-known obscures these structures and the U.S. empire's complicity in cycles of terror.

Naming terror:

A note on the politics of definition

Lisa Stampnitzky (2013) writes about what she terms "the problem of definition" when it comes to terrorism[1]—that is, the prevailing uncertainty, within both public discourse and the field of terrorism studies itself, about how "terrorism" (and, by extension "terrorist") is to be defined. While some of my interlocutors commented on this difficulty in our conversations, in practice they fluently invoked and readily interchanged the terms "terrorism/terrorist," "(violent) extremism/extremist," and "radicalism/radical" without betraying any doubts about the definitional stability of those terms. Indeed, conviction in the fundamental definability and "realness" of the objects these words describe seemed to me to be an essential part of my interlocutors' performances of expertise.[2] Students' and faculty members' understandings of "terrorism," while seldom explicitly articulated, coalesced around the definition supplied by Dr. Joseph Woods, a faculty member at the Institute, in his canonical introductory textbook on the subject. "Terrorism," Woods declares, "is a combination of strategies and violent tactics in which the victims (e.g., ordinary citizens) are a sub-element of a broader target (e.g. a government) […] used […] by individuals or groups in pursuit of some types of [political, social, criminal, or religious] objectives."

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[1] Lisa Stampnitzky, *Disciplining Terror: How Experts Invented terrorism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013): 4.

[2] When I suggested to one of my interlocutors, Dr. Adam Peretz, that part of the difficulty in studying radicals" might be an inability to define what exactly a "radical" is, he answered me unequivocally (and with some apparent impatience) that, in fact, "radical" *can* be defined. When I pressed him for more details, he told me that a radical is someone who is willing to use violence to achieve a political cause—a definition largely congruent with Dr. Woods' definition of the "terrorist," discussed above.

My interlocutors at the Institute tended to use the words "terrorism/terrorist" interchangeably with "(violent) extremism/extremist" and "radicalism/radical," with some important qualifications. Campaign CARE and Counterextremism Corrective, the two student-led counter-extremism programs at UWB, tended to favor the terms "extremism/extremist" in their materials, possibly because of those organizations' roots in the CVE (Countering Violent Extremism) initiative, and likely also because these terms (without the modifier of "violent") more readily include online recruiters for terrorist organizations who may not have actually committed political violence themselves.[3] Similarly, the term "radicalism/radical" also had the advantage of implicating only directly *beliefs* rather than violence *per se* (although see the second footnote on the previous page).

My interlocutors' expansive understanding of terrorism as, essentially, politically-motivated violence that victimizes a sub-set of a larger target, conflates nineteenth-century anarchist assassins, anticolonial guerrillas, secessionist movements, violent Salafist groups, and neo-Nazi organizations, among others, as manifestations of a singular social problem with a unitary set of fundamental characteristics. In keeping with dominant practice in the field of terrorism studies and the discourse of terrorism more broadly, my interlocutors did *not* use any of the above-mentioned terms in reference to violence enacted by states, even as they acknowledged the origins of the word "terrorism" *(*French: *terrorisme*) during the French Revolution, to describe the repressive brutality of Maximilien Robespierre's "Reign of Terror." Rather, "terrorism" was reserved to describe the actions of non-state or para-state actors.

[3] That said, one page of Counterextremism Corrective's website, which I discuss at length in the second chapter, declares based on an interpretation of federal law that even someone who simply donates money to a terrorist organization, even inadvertently, can be considered a terrorist. See Counterextremism Corrective, "What is Terrorism," https://www.Counterextremism Corrective.org/what-is-terrorism-1/, (2018). As a general rule, when using the terms "terrorism/terrorist," "(violent) extremism/extremist," and "radicalism/radical," my interlocutors tended more toward conflation than distinction.

In this thesis, I have generally elected not to use quotation marks around any of these terms, except when drawing attention to them as words themselves (as I have done above). This decision does *not* reflect any positivist conviction that these words accurately describe an empirical reality—to the contrary, by attending to the expert practices by which these terms' referents are constructed, I hope that my work continually problematizes discourse that treats those referents as natural and discrete social phenomena. Rather, in omitting scare quotes—which can have a trivializing effect on the words they enclose--I follow Stampnitzky in taking seriously the reality that these naming practices construct, and the political and material consequences of that construction.[4]

[4] Stampnitzky, *Disciplining Terror,* 5.

Plate 3: "Today the human race is on the edge of enormous calamity."

Hydroelectric works in Waterbridge, Massachusetts. Photo by the author.

Daily dramas of expertise:

Performative boundary-work and the disciplining of terrorist subject/objects in the life of a security expert

Dr. Blake Shepard: an ethnographic character portrait

According to Dr. Blake Shepard, I am probably the only person who has read "Counterterrorism Research Institute 2020," the eleven-page document outlining his vision and goals—both general and specific, short-term and long—for the research center he now helms. I tell him sincerely that this is a shame; the document strikes me as carefully conceived and crafted, and though Dr. Shepard shrugs off my praise and suggests that he spent little time actually writing this proposal to serve as Director of the Institute, the document is clearly the product of considerable passion on his part. In bold, decisive language, he lays out a template for how, through "correct leadership, effort and innovation," the Institute can transform itself by 2020 from an institution that "has not fulfilled its potential, nor its promises" to "one (of many) vital foundations (*sic*) upon which this empire is built."

The "empire" to which Dr. Shepard refers is that of the University of Waterbridge (UWB), a public research university located in a former industrial boomtown about twenty-five miles outside of Boston, Massachusetts. UWB has an enrollment of around 17,000 undergraduate and graduate students spread out among six colleges. The largest of these colleges, the School of Fine Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences (FAHSS), contains the School of Criminology and Justice Studies—this department, in turn, has hosted the Counterterrorism Research Institute (the Institute) since July 2013. The word "empire" is not originally Blake's own; in "Counterterrorism Research Institute 2020," he deliberately reappropriates it from a speech given by his colleague and former boss, Colin Mayhew, who

served as the Institute's first Director until his departure from UWB in July 2015. According to Dr. Shepard's document, Dr. Mayhew declared in that speech—delivered at the Institute's original launch event—that the Institute is "in the business of Empire (*sic*) building." As Dr. Shepard notes, Dr. Mayhew's statement was an allusion to a quote by fictional murderous crystal meth tycoon Walter White, the protagonist of AMC's acclaimed television series *Breaking Bad*, which was in its fifth and final season at the time of the Institute's establishment; a provocative referent, to say the least.

In his strategic plan and in our conversation, Blake Shepard is critical of Colin Mayhew's initial vision for the Institute. The Institute, he vehemently argues in his document, is not an empire unto its own, but a pillar of the larger UWB empire. Dr. Shepard suggested to me that, during his time as Director, Dr. Mayhew mobilized the Institute's resources primarily in service of his own research agenda. In contrast, Dr. Shepard envisions a research center oriented to the needs of three principal constituencies: UWB students, faculty who pursue security-related research, and the university at large, "whose goals focus on improving the lives of the people of the Commonwealth [of Massachusetts], the nation and the world." To this final point, Dr. Shepard takes pains throughout the document to outline exactly how his vision for the Institute aligns with the larger goals of UWB: to expand diverse student enrollment (particularly in its graduate programs), to raise its national and international profile, and to attract new sources of both public and private investment.

Given Dr. Shepard's enthusiastic rhetoric around the ambitions of the UWB empire in "Counterterrorism Research Institute 2020," I find it ironic when he criticizes UWB's expansionistic efforts to transform Waterbridge into a gentrified college town. We're sitting across from each other at a booth in Waterbridge Beer Works, an often sparsely-populated

brewpub that occupies the ground floor of a former textile mill building. The restaurant is adjacent to a sprawling former factory complex that Blake explains to me has recently been purchased by the university for around $6 million, to be converted into administrative office space.

"Oh, what, you were here first?" Dr. Shepard says, mocking the UWB administration's response to city residents protesting the university's hunger for real estate. "Well, we're loud."

Dr. Shepard has strong opinions, and does not hesitate to express them; the decisive claims he makes in "Counterterrorism Research Institute 2020" about his ability to lead the Institute to a new zenith are characteristic of him. "I know what to do, and everybody should just let me do it," he tells me at Waterbridge Beer Works in reference to the Institute, and laughs. In his conversations with me, as well as with his students, Dr. Shepard sometimes affected this facetiously cocksure posture, played (often successfully) for laughs. Amid these moments of good-natured self-parody, however, I recognized in Dr. Shepard an earnest conviction in his ability--working collaboratively with his colleagues--to optimize the Institute's capacity to serve the university, its faculty, and its students.

Dr. Shepard came to UWB at the Institute's inception in July of 2013, as Dr. Mayhew's research associate. When Dr. Mayhew departed the Institute for a position at a Georgia university in 2015, Dr. Shepard remained at UWB as a Visiting Professor and as the Institute's "Program Manager"—a title which he feels ultimately meant "intern runner."

"I was always staying because I wanted the Institute," he tells me. "I felt a very deep connection to it…I've always felt that it could do more than it did [under Dr. Mayhew]." After Dr. Mayhew's successor, interim Director Dr. Joseph Woods, departed on sabbatical in July 2016, the Institute was left leaderless. A year later, when Dr. Shepard was on the cusp of

completing his PhD in Forensic Psychology from the University of Liverpool and was to be promoted to Assistant Professor at UWB, he told the university administration that his one condition for remaining at the university was that he be given directorship of the Institute, and submitted "Counterterrorism Research Institute 2020" to the Dean of FAHSS, to indicate how serious he was. He suspects the Dean did not read his proposal, and after having not been notified whether he had been given the position or not, he simply began referring to himself as Director, and even wrote his own job description in order to qualify for his O-1 worker visa to remain in the United States (Dr. Shepard is a British expatriate). After winning a nearly $800,000 grant from the Department of Defense's (DoD) Minerva Research Initiative to research viable counter-messages to online extremist propaganda videos—in addition to a $500,000 award he had already received from the U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences to study military decision-making processes—Blake solidified his position at the start of the fall semester of 2017.

After lunch at the brewpub, Dr. Shepard and I go to his office in the Health and Social Sciences Building, an irregularly-shaped structure with brick-colored vinyl paneling and dense rows of narrow windows on its edifice. Exiting the elevator into the lobby of the fourth and top floor—which houses the School of Criminology and Justice Studies—I spy two stately banners on stands, flanking a flat-screen TV mounted on the wall. The banners are white with blue borders on the top and bottom. Beneath the top border of each banner, the DHS seal is prominently displayed: a stylized white eagle clutching an olive branch in one talon and a bevy of arrows in the other. A shield split into three sections—symbolizing air, land, and sea—rests against the eagle's breast. Under this seal, blue text marks the banners' recipients—Counterextremism Corrective and Campaign CARE, two counter-extremism intervention

programs launched by teams of UWB students—as finalists in the Fall 2016 and Spring 2017 YCI competitions, respectively.

Dr. Shepard leads me past the banners through a pair of large plexi-glass doors and into a narrow hallway flanked by faculty offices and conference rooms. We come to his office, which is decorated with clippings from a magazine article reporting rising civilian death tolls in Afghanistan, along with a poster featuring the cover of the first issue of *Charlie Hebdo* to be published after the 2015 al-Qaida-linked attack on the publication's offices. The cover shows a cartoon of the Prophet Mohammed, frowning and holding a sign that reads "JE SUIS CHARLIE" above which is printed, in typeface meant to resemble handwritten scrawl, the ambiguous statement "TOUT EST PARDONNÉ"—"all is forgiven."

Dr. Shepard settles into his desk chair. I take a seat across from him. He is a lean, wiry man in a gray suit jacket and dark blue tie; he gave a lecture to his introductory Forensic Psychology class this morning, before we met up. It's the third week in January, the first week of the spring 2018 semester at UWB. I ask Dr. Shepard if, after a full semester of acting in his official capacity as Center Director, he has altered any of the original objectives he laid out in "Counterterrorism Research Institute 2020." To refresh his memory, he flips open his Macbook on his desk and pulls up the document. Like his speech, Dr. Shepard's movements are quick and decisive.

The blueprint for the Institute's development that Dr. Shepard describes in the document is detailed and comprehensive, organized around the three constituencies—students, faculty, and the university as a whole—that Dr. Shepard feels the Institute must serve. For students, Dr. Shepard insists on the implementation of new, "richer" internship opportunities (in addition to the extant semester-long "standard" introductory Center internship, which typically involves

collecting and coding data for faculty research projects, and the more student-driven YCI internship), and the maintenance of an online Center alumni network, to keep track of the several hundred students who have participated in the Institute internship program—many of whom have gone on to work in government positions, or to enroll in post-graduate programs---and to "develop metrics on the impact that [the Institute is] having on students' employability and success." In regard to faculty, he recommends drawing a wider array of researchers from across UWB's departments into the Institute's orbit, through the institutionalization of a hierarchical, three-tier system of Center "Affiliates," "Associates," and "official faculty," with each tier defined by a distinct set of reciprocal relations between the Institute and the faculty member—Center "Associates," for example, must bring at least one potential research project to Center faculty within each twelve-month period, and in return, receive access to Center interns to collect and code data for that project. For the university at large, and the local community it purports to serve, Dr. Shepard highlights how the Institute's efforts will increase UWB's visibility and attractiveness of potential students, support new opportunities for international outreach, and entice outside investment.

The document demonstrates Dr. Shepard's penchant for teleological diagrams: a linear chart tracks the progression of a hypothetical student from their entry to UWB, through several levels of engagement with the Institute, to their entrance into "The Workforce," while the three-tier affiliated faculty model is illustrated with a brightly-colored inverted pyramid whose blue vertex points to "Results," signified with a handshake icon. The text suggests a fondness for military and industrial metaphors, and expresses a curious slippage between those two domains; the Institute internship, in particular, is referred to at one point as a training ground for a "

‘mobile army’ ” (in scare quotes) of undergraduate students who can assist faculty with research projects, and is later described as a “data-gathering machine.”

In addition to the broader, long-term blueprint that comprises the majority of the document, the first page also details five immediate short-term objectives, and it is to these that Dr. Shepard first turns his attention, sitting across from me in his office. He goes through each of them, assessing the progress he has made in their direction and whether or not he still finds them desirable and feasible. Number one: “Establish a live database of faculty at UWB that may have an interested (*sic*) in security.” Melanie, a graduate student and the Institute’s Program Manager (Dr. Shepard second-in-command), will be working on that project this semester, Dr. Shepard tells me. Number two: “Development of a 12-month [Center] financial plan to align members of the [Center] network with suitable grant opportunities.” The accomplishment of that goal is contingent on the achievement of the first objective, Dr. Shepard informs me, and he still wholeheartedly believes in its value; he already works actively to court grant opportunities for the Institute and its faculty, and tells me that the Institute is in the midst of applying for an approximately $5 million grant from the United Kingdom’s Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)—in partnership with a team of researchers at the University of Liverpool--as part of the ESRC’s 2018 Centres Competition. Number three: “Construction of a ‘[Center] Award’ Program to engage with [UWB] PhD students within and outside of FAHSS.” This goal, too, Blake stands by, but he must wait to pursue it until the Institute can accrue more financial resources. Number four: “Extension of ongoing [Center] outreach opportunity using the pre-existing relationship with the Arts and Design Department.” Dr. Shepard has adjusted this objective somewhat, telling me he now prefers to outsource the Institute’s graphic design projects, because this tends to glean better results (though he admits that an update of the

Institute's logo for which he shelled out $1,000 to an external graphic designer might not have been worth the expense). Number five: "Expansion of the Educational Program (*sic*) through pre-existing opportunities offered through the school that allow faculty and students to work closely together." This, too, remains a priority for Dr. Shepard.

"I should look at this more often," he tells me after he has completed his reappraisal of the document.

Dr. Shepard remains optimistic about and committed to the Institute's prospects despite a discouraging first semester as Director. He tells me that during the fall, he tackled too many projects and feels he ultimately accomplished little. He expresses frustration at the bureaucratic rigmarole that bogged down even his seemingly simplest endeavors ("[I had to go] to three hour trainings just so I could log onto my own website and a change a comma."). Still, I am impressed by how much Dr. Shepard has already achieved, even well before he assumed the directorship. The banners in the fourth-floor lobby are only the most visible emblems of his invigorating impact on the Institute, but they tell a remarkable story. It was Dr. Blake Shepard who presided over the creation of a Center internship that would assemble a team of students to participate in the DHS-sponsored YCI competition, in the spring semester of 2016. In just three semesters, two prize-winning teams had already emerged from that internship. This past semester, fall 2017, the fourth YCI project to come out of the Institute—Civic Minded Community—won third place.

What further strikes me, reading over and discussing Dr. Shepard's strategic vision, is his conception of the Institute as an institution dedicated to serving relatively "local" constituencies—faculty, students, and the university as a whole—rather than the strategic interests of national counterterrorism assemblages. Of course, the Institute remains a node--albeit a relatively peripheral one--in these assemblages, and their attendant circulations of capital and

discourse. Of greater ethnographic interest to me than this fairly self-evident observation is that in spite of the Institute's embedment in a (trans)national securityscape, Dr. Shepard imagines its central mission as independent of the objectives of state securitizing projects--even as he ambivalently recruits the rhetoric of "empire" and "armies" to frame that mission. The "empire" to which he feels most directly beholden is not that of the United States, with its imperative to continually consolidate and defend its global military and economic hegemony, but that of UWB, with its comparatively modest ambitions to increase student enrollment, amplify its research output, and elevate its regional, national, and international reputation and influence.[1]

[1] In light of Dr. Shepard's invocation of the UWB "empire," it is worth noting the extent to which the university's expansive ambitions are implicated in both local colonial projects (which, given Waterbridge's historic significance as an early industrial settlement, are linked to advancing the territorial sovereignty of the settler-colonial state) and transnational redistributions of capital and sovereignty, such that UWB (and by extension the Institute) can be understood as alternately a territorial empire within the U.S. nation-state and as increasingly de-territorialized and de-nationalized. Specifically, the recent physical expansion of the university's campus into the heart of Waterbridge has amplified a process of downtown gentrification catalyzed by earlier municipal "urban renewal" projects stretching back to the 1970s. Notable among these projects was the designation in 1978 of over 140 acres of the city as a national historical park administered by the National Park Service, reimagining shuttered textile mills and defunct railway depots as museums and historic sites. During my fieldwork, I visited several of these sites and observed how they position Waterbridge as the birthplace of both U.S. industrial innovation and liberal social equality, mobilizing canonical myths of U.S. exceptionalism to both consecrate the city and glorify national settler-colonialism and the exploitation and forced assimilation of immigrant wage laborers. The precise processes by which UWB's local colonial activities—i.e., purchasing a former textile mill building to convert it into office space—articulate with this joint municipal-national "urban renewal" project are well outside the scope of this ethnography, but their coexistence points to what Ann Laura Stoler (2017) calls the "recursive" nature of "colonial presence" in (post)colonial times, a recursion which manifests in "processes of partial reinscriptions, modified displacements, and amplified recuperations" of forms of colonial governmentality (See Ann Laura Stoler, "Critical Incisions," in *Duress* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 27). On the other hand, Dr. Shepard's interest in forging transnational partnerships between the Institute and other institutions and his general promotion of the Institute to the UWB administration as an entity that can attract new sources of transnational investment points to the neoliberal restructuring of the university that Tom Looser (2012) discusses. As neoliberal policies limit state funding for public universities, institutions like UWB are compelled to seek sources of transnational capital that increasingly de-territorialize universities, which come to be organized around a "socioeconomic indifference to locale." (See Tom Looser, "The Global University, Area Studies, and the World Citizen: Neoliberal Geography's Redistribution of the "World," *Cultural Anthropology 27*, 1 (2012): 107). While Looser focuses specifically on so-called "global universities" in tax-free Special Economic Zones, it is compelling to consider how these larger trends of de-territorialization and de-nationalization implicate UWB, and their articulations with the more territorialized (and nationalized) processes of gentrification in which the university also participates.

Chapter outline

Having illustrated an ethnographic character portrait of Dr. Blake Shepard's values and ambitions as the incumbent Director of the Counterterrorism Research Institute, I turn now to a fine-grained ethnographic analysis of the daily professional practices through which he performs, enacts, and consolidates expertise. In the next section of this chapter, I undertake a close "reading" of an introductory lecture that I observed Dr. Shepard deliver to his graduate-level Advanced Security Studies seminar. Adapting Gieryn's (1983) notion of "boundary-work" as a set of rhetorical strategies whereby experts delineate between legitimate and illegitimate knowledges,[2] and responding to Möllers' (2016) attention to the theatricality of expertise,[3] I put forth the concept of "operatic boundary-work" as a means of understanding Dr. Shepard's lecture as an affectively-charged performance that strives for the dramatic resolution of dissonance between Dr. Shepard's claims to legitimate expertise and the dubious status of security studies as a bounded and analytically-rigorous field of knowledge. In the concluding section, I analyze the white paper proposal that Dr. Shepard submitted to the DoD-affiliated Minerva Research Initiative—the very proposal that snagged him his nearly $800,000 grant—to deconstruct how the proposed experiment deploys the discursive figure of the depoliticized radical as a boundary object that coordinates Dr. Shepard's interest in consolidating his expertise and the government's interest in deterring radicalization, and which integrates two distinct but interrelated modes of disciplining the terrorist subject.

