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Building Community Resilience to Violent Extremism Through Genuine Partnerships

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What is community resilience in relation to violent extremism, and how can we build it? This article explores strategies to harness community assets that may contribute to preventing youth from embracing violent extremism, drawing from models of community resilience as defined in relation to disaster preparedness. Research suggests that social connection is at the heart of resilient communities and any strategy to increase community resilience must both harness and enhance existing social connections, and endeavor to not damage or diminish them. First, the role of social connection within and between communities is explored. Specifically, the ways in which social bonding and social bridging can diminish risk for violence, including violent extremism, is examined. Second, research on the role of social connection between communities and institutions or governing bodies (termed *social linking*) is described. This research is discussed in terms of how the process of government partnering with community members can both provide systems for early intervention for violent extremism, as well as strengthen bonding and bridging social networks and in this way contribute broadly to building community resilience. Finally, community-based participatory research, a model of community engagement and partnership in research, is presented as a road map for building true partnerships and community engagement.

Keywords: community-based participatory research, resilience, countering violent extremism, Muslim American, social bonds

> "And in all this work, the greatest resource are communities themselves."
> —The White House, Office of the Press Secretary (2015)

In 2011, the White House released a Strategic Implementation Plan for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States, stating within the report that it was "a blueprint for how we will build community resilience against violent extremism" (The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2011b, p. 2). While the number of deaths attributable to violent extremism remain small compared to those related to other forms of violence (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2015; Kurzman, 2014), a recent federal task force identified the problem of Americans joining or supporting foreign terrorist organizations as a "grave and growing threat" that requires a comprehensive strategy for prevention (Homeland Security Committee, 2016, p. 8). What makes a community resilient to violent extremism? How can we build or enhance community resilience?

The Role of Communities in Violence Prevention

Communities have long been understood to be critical to violence prevention across a spectrum of violence types. More than two decades ago, the launch of the National

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Center for Injury Prevention and Control signaled a federal commitment to understand violence as a preventable health issue (Mercy, Rosenberg, Powell, Broome, & Roper, 1993). Noting that a law enforcement response had failed, leadership of the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control called for a public health approach to preventing violence and "full participation of communities to engender a sense of ownership of this problem and its solutions" (Mercy et al., 1993, p. 8). Among the recommended interventions was an emphasis on changing how people interact, creating programs and social/economic conditions that strengthen ties, reducing inequities and discrimination, and increasing civic engagement (Mercy et al., 1993).

This thinking built on earlier work in criminal justice that identified the importance of strong social bonds to violence prevention. Originally introduced by Hirschi (1969), social control theory suggests that strong bonds to family, community and society are fundamental to violence prevention in that they both provide a conduit for conveying social norms and expectations in addition to the motivation to abide by those norms. In seminal research examining neighborhoods and crime, Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls (1997) identified collective efficacy—social cohesion combined with a willingness to take action on behalf of the broader community—as a central protective factor in relation to neighborhood violence.

Decades later, federal leadership is again calling for community-based efforts to prevent violence—this time, violent extremism. What evidence do we have that, as with violence prevention more generally, communities are central to preventing violent extremism? This article explores community assets that may contribute to preventing youth from embracing violent extremism. Specifically, models of community resilience as defined in relation to disaster preparedness are presented as means of enhancing community assets. A model of community engagement and partnership in research (community-based participatory research [CBPR]) is presented as a strategy for building true partnerships and community collaboration.

This article describes the ways in which social connection is at the heart of resilient communities and suggests that any strategy to increase community resilience must both harness and enhance existing social connections while endeavoring to not damage or diminish them. A model depicted in Table 1 illustrates how three types of social connections are critical to a resilient community in relation to violent extremism. First, social connection within and between communities specifically mitigate risk factors associated with violent extremism; *within* communities refers to individuals that share similar social identities (termed *social bonding*), and *between* communities refers to groups composed of individuals with diverse social identities but who share a common sense of community in some other way (termed *social bridging*). Second, the role of social connection between communities and institutions or governing bodies (termed *social linking*) provides an opportunity for addressing social injustice and building structures for intervention with youth who begin down that path. Finally, CBPR, a model of

