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Research Note

Moral Disengagement and Building Resilience to Violent Extremism: An Education Intervention

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This article reports on the development of an education intervention, the Beyond Bali Education Resource funded by the Australian Governments' Building Community Resilience Grants of the Federal Attorney General's Department, that applies a conceptual framework grounded in moral disengagement theory. Beyond Bali is a five module program for schools that is specifically designed to build social cognitive resilience to violent extremism by engaging self-sanctions and preparing students to challenge the influence of violent extremism that can lead to moral disengagement. The theory of moral disengagement has been applied to the study of radicalization to violent extremism to explain how individuals can cognitively reconstruct the moral value of violence and carry out inhumane acts. The mechanisms of moral disengagement through which individuals justify violence, dehumanize victims, disregard the harmful consequences of violence and absolve themselves of blame have been used in the construction of violent extremist narratives. However, they have not been applied to the development of intervention strategies that aim to counter the radicalizing influences of violent extremist narratives.

Education interventions have been developed as preventative programs targeting gang behavior, gun activity, and other forms of anti-social behavior among young people. To date, the application of education interventions in the prevention of violent extremism has not been fully developed, although it has had some consideration in the literature on building resilience to violent extremism. Education, particularly of young people, is recognized as

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an important and vital component of a comprehensive countering violent extremism approach particularly in the context of building cognitive capacity to resist violent extremist messages. Current evidence suggests that most efforts to develop education interventions for the prevention of violent extremism in schools tend to focus on promoting tolerance and understanding through citizenship education and the teaching of civic values. In Australia, some attempts to teach high school students about terrorism have met with community and public outrage, primarily due to the approach taken to discussing terrorism in the classroom context. In one example, a government high school in Western Australia came under attack for setting students an assignment to plan a terrorist attack in order to engage them in how beliefs and values influence behaviors.¹ The case drew national and international media attention and highlighted the ethical and methodological challenges to teaching about terrorism to support critical understandings of violence among adolescent learners. Beyond the classroom context, Weine and Ahmed, for example, identify opportunities for civic engagement and the provision of supervised after-school activities as strategies to diminish opportunities for violent extremism among Somali-American youth in Minneapolis.² Education programs also appear in de-radicalization strategies in the form of religious re-education.

This article reports on the development and implementation of Australia's first education intervention designed to educate adolescent learners about terrorism and build cognitive resilience to violent extremism. The Beyond Bali Education Program (Beyond Bali) is a five module program aimed at 15–16-year-olds that consist of five learning modules. Progressively, the modules build social cognitive resilience to violent extremism by preparing students to challenge the influence of violent extremism that can lead to moral disengagement. Beyond Bali is grounded in theories of moral disengagement and moral development that together offer a conceptual framework and pedagogic approach for the development of education intervention that can equip students with the capacity to engage their self sanctions and respond in positive ways to terroristic narratives that challenge their moral engagement. The program was piloted in 2012 and is currently being distributed to government and private schools throughout Australia.

The article is divided into four sections. The first examines current educational approaches to building resilience to violent extremism primarily through programs that integrate teaching civic values, democratic participation, and social harmony. This section attempts to build an argument for the application of a moral disengagement framework and moral education for informing education interventions to counter violent extremism. The second section explores the concepts of risk, vulnerability, and resilience in the context of education interventions to violent extremism. Overall, the literature in both areas covered in these sections is scant and underdeveloped. Much of the literature on vulnerability and resilience to violent extremism draws on other forms of violence such as gang activity and youth crime. Similarly, a review of the literature on teaching methods that help to build resilience to extremism yielded no empirical studies or case studies specific to violent extremism. In this context, the third section attempts to construct the conceptual framework for an education intervention to counter violent extremism. At the heart of this section is a call to examine how social-cognitive mechanisms of moral disengagement that have been used as organizing principles for understanding radicalization, can also be applied to preventative measures. While measures of moral disengagement processes have been used to predict acts of violence and support for violent extremism among young people, the same level of attention has not been given to examining how preventative interventions may enhance personal resilience to radicalizing influences through the activation of self-sanctioning mechanisms that can potentially psychologically immunize young people

against the social influences of moral disengagement. The final section presents the Beyond Bali education program and explains how moral disengagement theory and moral education pedagogical approaches form the basis for the theoretical constructs upon which the program was developed. This section begins with a discussion on the local context with a focus on Australian response to the Bali bombings in October 2002 that claimed 202 lives, including 88 Australians. This is followed by a description of the program highlighting how cognitive behavioral and knowledge-based modes of teaching and learning were integrated into the program to modulate moral disengagement mechanisms and reinforce self-regulatory mechanisms in the learners. The results of the initial pilot and evaluation of the program are also reported in this article, although it should be noted these results are not presented as a substantive evaluation of the program.