[2] Thomas Gieryn, "Boundary-Work and the Demarcation of Science from Non-Science: Strains and Interests in Professional Ideologies of Scientists," *American Sociological Review 48*, 6 (1983).
[3] Norma Möllers, "Shifting in and out of context: Technoscientific drama as technology of the self," *Social Studies of Science* 46, 3 (2016).

Diagrams and diatribes: Dr. Shepard and the opera of expertise

At the front of a small classroom in the academic annex of Riverside Heights—a sprawling residential complex on UWB's South Campus—Dr. Blake Shepard fusses with his laptop.

"*What* is…*this*…thing?" he mutters, emphasizing every other word in muted exasperation. For a few seconds, he taps and clicks obscurely at his laptop. He pauses and addresses us—the eight students enrolled in his Advanced Security Studies graduate seminar, and me—asking us to refer to the diagram on the sheet of paper he has just distributed.

"What are you seeing?" he asks us. Nobody answers. He returns to his laptop. "Ah!" he exclaims abruptly. "Fantastic," he whispers, and then, at a more normal speaking volume, "Got it." A projector casts the same diagram that is on our papers onto the whiteboard behind Dr. Shepard; he straightens up from his laptop and pulls down a white projection screen that captures the image like fly-paper. The diagram consists of four concentric circles shaded in grayscale, the shading becoming progressively lighter moving from the central to each successive peripheral circle. A bold black "**X**" overlies the circles, delineating two axes. The ends of one axis are labeled "**geographical dimension**" and "**reference dimension**," respectively; the ends of the other, "**danger dimension**" and "**issue dimension**." Each circle (except for the outermost) encloses four items of text, terms associated with each of the four half-axes and the "dimensions" they represent. In the first circle, for example, the term "**national**" associates with the "**geographical dimension**," "**military**" abuts the "**issue dimension**," "**state**" hovers alongside the "**reference dimension**," and "**threat**" haloes the "**danger dimension**." In the outermost circle, however, "**global**" flutters next to the "**geographical dimension**," whereas

"**humanitarian**" flirts with the "**issue dimension**." The "**threat**" and "**state**" lines are curiously bare, extending outward into desolate infinity.

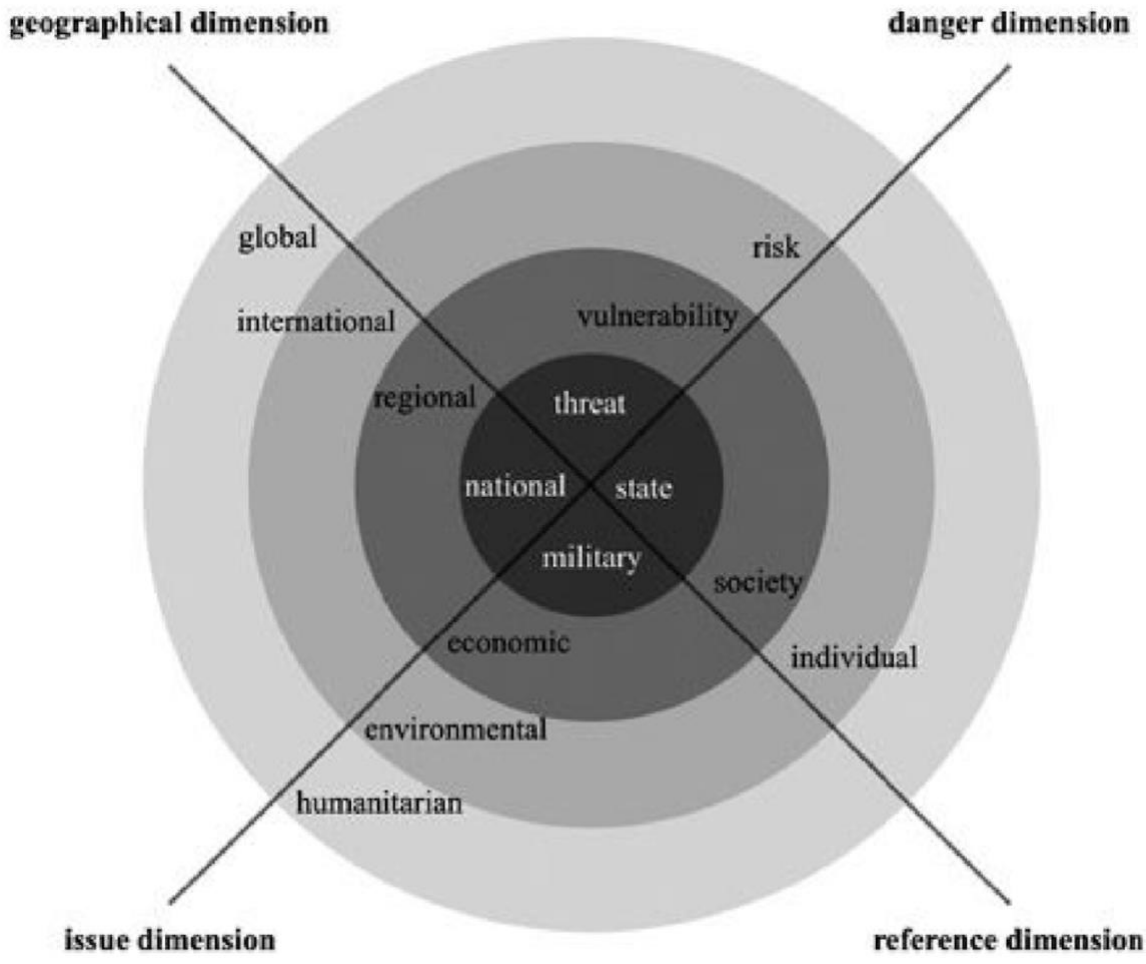

Figure 1: The diagram that Dr. Shepard displayed, reproduced from Schlag et. al (2016)[4]

At first apprehension, displayed utterly unannotated on Dr. Shepard's screen, the diagram is a mystifying figure, strewn with orphaned modifiers ("military," "global") and amorphous

[4] Gabi Schlag, Julian Junk, & Christopher Daase (Eds.), *Transformations of Security Studies: Dialogues, Diversity and Discipline* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 8.

nouns ("issue," "danger"). The four "dimensions" strike me as incommensurable, the "site" whereupon their terms—"geographical," "reference," "danger," and "issue"—are meaningfully juxtaposed, to engage Foucault's metaphor, curiously effaced.[5] To me, the diagram is a cipher, a sign without apparent referent. All I know is that the diagram has something do with what Dr. Shepard has just introduced as the theory of the "double extension of security studies"; which, in turn, relates to the "definitional problem" of the field that he has been discussing since I walked into the lecture, about twenty minutes late.

Dr. Shepard immediately sets about encouraging the class to fill in the blanks. "What do you see?" he prompts again, in reference to the central circle of the diagram. He continues:

> "Think back to 1940s, right? What are you seeing, it's when our, it's when our story begins. Before security studies lost itself."

Alternating between interrogatory and narrative rhetorical modes, Blake both attributes a temporal referent ("1940s", "begins", "before") to the central circle and imposes a narrative framing ("our story") on the diagram as a whole. This referent and frame supplied, one student raises her hand; with visible excitement, Dr. Shepard calls on her. She notes that the central circle of the diagram is concerned with the "state entity" and "sovereignty" and is "focused on military rather than national versus global or regional issues." In his slapdash handwriting, Blake scrawls some key terms from her response on the whiteboard, labeling them with the heading "First Wave."

"Agreed," he remarks, but is evidently looking for more. He asks the student if she can recall what the "main issues" were around the 1940s and '50s, cheekily framing this leading

[5] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York, NY: Random House, Inc., 1970), xvii.

question as being presented "just out of curiosity." After a little hesitation, the student discusses the "Soviet Union taking over" and the "spread of communism," responses to which Blake offers affirmative back-channeling ("uh-huh," "yeah.")

In this rhetorical mode—framed as a dialogue between lecturer and students, even as it is evidently premised on Dr. Shepard's intellectual authority on the subject at hand—Blake systematically assigns meaning to the diagram, transforming it from an esoteric, even incoherent image to a sign that is legible to the select community—eight graduate students and myself—that are in the classroom. The diagram, as I learn, is reproduced from an anthology, *Transformations of Security Studies: Dialogue, Diversity and Discipline* (2016)[6], which itself adapts the image from a 2010 article by a German political scientist named Christopher Daase.[7] Dr. Shepard explicates the diagram as a representation of the extension of security studies over the past fifty years, from Cold War-era origins when the field was concerned primarily with the behavior of antagonistic states, to a contemporary purview that embraces diverse referents, scales, and imaginaries of threat. As the lecture progresses, it becomes increasingly apparent that Dr. Shepard perceives this extension as problematic for the field; in continually "updating itself" to "[chase] the threat," in Dr. Shepard's words, security studies has failed to develop rigorous, empirically-validated theoretical models that predict phenomena—which, for Dr. Shepard, is the ultimate goal of scientific inquiry. By the end of Dr. Shepard's lecture—the first of his spring 2018 Advanced Security Studies seminar—he has refashioned the chaotic and elusive sign of the diagram into a troubling icon of security studies' unruly boundaries.

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[6] Schlag et. al, *Transformations of Security Studies*, 8.

[7] Christopher Daase, "National, societal and human security: on the transformation of political language," *Historical Social Research 35*, 4 (2010): 24.

Boundary-work as performance

The question of boundaries is essential in this section of the chapter, in which I analyze a single lecture by Dr. Shepard as a theatrical performance of expertise that continually (re)demarcate the boundaries between legitimate and illegitimate, as well as internal and external (in relation to his expertise), knowledges. Gieryn (1983) introduced the concept of "boundary-work" to demystify the rhetorical strategies whereby scientists attribute certain characteristics to science that distinguish it from non-scientific intellectual activities. Gieryn contends that this boundary-work is conducted to various ends—including the expansion of expert authority to domains of knowledge claimed by other professionals; the monopolization of authority and resources within a particular domain of knowledge; and the protection of professional autonomy—and that scientists constantly redraw the boundaries of their field(s) according to these alternating aims.[8] Möllers (2016) moves beyond Gieryn's primary interest in rhetorical style and content to understand acts of boundary-work as theatrical performances that incorporate, for example, costumes, props, and staging.[9] In this section, I synthesize Möllers' insights with Coopmans and Button's (2014) critical approach to the everyday "doings" of experts[10] to demonstrate how Dr. Shepard's quotidian professional practices double as acts of theatrical boundary-work that strategically map and remap the contours of his own expertise, legitimating certain kinds of knowledge and discrediting others. Importantly, the point of my critical analysis is not to undermine Dr. Shepard's claims to intellectual authority by asserting

[8] Gieryn, "Boundary-Work and the Demarcation of Science from Non-Science: Strains and Interests in Professional Ideologies of Scientists."
[9] Möllers, "Shifting in and out of context: Technoscientific drama as technology of the self."
[10] Catelijne Coopmans & Graham Button, "Eyeballing expertise," *Social Studies of Science 44*, 5 (2014).

that his expertise is "inauthentic"; indeed, Möllers warns us that to equate theatricality with deceit is a facile analytical move that risks obscuring the social conditions in which particular performances of expertise are rehearsed and enacted.[11] Rather, I seek to ethnographically illuminate the rhetorical, material, aesthetic, and affective performances whereby scholars and students of terrorism and security studies legitimate their knowledge claims within (and sometimes, as we shall see, outside) the contested boundaries of their field(s), and the consequences of these performances for the objects of expertise that they construct.

Gieryn (1999) contends that boundary-work should be most apparent in circumstances where the boundaries of particular fields and/or professional activities are under contestation.[12] Given this, a research center engaged in the production and dissemination of knowledge concerning terrorism and security represents a dramatic stage for the performance of boundary-work. Stampnitzky (2013) has asserted that the field of terrorism studies, in particular, is characterized by "weak and permeable" boundaries, partly due to its position in an "interstitial space" between academia, the state, and the media. Lacking a standardized institutional system for certifying expertise, the academic domain of terrorism knowledge(s), she maintains, is especially prone to incursions from self-proclaimed experts in the realms of politics or the media.[13] In regard to security studies, Dr. Shepard's introductory lecture itself suggests his own anxieties around the undisciplined boundaries of the field, open to knowledge claims from experts in diverse domains. These anxieties manifest in what I have decided to call *operatic* performances of boundary-work. I use the term *operatic* here not to flag a particular extravagant

[11] Möllers, "Shifting in and out of context," 369.
[12] Thomas Gieryn, *Cultural Boundaries of Science: Credibility on the Line* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).
[13] Lisa Stampnitzky, *Disciplining Terror: How Experts Invented terrorism* (Cambridge, UK: University of Cambridge Press, 2013), 46-47.

and/or virtuosic theatricality, but to underscore the dramatic, contrapuntal, and emotionally-charged character of these performances.[14] Dramatic, because they strive constantly toward the resolution of tensions and contradictions—what Gieryn (1983), drawing on Parsons (1967), calls "strain"[15]—that result from competing claims to expertise; contrapuntal, because they often entail the deliberate, confrontational juxtaposition of one "line" of expertise with another; and emotionally-charged, because they stem from expert anxieties and desires around crises of epistemological legitimacy and the drive to consolidate and defend one's own expertise. Attuned to these anxieties and desires, the concept of operatic boundary-work responds to Boyer's (2008) injunction to attend to the "halo of sentiments, affects, intentions and aspirations" that surround the "rational(ist) core" of expertise.[16]

A night at the opera

Let us return to Dr. Shepard's presentation of the "double extension of security studies" diagram. This ethnographic episode represents an ideal case study of operatic boundary-work because it foregrounds both the performance of expertise and the epistemological anxieties that this performance manifests. Dr. Shepard explicates the diagram as an *iconic* representation of the

[14] Opera is a genre of musical theater with roots in classical Renaissance drama. Deploying opera as a metaphor for understanding Dr. Shepard's performance of boundary-work, I emphasize three characteristics of the genre. First, opera is *drama*: it is a *narrative* performance, and as narrative in the Aristotlean sense, it revolves around the resolution of certain "complications," or tensions, such as those generated by competing claims to epistemological legitimacy by scholars within and outside the field of security studies (Aristotle, *Poetics* (trans. Malcolm Heath) (London: Penguin Classics, 1997). Second, opera makes use of *counterpoint*, a compositional technique that juxtaposes musical lines that are harmonically interdependent but rhythmically independent. My attention to this aspect of opera highlights how competing claims to epistemological legitimacy might mobilize similar lines of evidence, theoretical assumptions, and/or methodological approaches, even as they demarcate oppositional boundaries around the knowledges those mobilizations produce. Finally, opera is *emotionally-charged*: it is an affective performance that manifests the desires and anxieties of its players. Thus, the concept of operatic boundary-work importantly gestures to the epistemological anxieties that undergird expert boundary-making practices, as well as to the indignant denunciations of shoddy research that characterized the latter part of Dr. Shepard's lecture.

[15] Gieryn, "Boundary-Work and the Demarcation of Science from Non-Science," 782.

[16] Dominic Boyer, "Thinking through the Anthropology of Experts," *Anthropology in Action* 15, 2 (2008): 45.

radiating expansion of the field of security studies. I would attribute to the diagram a second, no less essential, semiotic function as an *index* of Dr. Shepard's expertise. In the performance that Dr. Shepard's opening Advanced Security Studies lecture constitutes, the diagram is a meaning-laden prop, the very indecipherability of its iconic referent (to the uninitiated student like me) the key to its indexical signification. Coopmans and Button identify the "naming" of physical features indicative of diabetic retinopathy depicted in photographs of the eye as one of the key routine practices by which Singaporean eye graders display their expertise. In identifying a particular feature by a technical term whose "meaning resides within the nomenclature (of retinopathy) as finite, and thus requires the nomenclature to be understood," the graders exhibit knowledge (of sign-referent correspondence) that is common to their professional community but inaccessible to outsiders.[17] While Coopmans and Button focus on the role of linguistic signs in indexing their informants' expertise, their theoretical claims can be productively applied to paralinguistic signs such as the double extension of security studies diagram. Like the nomenclature of retinopathy, the diagram is not generally interpretable, requiring specialized knowledge to understand. Thus, we can imagine how fluency with the diagram, too, can function as an index of expertise. Significantly, however, the parallels between the retinopathy nomenclature and the diagram are inexact. Whereas the terms that the eye graders use to describe retinal abnormalities belong to a standardized technical vocabulary, no analogous canon of diagrams is inherent to the field of security studies. Indeed, the diagram itself purports to represent a field of study far too diffuse in its interests and methodologies to sustain such a canon. Moreover, while the eye graders' naming practices seek to represent their object of

[17] Coopmans and Button, "Eyeballing expertise," 768-9.

expertise—that is, the signs of diabetic retinopathy—Dr. Shepard's explication of the diagram seeks to represent his *field* of expertise, that is, security studies itself.

The non-canonical and meta-referential nature of the diagram are the keys to understanding its significance in Dr. Shepard's performance of operatic boundary-work. Let us briefly revisit the particulars of this performance. It is worth noting here that, before distributing the printed diagram to the class and projecting the image on the board, Dr. Shepard asked the class if they had ever learned about the theory of the double extension of security studies before. None of the graduate-level security studies students indicated any knowledge of the theory, prompting Dr. Shepard to exclaim that he "love(s) presenting a theory no one's heard of before." The exchange is significant, first of all, because it indicates that Dr. Shepard recognizes that the diagram he is about to present is not a canonical sign of the security studies field, and second, because Dr. Shepard links affect to the practice of sharing his knowledge: he *loves* demonstrating expertise. The performance is therefore emotionally-invested from the get-go. There is a tension here, as well; the exclusivity of Dr. Shepard's knowledge of the diagram is what allows that knowledge to index his expertise, yet the diagram's obscurity also points to an absence of canonical knowledge in the field of security studies that potentially destabilizes that expertise. Dr. Shepard subsequently fumbles with his laptop, such that thirty seconds elapse before he projected the diagram onto the screen. This interlude struck me as authentic, but can nevertheless be read as a theatrical beat. After prefacing his demonstration by indicating that he is about to reveal to the students something they have never seen before, Dr. Shepard prolongs that reveal, heightening the suspense; his frustrated asides ("*What* is this *thing*?") and jubilant expression of triumph ("Fantastic!") suggest that the diagram is an elusive, almost mystical object, its ultimate entrapment on the projection screen an improbable act of virtual sorcery. The arcane complexity

of the diagram—its circles and axes, its incommensurable terms—reinforce this notion. Here, again, an important tension: the diagram's intricacies elude the layperson's ready interpretation, making it more useful as an index of expertise, yet its incoherence is an iconic representation of the incoherent—and thus suspect—expertise of security studies itself.

Dr. Shepard's operatic performance strives to resolve these tensions through scrupulous boundary-making. His commentary on the diagram ("it's when our story begins. Before security studies lost itself.") encloses the incorrigible field of security studies in a historical narrative frame, implicitly positioning the diagram itself—and thus the expertise that he displays through his fluency with that diagram—*outside* of that frame. The diagram's referent, after all, is not security; it is security *studies*. In erecting these boundaries, Dr. Shepard not only ensures that his own expertise is fortified against the epistemic rifts that have fractured security studies; he also attempts to canonize that expertise by socializing his class—among the first generation of security studies graduate students in the United States, given the relative novelty of graduate programs in the field—to the diagram itself. In short, Dr. Shepard's performance responds to a crisis of epistemic legitimacy in security studies expertise by operatically bounding an alternative expertise wherein the crisis itself becomes the object of study, and inducting a new generation of experts into that expertise.

The remainder of Dr. Shepard's lecture that day underscores this boundary-making project, albeit in paradoxical ways. Reviewing the course syllabus, he describes the curriculum as structured around the themes that have preoccupied security studies—terrorist radicalization, community threat response, war and state behavior—but as constantly bringing the theoretical insights of other "fields"—psychology, political science, statistics, economics, and even anthropology—to bear on these subjects.

"So our fields that we [the class] are always comparing to and trying to separate security studies from, or *learn* from, will move with us throughout the course."

