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Police and Community Cooperation in Counterterrorism: Evidence and Insights from Australia

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ABSTRACT

Effectively engaging the Muslim community is a challenge for police given many Muslims feel unfairly targeted by counterterrorism policies and laws because of their faith. This article explores how such perceptions influence the willingness of Muslims to voluntarily cooperate in counterterrorism efforts, drawing on data collected from Muslims living in Australia. We test whether *procedural justice policing* can help buffer this perception of being targeted as a security threat and whether it can enhance Muslims' willingness to cooperate with police. Efforts by the Australian Federal Police to engage Muslim communities in Australia are also examined. The implications of the results for community-based approaches to counterterrorism are discussed.

It is recognized that community cooperation is essential to mitigating the risks of terrorism and threats arising from violent extremism.¹ For example Sir Ian Blair, former Commissioner of the UK Metropolitan Police Service once stated: "The most single important component in the domestic defeat of terror in the next decade is the ability of the police to work with communities to do just that."² An assistant commissioner of the Australian Queensland Police Service also commented to the first author: "we know we can't arrest our way out of this problem"³—the problem being terrorism and violent extremism. In another interview an Australian Federal Police officer also made the following comment: "Because the Muslim community ... have felt very targeted for probably the last 12 years ... I think you have to start with grass roots engagement of let's just talk."⁴

Community outreach and engagement with Muslim communities has therefore become a central component of police counterterrorism efforts both in Australia and abroad.⁵ Objectives of community engagement include breaking down police and Muslim community hostilities and misunderstandings, enhancing the collection of community intelligence on terrorist risks, improving Muslims' perceptions of police, garnering community support for counterterrorism efforts and mobilizing Muslim organizations and leaders to take a lead in countering violent extremism.⁶ Given these aims an important question to consider is how the police can most effectively win the cooperation and support of the Muslim community?

Answering this question has practical significance because research indicates that community-based approaches to counterterrorism are fraught with tension.⁷ Muslims often report suspicion and resentment toward counterterrorism policing and laws and efforts by police to engage Muslim leaders.⁸ These sentiments have been exacerbated by the social and political response to the “War on Terror” that has led to the stigmatization of Muslims and Islam being associated with extremism and terrorism.⁹ Hence, generating cooperation in such an environment can be challenging.

This article explores factors that have an influence on the ability of police to effectively engage the Muslim community. While community-based approaches to counterterrorism have taken different forms,¹⁰ understanding the antecedents of Muslims’ willingness to cooperate with police, and how such cooperation is promoted or eroded, can help to understand why community-based counterterrorism efforts succeed or fail. In this article we draw on quantitative and qualitative data collected in the context of Australia’s counterterrorism policing of Muslim communities.

Given the field of terrorism studies has mainly focused on examining terrorist risks and profiles,¹¹ it has tended to overlook how studies on policing can inform understanding of how terrorism is sustained, detected, and disrupted. While many experts accept that Muslim communities are essential to defeating terrorism the question of how authorities can effectively mobilize key community groups, and the challenges in doing so, is less well understood. It is these gaps that the current article aims to fill.

The article is structured as follows. First, the data sources underpinning the analysis of Australian Muslims’ attitudes toward counterterrorism are described. The sense of being “targeted” that characterizes how Muslim communities feel in Australia is then investigated; we will show how Australia’s counterterrorism laws and policies have exacerbated this situation. In this article we use the term “targeted” to refer to a shared perception among Muslims that they are being increasingly singled out through counterterrorism policy and discourse as posing a terrorist risk due to their Islamic faith. In another context we have referred to this as a sense of being “under siege.”¹² The ways in which Australian Muslims express this feeling of being targeted is explored, including its source. It is hypothesized that the feeling of being “targeted” can affect a community’s willingness to voluntarily cooperate in counterterrorism efforts, with this claim empirically tested. If feeling targeted impacts on subsequent cooperation, how then do police effectively engage and win the support of the Muslim community in a context where Muslims feel stigmatized? Survey data comprising Muslim respondents is used to examine this issue and we test whether *procedural justice policing* can: (1) help diminish the perception among Muslims that they are perceived as objects of suspicion and (2) enhance Muslims’ willingness to voluntarily cooperate with police in counterterrorism. Further insights and lessons are drawn from a discussion on how the Australian Federal Police (AFP) engage Muslim communities. While the data and insights reported in this article are derived from the Australian context, they provide useful insights for authorities wanting to engage other Muslim populations living in the West.