Educational Approaches to Building Resilience to Violent Extremism

Education plays a preeminent role in the socialization of young people and their moral development. Consequently, education features strongly in the counter-radicalization programs of some States. For the most part, education interventions focus on the teaching in schools of subjects that promote tolerance, understanding, and citizenship. The United Kingdom's Prevent Strategy has produced a variety of activities in schools in recognition of the fact that schools play a vital role in preparing young people to challenge violent extremist influences. These efforts have primarily focused on "developing a positive and inclusive ethos that championed democratic values and human rights."³ Compulsory school curricula in Austria, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Australia include citizenship education, civic values, and cultural diversity. These programs are valuable in their own right, but reflect some of the problems of the broader policy approach to preventing violent extremism and building resilience that assume that violent extremism can be prevented by developing democratic participation.

Policies and programs to counter terrorism and violent extremism place particular emphasis on youth at risk of committing violent crimes influenced by ideology. This has been most pronounced in the preventative components of national counterterrorism strategies that predominantly target youth perceived to be at risk of ideological influences that promote the use of violence. In Australia, for example, the Resilience strand of Australia's counterterrorism approach has largely focused on providing funding for programs that target Muslim youth. A large proportion of funding has been allocated to programs that aim to promote democratic participation of young Muslims; address issues of alienation and marginalization; foster young Muslim leaders; and enhance Muslim youth civic competencies.

While the popular assumption is that a lack of opportunity for democratic participation is a root cause of violent extremism because violence is seen to be a last resort tool of the politically oppressed, the literature is inconclusive. In relation to the lack of democratic participation of diaspora Muslim youth, the consensus in the literature is that there is no relationship between religion and participation. A study on the relationship between religiosity and civic participation among Muslim and Christian youth in the Netherlands found that, despite popular assumptions that Muslim youth are disassociated from democratic institutions both Muslim and Christian adolescents have more developed democratic competencies than their non-religious counterparts.⁴ These findings are echoed by Attar-Schwartz and Ben-Arieh whose study on political attitudes and knowledge among Palestinian and Jewish youth concluded that political involvement was higher among more religious youth, both Jewish and Arab.⁵ Similarly, research on the political participation of ethnic minority

youth in Belgium revealed that while they do have lower levels of political participation, participation was influenced not by citizenship status or religion but by gender, socioeconomic status, language attributes and group identity.⁶ These studies indicate that programs targeting Muslim youth political participation and democratic engagement are more likely to be effective if they also take into account the broader social and economic conditions of Muslims in the diaspora.

Programs that aim at preventing violent extremism are better placed focusing on the kinds and forms of political participation available to Muslim youth. In an environment where Muslims have been excluded from participation in the public sphere, Australian Muslims are turning to alternative modes of political participation and finding new ways of engaging in political debates about their citizenship rights.⁷ A similar phenomenon can be observed among young British Muslims who respond to perceived discrimination in political and media discourses in creative ways that offer alternatives to those conventional forms of mainstream politics.⁸ The arguments made by these authors lend some legitimacy to programs that provide Muslim youth with positive avenues for expressing political dissent but do not comprehensively explain the exclusive focus on Muslims or the contribution that such programs can make to aim of countering violent extremism.

A report on the United Kingdom's approach to preventing violent extremism by the Communities and Local Government Committee concluded that the single focus on Muslims has been counterproductive to the aims of Prevent and called for a refocus of Prevent to address a broader range of extremism across all communities and dependent on a more comprehensive and effective assessment of risk.⁹ Criticisms of Prevent also raise questions about the cost effectiveness of government-funded counterterrorism initiatives that target specific communities assumed to be vulnerable (namely Muslim), are premised on the marginalization hypothesis, give primacy to the role of religion focus narrowly on radicalization.¹⁰

Progressive iterations of Prevent have attempted to address some of the issues identified by evaluations and criticisms of the strategy. At the same time, however, countering violent extremism efforts continue to be driven by a single focus on individual and/or group vulnerability to extremist violence while grappling with or completely ignoring the broader psycho-social factors associated with the phenomenon.

In light of the arguments leveled against preventative responses to terrorism, targeted educational interventions that build personal resilience by developing the self-regulatory function of young people may be effective in immunizing young people against the ideological influences of violent extremism. It is in this sense that the social cognitive theory of moral disengagement can contribute to the development of educational interventions for violent extremism.