Table 1
Types of Social Connection and How They Relate to Community Resilience to Violence Extremism

Social connections that contribute to community resilience	Risk factors for violent extremism addressed by social bonds	Examples of how communities can promote resilience
Bonds: sense of belonging and connection with others who are similar	Weak social identity, searching for belonging and meaningful identity	Support for ethnic-based community organizations promoting community self-help
Bridging: sense of belonging and connection with people who are dissimilar in important ways	Social marginalization, lack of identification with or attachment to nation	Community-wide/school-based antibullying/youth mentoring programming
Linking: connections and equal partnership across vertical power differentials, e.g., government and communities	Lack of trust, lack of collaboration and equal access to resources, systems that lack the knowledge to serve/engage communities	Establishing advisory boards or multidisciplinary team with community membership

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community engagement and partnership in research, provides a road map for how to enhance these types of social connection and build resilient communities.

Defining Resilience and Community

Resilience has been defined as "the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances" (Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990, p. 426). While there is extensive research on individual resilience (Bonanno, 2005; DuMont, Widom, & Czaja, 2007), recent efforts have sought to identify what makes communities resilient in the face of adversity (e.g., Bonanno, Brewin, Kaniasty, & Greca, 2010; Gil-Rivas & Kilmer, 2016; Norris, Stevens, Pfefferbaum, Wyche, & Pfefferbaum, 2008). Norris and colleagues (2008) defined community resilience as a "process linking a set of networked adaptive capacities to a positive trajectory of functioning and adaptation" in a community after a threat or a disaster (p. 131). Some definitions of community resilience include the notion that a resilient community has the capacity to prevent events that seriously disrupt communities, such as violence (Ahmed, Seedat, van Niekerk, & Bulbulia, 2004; Coles & Buckle, 2004). In relation to violent extremism, the challenge or threat can be understood as the potential for violent extremists to recruit individuals to their cause and potentially even engage in violence; successful adaptation to this threat would be a community that comes together in such a way that its members are no longer vulnerable to the threat. In short, the process of becoming a resilient community would need to inherently reduce potential vulnerabilities or risk factors, and promote protective experiences or conditions.

While "community" can refer to a physical or geographical area, social psychology has emphasized the importance of the relational aspects of community—the ways in which one's perception of similarity to others or belongingness can provide a psychological sense of community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Sarason, 1974). This includes both subgroups that identify with each other on the basis of shared characteristics (e.g., religion or ethnicity), as well as larger encompassing groups that form "superordinate" communities to which many subgroups belong (e.g., nationality). The below discussion of social bonding and social bridging addresses community relations at these two levels (subgroup and superordinate), and leans on the definition of community as a psychological process by which one perceives a sense of membership and belonging in a group.

Understanding the Context for Muslim Americans: The Legacy of 9/11

Violent extremism takes many forms and includes all those who "support or commit ideologically-motivated violence to further political goals" (The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2011b, p. 1). Muslim Americans have committed far fewer domestic terror attacks than other extremist groups (Miller, 2014); however, they continue to be at the center of media reporting and public debate around violent extremism. This article focuses on Muslim American communities because the authors (Ellis & Abdi, 2011) have worked in close partnership with some Muslim American communities to understand community concerns related to youth violence, marginalization, and resilience. In addition, Muslim American communities have actively engaged in debates about government efforts to counter violent extremism (CVE) and whether programs directed toward preventing violent extremism are needed and/or can be effective in preventing radicalization (Weine, Polutnik, & Younis, 2015). Thus, while the article specifically addresses risk and resilience in relation to the experience of Muslim Americans, this discussion is positioned as an example of how community resilience could be developed more broadly in the service of preventing the full range of violent extremism.

Since September 11, 2001, Muslims worldwide have experienced heightened levels of discrimination (American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, 2011; Schanzer, Kurzman, & Moosa, 2010). Efforts to build community resilience in relation to violent extremism must consider not only how to build structures to diminish risk, but also how to ensure that the process does not contribute to ongoing negative stereotypes and stigma of Muslim Americans. Although the focus of this article is on community resilience as a means of preventing violence rather than responding to violence/disaster, it is important first to acknowledge that our nation remains in the post-9/11 era—and a present-day

Paris/San Bernardino era—where the lingering effects of those tragedies shape the Muslim American experience of belonging and trust.

