

The Lack of Empirical Research to Support CVE Programming

Mike German, Fellow

Brennan Center for Justice at NYU
Law School

What is CVE

- Counter-radicalization efforts in the US met with resistance, so language was changed to “Countering Violent Extremism”;
- CVE programs suggest that future terrorists can be identified before they act by monitoring and reporting “extreme” beliefs, usually described in religious or political terms;
- CVE programs suggest that identifying people “vulnerable to” or “at risk of” violent extremism will enable psychological or religious counseling that can stop the progression to violence and avoid harsher counterterrorism responses.

CVE in Schools Pioneered in UK

- ‘You worry they could take your kids’: is the Prevent strategy demonizing Muslim Schoolchildren?, [The Guardian, \(Sept. 23, 2015\)](#);
- UK Teachers See Thin Line Between Spy and Protector, [Al-Jazeera \(Apr. 13, 2015\)](#)
- Children ‘Profiled’ with ‘Counter-Extremism’ Questionnaire, [Telegraph \(May 28, 2015\)](#);
- Schools Monitoring Pupils’ Web Use with ‘Anti-Radicalisation Software’ [Guardian \(June 10, 2015\)](#);
- ‘Radicalisation Risk’ Pupils in Waltham Forest Named, [BBC News \(Nov. 30, 2015\)](#).

US CVE Programs and Schools

- Boston CVE [Framework](#) aims to “enhance awareness within K-12 and higher education regarding behavior assessment and care protocols and how peers can connect individuals to assessment and care teams” (p.7);
- A Minnesota Public Schools representative [announced](#) CVE efforts focused on Somali-American students “to address identity issues and disaffection at school – root causes of radicalization”;
- The National Counter-Terrorism Center [produced](#) a CVE guide which included a list of “risk and protective factors” that “police officers, public health workers, educators, and social service departments” could assess individuals, families, and communities;
- Media reports that anti-radicalization software developed by private companies in Britain is being tested in [5 U.S. locations](#);
- The FBI has developed a “Don’t be a Puppet” CVE [website](#) for students and teachers, that was shown to “teachers and students in Northern Virginia to get feedback.”

CVE Programs and Intelligence Gathering

- CVE programs are often led or directed by law enforcement or homeland security agencies, raising concerns about intelligence gathering and watch-listing.
- Does CVE software collect information about students and teachers using it?
- Do CVE programs in schools comply with student privacy and health privacy laws?
- Will parents be informed when their child is referred to CVE program counseling?

Flawed Premises of CVE Programs

- That “violent extremism” is a precursor to terrorist violence, and that there are identifiable predictive indicators regarding who will become a terrorist;
- That violent extremism is primarily or predominantly a Muslim community problem;
- That government outreach and the provision of psychological and social services to American Muslim communities will be effective methods to suppress terrorism.

Studies Refuting “Radicalization” Models

- [Rethinking Radicalization: A Report](#) (Faiza Patel, Brennan Center, March 8, 2011);
- [Concerns with Mitchell D. Silber & Arvin Bhatt, N.Y. Police Dep’t, *Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat*](#) (Aziz Huq, Brennan Center, August 30, 2007);
- [Radicalization: The Journey of a Concept](#) (Arun Kundnani, Race & Class, October-December 2012);
- [Problematic Knowledge: How “Terrorism” Resists Expertise](#) (Lisa Stampnitzky, Capturing Security Expertise: Practice, Power, and Responsibility, Routledge: 2015);
- [Beyond Radicalization: Towards an Integrated Anti-Violence Rule of Law Strategy](#) (Colm Campbell, University of Ulster Transitional Justice Institute: Research Paper, April 7, 2011);
- [The Edge of Violence: A Radical Approach to Extremism](#) (Jamie Bartlett, Jonathan Birdwell & Michael King, Demos, 2010);
- [Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways Toward Terrorism](#) (Clark McCauley & Sophia Moskalenko, Terrorism and Political Violence, July 3, 2008)

Trained Govt. Officials Ineffective Predictors of Future Violence

- Forensic psychiatrist and former CIA officer Marc Sageman [argued](#) in a lawsuit challenging the no-fly list, that even government experts with access to massive amounts of intelligence and the most sophisticated analytic methodologies cannot accurately predict who might commit an act of political violence:
- *“No one inside or outside the government has yet devised a ‘profile’ or model that can, with any accuracy or reliability, predict the likelihood that a given individual will commit an act of terrorism.”*