Applications of the theory of moral disengagement and engagement to the study of terrorism and violent extremism are not new.¹¹ However, a moral disengagement framework for informing interventions to counter violent extremism has not been fully developed. Pels and de Ruyter theorize that moral education can prevent radicalization by countering signs of moral disengagement and reinforcing faithfulness to moral standards. Their analysis of theoretical and empirical studies about parental and education contexts in relation to radicalization found a need for educational practices and programs that target radicalization. Pels and de Ruyter conclude that "current practices in schooling often do not seem apt to diminish the susceptibility to radicalization in youngsters."¹²

A rapid evidence assessment of teaching methods that help to build resilience to extremism conducted a review of the literature in relation to preventative programs targeting gangs and gun activity and violent extremism among young people. As expected, the review

found no empirical studies or case studies on educational approaches to preventing violent extremism with the exception of Boucek's description of Saudi-Arabia's counterterrorism strategy, which includes an education program run by the Ministry of Education to raise awareness of the dangers of extremism and the negative impacts of terrorism and violent extremism.¹³

The review identified seven types of preventative initiatives:

- Cognitive behavioral initiatives—such as anger management, empathy, problem solving, moral reasoning, and mindfulness strategies;
- Mentoring and counselling approaches—primarily targeting young offenders;
- Knowledge-based initiatives—programs that aim to change attitudes and behaviors by educating young people about the consequences of gangs, guns, and knife crime and anti-racist education and awareness raising;
- Peer mediation and conflict resolution approaches—based on social cognitive theory to instruct students how to express anger without resorting to violence;
- Family based approaches—parent and carer training in child behavior management;
- Community-based approaches—such as outreach work and after-school programs;
- Opportunity provision—providing young people with educational and employment opportunities.¹⁴

Educational approaches tend to focus primarily on targeting youth identified as being at risk of gang involvement and crime. While such programs do not specifically address violent extremism, they do provide some good practice guidelines including taking an evidence based approach, working collaboratively and involving cooperation from school personnel.

Risk, Vulnerability, and Resilience

Resilience is a concept most commonly used in the fields of psychology and public health to refer to an individual's or community's capacity to achieve successful outcomes in the face of adversity. Studies on resilience define a particular risk or challenge and measure positive or successful adaptations to that challenge.¹⁵ Studies on child and adolescent resilience reveal certain characteristics or traits that make some adolescents immune to harsh or disadvantageous environmental influences. They also identify protective factors that enhance adolescents' capacity to deal with adverse experiences.¹⁶

Research into child and adolescent risk and resilience tends to focus primarily on risk factors for problems such as alcohol abuse, delinquency, and gang violence. There is little research available on adolescent risk and resilience in regard to violent extremism, although resilience is often cited as a central consideration in the development of countering violent extremism approaches. Several studies on adolescent risk and resilience confirm that adolescents are highly vulnerable to ideological influences. Adolescence is a period of intense psychosocial development characterized by a search for ontological security and consolidation of ideological identity. One study by Laor et al. evaluated symptoms, risk and protective factors of Israeli adolescents continuously exposed to terrorism and violence. The study found that perceived personal resilience was a significant protective factor against negative symptoms. Laor et al. conclude that early interventions to build personal resilience may help protect against the negative symptoms of exposure to terrorism and violence.¹⁷

One specific study by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) on resilience to violent extremism among Somali Americans affirms that there is no single risk factor for involvement in violent extremism. Rather

multiple risk factors interact at the family, peer, community, global, state, and social levels. The combination of risk factors operate to create three levels of opportunity for involvement in violent extremism: “youth’s unaccountable times and unobserved spaces; the perceived social legitimacy of violent extremism and contact with recruiters or associates.”¹⁸ The study does not identify protective factors but calls for a focus on strengthening protective resources and reducing opportunities for involvement.

A rapid evidence assessment of vulnerability and resilience to Al Qaeda violent extremism and other types of violent activity (animal rights activism; cults; gangs; right-wing extremism and youth crime) prepared for the Office of Security and Counter-Terrorism concluded that the evidence on risk and resilience factors for violent extremism is lacking.¹⁹ Based on limited empirical evidence the report concludes that there is no specific risk or vulnerability profile for Al Qaeda–influenced violent extremism. It identifies social, psychological, and physical risk factors. Social risk factors include broad demographic characteristics—male, young to middle-aged, married, and possibly with children—there was no identifiable discrepancy between the education levels or socioeconomic status of Al Qaeda–influenced violent extremists and the broader community although there was some suggestion that they may be working at lower skill levels than their educational attainment.

Psychological risk factors were also difficult to identify with religion playing a far lesser role in vulnerability than political ideology or grievance. Physical risk factors include support and reinforcement from family and peers, interpersonal bonds, social settings, and spaces that provide opportunities for involvement and recruitment. Social and psychological risk factors identified in other, non-Al-Qaeda–influenced, forms of violent extremism included family stability, educational attainment, personality or psychiatric problems, drug and alcohol abuse, and previous criminal convictions.