One of the greatest legacies of 9/11 is Islamophobia. Islamophobia, discrimination and social exclusion create conditions that may contribute to risk for violent extremism. The adverse effect of discrimination on multiple arenas of health is well documented (e.g., Johnston & Lordan, 2012; Padela & Heisler, 2010). Recent research further shows that experiences of discrimination are also linked to engaging in violence (Burt, Simons, & Gibbons, 2012; Caldwell, Kohn-Wood, Schmeelk-Cone, Chavous, & Zimmerman, 2004; Martin et al., 2011; Simons et al., 2006). This can contribute to a vicious cycle whereby negative stereotypes of a certain group or groups as threatening is reinforced, further heightening the likelihood for stereotyping and discrimination. The link between discrimination and violence in part may be explained by negative emotion (e.g., depression, interpersonal hostility) generated by discrimination, decreased attachment to the individuals/institutions seen as responsible for the discrimination, and/or a disengagement from conventional norms and, consequently, diminished social control (Agnew, 2001; Burt et al., 2012; Simons, Chen, Stewart, & Brody, 2003).

Some research suggests a link between discrimination and violent extremism. Countries that experience greater minority group economic discrimination are at higher risk for domestic terrorist violence (Piazza, 2011). In addition, some research has found a greater odds of supporting political violence among Muslim Europeans and Muslim Americans who have experienced discrimination (Victoroff, Adelman, & Matthews, 2012). As Victoroff and colleagues (2012) noted, “Prejudice is a vicious circle, in which outgroups feel aggrieved, which inspires disruptive behavior by an extremist minority, which may add to ingroup prejudice, which in turn exacerbates outgroup grievance” (p. 804). Another potential outgrowth of Islamophobia is the potential for turning toward a more extreme identity as a result of being blocked from embracing a mainstream identity (Thomas & Sanderson, 2011; Zimmermann & Rosenau, 2009).

Another legacy of 9/11 is fear and distrust of authorities among some American Muslims. Concerns of surveillance and ethnic/religious profiling were particularly salient immediately following 9/11, and continue to be important today (Council on American-Islamic Relations Minnesota, 2015; Zimmermann & Rosenau, 2009). The negative reaction of some Muslim American advocacy groups to CVE programs introduced in three “pilot” cities of Boston, Massachusetts; Minneapolis, Minnesota; and Los Angeles, California, illustrates the ongoing intensity of concern among some that Muslim American communities are unfairly targeted and at risk for the infringement of civil rights and civil liberties (Romaniuk, 2015; Weine et al., 2015). Furthermore, some community advocates have noted that the focus on violent extremism is disproportionately large compared to responses to problems viewed as being of far greater concern to the community, such as gang violence, and that CVE is getting disproportional attention and resources (Schanzer, Kurzman, Toliver, & Miller, 2016). Thus, another critical component of building resilient communities will be to address these concerns through building transparent, authentic, trust-engendering partnerships between communities and government.

Resilience and Disaster Preparedness: Applications to Preventing Violent Extremism

Community resilience as a means of preparing for disaster has been broadly embraced (Pfefferbaum, Pfefferbaum, & Van Horn, 2015). Norris and colleagues (2008) proposed a model of community resilience in relation to disaster response that involves four key networked adaptive capacities: economic development, information and communication, social capital, and community competence. While all four of these attributes likely have strong relevance for reducing risk for violent extremism, this discussion will focus on the latter two: social capital and community competence. *Social capital* has been defined as “the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures” (Portes, 1998, p. 6). Norris and colleagues (2008) described social capital as involving three key dimensions: sense of community (trust and belonging within one’s own community), sense of attachment to place (connection to one’s neighborhood or city), and civic participation (engagement with institutions or formal organizations). Thus, strong social bonds within a community as well as linkages to institutions and agencies are considered central to a resilient community. Norris and colleagues (2008) further suggested that resilient communities are marked by *community competence* or demonstrate the ability to collaborate effectively in the service of identifying and achieving goals. Community competence can involve both collective efficacy, the coming together to accomplish a goal, as well as empowerment, a process for engaging across power differentials in a manner that gives voice and agency to those typically in positions of less power. Thus, community competence closely parallels the concept of social linking, trust and connection between institutions/agencies and community members.