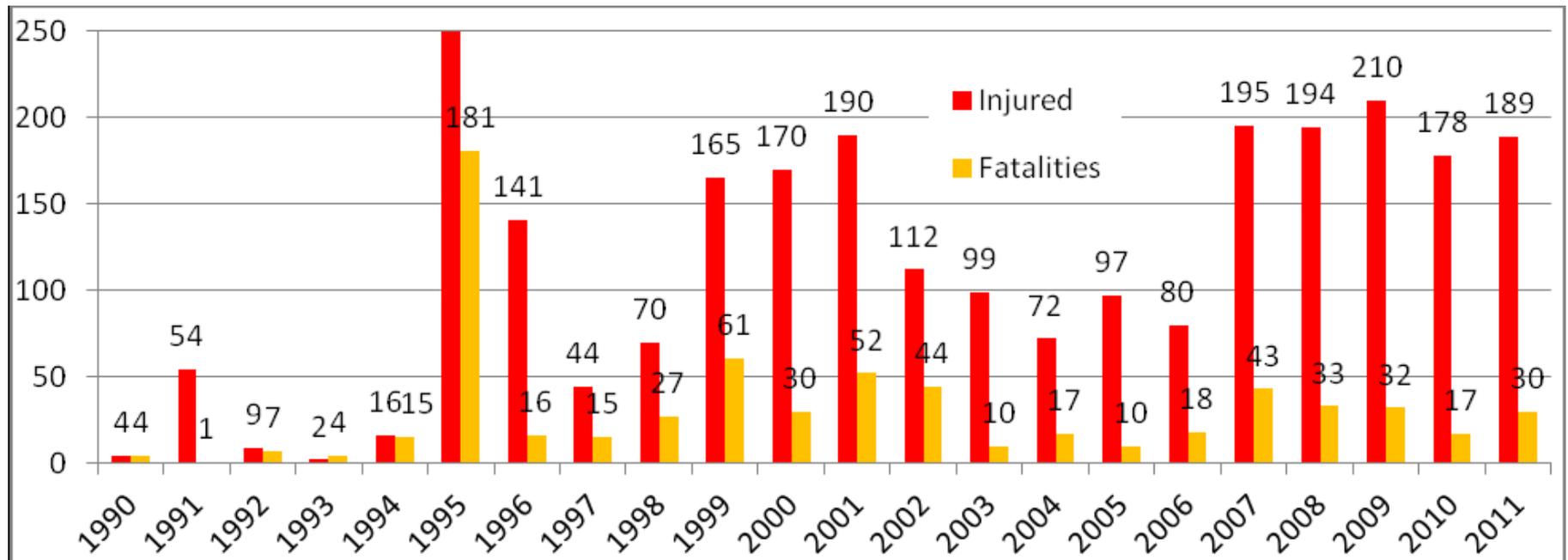
Violent Extremism is Not Primarily a Muslim Community Problem

Violence from far right extremist groups is more frequent and more deadly within the United States than violence emanating from the American Muslim community.

Terrorism of all kinds represents a tiny fraction of the roughly 15,000 murders each year in the US, a [third](#) of which go unsolved.

Arie Perliger, Challengers from the Sidelines: Understanding America's Violent Far-Right, Combating Terrorism Center at West Point (2013)