As mentioned, the study found scant evidence on the resilience factors for Al Qaeda and other forms of violent extremism. Resilience factors identified by the study included educational attainment, awareness, and tolerance of other religious and ethnic groups and financial stability.²⁰

Moral Disengagement and Violent Extremism

In the social-cognitive theory of moral disengagement, moral agency is expressed both as a refrain from behaving inhumanely and in proactively behaving humanely. The theory of moral disengagement suggests that individuals engage in violence and aggression in violation of their own moral standards. These moral standards are adopted through the course of socialization and serve as guiding principles for moral conduct. Behaviors that conflict with an individual’s moral standards create high levels of discomfort and hence are avoided through self-sanctions. Conversely, behaviors consistent with moral values create high levels of self-worth and hence are activated through positive self-sanctions.²¹ When faced with situations and influences that contradict their moral standards of right and wrong, people can choose to behave morally by exerting self-influence.

Individuals who are otherwise socialized can commit acts of violence with no sense of self-censure and do so through a gradual process of disengagement. Moral disengagement is a psychological process through which self-regulatory mechanisms of internal control are disengaged or dismissed. Self-sanctions are disengaged through the mechanisms of moral disengagement: “reconstruing conduct as serving moral purposes, obscuring personal agency in detrimental activities, disregarding or misrepresenting the injurious consequences of one’s actions, and blaming and dehumanizing the victims.”²² Collectively,

the mechanisms of disengagement allow individuals to cognitively reconstruct the moral value of violence, putting aside self-sanctions, so that acts of violence can be committed. According to Bandura, violent extremism can be explained as such:

The conversion of socialized people into dedicated combatants is achieved not by altering their personality structures, aggressive drives, or moral standards. Rather, it is accomplished by cognitively restructuring the moral value of killing, so that it can be done free from self-censuring restraints.²³

The majority of research on moral disengagement in the field of terrorism studies examines extremist narratives in relation to the mechanisms of moral disengagement. A study by Hafez of the last will and testament video speeches made by Palestinian suicide bombers drew linkages between the content of these media products and mechanisms of moral disengagement. In Hafez's study Palestinian suicide bombers used moral justification and dehumanization to moralize their violence as serving an altruistic cause of freedom from an oppressive and dangerous threat.²⁴ Aly's analysis of the narratives employed on Islamist extremist websites acknowledges that biographical narratives of suicide bombers on such websites adhere to a strict format that portray the suicide bomber as a devout martyr motivated to self-sacrifice by absolute submission to faith and an intense desire to fulfill the greatest demonstration of piety possible. Extremist narratives also displace the responsibility for violence on the victims of terrorist acts claiming that atrocities perpetrated against Muslims by Western regimes are the primary cause for their retaliatory actions.²⁵ The claims made in extremist narratives empower individuals to absolve themselves of blame for inhumane acts and behaviors while religion provides a moral template for justifying acts of violence as a moral response to perceived injustice.

Considering the application of moral disengagement to radicalizing influences, it is pertinent to also examine if social-cognitive mechanisms of moral disengagement can also be applied to the development of preventative measures. In this respect, the literature is lacking with no studies examining how processes of moral disengagement may make individuals more vulnerable to violent extremist influences or, importantly, how preventative interventions may enhance personal resilience to radicalizing influences by activating self-sanctioning mechanisms.

Moral disengagement appears as a personal risk factor to engaging in violent extremism and methods of measuring moral disengagement processes have been used to predict acts of violence among young people and support for violent extremism.²⁶ Conversely, the process of moral disengagement may be adapted and moderated to reinforce self-regulatory systems that prevent individuals from being influenced by violent extremism. McAlister notes that education and persuasive peer modeling has been shown to psychologically immunize young people against the social influences that promote negative behaviors such as smoking and racism. He suggests that similar methods may be useful in developing young people's resistance to influences of moral disengagement.²⁷

In the next section of this article, the authors describe the Beyond Bali school-based education program for countering violent extremism. Beyond Bali uses a multi-modal approach combining cognitive behavioral and knowledge-based elements to modulate moral disengagement mechanisms (prevent) and reinforce self-regulatory mechanisms (resilience) to counter violent extremism.