Dr. Shepard's statement here is both ambiguous and revealing. In first suggesting that the class will endeavor to "separate security studies from" these other fields, he might seem to imply that the curriculum's boundary-making agenda is intended to rehabilitate security studies by defining a distinct theoretical foundation for the field in opposition to the other disciplines that the course engages. Immediately, however, he invokes a contradictory framing in saying that the class will be "learn[ing] from" these alternative fields. In this formulation—which seems to align more clearly with the overall structure of the course—these other fields do not constitute *parallel* bodies of knowledge against which security studies must define itself, but *superior* bodies of knowledge which can offer insights into the problems that security studies analyzes. Here, Dr. Shepard gestures to what Boyer (2009) evocatively terms "epistemophagy"—the predatory consumption and incorporation of analytics in one field by another[18]--though it is unclear whether he envisions security studies to be the predator, gorging itself on the episteme of other fields, or the prey, sacrificing its own knowledge claims to satiate the appetites of stronger disciplines. What is striking is that Dr. Shepard at once invokes separation from other fields and incorporation of/into other fields as mutually-compatible solutions to the problem of security studies' undisciplined boundaries. Though these two statements may seem contradictory, they both constitute boundary work in that both implicitly demarcate a frontier between different domains of knowledges (even while the latter seems to recommend a transgression of that frontier).

[18] Boyer, "Thinking through the Anthropology of Experts," 42-3.

Later in the lecture, Dr. Shepard introduces the class to an academic paper that proposes a mathematical theory of terrorist radicalization based on epidemiological models of contagion.[19] He distributes copies of the article to everybody in the class, and challenges them to take fifteen minutes to read as much of the twenty-four-page paper as they can before they no longer understand the theory that the authors are proposing. Dr. Shepard participates in the activity as well; seated at a table in the front of the classroom, he pores over the paper for about ten minutes, pen in hand, before pronouncing that he has "given up on page four." After the fifteen minutes have elapsed, Dr. Shepard proceeds to systematically dismantle the paper's argument according to eight normative criteria for evaluating scientific theories, drawn from the work of C.A. Hooker (1987) and William Newton-Smith (2002), both philosophers of science.[20] The criteria—printed on a handout which Dr. Shepard distributes to the class—include predictive accuracy, internal consistency (the theory should not contradict itself), external consistency (the theory should not contradict what we already know to be true about the world), unifying power (the theory should bring together the insights of other theories), testability, fertility and heuristic value (the theory should open new avenues for research), simplicity, and explanatory depth (the theory should not just demonstrate *how* a phenomenon operates, but explain *why* it operates in that way).

Dr. Shepard invites the class to offer their opinions on how successfully the radicalization model measures up to these standards of evaluation, but emphatically pushes back against any favorable judgements on the paper. His ultimate appraisal is scathing:

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[19] Connell McCluskey & Manuele Santoprete, "A bare-bones mathematical model of radicalization," Cornell University Library. Retrieved from https://arxiv.org/abs/1711.03227.

[20] C.A. Hooker, *A realistic theory of science* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1987); William Newton-Smith, *The rationality of science* (London: Routledge, 2002).

"It sucks. I mean it does! To give it an evaluation, from an epistemic framework, this theory has none of the things we need to see from a theory. It doesn't help us *understand* a phenomena [sic], it doesn't build on what we *know* about the phenomena, it doesn't *bring* different bits of the phenomena together, it doesn't *unify* anything. It is *on* its own, *in* isolation, with *no* backing, and *no* evidence. And it's completely untestable."

Dr. Shepard's presentation of this theory is operatic boundary-work *par excellence*. His theatrical announcement, during the allotted reading period for the paper, that he has "given up on page four," is striking, particularly in comparison to his presentation of the diagram earlier in the lecture; here, the model is too esoteric even for Dr. Shepard's expertise to apprehend. The statement might be read as a performative gesture of solidarity with his students, but the climax of the opera confirms its fundamental boundary-making function. By critiquing the theory using a set of meta-analytical standards that he claims—through his fluency in their application—as part of his own knowledge, Dr. Shepard performs his expertise in counterpoint to the expertise of the article's authors. The exclusionary boundary-work that Dr. Shepard undertakes here is made quite transparent in a subsequent statement he makes:

"We *know* why this theory's bad. Because he's [the author of the paper] a mathematician who tries to simplify things who has a faulty analogy, and his *only* knowledge of radicalization comes with *one* phone call from Lorne Dawson, who isn't even the biggest expert in the world."

Here, Dr. Shepard discredits the paper's lead author, Connell McCluskey, because he is a mathematician, and thus apparently lacks the credentials to make any valid knowledge claim about terrorist radicalization. While Dr. Shepard had previously suggested that the theories of certain fields outside of security studies could offer valuable insights into matters of security, here, he frames the application of mathematical models to radicalization as an illegitimate incursion.

Speaking with Blake later in his office, I ask him point-blank how he conceives of security studies--as a coherent discipline, or as a "hodgepodge" of theories and methodologies from different fields?

"I was thinking about this the other day," he says, and lets out a heavy sigh. He contemplates in silence for a few seconds, then offers his perspective:

> "The problem with security studies, is if you look at everybody who teaches security studies, they came through education…through a field that wasn't security studies. Because security studies wasn't as big as it is now when we were all learning [….] And there's that age-old question, and that quote I used, um, in the lecture: 'International security is not a discipline, it's a problem.' I believe that one hundred percent. […] [The disciplines] give you, and like I said, like, um, like Toolman says, you know, they give you theories. Your discipline gives you methods. And your discipline gives you a group and a community. And I have all those, as a psychologist. I know my psychology theories. We have theories, they're great, been around for a long time. We have our methods. They're great, tried and tested, well they're not that great but they're tried and tested, been around for a long time. And I have all my fellow psychologists. And we are *all* psychologists first. And I think the issue with security studies is that everybody is security studies second and something else first. And so that's why that tension comes up."

Here, Dr. Shepard forges a boundary line between his own expertise—which he locates in psychology, and particularly, as he remarked at another point in our conversation, military psychology—and the field of security studies, which he suggests does not constitute a veritable discipline unto its own, because it lacks the "tried and tested" theories and methods, as well as the professional community, that characterize, for example, psychology. Nevertheless, he implies that even as he is a psychologist first, he is still "security studies second." Dr. Shepard's explicit commentary on the ambivalence of his professional expert identity makes abundantly clear that the aforementioned instances of boundary-work are not disinterested musings on the nature of security studies, but invested, operatic performances with clear stakes for his own expertise and academic career.

The ethnographic episodes I have just analyzed empirically reaffirm Gieryn (1983) and Möllers' (2016) theorizations of the fluid and contingent nature of the boundaries that experts demarcate around their knowledge(s).[21] Dr. Shepard's apparently contradictory framings of security studies as a field which should be quarantined and consumed, defended and demolished, reflect contingent efforts to resolve the tensions and contradictions of his own expertise in relation to contested domains of knowledge.

The Radical and the Military Psychologist: a tale of objects/subjects and experts

The negotiation of these contested boundaries has important ramifications not only for experts, but for the objects of expertise that they "enroll" (to use Latour's (1987) felicitous term)[22] into their epistemological domains. At the Institute, these objects are not only abstract concepts, such as international security, but human figures—namely, the terrorist and the radical—who are variously objectified within and between the shifting boundaries of professional knowledges, and through this objectification become reconfigured as subjects of expertise. A critical analysis of these contingent configurations is vital because of the material consequences that they can entail for living bodies, particularly those—racialized, poor, displaced, insurgent, etc.—existing at the margins of U.S. empire and/or in the crosshairs of the counterterror apparatus.

The prologue of this thesis touched on these fraught configurations of radical subjects by introducing the figure of the depoliticized radical. This figure constructs the radical as an individual specter of traumatized psychology, ideological extremism, and potential violence,

[21] Gieryn, "Boundary-Work and the Demarcation of Science from Non-Science," 792; Möllers, "Shifting in and out of context," 369.
[22] Bruno Latour, *Science in Action: How to Follow Engineers and Scientists through Society* (trans. Catherine Porter) (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).

who is abstracted from broader political conditions of inequity, injustice, and imperialism. I have identified the depoliticized radical as a boundary object in Star and Griesemer's (1989) conception,[23] capable, through its generality and durability, of coordinating the disparate interests of actors who share the Institute's resources but are differently invested in constructing the terrorist as a subject. Crucially, I intervened on Star and Griesemer's theory—which restricts itself to the above understanding of a boundary object as that which is used to negotiate different interests—to posit an additional and interrelated function of the depoliticized radical: that of integrating different modes by which the terrorist is made a subject of power in the Foucauldian sense.[24] I focused in particular on two distinct modes of "disciplining" the terrorist for which the depoliticized radical, as a discursive figure, can be useful. In the first mode, the terrorist (or the would-be terrorist) is transformed into a subject of academic inquiry; that is, it is brought under a particular regime of expertise. Here, I use the word "discipline" in the sense of an academic discipline. In the second mode, the terrorist (or the would-be terrorist) is transformed into a subject of regulatory control; that is, it is brought under a particular regime of corrective discipline. I argued that these two modes of disciplining the terrorist implicate each other through the knowledge and practice of actors sharing the Institute's resources, and that the depoliticized radical as boundary object often functions as a point of integration for these modes and the power relations they necessarily entail.

In this section, I ethnographically illustrate this theoretical understanding of the depoliticized radical as boundary object through an extended close reading of a white paper

[23] Susan Leigh Star & James R. Griesemer, "Institutional Ecology, 'Translations' and Boundary Objects: Amateurs and Professionals in Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, 1907-39," *Social Studies of Science 19*, 3 (1989): 408-13.

[24] Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 2nd ed., eds. Hubert Dreyfus & Paul Rabinow (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

proposal that Dr. Blake Shepard submitted to the Minerva Research Initiative, a DoD-funded social science research program. I examine how the proposal uses the figure of the depoliticized radical to construct the (would-be) terrorist as both an ideal subject of psychological experimentation (and thus an ideal subject of psychological expertise) and as an ideal subject upon which corrective discipline can be enacted. These two modes of disciplining the terrorist link up, respectively, with Dr. Shepard's interest in consolidating his expertise and with the Minerva Research Initiative's interest in finding methods to deter terrorist violence. By ethnographically attending to the depoliticized radical as a construction which coordinates these interests, I complicate analyses that suggest that the academic production of knowledge on terrorism is exclusively determined by government interests, and highlight the stakes that academic experts have in the production of disciplined terrorist subjects. In addition, however, I contend that the interests of these two actors, however important to attend to, are ultimately less salient in the formation of terrorist subjects than the internal logics of the modes of disciplining they deploy.

The proposal

In his office, Blake clicks rapidly and bangs on his keyboard as his Mac repeatedly freezes. He is hurrying to email me some files that he feels might be useful to my research before a scheduled meeting with a student in fifteen minutes.

Blake pulls up a PDF on the screen. The file is a white paper research proposal that he and a colleague at the University of Liverpool submitted to the Minerva Research Initiative, a Department of Defense (DoD)-funded social science research program. Written in response to a

call for proposals regarding "domains of inquiry relevant to the Department of Defense,"[25] the white paper requested $861,113.40 to fund a research project that would investigate how the use of autonomous/robotic systems impacts military decision-making and risk-taking.

"This is a fire fucking hot proposal," Blake tells me. He points out that he had already collected "half a million" data points in relation to the proposed research inquiry, which he felt demonstrated the study's viability. Nevertheless, to his chagrin, the Minerva Research Initiative had rejected this particular white paper, instead selecting the other white paper he had submitted to be expanded into a full proposal, which ultimately won the grant. When I asked Blake why he thought the Minerva Research Initiative had chosen the other proposal, he reckoned that it was because that proposal was "sexier."

The chosen white paper requested $722,434.11 to fund a study which purports to evaluate the effectiveness of different types of "counter-messages" in combatting the "psychological, behavioral, and cognitive consequences" of "extremist propaganda." The study's methodology would involve two treatment groups and a control group, with all participants aged 18-26—a demographic identified in the white paper as the "'at-risk population for recruitment to terrorist organizations." Individuals in the first treatment group would be shown a short video of extremist propaganda, while the second treatment group would view a counter-message (one of three identified types: "counter-ideological; emotional; and deterrent") prior to watching the propaganda. The control group would view an unrelated video. All three groups, the proposal outlines, would undergo a battery of tests before, during, and after viewing their respective videos. Prior to viewing, their heart rate and skin conductance (the transmission of electricity

[25] Minerva Research Initiative, "2017 Minerva Research Initiative Topics of Interest," http://minerva.defense.gov/Portals/47/documents/Research_Topics/2017%20Topics%20for%20website%20document.pdf?ver=2017-01-30-163533-870, "2017 Minerva Research Initiative Topics of Interest," (2017).

through the skin, which is known to increase in response to arousal) would be measured to establish a baseline. While participants watch the extremist propaganda (or the control video), investigators would record not only these two physiological responses in the individual, but a range of variables—including brain activity, facial expression, and eye movement—which the white paper collectively refers to as "high-fidelity neurometric measures." These data would then be entered into algorithms to "produce a robust and reliable measure of [the] resonance" of the propaganda for that particular individual. $245,000 of the estimated project cost would be used to pay for the services of Spark Neuro, a corporation which markets itself as providing companies with neurological analysis of the efficacy of their consumer advertising.[26]

In addition to these biological measurements, participants would also be asked to respond to a series of scenarios and two questionnaires after viewing their respective videos. The white paper offers samples of the scenarios, which include a 14-year-old neighbor who has been detained by the FBI after claiming he intended to join a foreign terrorist organization (the scenario asks the respondent whether the neighbor is a victim, and how severely he should be punished) and a friend who confides in you that he plans to join the Kurdish Workers Party (the scenario asks the respondent if they would tell somebody about their friend's intentions, and whom). It also presents the two questionnaires. The "extremist mindset questionnaire" asks the respondent to indicate the extent of their (dis)agreement with statements such as "We should never use violence as a way to save the world"; "Modern governments have overstepped moral bounds and no longer have a right to rule"; "Evil has been re-incarnated in the cult of markets and multi-national companies"; and, "If you believe you have received commands from God, you are certainly crazy"; among others. The "policy attitudes questionnaire", in turn, asks

[26] SparkNeuro, "About SparkNeuro," https://sparkneuro.com/about/, (2018).

respondents to indicate the extent of their (dis)agreement with statements such as, “ISIS must be stopped by any means necessary”; “The U.S. had no right to bomb Iraq”; “Terrorists deserve the same legal rights as everyone else”; and “The U.S. government should be allowed to assassinate suspected terrorists in other countries”; among others.

Blake is only one of four co-principal investigators who are identified in this white paper proposal. His collaborators include his Center colleague Adam Peretz, who has a background in political science; Thomas Gordon, a professor of psychology at UWB; and E.J. Bliner, the agent of a private, New York City-based data analytics and security development firm, ForecastFwd, Inc. The proposal was submitted in response to the third of four “Special Interest Areas” identified by the Minerva Research Initiative in their initial summons. This Special Interest Area—“Power and Deterrence for Shaping Operations”—exhorts would-be researchers to pursue novel experimental methods to establish causal relationships between, on the one hand, specific techniques of “power projection” (vaguely defined as actions that attempt to influence the behavior of another actor through the use of brute military/economic/diplomatic force) and “deterrence” (defined as actions that attempt to influence the behavior of another actor through a combination of incentives and disincentives), and, on the other hand, particular strategic outcomes. The state’s solicitation is thus open-ended: it identifies “cross border networked terrorist organizations” as only one of several proliferating threats of interest to the state, and notably does not explicitly prescribe a particular theoretical and/or methodological approach to terrorism for the prospective investigator to follow.

The would-be terrorist as subject of psychological experimentation/expertise

One of my interlocutors at the Institute, and one of the co-principal investigators that the proposal identifies, Dr. Adam Peretz, poetically characterized the interaction between an academic researcher and the government in the grant application process as a "dance;" the researcher is aware of the government's interests—just as the government accepts that the researcher has their own interests—and seeks to choreograph a research project in which those interests find harmonious expression. Using Blake Shepard's white paper proposal as a case study, we can see how the depoliticized radical functions as a figure that coordinates the peculiar interests of the researchers and the Minerva Research Initiative through the integration of two distinct modes (or maneuvers, to sustain the choreographic metaphor) of disciplining the (would-be) terrorist subject. I argue first that this proposal uses the depoliticized radical to transform the (would-be) terrorist into an ideal subject of psychological experimentation and expertise.

Where can we see the figure of the depoliticized radical in Dr. Shepard's proposal? Like Counterextremism Corrective's film, the proposal locates the root of potential terrorist activity in the minds and bodies of individuals—specifically, young people between the ages of 18 and 26—who are vulnerable to indoctrination by online propaganda. The "power projection" techniques and "deterrence strategies" whose efficacy the proposal purports to assess—that is, the digital "counter-messages"—act not upon states, para/nonstate organizations, or populations, but upon these individuals. In order to establish criteria for determining the effectiveness of these counter-messages, the proposal outlines biological (heart rate, skin conductance, eye movement, etc.), behavioral (the responses to the hypothetical scenarios) and ideological (the responses to the questionnaires) metrics for measuring an individual subject's affinity for terrorist propaganda. The proposed experimental design—testing a random sample of 18-26-year-olds in

laboratory conditions—endeavors to effectively isolate terrorism from the larger structural dynamics (economic and social inequities, racism, political exclusion, etc.), and to study it as an individual response reified in ideological stances and biological structures.

So we have a research proposal that uses the imaginary of the depoliticized radical to construct an ideal would-be terrorist who is individualized and isolated from political structures. In positioning this would-be terrorist as a subject of experimentation—as a being whose responses to terrorist propaganda in conjunction with variable counter-messages can be measured, compared, and extrapolated to make positivist claims about the likely reactions of all would-be "terrorists" to similar combinations of propaganda and counter-messages—Dr. Shepard's proposal disciplines the terrorist under a regime of psychological expertise. We can recognize in the proposal's underlying assumptions and methodology Foucault's (1970) observation that psychology, as a "human science" derived from biology, studies the human "as a being possessing *functions*—receiving stimuli…reacting to them….seeking to erase imbalances, acting in accordance with regularities, having…conditions of existence and the possibility of finding average *norms* of adjustment which permit him (*sic*) to perform his functions" (emphasis original).[27] Thus, Dr. Shepard, a military and forensic psychologist, and his fellow investigators—one of whom, Thomas Gordon, is also a psychologist—treat the humans on whom the experimental procedure is to be enacted as biologically-functioning beings whose responses—physiological, behavioral, and ideological--to audiovisual stimuli can be gauged relative to average baseline values (ascertained both from pre-experimental measures of heart rate and skin conductance as well as from the control group's results), that is, relative to a "norm of adjustment." The psychologization of the would-be "terrorist," then, is a mode of subject-

[27] Michel Foucault, "The Human Sciences," in *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York, NY: Random House, Inc., 1970), 357.

making, a mode of *disciplining*, aligned with Dr. Shepard's interests in rendering the terrorist legible to his expertise, and thereby figuring himself as an academic capable of making valid knowledge claims about "terrorists" and "(counter)terror." It is a mode of disciplining that operates *through* the figure of the depoliticized radical, insofar as it treats the would-be terrorist subject's response to terrorist propaganda as a variable that can be abstracted from political structures and measured—with recourse to biometrics and questionnaires—as a property of the individual body and mind in a laboratory setting.

Critically, even as we can recognize the primary association between this mode of disciplining and Dr. Shepard's interest in consolidating his expertise, we can also observe how the Minerva Research Initiative itself demands, in its call for research proposals, a commitment to a specific epistemological project that implicates particular expert regimes. The Initiative's Special Interest Area 3 emphasizes that it is seeking to fund research that would generate theories that "establish causality between action and outcome."[28] This language invites the deployment of an experimental method that, through the use of random samples and a control group, purports to measure the change in a particular response variable according to modulations in an isolated predictor variable, thereby establishing a causal relationship between the two variables. It further courts disciplines, such as psychology, that traditionally deploy this experimental model of investigation, rather than other disciplines—for example, anthropology or political science—whose orthodox methods are not recognized as valid techniques for the establishment of causality. When applied to the study of terrorism as a psychological phenomenon, the Minerva Research Initiative's mandate to "establish causality" encourages the reification of "resonance of terrorist propaganda" as a measurable response variable constituted

[28] Minerva Research Initiative, "2017 Minerva Research Initiative Topics of Interest."

of numerous individual response variables located in the human mind and body, and the transformation of the would-be terrorist into a disciplined subject whose response to terrorist propaganda can be "read" via an arcane alphabet of electric currents, heartbeats, pupil dilations, hypothetical decisions, and political positions.