Data Sources and Methodology

The primary data analyzed here were drawn from two sources. The data were collected as part of a project examining the impact of counterterrorism policing and laws on Muslim communities in Australia. This involved the collection of qualitative and quantitative data

via the use of focus groups and a survey with Muslims living in Brisbane, Melbourne, and Sydney. The cities of Brisbane, Sydney, and Melbourne were chosen as the sites for data collection because the majority of Australia's Muslims live in the states where these cities are located (i.e., Queensland, Victoria, and New South Wales). Fourteen focus groups were conducted in 2013/14, with a total of 104 participants (37 females; 67 males) spanning youth (18–26 years of age), “new arrivals” to Australia (18+ years of age), and middle-aged participants (35–50 years of age). Participants were drawn from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and were recruited through Mosques and Muslim community centers. Muslim moderators, who were trained in the aims of the research and the use of the focus group interview schedule, completed nine of the fourteen focus groups. The first author also undertook five additional focus groups, which were facilitated through *imams* and community contacts.¹³ All participants were given a \$50 department store gift voucher in recognition of their time. The focus group data were coded thematically in Nvivo.¹⁴

A face-to-face survey was also conducted in 2014. A total of 800 surveys were completed by members of Australia's Muslim community. Two hundred respondents were from Brisbane, 300 from Sydney, and 300 from Melbourne. A survey administration company specializing in the sampling of culturally and linguistically diverse populations administered the survey on behalf of the authors. Participants were selected using the Australian Electronic White Pages using an ethnic/Muslim naming system. This method identified for the Muslim religion given surnames in the Islamic religion often denote religious affiliation with Islam. A total of 525 Muslim surnames were used to generate the sample. A total of 8,765 sample records (name and telephone number) were generated and attempts were made to contact participants from this list by telephone. Of these records, however, only 8,090 were found to be valid phone numbers. After adjusting for the invalid cases and other out-of-scope participants ($N = 3,566$; i.e., those who were not contactable or ineligible to participate because they were not Muslim) an overall response rate of 18 percent was achieved. Overall, therefore, 800 respondents completed a survey.¹⁵ Trained interviewers (all of whom were Muslim) conducted the survey in each participant's preferred language at an agreed time and location. All participants were 18 years or older and paid for their time.¹⁶

In summary, 50.5 percent of survey respondents were male and 49.5 percent were female. The average age of respondents was 34.9 years old. Most respondents reported that they were born in Australia (58 percent), and 99 percent reported being an Australian citizen. Thirty-one percent reported belonging to the Shi'a Muslim faith, while 69 percent reported being Sunni Muslim. This sample composition matches the broader Muslim population in Australia.¹⁷ More than 50 percent of the sample (53.2 percent) reported attending a Mosque on a weekly basis.

A “Targeted” Community and Its Impact on Cooperation

Scholars have noted that since 9/11 the general feeling among Muslims living in the West is one of a heightened sense of anxiety and belief that their communities are “under siege.”¹⁸ In Australia this has been exacerbated by the enactment of a large number of counterterrorism laws. By the end of 2014 successive Australian governments have passed 64 pieces of separate counterterrorism legislation since 9/11 (more than any other Western nation). This has been characterized as a form of hyper-legislation.¹⁹ Many of these laws have raised concerns among legal experts and Muslim organizations. These concerns relate to their impact