Beyond Bali: An Education Resource for Teachers and Students to Build Resilience to Violent Extremism

The Bali Bombing in October 2002 was arguably the most devastating peacetime attack in the Australasian region. At approximately 11 p.m. a person-borne improvised explosive device (IED) was detonated inside the popular Paddy's Pub in central Kuta, Bali's bustling nightclub district. The first explosion sent patrons, confused and injured, into the streets and toward the shelter of the nearby Sari Club. Minutes later, a vehicle-borne IED was detonated from a van parked just outside the Sari Club, causing the total destruction of the club and its surrounds and most of the 202 casualties. The Bali Bombing was particularly significant for Australians, not only because 88 of the 202 dead were Australian but also because Australians have for decades dominated tourism in Bali, making up around 25 percent of overall tourist arrivals to the Island. In Australia, the bombings were framed as a direct attack on Australia and particularly on Australian values. The media and political discourse on the attacks emphasized the perception that Jemaah Islamiyah (who claimed responsibility for the attacks) targeted Kuta in protest to Bali's indulgence of Western decadence.²⁸

Occurring just one year and one day after the 11 September attacks on the United States, the Bali Bombings further consolidated an already developing discourse that constructed *Salafi-jihadist* terrorism as an assault on Western values of democracy, freedom, and liberty. Australia's response to 11 September, the Bali Bombings, and subsequent international *Salafi-jihadist* terrorist attacks was to reaffirm its commitment to the values of democracy that the attackers were seen to be targeting. As a consequence, the policy response in Australia reflects a focus on promoting civic engagement and democratic participation by groups that are seen to be at risk or vulnerable to the radicalizing forces of Al Qaeda-influenced ideology.²⁹ Education programs developed in response to the terrorist threat in Australia have largely targeted Muslim communities and consist primarily of leadership and mentoring programs, interfaith education, and programs that promote social values of respect, understanding, and tolerance. The range of programs developed and driven by the Australian policy response to terrorism reflect an understanding of vulnerability as an individual and collective phenomenon triggered by social isolation and resilience as the individual and collective engagement in democratic participation, social harmony, and interfaith tolerance. While some programs were school based, most were community based and targeted a specific ethnic (Arab, Somali, African, Lebanese) or religious group (Muslim).³⁰ As stated earlier in this article, this focus reflects some of the problematic issues with the broader policy approach to preventing violent extremism that has been articulated in scholarly analysis and evaluations of "soft" counterterrorism strategies. There is, however, some suggestion that awareness and tolerance of other religious and ethnic groups is a resilience factor to violent extremism, although the evidence supporting this assertion is scant.³¹

Among the range of interventions to counter violent extremism in Australia, there was no school-based program that (a) did not specifically target a singular religious or ethnic group; (b) focused exclusively on countering violent extremism; (c) could be integrated into the Australian school curriculum; and (d) constructed an understanding of individual resilience as the capacity to psychologically resist the moral disengagement mechanisms embedded in violent extremist narratives. In addition, attempts to integrate the teaching of terrorism in schools as a platform for developing students' awareness and capacity to critically analyze acts of violence had met with public resistance and ethical and methodological challenges. In this context, the Beyond Bali Education program was

conceived as a project that would translate theoretical models of moral disengagement and conceptual understandings of resilience to a practical program that could, potentially, provide evidence for the development of future programs in the countering violent extremism space.

The Beyond Bali Education Program was developed through collaboration between the Bali Peace Park Association Incorporated (BPPAI) and Curtin University, Western Australia. BPPAI is a non-profit organization formed by survivors, families, and friends of the 2002 and 2005 Bali bombings with the mission of creating a peace park on the Sari Club site of the 2002 Bali terrorist attacks in Kuta. Development of the resource was guided by an advisory body that consisted of the project leader, Anne Aly, a representative from the BPPAI, a Muslim youth representative, school teachers from two local schools and the project team, Elisabeth Taylor and Saul Karnovsky who developed the resource.

The project was born out of a research interest in citizen-driven responses to terrorism that explores the performative capacity of such initiatives to construct alternative and counternarratives to terrorism. As part of this, Anne Aly is currently the Chief Investigator on a three-year research project that explores how the Bali Peace Park initiative represents a form of citizen-driven performative resistance to terrorism through the construction of contested discourses that take place and are performed in and around the site of terrorist attacks.³²

Moral disengagement theory provided a conceptual framework for identifying elements in the program that could potentially counter the violent extremist narrative, thereby building resilience to the psychological influence of these narratives. Moral development theory offered a pedagogical approach to developing ethical discourse through the use of moral dilemma stories. Together, these two approaches, if implemented effectively, can be used to construct education interventions for violent extremism that target mechanisms of moral disengagement and facilitate the development of moral learning.