Other models of community resilience in relation to disaster preparedness similarly highlight the importance of social connections. Chandra and colleagues (2013) identified five central components of community resilience in relation to national health security: underlying physical and psychological health of the population, economic well-being, effective communication, comprehensive engagement of diverse stakeholders in planning, and social connectedness. The first two components (health and well-

being) provide an underlying community context for the other three components. Chandra and colleagues (2013) noted that the model of community resilience "highlights that community resilience depends on the strength of social connections among community members and between community members and the community-based organizations (CBOs) that serve their needs" (p. 1182).

Pfefferbaum and colleagues (2015) suggested that social connections, social groups, social networks and social capital are fundamental to community resilience in relation to disaster preparedness, and that building social capital is fundamental to increasing community resilience. They further suggested that developing community teams that include diverse stakeholders and, in particular, engage community members who are typically marginalized or underrepresented, is an important means of increasing community resilience. They also note that the very process of building partnerships around a team can build social capital, and is as important as the outcome of having a team in place to prepare for disasters (Pfefferbaum et al., 2015).

Thus, many disaster preparedness models focus on social connectivity, or bonding, bridging and linking, as primary assets within resilient communities. Other underlying components of disaster preparedness are also likely to be important background factors to reducing violent extremism (e.g., social and economic well-being, effective communication); as Coie and colleagues (1993) articulated in relation to prevention science, any significant developmental phenomenon entails "complex transactions between individuals and their environments, between systems of influence, and across periods of time" (p. 1017). Structural and political context surely shape a context in which social bonds may be easier or harder to develop and, to some extent, the process of social linking and actively including minority voice in government-community coalitions may ultimately contribute to a more just sociopolitical system. Thus, while social relations alone are not sufficient to ensure resilient communities, they are critical capacities that contribute to making communities resilient to violent extremism.

Social Bonding: Belonging and Connecting Within Communities

The search for a meaningful identity is frequently theorized to be a fundamental reason that some youth radicalize to violence (Al Raffie, 2013). This process can involve both the lure of an identity that promises power and significance, but also can grow out of the absence of a positive sense of social identity. In this case, the search for identity is understood as a personal crisis that may emerge in the context of conflicting identities that lead to an underidentification with any particular identity. An example of this is when a Muslim immigrant youth perceives that his or her familial, cultural, and religious identity is in conflict with the mainstream culture of the country in which he or she lives. Al Raffie (2013) described this as "a "double" sense of non-belonging that triggers a search for identity" (p. 74). However, in a comparative study of terrorists, nonviolent radicals, and young Muslims, Bartlett and Miller (2012) found that identity issues were salient among all three groups; thus while identity may play a role in radicalization, it is not a sufficient explanation on its own.

A strong racial or ethnic or spiritual identity has been found to attenuate the association between discrimination and the various negative health and public health outcomes in some populations (Benner & Kim, 2009; Ellis et al., 2010; Hodge, Zidan, & Husain, 2015), though not all (Lee, 2003). Sonn and Fisher (1998) suggested that a strong social identity within oppressed groups can serve as a protective resource, mitigating the negative effects of oppression. By engaging with each other in settings that reinforce one's sense of identity (e.g., within a church, mosque, or extended family), a positive sense of identity is maintained while the negative effects of oppression are moderated (Sonn & Fisher, 1998). It is important to note that violent extremism is a unique problem and that youth who experience discrimination may be pushed toward a more conservative and less tolerant type of Islamic practice. Indeed, it has been argued that "Islamophobia drives radicalization and vice-versa" (Abbas, 2012, p. 9).

