

Building Resilience against Violent Extremism: A Community-Based Approach

By
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Building Resilience Against Violent Extremism (BRAVE), the World Organization for Resource Development and Education (WORDE)'s community-based approach to countering violent extremism (CVE), has gained international recognition for its approach to CVE and its emphasis on research-driven strategies. This article provides an overview of the BRAVE model and suggests practical steps for how to structure an effective, research-based CVE program, based on the BRAVE experience.

Keywords: BRAVE; WORDE; CVE; violent extremism

Violent Extremism: An Increasing Threat

Preventing violent extremism—both within the United States and abroad—will remain a national security priority for the upcoming administration, given the multifaceted and expanding nature of the threat. There are a wide range of actors and movements that compose the threat matrix—including sovereign citizens; militia groups; issues-based extremists, such as eco-terrorists; ideologically linked gangs/organized criminal networks; and Islamist extremists, such as ISIS, al-Qaeda, and Al-Shabab. Islamist extremists compose a fraction of the overall threat in the United States (Kania and Kramer 2011; see also Shane 2015),¹ but in other regions, these groups claim responsibility

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for the majority of terrorist attacks, political instability, civil strife, and sectarian discord.

In addition to recruiting individuals to support violent extremist organizations (VEOs) abroad, some organizations such as ISIS (also known as the Islamic State or ISIL) and al-Qaeda encourage radicalized individuals to carry out attacks on U.S. soil. To complicate matters further, most plots, such as the 2009 Fort Hood shooting carried out by Nidal Hassan, are executed by “lone-wolf” terrorists who are not connected operationally to a larger foreign terrorist organization. Such attacks pose significant challenges for law enforcement officials to identify and disrupt (Southern Poverty Law Center 2015).

Underutilized Resources in the Fight against Extremism

Interviews with community leaders in Indonesia, Pakistan, Egypt, the UK, and the United States indicate that parents, teachers, religious leaders, counselors, and social service providers may be best positioned to identify individuals vulnerable to radicalization, and to mobilize resources to intervene should these individuals become radicalized. Community-based approaches can be effective in building resilience against violent extremism (Mirahmadi, Farooq, and Ziad 2010), but they remain an underutilized resource.

The U.S. government first articulated a strategy to leverage community resources to tackle violent extremism with the release of the 2011 White House *Strategic Implementation Plan for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States*. While the plan recognizes the role communities can play in collaboration with law enforcement agencies to protect America, it does not specify how public officials should establish those relationships; nor does it include any benchmarks for partnership. The plan also does not provide guidelines for how law enforcement can refer radicalized individuals for interventions or how community groups might conduct interventions with radicalized or at-risk individuals. In short, while the plan articulates a commitment to empowering communities, it does little in terms of providing guidance, funding, or resources to encourage the development of such initiatives. This article is a step toward filling that void: I provide an overview of a community-based countering violent extremism (CVE) program—Building Resilience Against Violent

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Extremism (BRAVE)—and reflect on what it tells us about building research-based CVE programs.

BRAVE: A Community-Led Model

Recognizing the increasing violent extremist threat, the World Organization for Resource Development and Education (WORDE) established the first community-led CVE program in the country to prevent radicalization. Launched in April 2013, and informally known as the “Montgomery County model,” the initiative is now being replicated as the BRAVE model in other counties across America.

The model utilizes an evidence-based collective-impact approach to increase the citizen’s role in upholding public safety—including intervening in the lives of vulnerable individuals before they choose a path of violence.

Understanding Radicalization

Though the U.S. government and its allies have spent millions of dollars in research to determine what causes radicalization, there is still no such thing as a terrorist profile, and no single factor can predict who will become a terrorist (Horgan 2009; Horgran 2014, 87).

What we do know from empirical research on convicted terrorists and terrorist incidents are some common indicators that exist in many of those cases, which may make an individual more vulnerable to recruitment and radicalization.

WORDE utilizes a “cluster model” approach,² which groups factors into five clusters to provide a systematic way of measuring potential risks for an individual who may be more vulnerable to radicalization and recruitment by extremist groups. These potential risk factors include sociological motivators, psychological conditions, ideology/belief/and values, political grievances, and economic factors. These potential risk factors can apply to any form of violent extremism (see Figure 1).