The use of dilemma stories in moral education can be traced back to Kohlberg who pioneered a cognitive-developmental theory of moral development.³³ Dilemma stories are often suggested as a pedagogical approach to developing ethical discourse and critical reflection in the classroom. According to Kohlberg's theory, dilemma stories are grounded in the concept of values clarification, through which students explore their own values and compare and discuss them with their peers.³⁴ This type of approach can result in transformative learning whereby individuals can critically assess their own beliefs and values and reconstruct their assumptions and perspective leading to the active construction of new values and moral learning.³⁵

The theoretical premises were:

1. Individuals who engage with a violent extremist narrative are more likely to become radicalized toward violent extremism as they adopt moral disengagement mechanisms and disengage their self-sanctions to:
 - Reconstruct violent extremism as morally just
 - Dehumanize victims
 - Obscure personal agency
 - Disregard the harmful or negative consequences of violent extremism
2. Education interventions can psychologically immunize young people against the social influences that promote violent extremism by engaging their self-sanctions to:
 - Construct violent extremism as morally unjust and inhumane
 - Empathize with victims of violent extremism

- Develop self-efficacy
 - Regard the harmful or negative effects of violent extremism
3. Educating students on the social impacts of the Bali bombings provides them with an opportunity to humanize the victims of violent extremism and assess the harmful impacts of violent extremism in ways that challenge violent extremism.
 4. Dilemma stories around the Bali bombings events facilitate moral learning by allowing students to explore and compare their own values and reconstruct their assumptions and perspective.
 5. The Bali Peace Park provides them with a concrete example of how societies can respond to violent extremism in positive and productive ways and encourages them to think about ways in which they can also resist extremism both individually and as a collective.

On the basis of these five theoretical assumptions and research on good practice in education interventions, each module of Beyond Bali used cognitive behavioral and knowledge-based approaches to build social resilience to violent extremism by:

- providing students with the skills and tools to critically analyze and challenge violent extremism, its causes, and consequences;
- raising awareness and education on the social impacts of violent extremism;
- encouraging students to think about how societies can resist the influence of violent extremism; and
- engaging students through activities and discussion about the Bali Peace Park as a response to violent extremism.

Module 1 of the program is designed to engage students in the context of Beyond Bali. While Bali is enjoyed as a favorite holiday destination for many Australians (particularly in Western Australia), popular understanding of Australia's connection to Bali is largely based only on the experiences of tourism. Developing students' knowledge and understanding of the cultural and historical connections between Australia and Bali is designed to engage their interest and contextualize the program.

Module 2 also takes a combined knowledge based and cognitive behavioral approach by educating students about the consequences of violent extremism and building empathy. Students learn about the devastating consequences of the Bali Bombings through eyewitness accounts of a Bali Bombing survivor. Approaching the subject matter in this way allows students to self-reflect on their moral values and reinforce those values that empathize with victims, construct violent extremism as morally unjust, and regard the harmful impacts of violent extremism. At this stage of the program, students have been presented with the problem. As they proceed through the program they will be required to use moral reasoning and problem solving in further consideration of violent extremism and its consequences.

Module 3 is based on ethical dilemma story pedagogy that promotes critical thinking and reflection as well as individual and collaborative decision making. Dilemma stories are typically based on ethical dilemma situations. Dilemma stories engage students in a moral dilemma situation in which choices have to be made at different stages of the story. Students are invited to identify with the character in the story that is faced with the dilemma and reflect on how the problem can be solved. They then exchange their own approaches and views with their peers in a whole-class discussion.³⁶ The focus is not so much on moral reasoning but rather on deep engagement with one's personal values and a confrontation with other people's values, which might be different from one's own. At this stage of

the program students are developing self-efficacy and exploring ways in which they can or would respond to violent extremism. Students verbalize and discuss their values and reinforce those values that self-sanction against violence.

Module 4 provides students with knowledge of peace parks as a positive response to violent extremism and conflict. Students are engaged in concrete examples of peaceful resolutions to violence and conflict and reflect on their own capacity to respond to adverse problems through positive activities such as peace activism.

The final module of *Beyond Bali* engages students in a creative exercise designed to activate their self-efficacy. Schools are encouraged to take a collaborative approach to building a peace park or garden, consulting with the school community and involving parents, staff, and local communities or partnering with other schools.

Description of the Program

The five modules of *Beyond Bali* guide students progressively through five stages of engagement, empathy, moral reasoning and mindfulness, problem solving, and creative resolution using the context of the Bali bombings and the Bali peace park. The program systematically works through a series of activities to engage students with the social impacts of the Bali terrorist attacks and guide them through peaceful alternatives to violence.

Each module in the program links to the Australian Curriculum and consists of a series of activities that meet the learning outcomes subscribed in the Australian Curriculum Framework. Teachers may elect to do all or some of the activities with their students as they work through the program (Table 1).

Program Evaluation

Beyond Bali was trialed in September and October 2012 with students at two metropolitan schools in the Perth region—one a public school and the other an Islamic community school. The public school incorporated the program into its curriculum with a group of students in the gifted and talented program (aged 15 and 16). The Islamic community school chose to trial some modules of *Beyond Bali* with year 9 students (average age 14).

The program was evaluated for its effectiveness as a teaching and learning tool for building resilience to violent extremism. This involved administering a short questionnaire for teachers and students involved in the trial program. The Project Team assessed whether the package is an effective education medium for promoting moral engagement with the social impacts of violent extremism and other effective measures such as usability of the package, interest in the activities, and usefulness against learning outcomes. The project team also held discussions with teachers and students to gain an insight into their experiences in using the *Beyond Bali* program.