Critically, programs or policies that create "suspect communities" may undermine this pathway toward resilience. In a study comparing programs aimed at reducing violent extremism in three European cities, Vermeulen (2014) found that by aiming programs at entire communities, unintended consequences of increased stigma and discrimination led to conditions of even greater risk for violent extremism, noting, "Viewing a whole group as inherently suspicious proved conducive to the severe stigmatization of an entire community" (p. 288).

In contrast, strengthening social identity within one's ethnic or religious group may be an important means of building community resilience to violent extremism. In their research examining aspects of Muslim American communities that prevent radicalization to violence, Schanzer and colleagues (2010) identified the assertion of Muslim American identity as an important protective factor in addition to the understanding that this identity is compatible with other identities including American. They further found that "the creation of robust Muslim American communities may serve as a preventative measure against radicalization by reducing social isolation of individuals who may be at risk of becoming radicalized" (Schanzer et al., 2010, p. 2). Although these authors also note that strengthening of communities is typically not done directly in the service of reducing violent extremism, they find that it nonetheless contributes to diminishing this risk.

Social Bridging: Connections Between Communities

While a strong sense of identification with one's own group can be protective, a sense of connection with one's larger national identity is also important. Much of the research examining the role of social marginalization and violent extremism has focused on alienation from host or dominant communities. Framed in terms of social capital theory, it is the absence of bridging social capital—strong connections to others who are dissimilar to oneself in some important way (e.g., culturally, religiously)—that makes one more vulnerable to violent extremist trajectories.

In a study of 131 Dutch Muslim youth, Doosje, Loseman, and Bos (2013) examined components of what they called a radical belief system, investigating the association of these components with attitudes toward Muslim violence by others. They found that perceived illegitimacy of authorities, perceived in-group superiority, distance to other people and societal disconnectedness all significantly predicted attitudes toward Muslim violence (Doosje et al., 2013). Similarly, in an examination of diverse types of violent extremists in the United States, Chermak and Gruenewald (2015) found that weak bonds to society were common. They conclude that "AQAM[1] perpetrators studied here may not be able to integrate into American communities and remain cultural outsiders" (Chermak & Gruenewald, 2015, p. 152).

While most studies focus on social marginalization as a risk factor, an inverse frame points to the possibility of strong bridging and social capital as a means of protection. In research examining openness to violent extremism among young Somali immigrants in the United States and Canada, stronger connection to community was associated with less openness to violence in support of a political cause (Ellis et al., 2014, 2016). In a sample of 465 ethnically Somali young adults living in the United States and Canada, a latent class analysis identified five classes, or groupings of participants who tended to report shared attitudes and behaviors. Groups that scored low on violent behavior and/or attitudes reported strong attachment to their country (United States or Canada) and low levels of social marginalization. In short, strong social connections were associated with less openness to violence, including violent extremism (Ellis et al., 2016).

Promoting tolerance and acceptance of diversity, and enhancing opportunities for minority youth to experience themselves as integral members of the larger community and nation are therefore key components of community resilience. Providing these types of avenues to integration *while simultaneously allowing for a strong ethnic identity* is central to community resilience.

Linking Social Capital: Connections Between Community, Organizations, and Government

Thus far, research has been presented that describes how social bonds and social bridges can diminish vulnerability to violent extremist ideas or recruitment. Communities also need mechanisms for early identification of youth who may be radicalizing toward violence and a means of providing off-ramps for these youth before the criminal justice system becomes engaged.

The "bystander effect" (Mandel, 2010) has been identified as a key barrier to identifying and intervening with individuals seeking to engage in violent extremism; in an examination of lone-actor terrorists, 64% of the time friends or families were aware of an individual's intentions to carry out a violent act (Gill, Horgan, & Deckert, 2014). While there are multiple explanations for why these "bystanders" failed to take steps to alert authorities to potential risk, Williams, Horgan, and Evans (2015) found that key reasons for not disclosing information about a potential violent extremism threat were concerns that the disclosure would get a friend/family member in trouble (as opposed to providing help) and potential ramifications from within the community itself.