In the matrix in the figure, each bubble represents a set of *potential* risk factors or drivers of violent extremism. Because there are no studies to date that have demonstrated a causal link between any one risk factor, or combination of factors, and an individual becoming a terrorist, use of the term “risk factor” is not predictive of who will become radicalized. The matrix provides a structural guide to explore variables that have a potential to contribute to one’s radicalization.

Within each category, there are multiple “push” and “pull” factors highlighted that may influence an individual’s susceptibility to radicalization. Push factors are “the negative social, cultural, and political features of one’s societal environment that aid in ‘pushing’ vulnerable individuals onto the path of violent extremism.” Pull factors are “the positive characteristics and benefits of an extremist organization that ‘pull’ vulnerable individuals to join” (Hassan 2012, 18). It is important to note that these factors can independently have an effect on an individual, or several factors can overlap and have a cumulative impact.

FIGURE 1
 WORDE's Potential Risk Factors in a Radicalization Matrix



A Closer Look at Potential Risk Factors

Sociological motivators

That sociological factors, such as group dynamics and kinship ties, and in particular, familial, tribal, and peer groups, have contributed to radicalization is well documented in previous research (Davis et al. 2009; see also Saltman and Smith 2015).³ A 2006 study of European extremists, for example, noted that for more than 35 percent of the sample population, social networks that had existed prior to joining militant groups played a critical role in the radicalization process (Bakker 2006). Such networks can exert peer pressure and other means to influence individuals to support extremist activities.

Individuals who are socially alienated are also at greater risk of being recruited by violent extremists, because these groups often offer a social network, or a place where lonely individuals can cultivate a sense of belonging (Kruglanski et al. 2009; Sageman 2011, 122; Saltman and Smith 2015, 9). A recent study

conducted in partnership with WORDE and researchers at the University of Maryland found that immigrants who struggle with acculturation and identify with neither their heritage culture nor the culture they are living in are at an increased risk of feeling marginalized and isolated. The study found that experiences of discrimination often make the situation worse and could lead to greater support for radical, fundamental groups (Lyons-Padilla et al. 2015).

Further, a lack of protective resources can lead to greater vulnerability, especially for youth. Protective resources are social and psychosocial factors that can stop, delay, or diminish negative outcomes, such as radicalization (Weine and Ahmed 2012). These resources often stem from strong families, communities, and trusted institutions and can be provided by parents, extended family, teachers, religious leaders, coaches, and elders. A UK study that tracked women who joined ISIS indicates that there is evidence to suggest that women's strong familial bonds can influence some prospective female migrants at least to delay, if not reject, migration entirely (Hoyle, Bradford, and Frenett 2015). Often protective factors provide emotional and practical influence that can prevent vulnerable individuals from radicalizing.

Psychological factors

Psychological factors might also contribute to one's vulnerability and propensity toward violent extremism. One body of research indicates that some people become violent extremists as part of a "quest for significance," or a desire to provide one's life with purpose and meaning (Kruglanski et al. 2009). While developing a sense of personal meaning and significance is a common need for all humans, for some, the inability to derive personal significance might increase their propensity to join a group that offers acceptance and a sense of belonging. Moreover, circumstances that erode one's sense of self-worth, such as personal trauma, shame, humiliation, and discrimination, have also been asserted to play a major role in cultivating support for violent extremism (Lyons-Padilla et al., forthcoming).

Searching for a sense of purpose is often associated with the need for adventure, glory, and other thrill-seeking complexes (Botha and Abdile 2014). Extremist groups capitalize on this and attempt to recruit individuals to join them by utilizing action-oriented videos that feature scenes of militants training, fighting, and celebrating battle victories, or by sharing personal testimonies of fighters who joined their cause to escape their mundane lives. Such narratives might have a particular appeal to young men and women during their formative years (Botha and Abdile 2014).