Students who participated in the trial of *Beyond Bali* felt that the program was worthwhile and relevant because the content was closely connected to subjects they were already studying as part of their school curriculum. Successful school-based programs rely on school staff buy-in and engaging students in meaningful ways.³⁷ Aligning the program to the national school curriculum, rather than presenting it as a stand-alone program, ensured that both teachers and students would engage with its content.

Some students expressed that they felt the program was worthwhile because it covered religious extremism, the motives of the terrorists, and allowed them to explore their own values and develop skills to differentiate between extremists and the general Muslim population. Good practice in knowledge-based initiatives suggests that such initiatives,

Table 1
Beyond Bali program description

Phase	Description of activities	Approach
Module 1 The Australia–Bali connection: An introduction to our shared history	Module 1 begins with an in-depth study of the island of Bali—its geography, history, and culture. Background to Australia’s geographic and cultural connection with the island is interwoven throughout the activities in order to provide the necessary context for studying the Bali bombings. Students engage with a variety of material (pictorial, text, and video) in a collaborative manner to arrive at a comprehensive and holistic understanding of the content.	Cognitive behavioral and knowledge based
Module 2 Peace and conflict in Bali and the world: Understanding terrorism through our experiences with recent terrorist actions	Module 2 begins with an exploration of the events surrounding the bombings, which is facilitated through eyewitness accounts bringing a personal and relevant perspective to the events. It is essential here to convey an understanding of the sensitive and emotional nature of these events to all participants—with particular focus on the damage done to individuals, families, and communities. The significant and far reaching social and economic impacts to Australia and Bali of the terrorist actions are also presented in this module. The ideas of peace and conflict are then presented through examples, which participants are then encouraged to contextualize to their own experiences. The module then moves on to an exploration of the notion that terrorism aims to cause division and conflict. Module 2 will finally prompt students to discover the notion that when we engage with peace individuals and communities are able to build empathy for others. This empathy can then offer us resilience against the division and conflict that results from the actions of terrorist groups.	Knowledge based Cognitive Behavioral developing empathy
Module 3 These are moral dilemmas: Making “good” decisions	Module 3 presents a dilemma story which contains a series of moral dilemmas for participants to engage with. Each situation is designed to allow an individual to question or express their values in a safe, supportive, and intellectually healthy environment. Resulting from these enquires emphasis is then given over to fostering a democratic approach in formulating productive strategies for resolving conflicts and making good decisions. The Module’s impact is enhanced by using real life examples of survivors and their families.	Critical constructivist; content based; ethical dilemma story pedagogy; promotes critical thinking and critical reflection; individual and collaborative decision making

(Continued on next page)

Table 1
Beyond Bali program description (*Continued*)

Phase	Description of activities	Approach
Module 4 The Bali Peace Park in context	Module 4 presents several existing peace parks situated across the globe with focus on the special characteristics and functions of peace parks. The module commences with an introduction to the concept of peace parks followed up by a Web quest, which takes groups of students to various parts of the world and allows them to investigate the characteristics of “their” peace parks. Students not only enhance their knowledge of peace parks but also their IT and investigation skills.	Knowledge based Cognitive Behavioral
Module 5 Thoughts into action: Creating your own Peace Park	Module 5 allows for a revision on what has been learned so far as the activities rely on the extensive scaffolding that has occurred in the preceding modules. Participants will need to be guided by their particular school site requirements, resourcing, and time availabilities. Initially research should be conducted and it is recommended that a consulting process occur with the administration team. The focus for the module is an authentic learning experience whereby the learning of the previous modules can be applied in the design and creation of a school site peace space, garden, or model. In groups participants should look at the needs of the school community and plan out the project with all the necessary requirements given due consideration. This module allows for multiple connections to be made with other students and parents as well as community and school leaders.	Cognitive Behavioral

when used in preventing support for violent extremism, work best when they encourage participants to question and challenge their own thinking. Conventional approaches that passively involve participants in learning about other religions, cultures or societies were found to be ineffective because they do not allow for self-reflection.³⁸

Students pointed out that using the story of a Bali Bombing survivor in the program content was very powerful and allowed them to put a personal, more human face to the tragedy of terrorism. This finding indicates that the program had some success (although this success was not measured in quantitative terms) in engaging the participants’ self-sanctions to empathize with victims of violent extremism. De-humanizing of victims is one mechanism of moral disengagement as is disregard for the harmful consequences of violence. The approach of educating students about the negative impacts of violent extremism through the story of a Bali Bombing survivor may develop psychological resilience to violent extremism.