Fundamentally, resilient communities require a great degree of trust and communication between community members and government representatives. Central to this is the idea of shared goals and purposes. Szreter and Woolcock (2004) noted that

> for trusting social norms to develop, there needs to be a minimum degree of understanding among the participants in the network in their mutual dealings with one another that they share each other's goals and purposes, and are working together toward mutually compatible ends. This, in turn, needs to be based upon a shared sense of fairness . . . and mutual respect. (p. 656)

How has this played out in efforts to prevent violent extremism in our communities? The White House states that the goal of CVE is "to prevent violent extremists and their supporters from inspiring, radicalizing, financing, or recruiting individuals or groups in the United States to commit acts of violence" (The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2011a, p. 3). Policies and programs seeking to implement CVE have faced significant challenges and criticism. One of the early efforts, the U.K.'s Prevent program, failed to achieve a sense of equal partnership and common purpose and has been critiqued as increasing stigma of Muslim communities (Romaniuk, 2015). Although more recent CVE efforts have integrated some of the lessons learned from the Prevent program, some segments of the community have continued to view CVE as misguided and

[1] AQAM stands for Supporters of al-Qa'ida and Affiliated Movements.

a threat to civil rights and civil liberties (Romaniuk, 2015; Weine et al., 2015). Specific concerns include (a) an apparent emphasis on Muslim communities, thereby insinuating that Muslims are at greater risk for radicalizing to violence than other communities, and (b) questions about whether CVE programs cross over into intelligence gathering or surveillance (Romaniuk, 2015; Schanzer et al., 2016). Concerns such as these reflect a lack of trusting partnerships between some sectors of community and government; as Weine, Henderson, Shanfield, Legha, and Post (2013) pointed out in relation to immigrant and refugee communities, "We ask people in these communities to collaborate with government, and yet what assurances, safety and protection do we provide them?" (p. 331). Implementing CVE in the absence of trusting partnerships may not only undermine the potential for systems to respond to prospective threats with early intervention, but may also contribute to a weakening of social connections between communities, potentially adding to the very problem CVE is tasked with addressing.

Strong partnerships between communities and institutions or government have been acknowledged as central aspects of resilient communities. Linking social capital has been used to describe the process of thoughtful collaboration, communication and problem solving between government and communities, and has been noted to lead to more successfully identifying and reaching shared goals (Poortinga, 2012). These ideas are also echoed in the description of capacity building, which Hawe and Shiell (2000) have referred to as "the process of working in partnership with communities (sharing power, building skills) on a particular issue" (p. 879).

Work in other spheres provide lessons in how to build community competence and linking social capital. In a review of partnerships built in the service of health promotion, Gillies (1997) identified several common features across the most effective efforts. First, stronger community representation and involvement in concrete activities related to health promotion lead to better sustainability and greater impact. Second, sharing of power with community members, rather than token involvement, is critical. Finally, successful initiatives involved policy-building around issues identified as important and relevant by community members. Notably, in some communities gang violence has been identified as a significant local concern with far larger felt consequences than violent extremism. Engaging community members in partnerships to address gang violence offers an example of how community competence can be built around issues seen as relevant and critical to community members. The process of developing these partnerships may simultaneously build broader resilience and paradoxically contribute more to the ultimate prevention of other forms of violence, such as violent extremism, than a top-down initiative focused solely on a government-identified issue (e.g., violent extremism).

Fundamentally, as a government-initiated effort, CVE must overcome community concerns that the initiative is being done "to" them rather than "with" them; power differences between government and community contribute to fears that the program activities will be used against rather than for the benefit of the Muslim community (Nasser-Eddine, Garnham, Agostino, & Caluya, 2011). Thus far, CVE has been the charge of law enforcement agencies. While community policing efforts have gone a long way toward building trust with minority communities, many of those efforts have targeted building trust with urban minority communities such as African Americans. CVE efforts, on the other hand, must engage new communities such as Muslim immigrant communities that bring with them unique experiences related to religion, culture and relationship with government institutions (Cashin, 2010; Huq, Tyler, & Schulhofer, 2011). In a recent report describing their study of community policing in response to violent extremism, Schanzer and colleagues (2016) noted that fewer than half of the police departments surveyed used community outreach and engagement as a strategy to address violent extremism; even fewer included community members in boards or other formalized police/community partnerships. To succeed, efforts to CVE must build genuine partnerships with all communities.