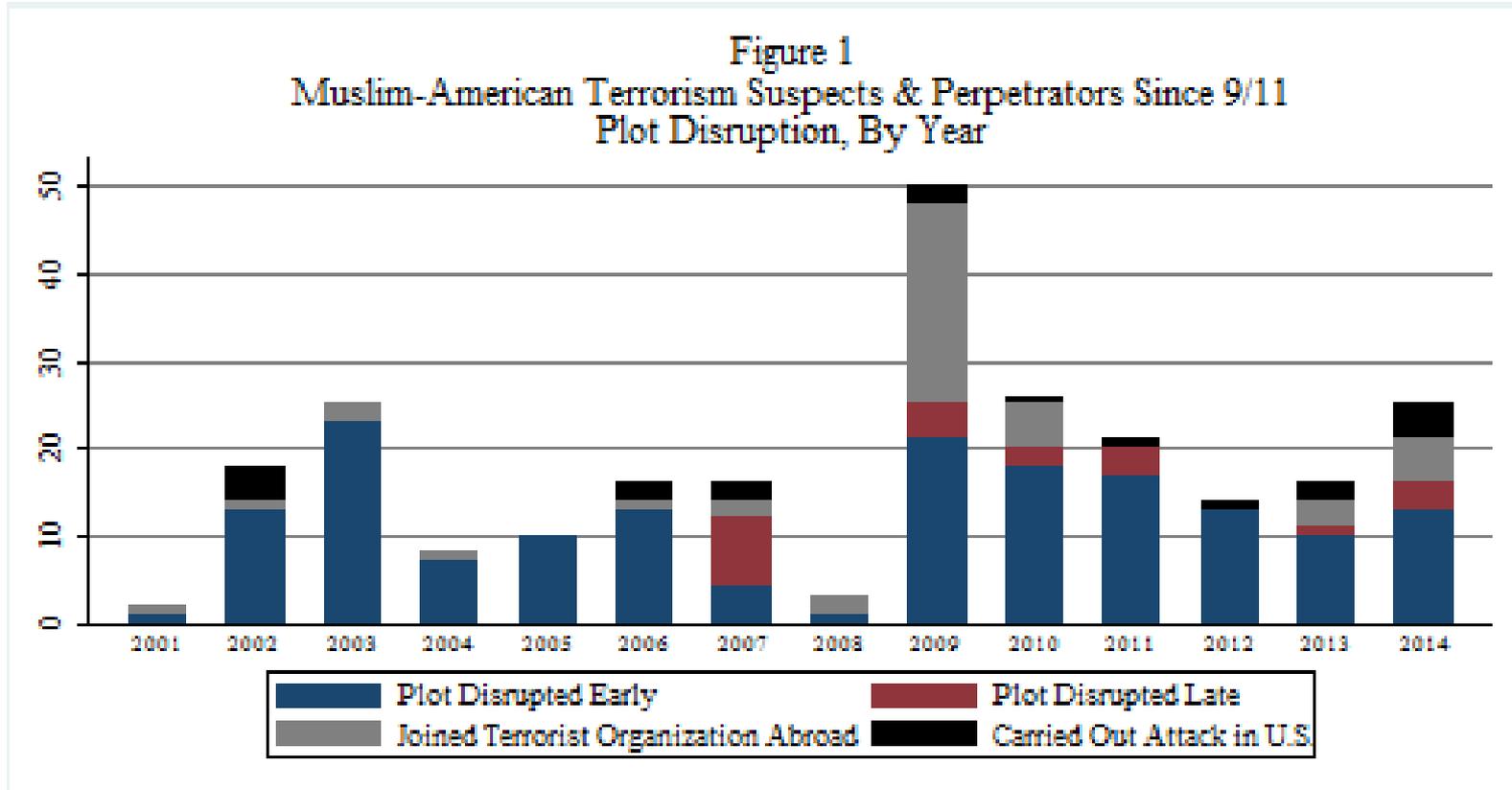
Number of Victims per Year, 1990–2011



Charles Kurzman, [Terrorism Cases Involving Muslim-Americans](#), 2014, Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security