on individual freedoms, expanding the powers of police and intelligence services, and their potential to be used disproportionately against Muslims.²⁰ Since the advent of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and arrests of Muslim youth in Australia for terrorism offenses²¹ the need to expand counterterrorism legislation is a priority of both major political parties in Australia (i.e., labor and liberal). Efforts by serving governments to consult the Muslim community about the need for counterterrorism legislation has not always been characterized as amicable. Muslim leaders in some instances have boycotted government consultations in protest.²² The political rhetoric used by Australian politicians has been branded as divisive with comments by politicians that Muslims are not “doing enough to speak out against terrorism or take the risk of radicalisation seriously” exacerbating tensions.²³ In early September 2014, one of the largest counterterrorism operations occurred in Sydney. This operation reportedly involved 800 police and was seen by some Muslims as adding to the fear and anxiety that Australian Muslims were experiencing.²⁴

The hyper-legislation and political rhetoric surrounding the “War on Terror” has implications for Muslims’ sense of belonging and the degree to which they believe society regards them as valued citizens.²⁵ This can fuel beliefs among Muslims that majority groups hold implicit biases toward them, and regard them and their religion as a threat to social harmony and security.²⁶ In the focus groups, Muslim participants expressed a general feeling that Islam was “under attack.” Participants noted that Muslims in Australia (and elsewhere across the world) were labeled as security threats through the media, and they expressed feeling stigmatized by the way national security debates were dominantly framed as a response to Islamic extremism. Participants spoke about feeling they were tarnished as terrorists socially and politically and that their religion was seen as inherently archaic and violent by the Australian public. The form of collective attribution being imposed on Muslim communities was regarded as impossible to resist or counter no matter how often Muslims defended their faith as a “*religion of peace*” or denounced terrorism attacks as not in the “*name of Islam*.” For many participants this only exacerbated a general feeling that governments were deliberating targeting Muslims. For example, one participant emotively stated:

When I hear all of the attacks you just mentioned [in reference to events like 9/11, 7/7, Mumbai] it really makes me angry a lot. Why is the world against us, why are we seen to be the bad people? ... God does not accept people blowing themselves up in the name of God. This is the evil that people use Islam to say, that it was done for the sake of Allah. Perhaps had we had the chance to reflect and say for example, why are Muslims being treated like this ... Muslims around the world ... being subjected to bad treatment from their own leaders. The whole notion is to destroy Islam and its followers. The whole world is against us. (female)

Another participant expressed their feelings about how difficult it was to escape being stigmatized by stating:

It’s upsetting because they tangle us in something that we have nothing to do with, you know being born and brought up here and that’s something that happens overseas [in reference to terrorist attacks such as 9/11, 7/7] that we have nothing to do with, just because we have the same faith although they did this. So it really has nothing to do ... it’s upsetting that you have to be judged and being judged based on something that really you don’t even practise or believe in. (gender not recorded)

In order to explore the feeling of being “targeted” further, survey respondents were presented with a series of seven statements assessing the level of scrutiny they believe they

experience from police, authorities and the public (e.g., “I feel at risk of being accused of terrorist activities because of my faith”).²⁷ On average, Muslim respondents felt under pressure, with many reporting they felt subjected to enhanced scrutiny by police and the public due to their faith (7-item “feeling targeted” scale; a higher score on this scale indicates greater feelings of being targeted; Mean = 3.52; SD = 0.91; see Appendix for all items in this scale). Overwhelmingly, 75 percent of the sample reported a high sense of their community being targeted.

Such perceptions should be of concern to authorities because if a group feels they are being arbitrarily and deliberately targeted due to some personal attribution (in this case because of their faith) it can generate a range of negative reactions. This can include perpetuating a sense of victimhood, it can result in reduced identification with Australia, it can provide fertile ground for conspiracy theories to flourish, it can create defensiveness and suspicion toward authorities, and can even perpetuate conflict between groups.²⁸ In the context of counterterrorism such outcomes are not helpful in a heightened security environment when police are looking to work with Muslim groups. Dismissing such perceptions as unfounded or lacking an objective foundation ignores the fact that the feelings of being targeted can also result from vicarious experience. What Muslims observe around them in the context of the social and political atmosphere and institutional responses surrounding terrorism can influence perceptions.