Community-Based Participatory Research: A Model for Building Resilient Communities

How can an atmosphere of trust, respectful collaboration and colearning be developed when working across differences in culture, power, resources and access to information? Fields such as psychology, education and public health have struggled with the issue of disadvantaged and marginalized communities having negative experiences with research institutions, resulting in community members losing trust in both the process and the outcomes (e.g., interventions) of research. CBPR was developed to specifically alter the power dynamic previously inherent in a researcher-subject relationship, bringing together community members and institutions to work as equal partners to identify, analyze and address public health concerns or issues (Israel, Schulz, Parker, & Becker, 1998; Schulz, Israel, & Lantz, 2003). Could a similar process be called upon to build resilient communities in relation to violent extremism?

What Is Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR)?

CBPR is an approach to research that looks at participants or consumers (especially vulnerable or disenfranchised par-

ticipants) as key and equal partners. It has been used in fields as diverse as reducing stigma around HIV among marginalized communities (Derose et al., 2014), reducing domestic violence (Burke et al., 2013), and reducing youth violence (Leff et al., 2010). It has also been used with diverse communities including African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans. CBPR promotes community ownership of research. Key principles of CBPR include approaching the community as a "unit of identity" and working with community members as a group, enhancing strength and resources in the community, ensuring that community-research partnership is reflected in all stages of the project, valuing knowledge from all partners, using knowledge and action for the benefit of all participants, promoting colearning, addressing social inequalities and contributing to "reciprocal transfer of knowledge, skills, capacity, and power" (Israel et al., 1998, p. 179). The outcome of this process is meant to benefit all stakeholders, including community participants, practitioners, and researchers, and result in greater connection between those who are being studied and those who study with greater benefit to both (Viswanathan et al., 2004).

In practice, CBPR involves both underlying values (e.g., belief that community members hold critical knowledge and are equal partners) and concrete structures to help operationalize these values (e.g., community advisory boards with decision-making power, the hiring of staff members that reflect the community of focus, building capacity in the community and transferring leadership). While there is no single prescription of how CBPR should be done, successful models contribute to building systems and structures that require and facilitate community participation. Below are several examples of how CBPR was used to overcome challenges that have thus far proven to be barriers to effectively engaging communities in preventing violent extremism: bridging disparate cultures, stigma, and distrust of authorities.

CBPR as a Means of Overcoming Cultural Barriers

CBPR has been used to address youth violence among ethnic minority and economically disadvantage youth in urban communities. One example is the Philadelphia Collaborative Violence Prevention Center. This project was one of eight centers across the nation chosen to use CBPR to combat youth violence by the national Academic Center of Excellence on Youth Violence by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, n.d.). Leff and colleagues (2010) chose CBPR because it aligned with their mission to work with communities as "equal and complementary partners in addressing the issue of youth violence within an ethnic minority, urban, and economically disadvantaged community" (p. 208). They argued that using CBPR in collaborating with ethnic minority communities results in "interventions that are culturally sensitive and responsive to the needs of the local community, while increasing the likelihood of generating meaningful and sustainable results" (Leff et al., 2010, p. 208). Youth and community advisory boards and community symposia all provided means of incorporating key stakeholder feedback into the project from conception to implementation to evaluation. For example, in an early phase of the partnership a question was raised regarding what mechanism would best include community voice; the planned approach of using focus groups was modified based on community feedback. Such actions both build trust and lead to more effective methods for gathering data or incorporating community voice. Similar processes in CVE, that incorporate community perspectives in meaningful ways throughout the course of a program, could reduce mistaken assumptions about community needs and best methods for effective interventions or evaluations.