The would-be terrorist as subject of normative regulation

Reading through Dr. Shepard's white paper proposal, the reader might have noticed something disorienting: that the range of response variables that the investigators propose to measure in their would-be terrorist subjects, that which I have above termed an *alphabet* for "reading" the subject's response to terrorist propaganda, seems to comprise not a unified symbolic system but two disjointed sets of glyphs characterized by distinct semiotic relationships to the response in question. On the one hand, we have the biometric variables—heart rate, skin conductance, brain activity, facial expression, etc.—that are to be monitored while the subject is viewing the propaganda and counter-messages. These variables index the subject's response to terrorist propaganda as generic markers of physiological excitement, and it is from this status as indices of affect that they derive their signifying power, not from any reference to a normative understanding of what terrorism constitutes behaviorally and ideologically. On the other hand, we have the responses to the hypothetical scenarios and the questionnaires, both of which index the subject's response to terrorist propaganda as markers of degrees of deviance from behavioral and ideological norms, which can only be understood with recourse to a normative definition of "terrorism." That is, a subject's (dis)agreement with the statement that, for example, "Modern governments have overstepped moral bounds and no longer have a right to rule," only has signifying power as an index of the subject's response to terrorist propaganda if the investigators

understand there to be an *a priori* relationship between this ideological stance and an affinity for terrorism—precisely what the "extremist mindset questionnaire" seeks to codify.

I contend that the integration of these two distinctive systems for signifying a subject's response to terrorist propaganda points to the concurrent integration of the mode of disciplining that makes the would-be terrorist into a subject of psychological expertise and the mode of disciplining that makes the would-be terrorist into a subject of normative regulation. This mode, of course, aligns transparently with the Minerva Research Initiative's stated objective of identifying techniques of "power projection" and "deterrence" that will compel actors to behave in ways favorable to U.S. security interests. Where Dr. Shepard and his colleagues seek to discipline the terrorist as an ideal subject of their regimes of expert knowledge, the Minerva Research Initiative, as an extension of the U.S. government, purports to discipline the terrorist as an ideal subject of state regulatory power. Dr. Shepard and his co-investigators recognize this interest, and encode normative standards of the moral U.S. citizen's comportment and ideologies into the metrics they plan to use to measure their subjects' behavioral and ideological responses. This is especially evident in the aforementioned "extremist mindset questionnaire," recreated below:

Extremist Mindset Scale

Please rate each of the following items in terms of how characteristic they are of you. Use the following scale for answering these items.
1.....Strongly and Completely Disagree
2.....Moderately or Mostly Disagree
3.....Neither agree nor disagree
4.....Moderately or Mostly Agree
5.....Strongly and Completely Agree

We should never use violence as a way to try and save the world	
Armed struggle is the only way youths can redeem themselves and their society	
All problems can be solved through negotiations and compromise	
Killing is justified when it is an act of revenge	
If violence does not solve a problem, it is because there was not enough of it	
The only way to teach a lesson to our enemies is to threaten their lives and make them suffer	
Our enemy's children are like scorpions; they need to be squashed before they can grow up	
War is the beginning of salvation	
Those who claim they are against any form of force are on their way to becoming slaves	
A good person has a duty to avoid killing any living human being	
Today the human race is on the edge of an enormous calamity	
Modern governments have overstepped moral bounds and no longer have the right to rule	
Evil has been re-incarnated in the cult of markets and the rule of multi-national companies	

The world is headed for destruction	
Our people are in danger, everybody is trying to divide us and hurt us	
The present day world is vile and miserable	
Only an idiot would go into a challenging situation expecting help from a divine power	
Those who obey heaven will receive beautiful rewards	
I do not believe in life after death	
Martyrdom is an act of a true believer in the cause, not an act of terrorism	
All suffering in life is small in comparison to the eternal pleasures one will receive after death	
Our leaders are decent people	
If you believe you have received commands from God, you are certainly crazy	
At a critical moment, a divine power will step in to help our people	

Figure 2: The extremist mindset questionnaire

Included in an appendix near the end of the white paper, the extremist mindset questionnaire is one of the most striking elements of the proposal. The investigators did not develop the questionnaire themselves, but rather adopted it verbatim from a 2010 study published in the psychology journal, *Psychological Assessment*.[29] The statements that the

[29] See Lazar Stankov, Gerard Saucier, & Goran Knežević, "Militant extremist mind-set: Proviolence, Vile World, and Divine Power," *Psychological Assessment 22*, 1 (2010). The study's authors exhaustively document the methods they used to develop the questionnaire. Through a linguistic analysis of high-frequency word roots and content categories in both primary texts produced by "militant extremist groups" and secondary sources commenting on "extremism" from seven different world geographic regions, they first generated 361 statements that they believed to be representative of the "militant extremist mind-set." After asking a sample of 452 "nonextremist" participants

questionnaire presents to the subject are formally eclectic, ranging from what seem to be generic moral claims ("Killing is justified when it is an act of revenge"; "A good person has a duty to avoid killing any living human being") to expressively imagistic pronouncements that, in their vivid specificity and their use of personal pronouns, read like miniature manifestos that seem to hyperbolically perform the specter of the fanatical terrorist that the questionnaire purports to be able to identify in the respondent ("Our enemy's children are like scorpions; they need to be squashed before they can grow up"; "At a critical moment, a divine power will step in to help our people"). The questionnaire feels less like an attempt at an objective survey instrument, which would tend to avoid such affectively-charged language (how many respondents, no matter how much Islamic State propaganda they have viewed and how confidential they presume their responses to be, would truly affirm the statement that "Our enemy's children are like scorpions"?), than a kind of ritual invocation of what Jasbir and Puar (2002) term the "terrorist-monster." Discursively constructed as the Janus face of the disciplined moral subject, the terrorist-monster, for these two theorists, mobilizes "monstrosity as a regulatory construct of modernity," fixing in a ghoulish caricature the pathological violence that the state's normative discipline endeavors to correct.[30] What is most significant about the questionnaire as a disciplinary instrument, then, is not its ostensible purpose of gauging the extent of the respondent's "extremist mindset," but its interpellation of the would-be terrorist subject into a

from three countries—the U.S., Serbia, and Australia—to rate their (dis)agreement with these statements, the researchers used factor and regression analyses to eliminate redundancy and reduce the number of statements first to fifty-six and then further to twenty-four representative statements. Based on exploratory factor analysis, the study's authors assigned to each statement a factor loading coefficient in relation to one (or sometimes two) of three proposed "factors" of the "extremist mind-set:" pro-violence, the belief that the present world is "vile," and the belief in a "divine power." For example, the statement that "Our people are in danger, everybody is trying to divide us and hurt us," has a loading coefficient of .538 in relation to the "vile world" factor.

[30] Jasbir K. Puar & Amit Rai. "Terrorist, Monster, Fag: The War on Terrorism and the Production of Docile Patriots," *Social Text 20,* 3 (2002): 119.

regime of normative regulation defined by the opposition between the moral, normal civilian and the evil, deviant "extremist."

This mode of disciplining, like that which transforms the would-be terrorist into a subject of psychological expertise, operates here through the figure of the depoliticized radical. The questionnaire severs moral and ideological claims from the political realities that animate them; the statement that "Evil has been re-incarnated in the cult of markets and the rule of multi-national corporations," reified as a dogma of the "extremist mindset," is framed as a monstrous, pathological assertion that signifies only its own lunacy rather than as an expression of protest against the violence of neoliberal capitalism. Like an amputated hand that continues to gesticulate, the statements index the political nervous system that articulate them, even as their movements, cut off from that system, are pathologized as irrational and inexplicable. The questionnaire thus sustains a regime of normative regulation, obviously linked to the interests of the capitalist and colonial U.S. state, that forecloses the possibility of critiquing capitalist and colonial exploitation by transmogrifying such critiques into markers of monstrosity.

To further expose the architecture of this regulatory regime, let us turn finally to one of the hypothetical scenarios that the white paper proposes to present to the experiment's subjects:

> "You have been on campus a few months now. Your roommate, an odd individual, but not unpleasant, usually keeps to himself. One day you come home and see that he is watching videos of beheading online. You think nothing of it. However, a few weeks later you come home and he is doing the same thing again. He has become a little quieter and is spending more time in his room."

After reading this scenario the participant is asked two questions:

1. Whether they felt the need to intervene in this situation (on a scale of -5 very unlikely, to 5; very likely).
2. Identify who they would likely contact to intervene (the student themselves; University-based support team; friends and family; campus or local police; the Federal Bureau of Investigations).

Here, what the investigators understand to be a normal (that is, not deviant) response to this scenario is not entirely transparent. It might be safe to assume that the disciplined moral subject would be expected to intervene in this situation, though it is unclear which of the proposed interventions the investigators (or, perhaps more significantly, the Minerva Research Initiative) would consider ideal. It is entirely possible, of course, that these responses, unlike those on the extremist mindset questionnaire, are not considered more or less deviant from each other; the investigators may just be interested in how different counter-messages motivate different hypothetical interventions among subjects, and may not assign value judgments to those interventions. Given this, can we still say that this scenario, like the questionnaire, enacts normative regulatory discipline?

I would argue that it does—and does so more insidiously than the questionnaire—insofar as the framing of the scenario incorporates the respondent into disciplinary apparatuses. Thus, the respondent becomes a subject who must choose between intervening in their roommate's potential radicalization or refraining from intervention and risk allowing that radicalization to continue (thereby implicating oneself in any resultant terrorist violence). It is this binary choice—to intervene or not to intervene, to disrupt radicalization or allow it to fester—that comes to define the experimental subject's ontology under the disciplinary regime of the scenario. One cannot help but recall President George W. Bush's oft-quoted dictum, delivered just ten days after the September 11th, 2001 terrorist attacks and directed toward national

governments (though arguably representative of that administration's stance toward its own citizens), that "Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists."[31]

The provocative irony of the regulatory regime into which the proposed experiment incorporates the would-be terrorist subject is that even as this regime relies on the depoliticization of the radical—alienating ideologies and behavior from the political realities that make them intelligible—they nevertheless produce political subjects, insofar as they instantiate relations between that subject and the state. Consider the questionnaire's statement—with which the respondent can either agree or disagree—that "Modern governments have overstepped moral bounds and no longer have the right to rule." Or the scenario's suggestion that the subject could intervene in their roommate's radicalization by reporting them to the police or the FBI. The subject that the experiment's biometric variables objectify as a primarily biological entity is through these instruments transformed into a political agent—albeit one whose agency is necessarily circumscribed by a regulatory regime that insists on an either-or commitment to countering "terrorism."

Crucially, the integration of these two modes of disciplining the would-be terrorist subject has important reciprocal effects. On the one hand, the subject qua political agent is psychologized, with deviant opinions and behaviors located within a pathological "extremist mindset." On the other hand, the subject qua biological entity is politicized, with elevated heart rates and dilated pupils afforded their own kind of political salience as responses to terrorist propaganda and counter-messages. Here, we can perhaps recognize Joseph Masco's (2014) unsettling observation that the contemporary counterterror apparatus "locates national security within the human nervous system itself, constituting a peculiarly embodied psychopolitics," such

[31] "Transcript of President Bush's address," *CNN.com*, September 21, 2001. http://edition.cnn.com/2001/US/09/20/gen.bush.transcript/.

that citizen affect becomes subject to the sovereignty of the counterterror state.[32] Thus, the twin modes of disciplining the would-be terrorist subject are conjoined, in Dr. Shepard's proposal, into a political project that ultimately incorporates that very subject's biology into the purview of regulatory control, and concurrently reifies deviance from the norm of the moral citizen as biological pathology.

That neither Dr. Shepard and his colleagues nor the Minerva Research Initiative would articulate this political project as among their *intentions* in undertaking the proposed experiment does not diminish that project's salience nor its intelligibility. Rather, it underscores the independent agency of the two integrated modes of disciplining that I have discussed as they are enacted, in accordance with differing interests, upon the would-be terrorist subject. These modes, finding joint purchase on the discursive construction and boundary object of the depoliticized radical, produce subjects according to their own logics—logics that are inextricable from the relations of power—between expert and object, sovereign and subject, government and research center—that imbricate them. Dr. Shepard's interests in writing his white paper proposal may be the consolidation of his expertise and the elevation of the Institute's reputation, but the modes of disciplining that that proposal invokes entail subject-making processes with profound consequences for the would-be "terrorist:" the pathologization and proscription of political deviance, the biological naturalization of state regulatory apparatuses, and the depoliticization of terror.

[32] Joseph Masco, "Introduction: The 'New' Normal," in *The Theater of Operations: National Security Affect from the Cold War to the War on Terror* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 19.

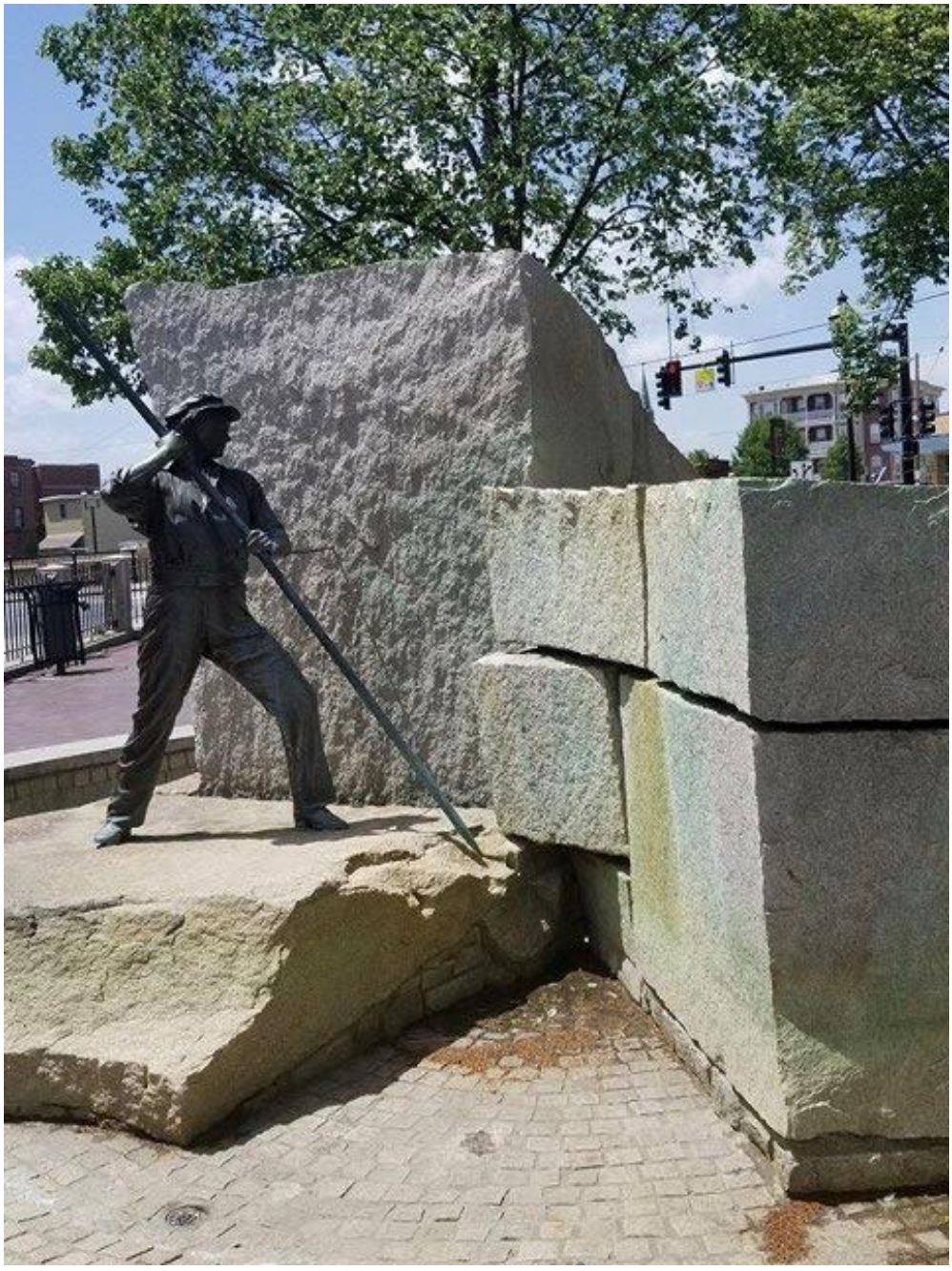

Plate 4: "I do not believe in life after death."

Statue of canal dredger in downtown Waterbridge. Photo by the author.

Save the extremist, save the empire:

Student-led counter-extremist interventions and the politics of redemption through education

He was always kind of different. And when he was in school, he would wear a bandana on his head and he had a long tail that came down his back. One day, he got attacked on the playground and they cut off his tail. And that was the first and only time he was ever bullied.

--Mother of Arno, a former member of Hammerskin Nation, a U.S.-based white supremacist organization, interviewed in the UNESCO video, *Preventing Violent Extremism through Education*[1]

I was just traumatized beyond traumatized. And I'm sure some seeds were planted by that incident that a reinforcement (sic) of the idea that violence is kind of just a fact of life and a way of life. You either run with it or you get run over by it. I don't wanna be in that position again.

--Arno, responding to his mother's story

Student: I think when people talk about [terrorist attacks], it's often very negative.

Teacher: In what way?

Student: Like, there's like no facts, you know what I mean?

Teacher: Like it's an emotional reaction?

Student: Yeah […]

Teacher: Do you get the sense that that emotional reaction comes from a more negative spot […] than a positive? Like do you feel like the responses to events like that are more about revenge, or do you think it's more about outreach and support and love?

Student: I mean, I don't think it's support and love at all. I think it's more revenge.

--exchange between teacher and student in high school English classroom, following a presentation by Campaign CARE

[1] UNESCO, "Preventing violent extremism through education." YouTube video, 4:26. Posted [Sept 2016]. URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=79MTkVumCcQ

The two exchanges transcribed above happened in an English classroom at Shady Grove High School in an affluent suburban community in eastern Massachusetts. The occasion was a presentation offered by three students—Anna, Ethan, and Devon—from Campaign CARE (Customized Anti-Radicalization Education), a counter-extremist education intervention program developed by a team of UWB students participating in the DHS-sponsored Youth CVE Initiative (YCI) competition.[2]

The presentation to thirteen high school sophomores in Mr. Hart's English class commenced with a PowerPoint that included the UNESCO video cited above, featuring the testimonies of three former "extremists:" not only Arno, but also Don, who was an Irish national paramilitary, and Yasmin, who was a recruiter for Al-Muhajiroun, a U.K.-based Salafist group. Despite the dramatic differences in these three individuals' racial, ethnic, national, and socioeconomic positions--as well as the structural contexts in which they engaged with political violence—their narratives are presented as comparable under the implicit and vaguely-defined rubric of "former violent extremists." Their testimonies adhere to a similar script as they identify a mixture of locally- and personally-specific factors that led to their radicalization and imply that they now "know better" and wish never to return to political violence. The edited testimonies themselves are brief and elide any explanation of how and why these individuals left their respective organizations, but the video makes clear UNESCO's prescription to counter "violent extremism."

[2] While "Campaign CARE" is a pseudonym, the "CARE"—Customized Anti-Radicalization Education—preserves the essential meaning of the organization's actual name, and signals one of the principal distinctions between Counterextremism Corrective and Campaign CARE's platforms; while both organizations purport to educate their audiences about terrorism, Campaign CARE invites its audience to take a "knowledge test" on their website, which purports to identify gaps in the user's knowledge regarding violent extremism. The quiz then directs the user to articles on the website that Campaign CARE claims will fill in those gaps. Hence, Campaign CARE's approach is "customized," in the sense that it tailors the user's virtual learning experience according to diagnosed deficiencies in their knowledge.

"Security is often the first step to curbing violent extremism," the voiceover proclaims, speaking in a familiar deep, resonant register meant to convey masculine authority and conviction. We see seven purple bars rise up to ensconce a blue, geometric rendering of a person—implicitly, a "violent extremist"—in an abstract, depersonalized, and decontextualized representation of incarceration. The voiceover continues: "But it is not a long-term solution. We need prevention to tackle the roots of violent extremism. And *education* is key to prevention" (emphasis added). On cue, the prison bars contract and vanish, and our blobby blue extremist is suddenly holding a book. The voiceover goes on to extol the redemptive power of education: education "can redress inequalities that fuel violent extremism" (here, an image of the scales of justice materializes above the extremist's head—though at first unbalanced, they quickly and miraculously right themselves under the book's implicit and mystic influence); furthermore, education "helps learners to make informed decisions and engage responsibly" (here, the scales of justice morph into a shining lightbulb, a familiar icon of enlightenment).