Mental illnesses, in particular post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), are posited as another major push factor toward violent extremism. Individuals exposed to prolonged periods of violence often exhibit psychological symptoms akin to PTSD (Homeland Security Institute 2009), which in turn might lead to a greater propensity and vulnerability to engage in revenge or violent acts (Davis et al. 2009).

Studies have also posited that depression may make some susceptible to radicalization (Bhui, Everitt, and Jones 2014). While there is no evidence to suggest that terrorists have higher levels of severe mental illness than in the general population, symptoms of depression and anxiety seem to be more prevalent in those who sympathize with violence or terrorism (Bhui, Everitt, and Jones 2014). This is particularly relevant for lone offenders, given that 61 percent of lone-wolf terrorists (those who act alone and have no history of belonging to a certain extremist group) had previous contact with mental health services (Bhui, Everitt, and Jones 2014).

Ideologies, beliefs, and values

Violent extremists often utilize radical ideologies, beliefs, and values⁴ to foment intolerance and hatred and to justify the use of violence to address grievances. It is important to note that violent extremism is not limited to any single faith community. In fact, previous studies indicate that individuals of all faiths have perpetuated terrorism (Krueger and Laitin 2008). Moreover, religiosity in itself is not an indicator of vulnerability to radicalization.

Over the past 50 years, however, the use of Islamic discourses to justify terrorism has become increasingly prominent. For example, Osama bin Laden's first *fatwa* (religious opinion) against the United States issued in 1996 begins with numerous references to the Qur'an and *hadith* (prophetic traditions), which provide a religious overtone to his justification for the use of violence in response to his grievances with U.S. foreign policy (PBS 1996). Several other *fatwas* issued by extremist clerics such as Anwar al-Awlaki (Al-Awlaki 2010) issue calls to support antistate violence and are heavily interspersed with religious rhetoric. These edicts are based on understandings of religious texts that rely on literalistic interpretations, and deviate from or circumvent more than 1,400 years of scholarly exegesis. Previous studies (Carpenter et al. 2010; Task Force on Confronting the Ideology of Radical Extremism 2009) and public opinion data (Ghitis 2014) indicate that the vast majority of Muslims around the world reject these concepts. However, extremist ideologies resonate among some individuals, particularly those who have a limited understanding of their religion, such as recent converts. In a 2004 study, only 18 percent of violent extremists were determined to have received religious primary or secondary education (Sageman 2004). Some leave extremist groups when militants' deviant interpretations of religious texts are revealed. In a 2010 study of twenty-five former violent extremists, former militants cited al-Qaeda's inaccurate interpretation of Islam as a major factor in their decision to leave (Jacobson 2010).

In addition to espousing deviant ideologies, violent extremists posit several extremist narratives, such as the "West" has launched a war against Islam and Muslims (Silber 2009). Al-Qaeda, ISIS, and other terrorist groups contend that Muslims must unify to defeat this threat and reestablish an Islamic state, or Caliphate.

Violent extremists often propagate a bifurcated worldview in which Muslims are at odds with non-Muslims and in a constant state of conflict. Although ascribing to

such a worldview would not necessarily lead one to engage in violence, previous research suggests that it can create a propensity to affiliate or support terrorism in various ways (Borum 2014).

For example, violent extremist worldviews are often framed within simple, binary “us versus them,” “right versus wrong,” or Manichean “good versus evil” rhetoric, all of which represent value monism. Unlike value pluralism, in which multiple values are considered equally valid and respected, extremist beliefs are underpinned by value monism, the understanding that a particular viewpoint is absolute and often nonnegotiable. According to Liht and Savage (2013), “the inability to make trade-offs between competing values results in low complexity reasoning.” This myopic reasoning promotes intolerance and is often used by extremists to justify *takfirism*, or violence against those who do not ascribe to their belief structures.

Perhaps the most prevalent deviant religious concept is the centrality of combative jihad to Islamic practices. It was traditionally interpreted by Islamic scholars to represent many aspects of Islamic practices, ranging from serving God and mankind, to struggling to submit to the will of God. Jihad can include armed combat, such as a defensive war; however, there are several strict rules and conditions that must be considered before militant jihad can be sanctioned. Extremists such as Abdullah Azzam, a key mentor of Osama bin Laden, argued that anyone, at any time, has a personal responsibility to engage in jihad. This reasoning appears in several major *fatwas* encouraging violence against the West issued by Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda leader Ayman Zawahiri (Davis et al. 2009). Although religious scholars, political leaders, and academics have refuted these radical ideologies, extremists have made combative jihad a central tenet of their ideology.