CBPR and Overcoming Stigma

CBPR has also been used to facilitate research on, and reduce stigma related to, highly stigmatized topics. For example, Derose and colleagues (2014) used CBPR in partnership with African American and Latino churches to create an intervention focused on reducing the stigma attached to HIV. Faith leaders presented narratives showing tolerance and inclusion of those who were stigmatized was central to the Christian faith (Derose et al., 2014). CBPR facilitated correct identification and integration of "the right messengers" who were able to change perceptions within their community. In relation to violent extremism, respected leaders from within Muslim American communities may be positioned to help reshape discourse about youth and radicalization within the community to encourage identifying and helping youth who appear to be struggling.

Engagement of youth as central partners in CBPR can also facilitate a focus on positive development, rather than problems. Reclaiming Futures is a community-based approach to support youth with substance abuse and delinquency issues. The program's philosophy is that "developing young people and the communities they live in can occur simultaneously" (Nissen, 2011, p. 24); when asked to identify what would help youth, stakeholders in their study identified a "network where youth could find a positive sense of identity, opportunity, and meaningful connection to others" (p. 23). Similar ideas have been applied to violence prevention (Allison, Edmonds, Wilson, Pope, & Farrell, 2011). In relation to violent extremism, developing opportunities for diverse youth to work together in leadership capacities may provide opportunities to challenge stigma and encourage interethnic collaboration.

CBPR and Building Trusting Relationships

Building trust between community and institutions has been one of the strengths of CBPR (Green & Mercer, 2001; Israel et al., 1998). CBPR engages with communities as partners in a way that is respectful and collaborative rather than paternalistic. Research objectives include clear community identified needs and expectations rather than simply the interest of the researchers (Israel et al., 1998). Communities that have historical distrust of institutions, such as African American communities, are particularly difficult for researchers to engage (e.g., Earl & Penney, 2001; Freimuth et al., 2001); CBPR has successfully overcome this distrust. An example of how CBPR can create a more trusting relationship between researchers and the African American community can be seen in the work of Ammerman, Corbie-Smith, St George, WA, and Weathers (2003), who emphasized the importance of engaging and working with pastors and other respected community leaders who then act as gateways into the community.

Programs aimed at reducing risk for violent extremism could benefit from building partnerships with respected community leaders (e.g., religious leaders, natural community leaders, or heads of ethnic-based community organizations), and youth; coalitions could be formed between these leaders and those who are positioned to make systemic or resource-based changes, such as policy or governmental leaders. Such coalitions could both build trust and simultaneously lead to actions that are more responsive to community needs and in support of social justice.

Conclusion

Government agencies have been charged with reducing our nation's vulnerability to violent extremism. In response, many have called for enhancing community resilience. Resilient communities require strong bonds within ethnic/religious subgroups, and also between these individuals and others in their broader community who may by dissimilar in important ways. Furthermore, resilient communities require genuine partnerships between communities and its governing institutions. The potential value of these bonds, bridges and links between and among individuals and institutions has been recognized over the years in relation to reducing violence and preparing communities to respond to disaster.

But as with disaster management, to truly build community resilience may require a paradigm shift. Disaster preparedness has traditionally been "top-down," but more recent efforts to focus on community resilience have noted the importance of shifting to a "bottom-up" approach because communities often play the most critical role in both immediate and longer-term response to disasters (Chandra et al., 2013). Done wrong, top-down efforts to define and respond to the risk of violent extremism run the risk of undermining the very community assets that contribute to community resilience. An overemphasis on one particular group as vulnerable to violent extremist ideology will lead to stigma and discrimination. Even carefully crafted messaging about the breadth of the threat of violent extremism can quickly be undermined by lopsided media coverage that overemphasizes the threat of violent Islamic ideology. Greater discrimination can both undermine a positive sense of social identity and alienate minorities from society—thereby reducing social bonding and social bridging, two essential resilient processes within communities. In the words of a Somali refugee youth interviewed as part of an investigation on violent extremism and Somali youth in the media, "They feel I am a threat, but I feel I am a target" (Ellis & Abdi, 2011). Thus, the very process of a government entity identifying a need for violent extremism prevention within a community may contribute to a reduction in community resilience. CBPR provides an alternative approach that could be used in the development of programs aimed at reducing risk for violent extremism. The process of building true partnerships could build the very social networks, identity and partnerships needed to build community resilience to violent extremism.

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