Though none of the "extremists" interviewed at the outset of the video make any explicit reference to education, their narratives are clearly enlisted to complement UNESCO's claims. As framed by the video, the three interviewees conform to the parameters of the figure of the depoliticized radical that I have discussed at length in the preceding chapters. Their bare-bones testimonies omit any substantive discussion of the structural conditions within and through which ideologically- and politically-motivated violence operates. Indeed, Arno acknowledges neither the systems nor even the ideologies of White supremacy and anti-Blackness in his account, instead describing an incident of childhood bullying as a traumatic event that inculcated him into a generic culture of violence. Yasmin is similarly silent on how institutionalized Islamophobia and racist anti-migrant politics in the United Kingdom may have affected her

decision to join al-Muhajiroun. She blames her radicalization entirely on her upbringing, which she says prevented her from "think[ing] for herself" and instilled in her a "desire to be controlled." Significantly, Don does mention his resentment of Irish Protestants, the British Army, and the police. However, the testimony frames this resentment as a local pathology, inherited from ignorant and misguided elders who used the Protestants and the government as a scapegoat to justify their community's poverty. In each testimony, the structural inequities that condition violence are either effaced entirely in favor of psychological explanations, or collapsed into a discussion of local superstition.

I would like to make clear that my point here is not to suggest that the stories that these three speakers tell about their engagements with extremist organizations are somehow illegitimate. Of course, the narratives we craft to understand our own experiences are deeply personal, and it is certainly not my place--nor is it analytically useful--to question the veracity of those self-representations. What I aim to deconstruct here is rather the way in which UNESCO's video centers these particular narratives—and, critically, the fleeting snippets of those narratives that it has elected to excerpt from much longer interviews—to reproduce an abstract figure of the extremist whose ideology and behavior stems from childhood trauma and local pathologies rather than broader and deeper structural inequities. Identifying these factors as the root of extremism enables the video to claim that it is addressing the deep-seated causes of violence without advocating any structural transformations.

What, then, *is* UNESCO advocating? On this point, the video is both unequivocal and vague: the antidote to the highly local and personal problems to which the former extremists attribute their radicalization is education from on high, the dissemination of knowledge that will empower individuals to transcend the local contingencies that might lead them astray. The video

is remarkably oblique about what knowledge, precisely, this education should seek to impart, invoking an imagined reality in which information—implicitly, "good" information, grounded in "fact"—is transformative simply by virtue of *being* information, and thus capable of elevating the informed above local prejudices and ignorance. Education is thus framed in the video as a redemptive project, capable of "saving" would-be violent extremists from sinister local forces of radicalization. Moreover, education is entirely compatible with and complementary to securitization, with prison bars and books visually figured as two sides of the same counter-extremist coin.

After Campaign CARE had finished their presentation, the students' teacher, Mr. Hart, invited the class to share their responses to a series of terrorism-related discussion questions that he had handed out at the start of the period. One of these discussion questions concerned how "we" (implicitly, the United States) should respond to terrorism, and whether intensive media coverage of terrorist attacks fuels further terrorist violence. It was in the context of discussing this question that the second exchange transcribed above transpired. The student critiques popular media discourse surrounding terrorism for being "very negative." When the teacher presses her to clarify, she seems to attribute this negativity to an absence of facts. Mr. Hart responds with a leading question--"Like it's an emotional reaction?"--that invokes a familiar dichotomy—oft-repeated throughout my conversations with Campaign CARE surrounding the importance of their educational mission—of fact and emotion, with the latter framed as a distorting force that leads to counterproductive and dangerous counterterror measures, and the former valorized as the ultimate basis for sound, effective, and responsible policy.[3] When the

[3] For an excellent discussion of the importance of evidence to neoliberal governance strategies, see Saida Hodžić, "Ascertaining Deadly Harm: Aesthetics and Politics of Evidence," *Cultural Anthropology* 28, 1 (2013).

student responds in the affirmative, Mr. Hart launches into another leading question, asking whether the student feels that emotional responses to terrorism are motivated by "outreach and support and love" or by "revenge."

"I think it's more revenge," the student responds, with little hesitation.

When Campaign CARE met with Mr. Hart prior to the first presentation of the day (Campaign CARE gave three presentations in all, to three of Mr. Hart's class sections), he made clear that this binary between "loving" and "vengeful" responses to terror was an essential theme that he hoped to encourage the class to think about. By emphasizing this binary, he wanted to link Campaign CARE's presentation to the broader thematic question of the entire sophomore-year English curriculum: "What is the right relationship to have with others?" Applied to the discussion of terrorism, this question formulates counterterror interventions as interpersonal engagements that entail a relation between an unmarked civilian self and an extremist or would-be extremist other.

This formulation resonates with the approach of the Campaign CARE team, who frame themselves on their website and social media platforms, as well as in their live classroom presentations, as knowledgeable mentors to vulnerable youth at risk of online radicalization. Mr. Hart's leading exchange with the student thus does important discursive work in legitimizing Campaign CARE and similar education-based counter-extremist interventions—often grouped under the rubric of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE), an Obama-era U.S. government initiative that broadly sought "community-based" counter-extremist initiatives—as not only effective, but also as "loving," and, implicitly, moral. By first equating "negativity" with a lack of facts, then conflating a lack of facts with an emotional reaction, and finally linking emotional reactions to revenge, the exchange inversely identifies "loving" reactions as stemming from

facts. Information, in the context of countering violent extremism, thus acquires a similar moral valence to that evoked in the UNESCO video.

While both the student and Mr. Hart are vague regarding what constitutes a "vengeful" reaction to terrorism in their imaginations, their broad implications are clear, particularly in the context of U.S. President Donald Trump's openly xenophobic, militaristic, and securitocratic rhetoric and policy in regard to counterterrorism. In an era when President Trump's bombast has made it increasingly difficult for White liberal U.S. citizens to ignore the oppressive violence that the United States conducts both at home and abroad in the name of counterterror, education serves as a civically and morally sacrosanct counterpoint to militarized counter-extremism.

In the following chapter, I explore how narratives of redemption play into the philosophy and practice of two education-based counter-extremism intervention programs developed by UWB students, Campaign CARE and Counterextremism Corrective. These narratives invoke not only the redemption of the violent extremist or the would-be violent extremist, but also the redemption of U.S. empire, from an irrational, emotional bully that battles terror exclusively with military force to a civilized and benevolent power that supplements evidence-based security measures with educational outreach programs. In setting up this argument, I feel it important to emphasize that I greatly admired the conviction and commitment of all of the students participating in these projects. They have worked diligently and collaboratively to develop projects that embody their visions of civically responsible counter-extremist interventions, and that have continued to evolve well beyond their origins as entries in a government-sponsored CVE competition. My critique here is in no way intended to undermine or belittle their work, or to suggest that there is nothing to be gained by offering high school students a more nuanced

perspective on terrorism. My goal is rather to deconstruct how the discourse of education that Campaign CARE and Counterextremism Corrective circulate participates in a twofold project.

The first component of this project is to use of the figure of the depoliticized radical to frame certain terrorist or would-be terrorist subjects as individuals who are morally corrupt or vulnerable to moral corruption, and who can and should be redeemed through education, understood as both enlightenment and corrective discipline (recalling Puar and Rai's (2002) reading of the "terrorist-monster" as a discursive construction in which the figures of the "monster" and the "person to be corrected," as understood by Foucault, converge).[4] Critically, this is a racialized framing that imagines the White civilian as vulnerable to contamination by the menace of Brown and Black terrorism, and that conversely positions Whiteness itself (and the values and normative social structures associated with Whiteness as a construct) as a source of redemption.

The second component of this project is the sanctification of evidence-based education as a necessary foil to securitization and military intervention in the fight against terrorism. Significantly, this framing by no means implies that *all* militarized responses to counterterror should be eschewed in favor of educational initiatives. To the contrary, the framing suggests that militarization/securitization measures that are grounded in fact—rather than emotion—must operate in tandem with education to stamp out the specter of violent extremism. Education, linked to the unimpeachable virtue of that which it is presumed to impart—facts—is thus positioned as capable of redeeming the U.S. counterterror campaign.

I begin the chapter by contextualizing Campaign CARE, Counterextremism Corrective, and the YCI competition in which both projects participated as outgrowths of the Obama-era

[4] Jasbir K. Puar & Amit Rai. "Terrorist, Monster, Fag: The War on Terrorism and the Production of Docile Patriots," *Social Text 20,* 3 (2002): 118-125.

CVE (Countering Violent Extremism) initiative, which seeks "community-based" solutions to domestic extremist violence. I discuss the ambivalent relationships of the two UWB teams to the legacy of CVE, relationships that are partially characterized by the teams' anxieties surrounding the absence of data to empirically affirm the initiative's efficacy. I then undertake a close reading of Campaign CARE and Counterextremism Corrective's educational materials and social media presence to deconstruct their self-framing as redeemers of both extremists and the U.S. counterterror campaign. I elaborate on Jasbir and Puar's (2002) reading of Foucault to discuss how these campaigns construct the subjects of their interventions as figures which are at once potentially monstrous and correctible[5], and discuss the racialized imaginaries inherent in this discourse. Finally, I draw on Saida Hodžić's (2013) insights into the role of the "aesthetics of evidence" in structuring humanitarian interventions[6] and Lyndsey Beutin's (2018) understanding of the "performance of facticity"[7] to analyze two ethnographic episodes that demonstrate how Campaign CARE and Counterextremism Corrective mobilize "metrics" and claims to political neutrality to certify the effectiveness of their interventions, even in the absence of more compelling empirical data. I conclude by gesturing to how these two organizations, despite their best intentions, ultimately uphold U.S. racialized imperial regimes of militarization and securitization through their framing of education as something which can—and should—at once save both the extremist and the empire.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Hodžić, "Ascertaining Deadly Harm: Aesthetics and Politics of Evidence."

[7] Lyndsey Beutin, "Trafficking in Anti-Blackness: The Political Stakes of 'Modern-Day Slavery' in Global Campaigns to End Human Trafficking," PhD Dissertation, Communication, University of Pennsylvania, 2018: 138.

Troubled descent and data deficiencies: Campaign CARE, Counterextremism Corrective, and the fraught legacy of CVE

In August 2011—just a month before the tenth anniversary of the September 11th, 2001 al-Qaida attacks—the Obama administration put out an eight-page national strategy document grandly titled *Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States*.[8] The document identifies al-Qaida and its affiliates as "the preeminent terrorist threat to our country" and further warns that "these groups are actively seeking to recruit or inspire Americans to carry out attacks against the United States."[9] To tackle this "complicated challenge"—which the document insists is dangerous not only because of the violence it portends, "but also because of its potential to divide us"—the Obama administration proposed a "community-based approach" in which the federal government would work to facilitate partnerships between "local government, law enforcement, Mayor's offices, the private sector, local service providers, academia and many others" to develop grassroots networks to counter "violent extremism" in local communities, particularly those understood be to especially vulnerable to al-Qaida recruitment efforts—that is, impoverished communities of color, and especially Muslim diasporic communities.[10] Four months later, in December, the administration followed up this document with a twenty-three-page Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP) that outlines in greater detail the federal government's ongoing and planned initiatives in conjunction with this "community-based approach."[11] The SIP used a novel acronym that would come to define a

[8] U.S. White House, *Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States*, (Washington, DC, 2011), https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/empowering_local_partners.pdf.
[9] Ibid, 2.
[10] Ibid, 2-5.
[11] U.S. White House, *Strategic Implementation Plan for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States*, (Washington, DC, 2011), https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/sip-final.pdf.

heterogeneous array of government-sponsored local counter-extremist interventions: CVE (Countering Violent Extremism).

The SIP laid the groundwork for the broad and at times nebulous scope of initiatives that would come to lumped under the CVE rubric. Organized around three principal strategic imperatives—"Enhancing Federal Engagement with and Support to Local Communities that May be Targeted by Violent Extremists," "Building Government and Law Enforcement Expertise for Preventing Violent Extremism," and "Countering violent extremism while promoting our ideals"—the SIP discussed then-current pilot efforts by district U.S. Attorneys (with the support of the State Department, Treasury Department, the Department of Education (EDU), the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and DHS) to implement community engagement programs to educate and hear concerns from civilians regarding counter-extremism;[12] the November 2010 establishment of a National Task Force "to help coordinate community engagement at the local level"; the expansion of the Building Communities of Trust Initiative[13] to educate civilians on "how to report incidents in order to keep our communities safe";[14] the incorporation of CVE curricula into existing federally-sponsored community "resiliency programs";[15] DHS's establishment of a Homeland Security Advisory Council "Faith-Based Community Information Sharing Working Group";[16] the creation of an FBI CVE Coordination Office;[17] federal sponsorship of research on violent extremism in the United States,

[12] Ibid, 8.

[13] The Building Communities of Trust Initiative is DHS-sponsored program with the ostensible aim of "developing trust among law enforcement, fusion centers, and the communities they serve, to address the challenges of crime and terrorism prevention." See Department of Homeland Security, "Building Communities of Trust Fact Sheet," https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/building-communities-of-trust-fact-sheet.pdf, (2013).

[14] Ibid, 9.

[15] Ibid, 11.

[16] Ibid, 12.

[17] Ibid, 10.

and the dissemination of that research to local public safety providers;[18] collaboration between DHS, the FBI, the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), and the Federal Bureau of Prisons, "to increase information sharing […] about [prison] inmates who may have adopted violent extremist beliefs and are being released";[19] and an NCTC-helmed training seminar for "civic activists" and "technology experts […] on how to maximize the use of technology to counter extremist narratives online";[20] among numerous other initiatives.

In short, the Obama administration's *Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States* and its accompanying strategic implementation plan envisioned an interconnected set of initiatives that mobilized a unified network of federal agencies, municipal governments, local law enforcement, private-sector entities, social service providers, prisons, religious congregations, and individual citizens to share information and intelligence and implement programs that would quash the menace of terrorist radicalization at the grassroots level. This strategic imaginary formed the basis for what "CVE" was in the U.S. context. Significantly, from its inception, CVE was envisaged as encompassing not only the activities of "security partners" (that is, DHS, law enforcement agencies, prisons) but also those of departments and institutions—such as EDU, HHS, and "community-based organizations that provide assistance to new immigrants"—whose *modus operandi* is not securitization but the management and provision of public goods and social services.[21] Moreover, the rhetoric of the initial national strategy document configured CVE not only as a strategic initiative but as an

[18] Ibid, 13.
[19] Ibid, 13.
[20] Ibid, 19.
[21] Ibid, 4.

ideological project invested in "promoting the unifying and inclusive vision of American ideals."[22]

Despite the strategy's professed commitment to democratic ideals, civil liberties groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)[23], policy institutes such as the Brennan Center for Justice[24], and Muslim community advocacy groups like the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)[25], were quick to charge CVE programs with sponsoring increased surveillance of Muslim communities under the dubious guise of community outreach. The Brennan Center's report, in particular, excoriates CVE programs for their "shaky foundations" in empirically-debunked models of radicalization[26] and for the lack of evidence supporting their efficacy.[27] Under the Trump administration, federal CVE grants have been slashed, and the initiative has been rebranded as "Terrorism Prevention."[28]some observers fear that the administration—which had initially proposed rebranding CVE as "Countering Islamic Extremism"—is systematically allocating funds away from those initiatives that address far-right

[22] U.S. White House, *Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States*, 6.

[23] American Civil Liberties Union, "ACLU Eye on the FBI: The San Francisco FBI conducted a years-long Mosque Outreach program that collected and illegally stored intelligence about American Muslims' First Amendment-protected religious beliefs and practices," 2012, https://www.aclu.org/files/assets/aclu_eye_on_the_fbi_-_mosque_outreach_03272012_0_0.pdf.

[24] Faiza Patel & Megan Koushik, "Countering Violent Extremism," New York: Brennan Center for Justice, 2017, https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/publications/Brennan%20Center%20CVE%20Report_0.pdf.

[25] CAIR Minnesota, "Countering Violence Extremism: What You Need to Know About CVE," http://www.cairmn.com/civil-rights/cve-toolkit/59-cve.html, (Feb 11, 2016).

[26] Faiza Patel & Megan Koushik, "Countering Violent Extremism," 9-11.

[27] Ibid, 13-20.

[28] William Braniff, Seamus Hughes, Shanna Batten, & Matthew Levitt, "From CVE to 'Terrorism Prevention:' Assessing New U.S. Policies," Washington, DC: The Washington Institutue, 2017, http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/from-cve-to-terrorism-prevention-assessing-new-u.s.-policies.

violence, to target Muslim and migrant communities even more exclusively and explicitly than the Obama-era programs.[29]

Campaign CARE and Counterextremism Corrective, the two UWB student-led programs that I studied, can both trace their descent directly to the first CVE summit in Washington, D.C. in February 2015. At this summit, the White House announced the launch of Youth CVE Initiative (YCI), an initiative meant to "empower university students […] to develop digital content that counters violent extremist messaging."[30] Beginning as an interagency program spearheaded by the State Department, YCI saw teams of students from universities across the country as well as foreign institutions compete each semester (beginning in spring 2015) to develop online campaigns to counter extremist ideologies among their peers, using a $2,000 grant supplied by Millennial Solutions, a private firm contracted by the federal government to design and administer the program.[31] In fall 2015, Facebook joined the program, and has provided Facebook ad credits to all competing teams and become the sole official sponsor of the international competition, the Facebook Global Digital Challenge. In late 2016, DHS assumed primary federal sponsorship of YCI, though funding cuts under the Trump administration have since put the program's future in doubt.[32] Third-, second-, and first-place teams in both the

[29] Editorial Board, "Trump's Homeland Security department gives right-wing extremists a pass," *The Washington Post*, August 31, 2017.

[30] The Obama White House, "FACT SHEET: The White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism."

[31] Inderpal Grewal (2017) has discussed how what she calls the "advanced neoliberal security state" of the United States produces "exceptional citizens," entrepreneurial subjects who exercise their private sovereignties—unevenly distributed according to racialized, gendered, and classed hierarchies—in efforts to "repair the [insecuritizing] effects of imperial and neoliberal policies and thereby save the security state." Grewal's provocative argument usefully frames the YCI competition, which can be understood as a neoliberal outsourcing of government counter-extremism initiatives to both private corporations (Millennial Solutions and Facebook) and individual citizens (university students), who are configured as "exceptional citizens" empowered to save U.S. empire. See Inderpal Grewal, "Introduction: Exceptional Citizens? Saving and Surveilling in Advanced Neoliberal Times," in *Saving the Security State: Exceptional Citizens in Twenty-First Century America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017).

[32] The Trump administration cut DHS funding for YCI in fall of 2017. My student interlocutors at UWB bemoaned that UWB's fall 2017 team, which ultimately won third place in the domestic competition, did not have the

domestic and international competitions won $1,000, $3,000, and $5,000 awards, respectively, to continue developing their projects.

Under the direction of Dr. Blake Shepard, the current Director of UWB's Counterterrorism Research Institute (the Institute), UWB teams began participating in the YCI domestic competition beginning in the spring semester of 2016. That semester, UWB's team did not place, but the subsequent semester, Counterextremism Corrective won third place, and the following semester, Campaign CARE snagged second.[33] Both projects have continued to evolve since their initial success. Counterextremism Corrective triumphed in UWB's annual Vision Builders competition in March 2017, winning a $6,000 grant. Since then, the team—which currently consists of a six-person Board of Directors, including five students and former students, as well as Dr. Blake Shepard--has developed lesson plans and curricula for disseminating their educational program regarding online safety and radicalization to schools, established partnerships with regional school districts and given in-school presentations, overhauled their website to reflect a more holistic perspective on terrorism (the site's initial incarnation was heavily focused on the Islamic State), and planned to convene a conference at UWB in March 2018, where they hope to promote their program to around 150 regional educators and school administrators. Counterextremism Corrective has also won a three-year grant from the National Institute of Justice to participate in a pilot study managed by Harvard University's T.H. Chan School of Public Health, which will purportedly evaluate the efficacy of

opportunity to travel to Washington, D.C.—where the final competition took place in semesters past—because of the loss of DHS sponsorship. At the moment, YCI's future is uncertain.

[33] UWB's fall 2017 team, Civic Minded Community, won third place in the national competition. Given that I did not have the opportunity to speak with participants on this team, I will limit discussion in this chapter to Counterextremism Corrective and Campaign CARE.

what Counterextremism Corrective calls their "logic model"—that is, their pedagogical approach to delivering their curriculum.

The Campaign CARE team has had comparatively less time to develop their project since their victory in D.C. in July 2017. Nevertheless, the team—which now consists of seven students--won a $5,000 grant at UWB's Creative Venture Competition—jointly sponsored by the College of Fine Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (FAHSS) and Vision Builders—in which they competed against projects by other FAHSS students. Their success in the competition makes them automatic entrants in the larger university-wide Vision Builders competition in the spring. Like Counterextremism Corrective, Campaign CARE also conducts presentations to students in school districts throughout eastern Massachusetts.

Given their origins in the YCI competition, both Counterextremism Corrective and Campaign CARE are entangled in the troubled legacy of CVE. Their relationships to the initiative, however, are markedly ambivalent. On the one hand, both projects invoke the mobilization of local communities through education as key to preventing radicalization among vulnerable youth, a discourse that resonates with official state framings of CVE. Furthermore, Counterextremism Corrective, in particular, is the only North American member of Families Against Terrorism and Extremism (FATE), a coalition of some ninety CVE organizations concentrated predominantly in Europe and North Africa.[34] On the other hand, neither of the projects' official websites nor social media accounts identifies them as CVE programs, and most of the team members themselves seldom used the phrase when discussing the projects with me.