Political grievances

Political grievances against a state are often a major factor in why individuals become radicalized. These grievances may be due to unpopular foreign policies or economic, social, or cultural practices sanctioned by the state; weak infrastructure; limited rule of law; inefficient judicial structures; unequal resource distribution; limited political rights and civil liberties; and repression of oppositional groups. States’ failure to address these grievances can eventually delegitimize a regime, which increases the likelihood that an oppositional group will use violence to resolve those grievances (Sprinzak 1990). Moreover, oppositional political parties are most likely to use terrorism when they have large-scale ambitions of regime change and the establishment of a new social order (Noricks 2009).⁵ This is particularly relevant for organizations such as ISIS or al-Qaeda, which intend to subvert established regimes to build a new supposed “Islamic” state.

Foreign interventions such as drone strikes and the presence of foreign military troops or bases are common political grievances. For example, the deployment of 10,000 U.S. forces in Saudi Arabia during the 1991 Gulf War was heavily criticized by Osama bin Laden. Following the twin bombings of the American Embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, an organization with ties to Osama bin

Laden issued a communiqué warning that additional attacks would occur unless U.S. and Western forces withdrew from Muslim countries (Kifner 1998). Effective recruiters draw on these global themes and then make them relevant at the individual level by appealing to personal senses of injustice, relative deprivation, or collective humiliation.

Previous studies indicate that the perception of foreign occupation also has a correlation with incidents of terrorism. For example, in a study of suicide campaigns from 1980 to 2001, suicide bombers were determined to be particularly likely to target democracies that are perceived to be foreign occupiers (Pape 2003).

State repression is considered particularly powerful in mobilizing opposition groups. The state's use of excessive violence against oppositional figures not only delegitimizes the state but also legitimizes the use of violence by activists. Furthermore, state repression can create and reinforce the notion of martyrdom (Della Porta 1995), a popular theme among extremists.

Limited political rights and civil liberties—including a lack of political representation, perceptions of political discrimination, and feelings of disenfranchisement—facilitate a sense of alienation and hopelessness, which may influence vulnerable individuals' participation in radical milieus (Helmus 2009). The lack of civil rights and civil liberties, compounded by distrust of the government, is a particularly powerful narrative among vulnerable individuals.

Government corruption is also a major source for political grievances and contributes significantly to the perceived illegitimacy of a regime. Allegations of corruption can stem from usurping power, embezzling state funds, or from serving the needs of foreign governments.

Economic factors

The relationship between economic factors—such as poverty, unemployment, and relative deprivation—and the propensity to support violent extremism is arguably one of the most contested issues in the field of terrorism studies. Some studies that rely on national survey data suggest that unemployment or low levels of income do not necessarily lead one to become a terrorist (see, for example, Krueger and Maleckova 2003). Other studies indicate that lack of gainful employment and other poverty indicators have been identified in some regions as a driving factor of recruitment and radicalization (see, for example, Mesøy 2013). For example, in Somalia, Mali, Syria, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, violent extremists target their recruitment efforts in poor communities, by providing social welfare assistance, employment, cash handouts, and scholarships to impoverished individuals to gain support (Mirahmadi and Farooq 2010; Mirahmadi, Ziad, and Farooq 2014). Similarly, Turkish foreign fighters in Iraq and Syria cite financial incentives such as stipends of \$150 per day for fighting with groups such as ISIS (Yeginsu 2014). In one study of al-Shabaab fighters, more than half of the respondents indicated that economic considerations played a major role in their decision to join (Botha and Abdil 2014). Half reported being unemployed at the time that they joined the group, while the other half reported being largely in

low-wage jobs. It is noteworthy that respondents who cited economic reasons for joining al-Shabaab were apt to view the organization as a reliable employer. It is also worth noting that disincentives play a critical role in individual's decisions to provide material support to VEOs.