A number of additional scales were constructed to test whether a sense of being “targeted” is related to Muslims’ trust in police, feelings of being treated fairly by police (i.e., procedural justice), and their willingness to cooperate with police in counterterrorism efforts. These additional scales were: “trust in police to combat terrorism,” “procedural justice,” and two measures of cooperation: (1) willingness to “work” with police in community-based efforts to combat terrorism (i.e., labeled as “work” in Table 1) and (2) willingness to report suspicious terrorism-related activities to police (i.e., labeled as “report” in Table 1). Both cooperation measures are self-report measures, rather than actual cooperation with authorities. The individual survey items used to construct all of these measures are reported in the Appendix. Table 1 presents the mean and standard deviation scores for each measure, and the Cronbach alpha reliability scores report how reliable the scale is (a score closer to 1 indicates a strong and reliable scale; those above 0.8 are considered to be strong and reliable scales). Note that the maximum mean score possible for each scale is 5, with higher scores on the trust and cooperation measures indicating greater levels of trust and a greater self-reported willingness to cooperate with police in their counterterrorism efforts. Table 1 also indicates the bi-variate relationships between reported measures of feeling targeted, trust in police to combat terrorism, and the two cooperation measures.

Table 1 shows that feeling “targeted” has a negative impact on people’s trust in police and their willingness to cooperate with police. That is, respondents who felt more targeted were less trusting of police when it came to combating terrorism. Muslims who felt more targeted were also less likely to think police treated them fairly. They were also less likely to want to work with police to combat terrorism and they were less likely to want to report suspicious terror-related activity to police. While it is recognized these relationships do not demonstrate causation due to the cross-sectional nature of the survey data, the data do demonstrate that feeling targeted is related to Muslims’ scepticism toward the police. Such a finding begs the question: How, under such circumstances, can police win the support of the Muslim community and encourage their collaboration in counterterrorism? This issue is explored in the next section.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and bi-variate correlations between scales.

	Mean (SD)	Cronbach α	1	2	3	4	5
1. Feeling targeted	3.52 (0.91)	0.92	1				
2. Trust in police	3.83 (0.78)	0.90	— .35*	1			
3. Procedural justice	3.93 (0.74)	0.95	— .34*	.82*	1		
4. Work with police	4.15 (0.80)	0.92	— .27*	.67*	.66*	1	
5. Report	3.96 (0.84)	0.96	— .35*	.74*	.73*	.66*	1
6. Age	34.89 (15.51)						
7. Income	9.99 (3.57)						
8. Police Contact	0.40 (0.92)						
9. Mosque attendance	5.31 (2.04)						
10. Education	5.32 (2.03)						
11. Muslim faith	69.4%						
12. Country of birth	57.9%						
13. Marital Status	46.3%						
14. Gender	50.5%						

Note. * $p \leq .001$; higher scores on scales indicate more favorable assessments; Gender (0 = female; 1 = male); Country of Birth (0 = overseas; 1 = Australia); Muslim Faith (0 = Shi'a; 1 = Sunni); Marital Status (0 = not married; 1 = married); Income (1 = \$11,000 to 20 = \$110,000+); Mosque attendance (0 = never to 8 = daily). Percentages shown for dichotomous variables, with percentage referring to the "1" category.

Winning Trust and Cooperation

One aim of this research is to understand the type of police practices that can be used to: (1) build trust with the Muslim community and (2) overcome the barriers to collaboration to encourage greater levels of cooperation in community-based counterterrorism. Of interest is the effectiveness of *procedural justice policing* in a counterterrorism context.