[34] In the United States, CVE is often specifically associated with the set of pilot programs launched by the Department of Justice under the Obama administration in September 2014 (with precursors developing out of the 2011 *Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States* national strategy). However, programs deploying similar strategies and discourses exist globally.

Two exceptions to this were Andrew and Briana, members of Counterextremism Corrective's Board of Directors. Briana is currently in her junior year at UWB, majoring in international relations with a minor in languages, while Andrew graduated at the end of the fall 2017 semester with a double major in criminal justice (with a homeland security concentration) and political science. In the fall of 2016, when Counterextremism Corrective was still in its infancy, the two earned a reputation for their productive friction on the team, which Carl—a former UWB graduate student who acted as the team's "manager"—recounted to me. Now, Briana is responsible for coordinating the project's connections with similar nonprofits—like the FATE network and the transnational organizations, Mothers for Life and Families for Life—and is the public "face" of Counterextremism Corrective, while Andrew serves as the Director of Education and Outreach, designing curricula and lesson plans and managing the project's partnerships with regional school districts. When I first spoke with Andrew and Briana, I was impressed by their self-assurance and their fluency in the parlance of nonprofits, discussing grants, deliverables, pilot studies, and logic models with an ease that seemed to me to be beyond their age and their relative inexperience in nonprofit management. They were also keenly attuned to the larger milieu in which Counterextremism Corrective operates, and often discussed the program in the context of CVE. Indeed, it was in conversation with Andrew and Briana that I first became aware of the term.

The two expressed slightly different though often concordant perspectives on what the relationship between Counterextremism Corrective and the field of CVE is, and what that relationship, ideally, should be. Andrew conceded that Counterextremism Corrective is, in fact, "a CVE"[35], but suggested that their school district partners do not think of the program in those

[35] Both Briana and Andrew used "CVE" alternately as an adjective, as an uncountable, generic noun for the entire field of CVE, and as a count noun describing an individual CVE program. The flexible usage speaks to the extent

terms, and that as such, they have generally avoided the baggage associated with the field. He said:

> "I think that the most effective CVEs are the ones that aren't CVEs at all, or don't identify […] themselves as CVEs. […] We don't mask ourselves, or kind of hide the way that we're a CVE, but we do this thing where we tell [school district partners] the problem, and we say how we solve it, and then really it comes down to whatever the teacher wants, whatever the educator wants. I mean there's no one way to do a CVE, which may be part of the reason why it has been largely ineffective, cause nobody really knows what a CVE is. […] So I think that we've kind of found our success because they're [school district partners] not looking at it as, 'Well, CVE's never worked.' They're looking it [sic] as, 'Here's a problem. Here's this program that addresses this specific problem, and it's free, so…why not?"

Briana's response was more emphatic in distancing Counterextremism Corrective from CVE. She characterized the field as disreputable, uninformed, and poorly-defined. She suggested that Counterextremism Corrective is better served by affiliation with the terrorism and radicalization fields:

> "Personally, not on behalf of [Counterextremism Corrective] […] I actually don't always categorize ourselves as CVE. I view [Counterextremism Corrective] as an educational program that exists in the terrorism field, that exists in the radicalization field, because […] I give those fields far more legitimacy than I give CVE. And the reason being is that CVE was taken on by a lot of individuals who maybe didn't know what they were doing and they just started throwing things at a wall and they were hoping something would stick. And then there became this notion that, well, anything than be a CVE, anything that gives kids something to do is a CVE, and to quote somebody, 'If CVE is everything, it is nothing.' And I feel very strongly about that."

While Briana's dissociation of Counterextremism Corrective from CVE might seem to diverge sharply from Andrew's evaluation of the organization as a program that "[doesn't] hide the way that [it's] a CVE," it is important to note that I interviewed the two colleagues together,

with which, in the span of just a few years, CVE has been linguistically reified as a discrete category of counterterrorism intervention, despite prevailing confusions about what, precisely, it constitutes.

and that as Briana spoke, Andrew made affirmative noises that indicated at least partial agreement with her argument.

Briana then launched into a discussion of afterschool programs for inner-city youth. Whereas Andrew had at first cited these social service-oriented initiatives as "the most effective CVEs," given that they may indirectly deter radicalization among vulnerable youths but do not explicitly call themselves "CVEs," Briana dismissed the idea that these programs should even be considered CVEs by external observers, given that they address a much broader spectrum of issues than simply violent extremism. Throughout this discussion, Andrew continued to vocally affirm Briana's points. The readiness with which Andrew shifted from labeling these programs as "the most effective CVEs" to agreeing with his colleague's assessment that it is misleading to even refer to these programs as CVEs at all is striking. Social service programs that do not considers themselves CVE, he seems to suggest, might be alternately considered as exemplary initiatives that the broader field of CVE should strive to emulate or as evidence that the field's aims are best accomplished by more holistic programs that exist outside its scope, thereby discrediting the field. By pivoting between these two claims, Andrew signals his—and Counterextremism Corrective's—fundamentally ambivalent orientation to the dominant paradigm of CVE as it is conceived by (trans)national governments and reflected in popular discourse.[36]

This ambivalence came to the fore in a subsequent exchange between Andrew and Briana. Here, Andrew appeared to backtrack on his assertion that Counterextremism Corrective

[36] Andrew's ambivalent and sometimes paradoxical positions on the field of CVE—and Counterextremism Corrective's relationship to that field—resonate to some extent with Dr. Blake Shepard's similarly contradictory and fraught framings of security studies, and the relationship of his own expertise to the field, as discussed in chapter 1 of this thesis, "Daily dramas of expertise." Refer in particular to the section entitled "Diagrams and diatribes: Dr. Blake Shepard and the opera of expertise."

is fundamentally a CVE, suggesting that the organization simply inherited the term from the YCI competition. Briana seemed to agree, and elaborated that she feels that the label "CVE" is not especially useful to Counterextremism Corrective even from a networking perspective. Both she and Andrew then emphasized that Counterextremism Corrective's stakeholders care more about the organization's educational "product" than their affiliations with the somewhat esoteric and elusive field of CVE.

A: I mean, I think our CVE tag is entirely just from our root, like where we started […] I mean we started in the [Youth CVE Initiative] competition that is like geared towards CVE, like 'make a CVE.' […] But as [Briana] said, you can do [Counterextremism Corrective] and not be a CVE, or not consider yourself a CVE whatsoever.

B: And honestly I think we'd have the same traction. […] I don't think it positively or negatively affects us in any way because most people don't know what it means. *(A: Mm, true.)* And nobody's ever asked! Like

A: Yeah, a lot of people don't know what CVE is.

B: And I don't think they wanna sound ignorant and ask. That's honestly, that's my theory, because we'll go to schools and we'll just say, 'oh, we're a Countering Violent Extremism organization,' you get like this weird look *(A: Yeah)* And you can tell they have no idea what that means but they also don't really care enough to ask. *(A: Yeah)* They just kind of get what we do.

A: Yeah, they care about the product, they don't care about […] the goal of whatever it is that CVE sets out to do. They care about, we're making readings (*sic*), we're going talking to kids, we're getting discussions going that teachers have wanted to have going for a long time. And that's what they care about.

B: It's really an identity thing. Like our identity isn't CVE, our identity is an educational program.

Again, Briana took a decisive stance in her final statement, asserting conclusively that Counterextremism Corrective is not, in fact, a CVE organization, but an educational program. Nevertheless, it is worth noting from this exchange that the team still introduces

Counterextremism Corrective as a CVE organization to stakeholders, even as Briana suggests that the term seldom elicits recognition. Moreover, Counterextremism Corrective's *Educator's Guide*, intended to introduce their pedagogical model and its implementation to educators, explicitly references CVE. Despite their efforts to distance themselves from the field, "CVE"—as a label, as a citation, as a point of political contention, and as an ideology and practice of counterterror expressed through the idiom of community engagement—continues to haunt the foundations and fractured identity of Counterextremism Corrective.

Curiously, neither Andrew or Briana directly mentioned CVE programs' perceived targeting of Muslim and migrant communities in their critiques of the field. In addition to the nebulousness of CVE as a concept, they were chiefly concerned with the difficulty in empirically measuring the effectiveness of CVE interventions in preventing terrorist attacks, and the resultant fact that most CVE programs are not evidence-based. Briana alluded to this in her transcribed comments above, when she disparaged CVE's early practitioners for "throwing things at a wall and […] hoping something would stick." Toward the end of our conversation, both she and Andrew lamented the virtual impossibility of generating data on CVE's efficacy:

A: What makes a CVE successful? If it turns one person away [from radicalization], is that success?

B: I would honestly say so if it saves five lives that would have resulted in deaths [*sic*] during an attack, yeah. (*A: Mm-hm)*. The millions of dollars that went into developing that CVE were probably worth it.

A: Yeah, but there's no way to tell if any CVE has done that.

B: You can't measure an effectively negative outcome.

A: It's almost impossible.

B: That's the biggest issue with CVE, the effectively negative outcome.

Though this exchange suggests that both Briana and Andrew are resigned to the fundamental "untestability" of CVE programs' effectiveness at countering radicalization, both were nevertheless enthusiastic about the prospect of the pilot study administered by Harvard's T.H. Chan School of Public Health, and seemed confident that the study could produce a faithful assessment of the strength of their "logic model." Indeed, both Counterextremism Corrective and Campaign CARE seemed intent on defying the problem of untestability through a commitment to generating data and "metrics" that purported to measure the success of their respective organizations according to multiple variables. It is in this shared obsession with data-based legitimacy that Counterextremism Corrective and Campaign CARE perhaps most vividly manifested the troubled legacy of CVE. I will explore this phenomenon in greater detail toward the end of this chapter.

The Parable of Tony: White vulnerability and the dark specter of terror

Counterextremism Corrective's website—newly- and slickly-reimagined with the help of designers the team contracted using their Vision Builders grant money—features seven tabs laid neatly out across the top of the page. Under "HOME," we find the organization's mission statement spelled out in no-nonsense, sans serif capitals:

COUNTEREXTREMISM CORRECTIVE SEEKS TO EDUCATE CHILDREN, PARENTS, AND TEACHERS ABOUT ONLINE SAFETY AND HOW TO MOST EFFECTIVELY PROTECT THEMSELVES FROM COMING INTO CONTACT WITH ONLINE VIOLENT EXTREMIST MATERIAL AND INDIVIDUALS.

Beneath this, we find a link to Counterextremism Corrective's *Educator's Guide* and beneath that, three links to pages directed at STUDENTS, PARENTS, and TEACHERS, respectively.

Under the next tab, "ABOUT," we find a quote from Pakistani activist Malala Yousafzai set in a comforting, quaintly elegant serif typeface:

"With guns you can kill terrorists,
with education you can kill terrorism."

Beneath this, the statistic that "more than 250 Americans have defected to various extremist groups in Syria and Iraq, the mission statement again, a link to a page for educators entitled "WHAT WE OFFER," and the statement that "Counterextremism Corrective is a proud member of the FATE network," with FATE's insignia stamped below.

The "CONFERENCE" tab takes us to an overview of the conference that the organization hosted at UWB on March 23, 2018. The conference, we learn, was entitled "Combating Hate and Extremism: Fostering Inclusion in Our Schools and Communities."

Moving to the "STUDENTS" tab, we are presented with a surfeit of options. If we click on the first link—"WHAT IS TERRORISM"—we encounter a parable of sorts. The parable's heading reads "WHO'S THE TERRORIST?", and the visitor is instructed to read the story and identify which of the characters is the terrorist. The story goes like this:

"A 17 year old teenager, Tony, from the United States has decided to convert to Islam. Over the past few months, he has become more and more radical in his beliefs. Through a friend at his mosque, Tony meets someone who claims to be a recruiter for the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) which is a terrorist group. The recruiter has been speaking with Tony a lot and has finally convinced him and a few of his friends to fly to Syria and join the group. He makes it into Syria and establishes a role within the group as a fighter, actively engaging in violence in the name of their ideology. After a few weeks, Tony contacts his parents and asks them to send him some money. He claims that he is struggling and doesn't get paid that much. Tony's parents are reluctant to send the money, as they knew that Tony had gone to Syria and was probably a member of ISIS. But Tony is still their son and they want to help him stay safe, so they send some money."

The tale is accompanied by a full-color cartoon drawn rendered in poignant, almost childlike strokes. A White boy with a striped green shirt, green baseball cap, and rosy cheeks—who looks much younger than the seventeen-year-old Tony described above—stands facing another figure. This figure's face, too, appears White, but is mostly obscured by a black niqab. The figure appears to be seated and has a white laptop open on their lap, on which they are typing. The boy's back is to his parents: a mustachioed White man with beady, bewildered eyes and a White woman with bright pink cheeks and one hand at the back of her head, as though she is at a loss for what to do. It is a scene fraught with moral panic: the precious, naïve all-American boy, baseball cap in tow, seduced away from his loving nuclear family by a mysterious virtual predator whose online anonymity is coded by their veiled face. Curiously, the cartoon depicts a child "radicalized" through an online recruiter, while the Tony of the tale is "radicalized" in person, through a connection at his mosque. Still, the image seems poised to elicit sympathy from the viewer for Tony, who is, after all, simply a hapless adolescent victim of seductive foreign evildoers.

Figure 1: The parable of Tony. From Counterextremism Corrective's website.

Yet the text below the image extracts a different lesson from the parable of Tony. All of the characters in the story, it declares—the recruiter, Tony, his friends, and even his parents—are terrorists, because all have aided and abetted an organization which practices terrorism, which the same page defines as "an act of violence or the threat of violence against someone or something…[with] the goal […] to promote a political agenda or a religious belief."

So the parable of Tony seems to proffer a sinister warning for children and their parents alike: the line dividing "us" from "them," civilian from terrorist, patriot from traitor, innocent from murderer, self from other, is finer than we would like to imagine. This warning is implicitly racialized. The fable begins with our protagonist, Tony—whose name evokes a White American

every-boy—converting to Islam, a faith which, despite its global reach and the ethnic and racial diversity of its nearly two billion adherents, is often understood in the U.S. context to index Brown people of Middle Eastern origin (or, secondarily, Black people of African origin). We learn that "over the past few months, [Tony] has become more radical in his beliefs." We are not told specifically what Tony's newly-"radicalized" beliefs are, or what motivates them; this information is rendered unimportant in the narrative, which seems to take it as unremarkable that Tony should take up "radical" beliefs—undefined but understood to be dangerous and threatening—following his conversion to the racialized faith of Islam. This familiar suturing of Islam to dangerous radicalism is continued and emphasized in the narrative when Tony meets a recruiter for the Islamic State "through a friend at his mosque." Mosques, which in the U.S. context often serve not just as places of worship but as important focal points for Muslim diasporic communities, frequently function as metonyms for Islam—and, in the aftermath of the September 11th, 2001 attacks, "Islamic terrorism"--in popular discourse and the White U.S. imagination, and have been the targets of numerous incidents of anti-Muslim vandalism and attacks over the past decade or so.[37] Tony's parable thus re-inscribes a familiar linkage between mosques, Islam, and terrorist violence. Tony's fall from innocence—read: Whiteness—climaxes when he agrees to travel to Syria to join the Islamic State and proceeds to ask his parents for money, presumably to fund his terrorist activities abroad. Lured from the national homeland to a war-torn country abroad, Tony becomes so fully indoctrinated by his violent Brown hosts that he exploits the normative White nuclear family structure to finance foreign barbarism. In the end,

[37] ACLU, "Nationwide Anti-Mosque Activity," https://www.aclu.org/issues/national-security/discriminatory-profiling/nationwide-anti-mosque-activity, (Feb 2018).

Tony's betrayal—of nation, values, and, implicitly, race—contaminates his family as well, branding them all with the disfiguring and de-Whitening label of "terrorist."[38]

Puar and Rai (2002), reading Foucault, offer an illuminating theoretical lens through which to understand the discursive work that Tony's tale undertakes. Writing a year after the September 11th, 2001 terrorist attacks, these two scholars reckon with contemporaneous representations of "Islamic terrorists" in government, popular, and academic discourse. Puar and Rai suggest that these representations are invested in the construction of what they term the "terrorist-monster," a subject whose pathologically violent behavior is configured as the result of racialized and sexualized psychic deviance.[39] To understand the formation of the "terrorist-monster," they turn to Foucault's (1997) historical analysis of Western discourses of normality. They point out that Foucault posits the "human monster" as one of three "abnormals" in the Western imagination, a figure that is monstrous because it transgresses not only biological but also juridical norms (that is, not only does it violate how the human subject is supposed to look according to "natural law," but also how it is supposed to behave according to "human law"). The "Ancient notion" of the human monster, according to Foucault, chronologically precedes the formation of the second of the West's "abnormals," that is, "the individual to be corrected." The individual to be corrected, for Foucault, is constructed as a subject that resists not primarily legal

[38] Recent significant anthropological analyses of the discursive, affective, and visual infrastructures of the U.S. War on Terror (Hodges 2012, Masco 2014) have largely ignored how these infrastructures incorporate racialized imaginaries to frame the opposition between the normative White citizen and the Brown and/or Black terrorist; a conspicuous and disconcerting omission, to say the least, given the enduring salience of race in ongoing counterterrorism discourse and policy. Simone Browne (2015) draws attention to the systemic exclusion of discussions of the surveillance of Blackness (as well as the exclusion of Black scholars) from canonical surveillance studies literature (See Simone Browne, "Introduction, and Other Dark Matters" in *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 13). She and other scholars of color, including Puar and Rai (2002), cited below, and Inderpal Grewal (2017), cited earlier in this chapter, have staged important theoretical interventions that re-center race and racialization in critical analyses of security and surveillance.

[39] Puar & Rai, "Terrorist, Monster, Fag," 118-125.

imperatives but the normalizing regimes of discipline present in the workplace, the school, and the family.[40]

For Puar and Rai, the construction of the terrorist-monster hinges on the convergence of these two abnormal figures in counterterrorist discourse. In the terrorist-monster, they identify both a "monster" whose racial and sexual otherness locates them at the margins of the biological and legal norms prescribed by the U.S. nation-state, and a "person to be corrected," whose pathological deviance makes them a target for disciplinary normalization. In short, Puar and Rai find in the terrorist-monster the deployment of "monstrosity as a regulatory construct of modernity,"[41] wherein the specter of the racialized monstrous terrorist becomes an instrument for the enactment of discipline on the behavior of the citizen. Discourses of the terrorist-monster, they suggest, tell the citizen that they must behave a certain way to avoid slipping into terrorist "monstrosity."

And so we return to Counterextremism Corrective's website and the troubling parable of Tony. With Puar and Rai's insights in mind, we can recognize how the tale's power stems from its invocation of the figure of the terrorist as the Janus face to Tony, his friend, and even his parents--people to be corrected, whose violation of norms (of religion, nation, family, and race) implicates them in the monstrosity of terror. By power, I mean here not just the tale's narrative impact, but its regulatory force, its capacity to discipline the reader, to normalize their behavior. Let us not forget that Tony's parable introduces a page of Counterextremism Corrective's website aimed at adolescent students, students implicitly invited to see Tony as a proxy for

[40] Ibid, 118-119.
[41] Ibid, 119.

themselves: hapless and unsuspecting teens who, through a series of transgressive choices, could find themselves, their friends, and their families transfigured into terrorists.

The disciplinary, normalizing *raison d'être* of both Counterextremism Corrective and Campaign CARE's curricula is apparent throughout their educational materials. Consider another link under the "STUDENTS" tab— "ONLINE SAFETY"—which takes the viewer to a list of seven "very simple tips" to avoid "poor online decision making" that could lead to "coming into contact with members of the virtual world that are deemed dangerous." Or another page aimed at "PARENTS," which advises its audience on "what to do if your child is talking to an unsafe person," and includes a link to a tip form for the Federal Bureau of Investigation, in the event that the parent suspects that their child has been speaking to a violent extremist.

Despite their evident interest in prescribing normative behavior to students and parents alike, I argue that these two organizations frame their educational interventions not as disciplinary per se, but as *redemptive*. Recall the UNESCO video that opened Campaign CARE's presentation in Mr. Hart's classroom, which I discussed at the beginning of this chapter and which tokenized the testimonies of former (read: redeemed) "violent extremists" as proof of the transformative power of education. Or consider that Counterextremism Corrective's "ONLINE SAFETY" page introduces its seven "very simple tips" as "suggestions to *bettering* everyone's online behavior" (emphasis added). Invoking here the language of self-betterment, Counterextremism Corrective links behavioral correction to moral improvement and suggests the possibility that would-be "extremists"—that is, naïve and ignorant teens like Tony, or the young Eastern European immigrant at the center of "Recruited by Radicals," the three-minute video that opens Counterextremism Corrective's website--can be redeemed even before they are radicalized, so long as they are educated about appropriate norms of behavior.