In addition, feelings of relative deprivation, the discrepancy between what individuals believe they are entitled to and what they obtain or experience as their circumstances permit it, are a prominent push factor of violent extremism because they can fuel frustration and aggression (Taspinar 2009). Feelings of relative deprivation can stem from perceived economic inequalities, discrepancies of national resource allocation, or even political disenfranchisement. VEOs often reinforce relative deprivation, by drawing on victimization narratives, which posit that Muslims are discriminated against by the broader society and, as such, receive fewer resources.

Translating Research into Action: Four Core Components of the BRAVE Model

Extensive research into the theories of radicalization and decades of empirical work on social integration revealed the four core components of what would become the BRAVE model for CVE (WORDE 2016). First, engage a wide range of stakeholders—including faith community leaders, public officials, law enforcement officers, educators, and social service providers—in a way that promotes trust, respect, and positive social interaction. The goal here is that these participants become a cohesive community network, committed to public safety and serve as an early warning network of trusted adults. More than 300 faith-based institutions and community service providers have participated in the Montgomery County, Maryland, pilot initiative.

Second, educate the stakeholders with the information they need to be an informed and aware citizenry dedicated to public safety. It is important to note that the scope of the collaboration cannot be limited to terrorism. Designed to respond to the needs of each locality, the network should also address issues such as disaster preparedness, treating mental illness, and responding to acts of hate or targeted violence.

Historically, terrorism has been treated as the exclusive purview of law enforcement, but the BRAVE model empowers the wider community with knowledge to recognize warning signs of radicalization or recruitment so many more actors can intervene in the precriminal space. To date, WORDE has trained hundreds of first responders, teachers, and faith community members with the latest information about violent extremism and other public safety threats.

Third, once a community becomes an informed and aware public, it has the opportunity to connect vulnerable individuals to a variety of professionals for intervention. Fourth, professionals who are culturally competent and trained in trauma use a multidisciplinary approach to provide counseling and other direct

services, such as positive youth development classes or vocational training, for those identified as vulnerable. Although no one can prove a counterfactual—that services prevented someone from becoming a terrorist—one can prove through preclinical and postclinical assessments that clients have had a reduction in potential risk factors and an increase in protective factors.

In Montgomery County, Maryland, we also integrated a licensed clinical social worker (LCSW) into the police department. The LCSW is an independent contractor, employed by the Department of Health and Human Services, but embedded in the Crisis Intervention Team of the police department. Her case files are subject to protected health information rules, so the community can use her as a resource without worrying that it would lead to a police investigation.

Utilizing both innovative and traditional assessment tools, we can measure outcomes and efficacy of the treatment provided. Since the program is a clinical model and follows the protected health information guidelines of professionals, client information is kept entirely outside the purview of law enforcement unless a client's behavior triggers the statutory duty to warn a health care or law enforcement professional.

Lessons Learned

Having now applied these principles for more than 3 years in Montgomery County, Maryland, with more than 3,000 participants, and beginning to apply the program in Prince George, Maryland, and Denver, Colorado, there are some important lessons that stand out:

Whole-of-community approach: The BRAVE model involves diverse faith and ethnic communities, purposively and strategically brought together to reduce stigma of any single faith community. Programs that have singled out the Muslim community have been negatively perceived and only exacerbated the lack of trust or cooperation between the community and law enforcement (Schanzer et al. 2016). Such programs rarely led to more tips on potential threats and provided a lot of negative propaganda for the recruiters who claim that the West is at war with Islam and Muslims.

It is important to note that cross-cultural collaboration is not always a smooth process, and social science research strongly suggests that merely bringing different groups together, who are likely to view the other group as “not like us,” stands to increase intergroup alienation (Bodenhausen 1988; Dovidio, Evans, and Tyler 1986; O'Sullivan and Durso 1984; Wyer 1989). To bridge the intergroup divide successfully, in ways that tend to create lasting change, decades of research have demonstrated that several conditions need to be met, including being brought together as equals by trusted interlocutors, working together toward a common goal, and creating opportunities for consistent cross-cultural interaction (Aronson and Bridgeman 1979; Cook 1984; Riordan 1978).