Procedural justice refers to the perceived fairness of decision making and the perceived treatment one receives from a decision maker. The fairness of police treatment depends on how police interact with the public. There is a wealth of research showing that when police use procedural justice in their dealings with members of the public it leads to greater levels of cooperation with police and a greater willingness to defer to police decision making and rules.²⁹

There are four key dimensions to procedural justice. One is *neutrality*, which relates to police acting in a neutral fashion during encounters with members of the public. If police decisions are bias-free and Muslims see they are being treated in the same manner as others then police will be seen to be acting in a neutral manner. For example, racial profiling against Muslims signals to them they are being treated differently and that police are not acting in a neutral fashion. Another dimension is *fairness*, which relates to the view that authorities are benevolent in their actions toward individuals by demonstrating they have their best interests at heart when making decisions. For instance, police officers who display concern for Muslims (e.g., about the needs of Muslim youth) and explain that they want to do the right thing by them and their community, will demonstrate fairness. People are also extremely sensitive to signs that police treat them with *respect*. Respectful and dignified treatment communicates to people that the authority values them. In the case of Muslims this might include police removing their shoes when entering a mosque or a Muslim's home and carefully handling the Koran. This displays respect for Muslims and their religious practices. *Voice* is the fourth principle of procedural justice. People value the opportunity to have a say in situations that affect them. Being able to voice one's concerns and seeing that police are taking those concerns into account is viewed positively by citizens. Hence, when police provide the opportunity for Muslims to have a say about issues that concern them and act on those concerns they are displaying the opportunity for voice.

Research shows that these four elements of procedural justice are important to Muslims when it comes to their interactions with authorities.³⁰ Existing research with U.S., U.K., and Australian Muslim populations shows that procedural justice is a significant predictor of Muslims' willingness to cooperate with the police in counterterrorism initiatives.³¹ One of the key reasons given for why this occurs is that procedural justice can help build trust between police and Muslim communities because it communicates to Muslims that they are valued members of society.

Our study takes this procedural justice research one step further by examining whether procedural justice can buffer the effect of perceived targeting on the negative attributes that Muslims display toward police and counterterrorism. Specifically, we test whether: (1) procedural justice mediates the relationship between feeling targeted and trust in police and whether (2) procedural justice mediates the relationship between feeling targeted and Muslims' willingness to cooperate with police. If procedural justice does buffer the effect of feeling targeted on trust and cooperation then this will be an important finding. It will show that police can use procedural justice to reduce the negative effects that feeling targeted has on attributions toward police counterterrorism efforts.

To test these relationships a series of regression analyses were completed. As noted earlier, the survey items used to measure perceived "targeting," "trust in police to combat terrorism," and the two cooperation measures ("work" and "report") are presented in the Appendix. To measure procedural justice, survey respondents were presented with 10 survey items on a 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree scale (e.g., "When dealing with you or people in your community concerning issues of terrorism, the police give people a chance to express their views before a decision is made"). The Appendix lists the items used to construct the procedural justice measure; a higher score on this scale indicates a greater perception that police use procedural justice when interacting with members of the Muslim community. [Table 1](#) presents the mean and standard deviation score for this measure and how it relates to the other scales constructed in this article.

A number of control variables were also included in the regression analyses. These were used to control for demographic and background differences between survey respondents. These variables were: age; gender (0 = female; 1 = male); Mosque attendance (measured as how often the participant attended Mosque each year; 0 = never to 8 = daily); number of contacts respondents had with police in the previous 12-month period (Mean = 0.40; *SD* = 0.92); Muslim faith identified (0 = Shi'a; 1 = Sunni); country of birth (0 = overseas; 1 = Australia); marital status (0 = not married; 1 = married); income level (1 = \$11,000 to 20 = \$110,000+); and educational status (0 = no schooling to 10 = postgraduate degree).