We can see through this analysis how the person to be corrected in Puar and Rai's analysis is reconfigured in Counterextremism Corrective and Campaign CARE's educational interventions as the redeemable (would-be) extremist—a figure who, of course, is a variation on the trope of the depoliticized radical, insofar as their (potential) terrorist violence is framed as the result not of structural conditions but of transgressive decisions. Critically, the redeemable (would-be) extremist, in the discursive imagination of Campaign CARE and Counterextremism Corrective, is racialized as White. Let us return to the parable of Tony. I have already discussed how Tony's transgressions (converting to Islam, attending a mosque, talking to an Islamic State recruiter, leaving the United States to fight in Syria, asking his parents for money to finance his terrorist activities abroad) are implicitly framed as betrayals of his nation and his Whiteness. What, therefore, should redemption look like for Tony? Redemption should look like leaving Syria, returning to the United States, and abandoning his "radical" Islamic beliefs. Redemption should look like ending his friendship with the person he met as his mosque, who introduced him to the Islamic State recruiter. Redemption should look like apologizing to his parents for exploiting their generosity and reintegrating into the fold of the nuclear family. Redemption, in short, should look like a return to normative U.S. Whiteness.

Counterextremism Corrective's video, "Recruited by Radicals," similarly features a White male adolescent protagonist seduced to terrorism by sinister cyber-recruiters whose online usernames—"Rick Abdoul" and "Tom Omar"—allude to Middle Eastern origins. This same racialized narrative trope finds visceral visual expression in an illustration on Counterextremism Corrective's "ONLINE SAFETY" page (see Figure 1, on the next page). In the left half of this image, a young White boy sits at a desk with a laptop against a yellow backdrop. In the right half of the picture, a monstrous black figure, shapeless and inhuman, sits opposite the child at the

other end of the desk, their own laptop connected to the White boy's, suggesting the perils of online communication. An inadvertent visual metaphor for the racialized duality of the person to be corrected (or redeemed) and the monstrous terrorist, the image aptly captures the terms of redemption implicit in Tony's parable and "Recruited by Radicals," which position the Whiteness of their protagonists as vulnerable but savable, and the racialized otherness of their recruiters as predatory, monstrous, and irredeemable.

Figure 2: The person to be corrected/redeemed and the terrorist-monster. From Counterextremism Corrective's website.

Critically, I am *not* asserting that Counterextremism Corrective and Campaign CARE promote a discourse that claims that *all* terrorist recruiters are Black or Brown, or that only White "extremists" can be redeemed. Indeed, both organizations, to their credit, have taken pains on their websites, social media accounts, and classroom presentations to present terrorism as a phenomenon that does not exclusively emanate from particular region, religion, ethnic group, or

race, and to incorporate discussions of predominantly White domestic terrorist organizations, including right-wing terror. Moreover, Counterextremism Corrective's conference in March 2018 featured a keynote address by Nicola Benyahia, founder of the CVE organization Families for Life, a British convert to Islam whose son by her Algerian Muslim husband died while fighting with the Islamic State in Syria.[42] Benyahia's narrative frames a Muslim teen of Algerian descent, rather than a White adolescent,[43] as the vulnerable target of online radicalization; by centering this narrative in their conference, Counterextremism Corrective suggests that this boy, too, might have been redeemed through timely intervention.

It would be analytically reductive, therefore, to argue that Counterextremism Corrective and Campaign CARE categorically deny the possibility that Brown and Black extremists can be redeemed, or that White recruits to extremism can be "monsters." When I claim that these two organizations racialize the figure of the redeemable (would-be) extremist as White, I am making a statement not primarily about this figure's *phenotype*—that is, how closely they are imagined to adhere to the idealized physical parameters of Whiteness (although the redeemable (would-be) extremists in Tony's parable, "Recruited by Radicals," and the illustration in Figure 1, are all suggested to be phenotypically White)—but about their proximity to formations of Whiteness that extend beyond phenotype and involve racialized social, cultural, and political norms and values.

Consider the former recruiter for al-Muhajiroun, Yasmin, interviewed in the UNESCO video that Campaign CARE showed to Mr. Hart's English class. Yasmin may not be White, but

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[42] Dominic Casciani, "An extremist in the family," *BBC News*, November 21, 2016.

[43] Rasheed Benyahia, Nicola's son, was Muslim and of Algerian descent on his father's side. However, it is worth noting here that his mother is British and White, and images of Rasheed included in the article referenced above show that he had stereotypically European features, including light skin. I am unaware of how Rasheed identified himself racially or ethnically.

she is British and speaks fluent British-accented English. Moreover, she attributes her decision to join al-Muhajiroun to an inability to "think for [her]self," which she claims was inculcated in her from her upbringing. She suggests that she has now embraced free, independent thought, often idealized as a hallmark of White, European civilization—typically in opposition to the presumed authoritarian, antidemocratic traditions of the Middle East and North Africa. Thus, not only does this video position Yasmin—the redeemed extremist—as proximal to Whiteness, but, crucially, it frames her proximity to Whiteness as fundamental to her salvation. Whiteness, in this formulation, is redemptive even for those who are not phenotypically White.

"Can't bomb our way out of the issue:" Soft warfare and the redemption of empire

"Several big questions," remarks Vincent, squinting thoughtfully and looking slightly away from me, across the table. We're seated in the high-ceilinged atrium of UWB's student union building, beside a full wall of generous windows that look out onto a busy four-way intersection, jostling with vehicles. Vincent is a junior at UWB and has been a member of the Campaign CARE team since the organization's inception in the spring semester of 2017; when we spoke, he had just been chosen by his colleagues to take principal responsibility for managing the project's social media accounts. The "several big questions" he refers to are my queries about his perspectives regarding historic and contemporary U.S. counterterror policy, and how those perspectives have evolved through his work with Campaign CARE.

After ruminating for several moments, Vincent proceeds to offer a general history and assessment of the United States' "War on Terrorism." He speaks slowly and with deliberation, gradually unfolding the full controversial litany of the nation's most-talked-about counterterror tactics, from the Patriot Act, to the use of torture on inmates in Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo

Bay, to "targeted killings" with collateral civilian casualties. On the first and last issues, Vincent seems intent on offering the U.S. government the benefit of the doubt, acknowledging the potential merits of both public surveillance and unmanned drone strikes, even as he cites the myriad problems in which each strategy is mired. When it comes to "enhanced interrogations," however, Vincent is unequivocal, denouncing the use of torture on alleged terrorists as "huge mistakes." He goes on to say:

> When you find out that we [the United States] were torturing people, you have to ask the question, 'What separates us from the people that we're fighting?' Because the people that we're fighting torture people as well, and they don't care about human rights, and that kind of thing…In fighting them, you have to, I guess separate yourself from them, to make yourself clearly the good guy, like we care about human rights and that kind of thing."

Vincent's commentary expresses a sense of shame that the U.S. government, in waging its campaign against terrorism, has deployed tactics that he associates with the immoral violence of the terrorist "Other." In invoking the precarity of the United States' moral superiority vis-à-vis its insurgent foes, Vincent gestures to a narrative of the empire's fall from grace that provocatively mirrors Campaign CARE and Counterextremism Corrective's tales of all-American teens caught up in jihadist bloodshed. "What separates us from them?", both narratives ask, in voices frayed by moral panic.

For Vincent, however, the panic abates. Ultimately, he suggests, the United States is the "good guy," and the state's approach to counterterrorism has improved since initial blunders, which he attributes largely to the government's inexperience in contending with the contemporary specter of the Islamic terrorist network. Looking to the future trajectory of the government's strategy, Vincent suggests that organizations like Campaign CARE will be instrumental in further bettering U.S. counterterrorism:

"We can't necessarily bomb our way out of the issue, because the very act of bombing them (the terrorists) prolongs the issue […] as we go into the future, cause obviously the problem isn't going away, I think examining strategies like intervention programs […] especially domestically [is the next step][….]Being able to reach out to somebody that may be thinking that[…]the terrorists' message is favorable, being like, 'Hey, like, this is what they actually do, and maybe you don't feel like you have a sense of community or that you don't feel like you have a place, or you don't have a family or support network. All those things are great for someone growing up. But these people aren't the answer.' And then providing them with, maybe like counseling help, or trying to just get them back on their feet. So I think that that is the most effective way to do it, because what are the terrorists going to recruit out of that?[...]'Oh God, the Americans gave them a better life'? Not a great recruiting message for them."

Vincent jokes that his response is just an advertisement for Campaign CARE, but it is obvious to me that he, as well as his teammates, hold a genuine conviction that organizations like theirs can pave the way for a more long-term, holistic, and humane national counterterror strategy. Vincent's suggestion that such intervention programs quell recruitment by offering would-be "extremists" new opportunities and demonstrating the benevolence of the United States echo similar implications in *Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States*, the national strategy document signed by President Obama in 2011, which launched the national CVE initiative.[44] His rhetoric sketches a redemption arc for the embattled empire, parallel to and dependent upon the offer of redemption to its (would-be) enemies. It is a narrative to which many of my interlocutors in Campaign CARE gestured throughout the course of our conversations, and one that I came to see as integral to the organization's conception of itself relative to the U.S. counterterrorism campaign writ large. Andrew and Briana, of Counterextremism Corrective, were less explicit about their organization's capacity to redeem the "War on Terror," but they similarly spoke of the importance of what we might call "soft

[44] U.S. White House, *Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States*, https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/empowering_local_partners.pdf.

warfare" in deterring "at-risk" adolescents from turning to terror. For these organizations, such soft warfare does not replace securitization and military force, but complements these approaches with a long-term solution that convinces potential insurgents of the fundamental goodness of the United States (recall Counterextremism Corrective's appropriation of Malala Yousafzai's statement that "with guns you can kill terrorists, with education you can kill terrorism"). At the same time, soft warfare rehabilitates that goodness, fortifying the empire's moral high ground against the corrupting assaults of its barbaric foes.

The virtue of facts: numbers, neutrality, and the redemptive power of data

But what, then, makes Campaign CARE and Counterextremism Corrective virtuous? What gives them the moral authority to redeem extremists and empire alike? I return now to Andrew and Briana's discussion of a crisis of absent data to affirm the efficacy of CVE programs, and to the UNESCO video's positioning of knowledge as redemptive simply by virtue of being knowledge. I contend that for Campaign CARE and Counterextremism Corrective, facts—which they routinely distinguished from the "biased" information trafficked by mainstream news outlets—possess an intrinsic virtue, capable of countering the abstract hatred and ignorance they believe can lead to both "violent extremism" and misguided policy alike. For these two organizations, the virtuous data legitimizes itself: exhaustively-calculated "metrics" on the "reach" of their interventions serve as proof that they are accomplishing their goal of disseminating the gospel of fact to as many potential "extremists" as possible.

Social scientists have already remarked on the fetishization of empirical evidence and facticity in contemporary neoliberal governance.[45] In this analysis, I draw specifically on Saida Hodžić's (2013) theorization of the "aesthetics of evidence" and Lindsey Beutin's (forthcoming) work on the "performance of facticity" to ground my ethnographic observations on the role of facts, data, and "political neutrality" in the work of Campaign CARE in particular (although my insights are also obviously relevant to Counterextremism Corrective). Both Hodžić and Beutin understand evidence and facts as "aesthetic" forms that NGOs, in particular, perform in order to lend credibility to their interventions. For Hodžić, the authority of a data set stems both from its "objectivity"—which must be "performed" in initial reports of findings—and its sheer size, which in and of itself is "capable of signification and meaning."[46] Thus made meaningful, such data can then serve as the basis for conclusive claims whose objective "truth value" is less important than their adherence to aesthetic norms of academic argument.[47] For Beutin, anti-human trafficking NGOs refashion political positions as "facts" through aesthetic presentation, concealing the power at play in the formation of knowledge.[48]

For Campaign CARE, aesthetic performances of evidence and facticity are instrumental to affirming not only their epistemic but also their moral authority to educate students, parents, and teachers alike about terrorism and the dangers of online radicalization. During Campaign CARE's presentation in Mr. Hart's English classroom, Ethan, a member of the Campaign CARE team, discussed how the organization developed its online educational articles in response to a

[45] For an exemplary analysis, see Maya J. Goldenberg, "On evidence and evidence-based medicine: lessons from the philosophy of science," *Social Science and Medicine 62,* 11 (2006): 2621-32. Her examples and insights originate in the medical field, but are broadly applicable to "evidence-based" regimes of governance.
[46] Hodžić, "Ascertaining Deadly Harms," 97-99.
[47] Ibid, 99-101.
[48] Beutin, 138.

survey they distributed that asked respondents to name "a question they have about violent extremism that they'd be too afraid to ask in public." He positioned Campaign CARE as performing a civic duty by connecting students to "factual" sources that can fill in the "gaps" in their knowledge regarding terrorism. Lack of factual information, Ethan suggested, makes students vulnerable to the corrupting influence of "opinions:"

> "[We distributed] an initial survey to people between the ages of 13 and 25. We got between 400 and 500 people to answer the…survey….We collected all of those [questions that survey respondents asked about violent extremism] […] and wrote over thirty different articles, all of the articles that are on the website are written by us, we did all the research for them […] We found all the resources, whether they're the government-written (sic), or the case studies […] that are fact-checked, they are factual...We did all that so that you guys [the students] have that quick access to certain questions you guys may have to help fill in your gaps in knowledge[…] If you guys have like a gap in something, you guys are more vulnerable to be given opinions about something and take it as fact, rather than getting facts about something to create your own opinion."

Here, Ethan both recruits and reaffirms the authority and virtue of data and facts to legitimize Campaign CARE. He cites the "between 400 and 500" respondents to the team's survey to certify the organization's approach as evidence-based, recalling Hodžić's observation of the signifying potential of large data sets.[49] He emphasizes that the articles on the Campaign CARE website are based in "factual" resources—such as government reports and academic case studies—after earlier lambasting popular news outlets like CNN and Fox News for peddling "biased" information. Finally, he suggests that, by "fill[ing] in [their] gaps in knowledge," students can protect themselves against the seductive influence of opinions masquerading as facts. In the context of Campaign CARE's larger mission to use education to deter online radicalization among adolescents, Ethan's claim posits facts as an antidote to violent extremism.

[49] Hodžić, "Ascertaining Deadly Harms," 98-99.

It follows that if violent extremism is bad—hateful, destructive, monstrous, even—then facts are good. Education produces moral subjects, and so the fundamental morality of information is affirmed.

The metrics ritual: proving efficacy and the performativity of numbers

In addition to affirming the moral authority of Campaign CARE's intervention, facts—in the form of quantitative data—can also certify the efficacy of their approach. Earlier in this chapter, I referred to Briana's and Andrew's claims that the effectiveness of CVE programs is virtually untestable because of the near impossibility of measuring a negative outcome—that is, ascertaining whether a terrorist attack *would have happened* had it *not* been for a particular initiative. Despite—and arguably because of—this crisis of absent data, Campaign CARE invested considerable effort in gathering and presenting "metrics" that purported to measure the scope of their online "reach"—that is, how many users visited their website, took their knowledge test, and interacted with their social media accounts. In the absence of a method for empirically investigating how many "radicalizations" Campaign CARE had prevented, these metrics stood in as a statistical indicator of the organization's effectiveness.

Indeed, as Campaign CARE further developed their website and expanded their social media presence in preparation for the final product submission deadline of the YCI competition, the recitation and visualization of these metrics became a kind of ritual undertaken at most of their weekly team meetings. On these ocassions, one of the students would announce and sometimes write on the whiteboard the number of followers that each of the organization's social media accounts—at that time, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram—had accrued, as well as the number of users that had registered on the Campaign CARE website by taking the terrorism

knowledge test. Strong growth in the number of followers and registered users from the previous week would be a cause for celebration among the students, affirming the viability of their product. Disappointingly low statistics would typically prompt conversations about how the organization could "improve their numbers."

At one memorable meeting, Dr. Blake Shepard—who attended some, though not all, of Campaign CARE's work sessions—leapt from the table in the conference room and scrawled a sprawling tree diagram on the whiteboard. The diagram, he explained, was intended to demonstrate how Campaign CARE can boost the number of followers on its social media accounts by funneling visitors from its website to its Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram pages. Dr. Shepard invested this fairly basic claim with the authority of fact by converting it into a diagram, performing an aesthetic of facticity akin to that which Beutin observes in the glossy graphics and footnotes in an anti-human trafficking NGO's "fact sheet."[50]

Campaign CARE enacts these performances of facticity through online metrics not only for themselves, but for their stakeholders. Multiple slides of the PowerPoint presentation that they submitted to Millennial Solutions—the firm that administers the YCI competition—were devoted to displaying the most current figures regarding their virtual "reach," and they offered updated metrics in their subsequent presentation to the judges in Washington, D.C. Indeed, both Carl—the project manager—and Dr. Shepard told me that Campaign CARE earned a higher place in the YCI competition than Counterextremism Corrective because the former presented more robust metrics. It comes as little surprise that the DHS and Facebook representatives who judge the YCI competition should reward projects that purport to proffer statistical evidence of their efficacy, particularly when CVE programs have been so roundly criticized for failing to

[50] Beutin, 138.

prove their effectiveness. Of course, these judges—just like the Campaign CARE team—must recognize that these metrics actually say little in regard to the organization's ostensible goal of preventing radicalization among adolescents. After all, the numbers cannot even say whether the hundreds of people who have made contact with Campaign CARE online have read any of the organization's educational articles or social media posts, let alone whether that content has somehow affected the likelihood that they will become "radicalized." Ultimately, however, what the numbers *say* seems less important than what they *do*—that is, perform facticity to authorize Campaign CARE's intervention as legitimate and effective. Such authorization depends upon the signifying power of facts as an aesthetic form invested with moral virtue and epistemic validity.

Leaving cans of worms unopened: the politics of neutrality and the price of redemption

I would like to conclude this chapter with a revealing anecdote that Carl—the student manager for both Counterextremism Corrective and Campaign CARE—recounted to me. Carl graduated from UWB with an M.A. in Security Studies (concentration in homeland defense) in May 2017. Having participated in the YCI competition in spring 2016—the first year that UWB submitted an entry to the competition—he was chosen by Dr. Shepard to work with the two subsequent teams in a paid supervisory position. A former U.S. Marine and salesman who is now pursuing government work in intelligence analysis, Carl struck me as reserved and thoughtful. When I interviewed him, he told me about an "embarassing" incident that Campaign CARE had had to contend with in the earliest stages of its development. After asking over four hundred respondents to submit a question that they have about violent extremism, the team proceeded to draft answers to the questions. In an early outreach effort, they submitted a document with these questions and their responses to the local Waterbridge police department. The police department,

however, rejected the document, because in Carl's words, "someone (an unknown member of Campaign CARE) wrote two sentences or so and they were saying that the U.S. does sponsor terrorism."

Carl characterized the debacle as an early learning opportunity for Campaign CARE, demonstrating the need for more rigorous "quality control" in the development of their product. He was evasive about his own opinion on the claim that the United States has sponsored terrorism, framing the issue as a "can of worms you don't wanna open." This statement typifies Campaign CARE's approach to political controversies regarding U.S. counterterrorism and governance in general, which they almost never overtly engage in their educational materials.

From my conversations with the Campaign CARE team, I suspect that the organization justifies this silence as a necessary expression of their commitment to political neutrality. For Campaign CARE, political neutrality is an important requisite of "factual" discourse, and a marker that distinguishes the knowledge that they provide from the "biased" information peddled by both the mainstream media and extremist propaganda alike. The incident with the Waterbridge police department notwithstanding, Campaign CARE, in practice, tends to perform political neutrality by refusing to acknowledge the controversial aspects of U.S. policy. Unopened cans of worms lie scattered in the margins of the articles on Campaign CARE's website, including one which recounts President Trump's April 2017 airstrike in Syria and fails to mention the domestic controversy and condemnation the strike generated,[51] and another which discusses the Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) airport screening procedures but

[51] This article says only that the airstrike "drew praise from much of Europe, Saudi Arabia, and Australia" and was condemned by Russia. It neglects to mention the vociferous criticism that the attack provoked domestically as well as globally.

fails to acknowledge allegations of racial and ethnic bias in those procedures.[52] The latter omission is especially striking because the audience-submitted question that the article purports to answer—"Why Does the Screening Process at Airports Vary from Person to Person?"—seems to gesture to these allegations. In response, Campaign CARE simply points out that some passengers are "randomly" selected for more intensive screening, and that such randomization ensures "fairness." The article includes a link to the TSA's website.