Bottom-up; top-down: The BRAVE program truly places communities at the forefront; it gives them ownership of the agenda and allows them to define the contours of what CVE programing looks like. Nonetheless, while BRAVE is a

civil society–led initiative that is bottom-up, it also employs top-down support. The model would not be successful without support from local government and law enforcement, which confer legitimacy to the endeavor and facilitate broader community participation.

Consistent collaboration: Building momentum and expanding the circle of participation relies on fostering trust through consistent engagement and collaboration on a multitude of issues beyond violent extremism. Rather than focusing only on threats from groups such as ISIS or al-Shabaab, it is important to discuss issues such as online safety of youth, how to prevent cyber bullying, or reducing the incidence of hate crimes.

Cultivating these relationships across social divides is more critical now than ever. Domestic terror attacks are creating fault lines in our societies that will only lead to more violence, if they are not repaired. The separation of Muslims from non-Muslims feeds into the bifurcated worldview of the terrorists who say “it is us versus them; the West against Islam.” A comprehensive prevention agenda therefore must include programs that prevent that divide, so that there is only an “us” against the terrorists.

Metrics and evaluation: Last but not least, using a solid, research-based framework to guide engagement strategies, threat assessment, and intervention efforts promotes credibility and ensures financial support for the initiative. The Montgomery County model has been the subject of two federally funded evaluations. The first, funded by the National Institute of Justice (Williams, Horgan, and Evans 2016), indicates that the program has fostered positive social integration in its participants. In fact, there were statistically significant outcomes in twelve out of the fourteen indicators measured—factors such as “I feel welcome”; “I learned about cultures different than my own”; and “I feel a sense of belonging.” All these factors help to reduce social alienation, which is posited as one of the motivations for radicalization.

The second evaluation, funded by the Department of Justice, carried out by the Police Executive Research Forum, indicates that the vast majority of participants in the model felt empowered to tackle public safety issues. They had a sense of satisfaction with the quality of speakers and topics presented; had gained new insight/knowledge from the trainings; and appreciated the religious and cultural diversity of participants, and working together toward common goals.

In addition, WORDE conducts its own event satisfaction surveys after almost every event. Whether it is at a training on disaster preparedness for houses of worship or at a workshop on mental health first aid, these surveys indicate that at least 80 percent of those surveyed feel a greater connectivity to people of other faiths, have an increased understanding of people who come from other traditions, and are more likely to engage in help-seeking behaviors to protect their community and loved ones.

Recommendations

With proof of concept based on the experiences in Montgomery County, Maryland, the model shows promise for scale-up and replication in other

jurisdictions. However, there are several challenges that the next administration must consider.

1. *Improve federal government coordination in CVE:* Though important steps have been taken to coordinate and streamline the federal government coordination of CVE, much of that has not translated into practical differences at the local level. There is also no attempt to scale and replicate an evidence-based program like BRAVE or to develop a national framework for domestic CVE efforts. Every jurisdiction is left on its own to create a program from scratch, often not based on any research, and the result is an ad hoc collection of disjointed efforts. Such an approach also prevents us from creating a “community of practice” that can be fine-tuned and improved across jurisdictions.
2. *Act in ways that show how CVE is about more than terrorism and Muslims:* An oft-repeated CVE mantra is “words matter,” but the pushback to CVE is largely because the actions of law enforcement and federal partners do not match their words. In other words, if CVE is to be truly about more than just terrorism and the Muslim community, then the programming and partnerships for CVE must reflect that. It is not enough to say it; the actions should reflect the words.
3. *Increase community engagement efforts:* To reduce the long-term effects of socially alienated or isolated communities, federal, state, and local governments and law enforcement need to invest and participate in creating and sustaining cross-cultural community engagement efforts in accordance with research-based principles like those used in social integration theory⁶ or collective impact models (Kania and Kramer 2011). This will require enhancing U.S. public and private agencies’ cultural competency and partnering with civil society to implement these programs.
4. *Provide additional resources:* Communities need resources, not just funding. They need institutional capacity development, training on radicalization and terrorism, and program administration before they will be able to create multidisciplinary, community-based prevention programs as well as diversion programs (see below) that can actually treat radicalized individuals in a way that is governed by the laws of informed consent and monitored by federal or local law enforcement agencies. The Department of Homeland Security’s Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI), which enhances regional capabilities to prevent, protect, and mitigate terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies, could be expanded to assist in this area.
5. *Encourage the development of diversion programs:* Diversion programs, as opposed to prevention, are meant to take a subject off the path of criminal or violent behavior before prosecution or to channel offenders into rehabilitative programs in lieu of incarceration. Such programs are often conducted in close partnership with law enforcement, courts, district attorneys, or nongovernmental agencies because the subjects pose a greater risk to society if not properly monitored. To support such initiatives for radicalized