Results

The first regression analysis entered all of the control variables and the "feeling targeted" variable at Step 1, followed by the "procedural justice" measure at Step 2 to predict Muslims' "trust in police to combat terrorism." The results of this analysis are presented in [Table 2](#). The second and third regression analyses used these same variables as predictors of Muslims' "willingness to work with police in counter-terrorism" (see the "Work" columns in [Table 3](#)), and "willingness to report suspicious terrorism related activities to police" (see the "Report" columns in [Table 3](#)).

Turning to [Table 2](#) first, it is shown in Step 1 of the regression model that a few of the demographic and control variables predicted Muslims' trust in police. Specifically, the

Table 2. OLS regression of independent variables on “trust” in police to combat terrorism.

	Step 1		Step 2	
	B (SE)	β	B (SE)	B
Intercept	4.50 (.18)		.88 (.15)	
Age	.00 (.00)	.08	.00 (.00)	.01
Gender (0 = female)	-.14 (.06)	-.09*	-.04 (.04)	-.02
Muslim faith (0 = Shi'a)	.01 (.05)	.00	-.01 (.03)	-.01
Country of birth (0 = overseas)	.11 (.07)	.07	.06 (.04)	.04
Marital status (0 = not married)	.20 (.07)	.12**	.09 (.04)	.06*
Income	-.01 (.01)	-.02	-.01 (.01)	-.05
Education	.00 (.02)	.01	.01 (.01)	.02
Mosque attendance	.03 (.01)	.07*	.01 (.01)	.02
Police contact	-.19 (.03)	-.22***	-.07 (.02)	-.08***
Feeling targeted	-.28 (.03)	-.32***	-.07 (.02)	-.08***
Procedural justice	—	—	.81 (.02)	.76***
Adjusted R^2	.21		.69	
R^2 change	.21		.48	
F change	21.29***		1209.6***	
df	10, 789		1, 788	

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$

gender, marital status, mosque attendance, and police contact variables predicted feelings of trust. Those who are female ($\beta = -0.09$), married ($\beta = 0.12$), and who attend a mosque more regularly ($\beta = 0.07$) are more trusting of police. The negative coefficient for the police contact variable is also quite large ($\beta = -0.22$), indicating that those who have more personal contact with police are less trusting of police. Importantly, the “feeling targeted” variable is also a strong negative predictor of trust ($\beta = -0.32$). Those who feel more targeted are less trusting of police.

Table 3. OLS regression of independent variables on intentions to “work” with police and “report” suspicious activity to police.

	Work				Report			
	Step 1		Step 2		Step 1		Step 2	
	B (SE)	β	B (SE)	B	B (SE)	B	B (SE)	β
Intercept	4.92 (.19)		1.92 (.21)		4.89 (.19)		1.50 (.19)	
Age	-.00 (.00)	-.03	-.00 (.00)	-.08	.00 (.00)	.04	-.00 (.00)	-.02
Gender	-.14 (.06)	-.09*	-.06 (.05)	-.04	-.20 (.06)	-.12***	-.11 (.05)	-.07*
Muslim faith (0 = Shi'a)	.02 (.06)	.01	.01 (.05)	.00	.04 (.06)	.02	.03 (.04)	.02
Country of birth (0 = overseas)	.07 (.07)	.04	.03 (.06)	.02	-.02 (.07)	-.01	-.07 (.06)	-.04
Marital status (0 = not married)	.21 (.07)	.12**	.12 (.06)	.07*	.16 (.08)	.09*	.06 (.06)	.03
Income	.01 (.01)	.03	.00 (.01)	.01	-.00 (.01)	-.02	-.01 (.01)	-.04
Education	-.03 (.02)	-.07	-.02 (.01)	-.06	-.00 (.02)	-.00	.00 (.01)	.01
Mosque attendance	.01 (.02)	.03	-.00 (.01)	-.01	.02 (.02)	.05	.01 (.01)	.01
Police contact	-.21 (.03)	-.24***	-.11 (.02)	-.13***	-.19 (.03)	.21***	-.08 (.02)	-.09***
Feeling targeted	-.20 (.03)	-.23***	-.04 (.03)	-.04	-.29 (.03)	-.31***	-.10 (.02)	-.11***
Procedural justice	—	—	.67 (.03)	.61***	—	—	.75 (.03)	.66***
Adjusted R^2	.14		.45		.19		.56	
R^2 change	.15		.31		.20		.36	
F change	13.81***		452.32***		19.82***		654.96***	
df	10, 789		1, 788		10, 789		1, 788	