The most interesting aspects of the program according to the participants were the interactive lessons and group discussions that allowed reflection on their moral values in a safe and supportive environment. An evaluation of good design in education interventions found that effective interventions incorporated activities that were enjoyable and interesting. It is recommended that intervention programs accommodate youth's interests as well as their development needs.³⁹ Many of the activities in *Beyond Bali* were developed with an awareness of the need to engage the participants in activities that they would find exciting and interesting. This proved to be an effective approach for engaging the students in a subject matter that is sensitive and can be provocative. Students comment that they found the program interesting and effective because it provided them with a way to talk about, think about and explore violent extremism they could engage with.

The following excerpts are taken from student written feedback and comments on the *Beyond Bali* program. They demonstrate some of the perspectives of student participants in the program. These excerpts are by no means a measure of the success or otherwise of the program. They do, however, highlight ways in which the program impacted positively on the participants:

This course has begun to teach principles that are very relatable about tolerance, forgiveness and finding out other people's perspectives. It has really put it in a whole new light as it [Bali bombing] was something that happened to us not just as individuals but as Australian people and we all experienced it together.

This gave us an opportunity to discuss the motivations behind it [Bali Bombing] and in a way it is really important because it will give us, the next generation who are people who are going to in parliament and running the world the opportunity to what motivates them and what we can change, it's about finding solutions to these problems.

I knew there was a bombing and it was a bad thing that happened but just the way people talked about it I assumed that the people responsible were 100% fruit loop and it just a random act and was a tragedy but we should just move on, not that something could be learned from it.

It [Bali bombings] was really disconnected to us until we learned this module, not something we thought about and connected to everyday life.

It really made it less of a headline and more of an act of different perspectives, we may have physically heard of it but we did not know about the effects, how many Australians were effected and basically we did not know how it may of effected just people in our community, people we may know and it really just puts into perspective the community influence it can have.

As *Beyond Bali* has gained momentum, information about the program has extended beyond schools. *Beyond Bali* is currently being distributed to around 400 high schools across Australia and is available for download from the Bali Peace Park Association website. It will also be available for download from other organization and government websites. In addition to student feedback, *Beyond Bali* has also been recognized by terrorism victim and survivor groups who have been particularly encouraged by the programs use of a survivor's story to educate students on the events of the Bali Bombings. Victim's groups see this aspect of the program as a way to give a voice to victims of terrorism and humanize those lost to terrorist acts. This particular outcome of the project has significance for the ongoing research into victim initiated responses to terrorism that, often in opposition and

resistance to official discourses on terrorism and counter terrorism, act in ways that attempt to humanize victims (through commemoration and remembrance as well as initiatives such as the Bali Peace Park). The various attempts to humanize victims of terrorism, mostly by survivors and families, can be further explored for their capacity to develop and sustain effective counternarratives to violent extremism. Central to this analysis of victim driven responses is an understanding of how terroristic narratives integrate moral disengagement mechanisms that de-humanize victims and disregard the injurious consequences of violent action and conversely, how victim driven responses can counter these elements through their own narratives.

Conclusion

Preventative approaches in national counterterrorism strategies stress the importance of programs to counter violent extremism by building resilience to violent extremism. These approaches have come under criticism for the emergence of programs that assume that communities and individuals are particularly vulnerable to violent extremism by virtue of their religious or ideological beliefs. Prevent and resilience programs appear to be rarely based on sound theoretical understanding of risk and resilience and there is limited empirical evidence on risk and resilience factors for violent extremism. Within the literature that does exist, the theory of moral disengagement offers a conceptual approach to developing education-based prevention strategies.

Moral disengagement is a psychological process through which individuals that are normally socialized commit acts of violence in violation of their moral standards. The process involves mechanisms through which the individual moralizes violence as a just action, dehumanizes the victims of violence, obscure their personal agency, and disregard the harmful consequences of violent behaviors.

Moral disengagement theory has been applied to analyses of violent extremism and support for terrorism but has not been utilized as a theoretical framework for the development of education interventions for building resilience to violent extremism. The Beyond Bali Education Program is a five module program about the 2002 Bali Bombing, its impact, and the Bali Peace Park response that is designed to build psychological resilience to violent extremism. The program applied a theoretical framework based on Moral Disengagement and Moral Development to engage students in learning about the Bali bombings and exploring their own values and assumptions. The program is designed to activate students' self-regulatory mechanisms of moral agency and psychologically immunize them against the social influences that promote violent extremism. A qualitative evaluation of the program trial indicates that the program achieved some success in building resilience by engaging participants in constructing violent extremism as unjust and inhumane; creating empathy with victims of violent extremism; developing self-efficacy in resisting violent extremism influences and responding to influences in positive, productive ways and considering the devastating impacts of violent extremism.

Notes

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