- subjects, law enforcement will need to provide training on radicalization indicators and behavior intervention assessment tools for professionals who have the competency to take on such cases.
6. *Establish and refine metrics for evaluating CVE programs*: Federal funding should require applicants to clearly articulate a theory of change that connects program activities with the potential risk factors⁷ that the program seeks to address. Using traditional and innovative evaluation tools, we should be able to determine whether a CVE program reduces vulnerabilities in the program participants.
 7. *Incentivize multidisciplinary approaches*: Given that CVE requires a multidisciplinary approach, the federal government should support research on adapting good practices from other prevention programs (e.g., gang prevention, drug prevention) and apply them to the CVE context. Funding agencies could also require CVE programs to be carried out in collaboration with multiple partners, or through a consortium.
 8. *Improve access to services*: For many vulnerable communities—particularly new immigrants—unfamiliarity with bureaucratic processes and language barriers can lead to misperceptions that they are being discriminated against by the system. This may reinforce “us-versus-them” mentalities and further validate the feeling that they “don’t belong here,” the latter of which is also articulated by violent extremist organizations to radicalize vulnerable individuals. There should be extensive training and resources for government funded agencies in particular to increase their outreach and engagement with these communities so that those in the community can better access services and transition to life in the United States more effectively.
 9. *Provide communities guidelines on the duty to warn*: Communities that will engage in interventions in the precriminal space must understand and be trained on the regulations around the “duty to warn,” which varies from state to state. Such laws are designed to balance the privacy rights of those seeking treatment and the rights of protection from harm for the rest of the public.

In summary, the BRAVE experience has established that long-term prevention (reduction of recruitment and lessening radicalization to violent extremism) requires public and private stakeholders to undergo a paradigm shift that emphasizes trust, collaboration, and multidisciplinary strategies through engagement, education, and specialized interventions. It is a departure from traditional government-led or law enforcement–centric approaches and requires an acknowledgement by all parties that each stakeholder makes a unique contribution to this struggle. It also requires the recognition that all citizens have a role to play in upholding public safety; and while the law enforcement community has an important role to play, it should ultimately play a supporting role to healthcare professionals, educators, and other governmental organizations that are better suited to lead prevention activities.

Notes

1. According to the New America Foundation, non-Muslim extremists are responsible for nearly twice as many deaths in the U.S. than supporters of Islamist extremism since September 11, 2001.

2. A similar cluster model approach was utilized by the Department of Homeland Security (see U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2011).

3. See Saltman and Smith (2015, 13), for a discussion of the conceptualization of “sisterhood bonds” that pull individuals toward joining violent extremist organizations.

4. It is important to note that just because an individual holds radical or extremist views, this does not make them a potential violent criminal.

5. Darcy M. E. Noricks identifies research conducted by Leonard Weinberg, Ami Pedahzur, and Arie Perlinger as instrumental works in the field. See Noricks (2009, 21).

6. Also referred to as Intergroup Contract Hypothesis, there is a whole body of social science research that outlines key factors for how this contact should be structured for maximum benefit.

7. Since there are no studies to date that have demonstrated a causal link between any one risk factor or combination of factors, and an individual becoming a terrorist, our use of the term “risk factor” is colloquial and not predictive of who will become radicalized.

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