Here, we arrive at a critical observation: that the performance of political neutrality is often not all that politically neutral at all. I am not the first to have made this observation; Harri Englund (2006) says as much when he discusses how a Malawian NGO that purported to promote civic education and democratic participation ironically supported the undemocratic interests of the ruling party by prohibiting its volunteers from commenting on prevailing political controversies.[53] While Englund's ethnographic context is obviously no means analogous to mine, his insights on the consequences of "political neutrality" are salient in my analysis of Campaign CARE's "unbiased" educational materials. Ultimately, by refraining from engaging criticisms of U.S. policy, the organization's discourse ends up uncritically upholding state agendas. Silence on the controversy surrounding Trump's airstrike in Syria tacitly legitimizes the attack. Deflecting a question that seems to implicitly invoke allegations of racial profiling in TSA screenings by discussing the agency's "randomized" and "fair" procedures simply regurgitates official government discourse. Redacting a statement that suggests that the United States sponsors

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[52] Importantly, systematic racial bias in TSA airport screenings predates the September 11th attacks and the subsequent hyper-securitization of U.S. airports. Browne (2015) cites a 2000 Government Accountability Office report that stated that "black women who were U.S. citizens had the highest likelihood of being strip searched" in airport screenings and "were 9 times more likely than White women who were U.S. citizens to be x-rayed after being frisked or patted down." See Browne, " 'What Did TSA Find in Solange's Fro'?: Security Theater at the Airport," in *Dark Matters*, 132.

[53] Harri Englund, "The Hidden Lessons of Civic Education," *Prisoners of Freedom: Human Rights and the African Poor* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006), 79.

terrorism does not just leave a can of worms unopened—it tries to make that can of worms disappear.

What ends does such rhetorical legerdemain serve? Of course, the performance of political neutrality is essential to Campaign CARE's performance of facticity: by abstaining from even the acknowledgment of political controversy, they seek to avoid tainting their curriculum with the corrupting stain of "bias" that they criticize in both mainstream news media and terrorist propaganda. Yet Carl's anecdote points to another reason that Campaign CARE is so invested in "neutrality." The Waterbridge police department rejected to collaborate with Campaign CARE because their question-and-answer document alleged that the United States sponsors terrorism. Likewise, the representatives from DHS who adjudicated Campaign CARE's product would have likely been none too happy to see the organization take such an anti-government stance. Even as Campaign CARE and Counterextremism Corrective seek to establish independence from the state-sponsored CVE competition that spawned them, they remain embedded in a field of counter-extremism interventions that rely on government—national, state, and local—recognition, funding, and cooperation to remain viable. Hence, these two student-led organizations must ultimately frame themselves not as seeking to criticize or supplant government counterterrorism initiatives, but as complementing, improving, and redeeming them. By constructing (would-be) extremists as vulnerable, innocent, White or White-adjacent adolescents who are corrupted to violence by sinister Brown and Black radicals, Campaign CARE and Counterextremism Corrective, for all their best intentions, ultimately entrench dominant state discourses that legitimize ongoing oppression at home and imperial violence abroad. What is promised to be redemption of the U.S. empire starts to look a lot more like simply a rebranding.

Plate 5: "The present day world is vile and miserable."

Christ the redeemer, in the yard of a funeral home in Waterbridge. Photo by the author.

Conclusion:

On being terrorized

"Upon the news of the [September 11th, 2001] attack, major network television ran images of Palestinians dancing in the streets. Although there was no credible evidence to confirm that the filming in fact occurred after the World Trade and Pentagon attacks (which raised serious questions regarding the US media's role in manipulating US anti-Arab sentiment), the images *struck me with a profound sense of awe*, as they forced the Amerikan public to recognize how thoroughly the United States is hated by the victims of its policies […] Bombs dropped on Palestine civilians bear the United States insignia. Is not four billion dollars a year to support the Israeli state a form of terrorism against Palestinian people?"

--Cherríe Moraga (2002), "Foreword" to *This Bridge Called My Back, Third Edition: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (emphasis added)[1]

At a crowded Mexican bar and restaurant in Salem, Massachusetts—about an hour-and-a-half train ride from Waterbridge, through flat green marshes and sparse birch forests—I sit across from Devon, one of the UWB students who worked to develop Campaign CARE. Anna and Ethan, two of the other members of the team, are seated to my left. The students have invited me to this venue—one of their favorite eateries in Salem's well-touristed downtown—so that I can have an opportunity to interview Devon, whose busy schedule has thus far made him difficult to track down. Chatty, charismatic, and astute, Devon has just spent the last twenty minutes or so explaining to me a three-month internship he undertook with the United States consulate in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, where he investigated visa application fraud for Citizenship and Immigration Service. The internship was a personal watershed for Devon, and a

[1] Cherríe Moraga, "From Inside the First World: Foreword, 2001" in *This Bridge Called My Back, Third Edition: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (Berkeley, CA: Third Woman Press, 2002), xix.

stepping stone toward his longtime aspiration of working a U.S. government job in the field of counterterrorism. In this capacity, he tells me, he can "make the world a safer place."

I ask Devon about the origins of this ambition. He responds that although it may sound cliché, it was the September 11th, 2001 al-Qaida attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon that first got him interested in "terrorism."

"It got the whole world interested," he adds, raising his eyebrows. Devon was only six years old at the time of the attacks, and although he did not know exactly what the exploding towers on TV "meant," he vividly remembers the word that his father used to describe the image: "awesome."

When Devon, confused, asked his dad to clarify, his father told him that he meant the word in its original sense, referring to that which "inspires awe." Reflecting on the event now, Devon concurs with his father. For all their tragedy, he tells me, the September 11th attacks on the World Trade Center inspired awe. I recall a quote from Cynthia C. Combs, a scholar on terrorism, cited in a textbook I read for an online UWB course I took in conjunction with my research (the textbook itself, in fact, was written by Dr. Joseph Woods, a faculty member and former Director of the Institute). Terrorism, according to Combs, is "a synthesis of war and theatre: a dramatization of violence which is perpetrated on innocent victims and played before an audience in the hope of creating a mode of fear."[2] Awesome, indeed.

Devon's story compels me because it invokes an affective register that my interlocutors at the Institute, faculty and students alike, seldom used when talking about terrorism. In describing the September 11th attacks as "awesome," Devon and his father frame terrorism not as monstrously criminal behavior, or depraved violence, or even as a sociopolitical phenomenon,

[2] Cynthia C. Combs, *in the Twenty-First Century* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2003).

but as a spectacle with psychic and emotional resonance, as *that which induces terror*—and inspires awe. They gesture toward an ontology of being in relation to terrorism that is neither juridical ("the terrorist is the criminal perpetrator, therefore I am the innocent victim and/or the arbiter of justice") nor moral ("the terrorist is evil, therefore I am good") nor even analytical ("the terrorist is the object to be studied, therefore I am the analyst"), but which is rather premised on the affective experience of terror.

Joseph Masco (2014) would argue that it is this affective experience of terror that is manipulated by the U.S. counterterror state to mobilize support for increasing securitization and militarization, and that it is this ontology of being terrorized that has come to define the ideal citizen-subject of that counterterror state. Tracing "the constitution of a new affective politics" from the nuclear revolution of the early Cold War to the present-day War on Terror, he contends that the contemporary United States has assembled and continually reconstituted the "material, imaginative, and affective infrastructures" (color-coded warning systems, mushroom cloud imagery, commemorative museums) to sustain "a security culture of existential threat" that justifies the unending expansion of U.S. military hegemony.[3] Suturing present-day terror to unknowable future calamities, the counterterror state governs through a mode of speculative, preemptive risk management that sees threats as omnipresent and ever-multiplying.

Masco identifies "security experts" as a major locus in this national affective infrastructure of hyper-terror, prolifically generating knowledge in the form of new imaginaries of catastrophe. Indeed, he identifies the emergence of what he calls "a new kind of expert psychopolitics that is not grounded in the effort to establish facts but rather is committed to

[3] Joseph Masco, "Introduction: The 'New' Normal," in *The Theater of Operations: National Security Affect from the Cold War to the War on Terror* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).

generating speculative futures."[4]Although Masco seems to refer primarily to "experts" working with government agencies and private companies, his claim implicates the academic "experts" (and their students, experts-in-training) at the center of my research—particularly given that many of those academic experts have collaborated with and conducted research for the government and, to a lesser extent, private security firms.

There can be little argument that the "politics of shock"[5] have catalyzed an exponential growth in the academic study of terrorism since the September 11th, 2001 attacks. Lisa Stampnitzky (2013) points to a study that found that 54 percent of all scholarly articles published on terrorism between 1972 and 2002 were published in 2001 and 2002.[6] Today, speculative panics around the radicalization of U.S. youth are mobilized to justify DoD investment in research studies to measure the effectiveness of "counter-messages" at undermining Islamic State recruitment, and CVE interventions that teach adolescents how to avoid being seduced by "extremists" online. Indeed, it would seem that Masco's affective infrastructure of terror is critical scaffolding for the expert interventions I have documented in this thesis.

And yet in spite of this, Devon's anecdote about the "awesomeness" of the September 11th attacks is one of the few instances when such affectively-charged language surfaced in my fieldwork. Expert discourse on terrorism at the Institute, my ethnography suggests, is curiously alienated from rhetorical expressions of affect. Where Masco paints a portrait of paranoid analysts practically hallucinating disaster into their reports, the scholars and students I spoke to seldom mentioned anxiety, uncertainty, fear, or, indeed, terror, in conjunction with their object of

[4] Ibid, 20.
[5] Ibid, 6.
[6] Lisa Stampnitzky, *Disciplining Terror: How Experts Invented terrorism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 196.

study. Critical to the performance of expertise that I discussed in the first chapter of this thesis seems to be a kind of emotional detachment from the object of study. Emotions, my interlocutors often suggested, are the antithesis of facts—which, despite Masco's thesis of "a new kind of expert psychopolitics," the faculty and students at the Institute were still very much invested in producing. Hence Dr. Joseph Woods' claim that reactionary and ill-informed counterterror policies can be attributed to an overly emotional mainstream discourse on terrorism, and Campaign CARE and Counterextremism Corrective's framing of facticity as redemptive amid terrorist propaganda and mainstream media coverage that manipulates the public's emotions to serve political ends. Thus, whereas Masco, citing Sloterdijk and Henrichs (2001), claims that under the counterterror state "excitability is the foremost duty of all citizens,"[7] it seems that for the *expert* citizen, the foremost duty is to resist excitement, to resist affect, to resist being terrorized. It is as if the disciplining of terror as an object of study has entailed also the denial of terror as affective experience, as if the field of terrorism expertise must exorcise itself of the very nationalized fear by which it is sustained, such that its claims to empiricism, facticity, and objectivity are not compromised.

In this expert milieu of emotional suppression, Devon's simple statement that the September 11th attacks were "awesome"—without any gesture toward objective analysis, toward the disciplining of his experience—is striking. It reminds us that amid all the scholarly cacophony around what terrorism is or is not, who does it, and how it can be deterred, there remains the affective experience of terror; an affective experience that is closely linked to what I call the *ontologies of being terrorized.*

[7] Masco, "Introduction: The 'New' Normal," 20.

I invoke the word *ontologies* here (in the plural) to signal an anthropological attention to alterity—that is, otherness—that, as Heywood (2012) puts it, "is not a matter of 'culture,' 'representation,' 'epistemology,' or 'worldview,' but of *being*" (emphasis added).[8] That is, differences in human subjectivities cannot simply be understood as the result of *grafting* different interpretive practices onto a universal empirical reality; rather, such interpretive practices *constitute* reality, configuring social worlds and modes of being within those worlds that are fundamentally *real*. In speaking of the ontologies of *being terrorized*, I follow Kockelman (2011) in understanding affective processes as "project[ing] out ontologies."[9] For Kockelman, the relation between an event, the interpretation of that event, and the affective response that that interpretation provokes, is a semiotic relation, a Peircean triad that configures sign (event), object (the interpretation), and interpretant (affect).[10] Moreover, in this semiotic process of affect, "the self is at stake"[11] as it negotiates responses to events in accordance with its own sense of being in the world. Affect and ontology are thus interdependent: affect is grounded in ontology, insofar as affective responses to events hinge on one's sense of selfhood in relation to others, but affect can also project ontologies, as such events destabilize the self in relation to others. Affect, then, constitutes reality. While Kockelman takes as his case study the affective responses of Q'eqchi' Mayan women to a hawk plundering their chicken flock, we can just as readily understand his argument in the context of the 9/11 attacks; or, for that matter, any dramatic spectacle of political violence deployed against the self by an other. The interpretant of

[8] Paolo Heywood, "Anthropology and What There Is: Reflections on 'Ontology,' *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology 30*, 1 (2012): 143.
[9] Paul Kockelman, "A Mayan ontology of poultry: Selfhood, affect, animals, and ethnography," *Language in Society 40*, 4 (2011): 429.
[10] Ibid, 448-452.
[11] Ibid, 449.

such events—that is, the affects they induce (panic, outrage, awe, *terror*)—takes ontology (being a self in relation to others) as its semiotic ground, but those affects also "put the self at stake" insofar as they destabilize existing ontologies and project out new modes of being in the world. We can thus speak, then, of the ontologies of being terrorized: the modes of being in relation to others that terror—as both event and affect—projects.

In the essay from which this conclusion's epigraph is excerpted, radical Chicana feminist Cherríe Moraga attends closely to these ontologies as they constitute both herself and others. She narrates, with anguish and compassion, her struggle to respond to her eight-year-old son's terrified question, watching the collapsing buildings on TV:

> " 'Will they bomb here?" he asks, eyes glued to the TV screen; and I realize in all honesty, I cannot answer, 'No, not here,' as I would have before September 11. Because we live on the edge of the ocean, on the borderline of this nation-state; we live in a major metropolitan city, in the shadow of the Golden Gate Bridge and the Transamerica Building; we are the symbol of greed and arrogance that is Amerika on the West Coast. 'I don't know,' I answer. How do you teach a child a politic where there is no facile 'us and them,' where the 'us' who is his ostensive protector against the bombing of his city, his home, is at the same time the 'them' who brought the bombs down upon this soil."[12]

Here, the conjunction of Moraga's fear of calamitous attack and her outraged recognition of that attack as long-overdue comeuppance projects an unstable ontology that she struggles to communicate to her son. "*How do you teach a child a politic where there is no facile 'us and them*'?" Terror, for Moraga, fragments the self—her fear, premised on her sense of belonging to an imperiled nation-state, coexists with an indignation that stems from her radical identification with the other. "It occurs to me," she writes later in the essay, "that as residents of the United States we are finally subject to the global violence we have perpetrated against the Non-Western

[12] Moraga, "From Inside the First World: Foreword, 2001," xxi.

world."[13] Terror is reciprocal violence, which can upend, even momentarily, relations between the self and the other even as it articulates within existing structures of imperial power.

Critically, Moraga's ontology of being terrorized is premised on her recognition of the multiplicity of ontologies that terror projects, on her radical acknowledgment of the terrorized other. Her ontology, then, is what Kevin Inston (2015) describes as "an ontology of finitude whereby everything confronts otherness as both the condition and limit of its existence."[14] Moraga's mode of being as a terrorized subject is conditional on and constrained by her unsettled relation to the other. How do we (existing "inside the First World," to invoke the title of her essay) understand ourselves as a terrorized nation when there are others who have been terrorized by us?

For Moraga, the uncertain ontology to which this question gestures is a function of affect. Recall the epigraph to this conclusion, in which she recalls "the profound sense of awe" that struck her as she reckoned with the Palestinians dancing in the streets in the aftermath of the attack. Moraga recognizes this dancing itself as affect—recalling Kockelman's observation that affects, as interpretants, "are also potential signs (and objects) themselves"[15]—and understands such affect as grounded in an-other ontology of being terrorized. Later in the essay, she imagines this alter affect-ontology complex as reflective of her own being as an indigenous subject under the terroristic U.S. settler-colonial state. She recounts telling a friend, "If Indigenous América had blown up the Pentagon, I'd be dancing in the streets, too."[16]

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[13] Ibid, xxix.

[14] Kevin Inston, "Michel Leiris' Anthropology and the Ontology of Finitude: Reading the Ethnographic Writings Through the Lens of *Miroir de la Tauromachie*," *MLN 129*, 4 (2014): 1010.

[15] Kockelman, "A Mayan ontology of poultry," 450-451.

[16] Moraga, "From Inside the First World," xx.

I would like to complicate, then, my interlocutors' unequivocal denunciation of affect as mystifying force in our efforts to understand "terrorism." For Moraga, holding close the affective experience of terrorism—from outrage to confusion to celebration to, yes, awe—is a means to accessing a plurality of ontologies, of acknowledging the cycles of terror and trauma in which we are implicated—as victim, perpetrator, and witness. What is obscured when, rather than acknowledging the traumas that begets terror and the traumas that terror begets, we instead treat terrorism as an analytical problem unto itself, a self-contained phenomenon to be studied and solved rather than a symptom of the structures of violence in which we live our lives? What possibilities for understanding terrorism are foreclosed when we treat the affective experiences of the terrorist only as individual aberrations—persecution complexes, indoctrinated hatred, personal alienation—rather than as responses to and manifestations of everyday structural violence? Masco is certainly right to be wary of the nationalization of the terror qua affect as a mode of governance, but perhaps we should be equally suspicious of an expert discourse that circumscribes terror to an isolated space of scientific reasoning, that interpolates the terrorist and the terrorized (and so often, as Moraga reminds us, they are one and the same) not as feeling subjects but as so many more or less deviant bodies to be dissected? Is not this disciplining, this abstraction of violence from the traumatic structures (colonialism, apartheid, and neoliberal capitalism) that sustain it and are sustained by it, its own kind of violence? If, as Cynthia Combs suggests, terrorism is a kind of theatrical performance, then what is it trying to communicate? Can we imagine an "expert" discourse that takes this question seriously?

I wonder if Devon—having now completed his B.S. in criminal justice (concentration in homeland security) and his M.A. in security studies at UWB, having helmed the development of a CVE organization, having, in short, been fully inducted into terrorism expertise—still feels a

sense of awe, witnessing the spectacular violence of our age of permanent war. I suspect that he does. After all, as Dominic Boyer (2008) reminds us, expertise is ringed always by an irrational "halo" of affect,[17] which is not overthrown but only concealed by the hysterics of diagrams, statistics, and facts that are the expert's parlance and performance. I wonder also if it is not too much of a stretch to suggest a kinship between Devon's awe and that which Cherríe Moraga experienced, watching Palestinians dancing in the streets. Of course, she and Devon are two radically different subjects; yet in witnessing the aftermath of the September 11th attacks, they both find themselves destabilized by the experience of terror, sharing an ontology of being terrorized that allows space for uncertainty and contradiction: a space where fear becomes awe, where violence becomes celebration, where the terrorist becomes the terrorized. Is there knowledge to be gained from dwelling in these uneasy ontologies? Can we resist the urge to fix, to stabilize, to discipline, and instead trace violence as it moves, fluid and flammable, through the veins of empire and insurgency and back?

In this ethnography, I have attempted to understand the expertise of terrorism, and to take seriously the practice, discourse, and human actors that constitute that expertise. I have endeavored also to shed some light on what terrorism expertise reveals and conceals, what possibilities it enables and forecloses, the forms of power it channels and the subjects it produces. I have undertaken an ethnographic project, yes, but also necessarily a political one, one which reckons with terrorism expertise as it interacts with the ongoing violence of this interminable War on Terror. I must confess that I, like my interlocutors, am only one "expert" voice among many. It would be laughably naïve to suggest that I, as an anthropologist, possess any more privileged outlook than the faculty and students at the Institute on how we should come

[17] Dominic Boyer, "Thinking through the Anthropology of Experts," *Anthropology in Action* 15, 2 (2008): 45.

to know "terrorism." But I would suggest that perhaps this is not the right question to ask. Seventeen years, $1.7 trillion,[18] and virtually uncountable military and civilian dead since September 11th, 2001, and the cycle of terrorism continues unabated. Can such violence be apprehended by ways of knowing that seek to discipline it: to analytically quarantine it, to fix it in place, to explicate it by reference only to itself as a bounded thing-to-be-known? Or might we better served my taking seriously the definitional instability and mobility of terror as, at once, violence, politics, and affect, interfused and inseparable, as a multivalent and multidirectional force that tells us not so much about itself-as-object as it tells us about the brutal circuits through which it moves? To interrogate what it means to be terrorized, I would argue, might reveal to us also what it means to terrorize; and perhaps this, after all, is what we are forbidden to reckon with.

[18] Kimberly Amadeo, The Balance, "War on Terror Facts, Costs, and Timeline," https://www.thebalance.com/war-on-terror-facts-costs-timeline-3306300, (Mar 31, 2018).

Plate 6: "Our enemy's children are like scorpions."

The Angel of Victory at an intersection in downtown Waterbridge. Photo by the author.

Plate 7: "War is the beginning of salvation."

A New England summer. Photo by the author.