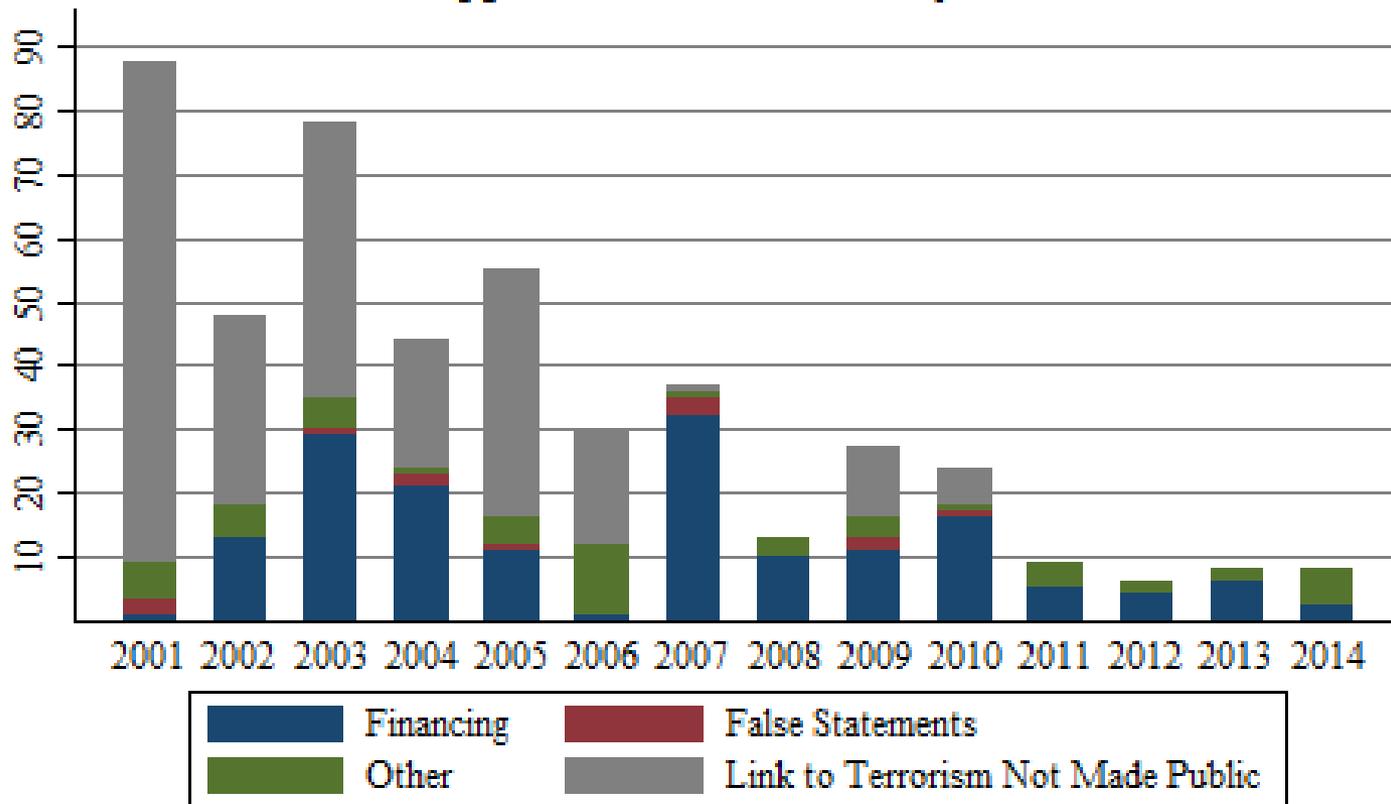
- Twenty Muslim-Americans have carried out attacks on targets in the United States since 9/11;
- Total number of fatalities in the US from terrorism by Muslim-Americans since 9/11 is 50 (+14 in 2015 = 64 people over 14 years);
- In 2014 alone, there were 30 mass shootings with four or more fatalities, killing 136 people.

Charles Kurzman, [Terrorism Cases Involving Muslim-Americans](#), 2014, Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security



Charles Kurzman, [Terrorism Cases Involving Muslim-Americans, 2014](#), Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security

Figure 5
Muslim-American Terrorism Suspects and Perpetrators Since 9/11
Support for Terrorism, By Year



Research Challenging Value of CVE

- [Preventing and Countering Youth Radicalisation in the EU](#) (E.-P. Guittet, F. Ragazzi, L. Bonelli & D. Bigo, European Parliament: Report, 2014);
- [Preventing Violent Extremism](#) (U.K. House of Commons: Report, March 16, 2010);
- [Spooked! How Not to Prevent Violent Extremism](#) (Arun Kundnani, Institute of Race Relations: Report, October 2009);
- [The Stagnation of Research on Terrorism](#) (Marc Sageman, The Chronical of Higher Education, April 2013).

Questions

- Have members of your association or teachers/administrators in your school systems been approached by law enforcement or other government agencies to participate in CVE programming? If so, did they agree to participate?
- Did they receive CVE training? By whom?
- Does the program include assessing students or their families for their risk of radicalization or vulnerabilities to extremist recruitment? What criteria are used for making these assessment?
- To whom are students and their families referred if they are assessed as vulnerable to extremist ideology? Is information regarding such referrals reported to law enforcement or intelligence officials?
- What mechanisms exist to ensure all federal, state and local student and health privacy laws are complied with in such programs? Have your schools purchased anti-radicalization or anti-extremism software? How is it used?