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$

When the procedural justice scale is entered into the regression model at Step 2, it can be seen that it has a very large positive effect on trust ($\beta = 0.76$). Those survey respondents who feel the police are more likely to use procedural justice when interacting with the Muslim community feel more trusting of police. Interestingly, the size of the coefficient for the “feeling targeted” variable dropped substantially on entry of procedural justice into the model (from $\beta = -0.32$ at Step 1 to $\beta = -0.08$ at Step 2). Such a large reduction in the size of the coefficient from Step 1 to Step 2 suggests that procedural justice may be a partial mediator of the relationship between feeling targeted and trust. In other words, if people feel the police use procedural justice then their feelings of being targeted come close to being negated. Such a finding suggests procedural justice plays an important buffering effect for countering a sense among Muslims that they are increasingly being singled out by counterterrorism policy and discourse due to their faith.

Turning now to Table 3 with willingness to cooperate (“work” and “report,” respectively) as the dependent variables, the models show that the “police contact” and the “feeling targeted” variables both predict the “willingness to work with police” and “report suspicious terror-related activities to police” scales. Those who have had more contact with the police in the previous 12-month period, and those who have greater feelings of being targeted are less likely to want to cooperate with police. For both models, gender and marital status also predicted self-reported cooperative behavior. Women and those who are married indicated a stronger willingness to work with police.

The procedural justice variable was entered at Step 2 for each cooperation model (see Table 3). For the willingness to “work” with police model—procedural justice is a strong positive predictor of cooperation. If Muslims feel the police use procedural justice in their dealings with Muslims then they will be more willing to work closely with police in their fight against terrorism. Likewise, Table 3 shows that procedural justice is also positively related to “reporting” behavior. Those who feel police use procedural justice are also more willing to report suspicious terror-related activities to police. Importantly, at Step 2 of both cooperation models the size of the regression coefficients for the “feeling targeted” variable dropped significantly. For the “work with police” cooperation model, the previously significant effect of “feeling targeted” on cooperation became insignificant on entry of the procedural justice variable at Step 2. This indicates that procedural justice fully mediates the relationship between feeling targeted and willingness to work with police. In other words, if police use procedural justice when dealing with Muslims then this can negate the negative effect of feeling targeted on Muslims’ willingness to work with police. Table 3 also shows that procedural justice partially mediates the relationship between perceived targeting and reporting behavior. Again, this suggests if police use procedural justice when dealing with Muslims then this can come close to negating the negative effect that feelings of being targeted can have on Muslims’ willingness to report suspicious terrorist related activity to police.

Discussion: The Practice of Engagement and Trust Building

The regression results reported in the previous section indicate that procedural justice has the potential to mediate the effect of feeling targeted on Muslims’ trust in police and their willingness to cooperate with police in a counterterrorism context. Such findings across three different dependent variables (i.e., trust in police; working with police; reporting to police) demonstrate the importance of police adopting practices that display procedural justice

when engaging Muslims. The results illustrate there are practices police can adopt to build trust with Muslim communities and also that they can potentially engage in ways that help to mitigate the reactions among Muslims that are the outcome of being socially and politically constructed as a suspect community.

Police services in Australia are attempting to incorporate procedural justice into key aspects of their work.³² One should not underestimate the challenges of adopting practices based on procedural justice into aspects of counterterrorism. However, if police want to partner with Muslims so they can work more cooperatively together through grass-roots initiatives, it is here that the principles of procedural justice readily apply. Displays of procedural justice are particularly important given Muslims feel they have been unfairly singled out by counterterrorism policing and laws.

What might these practices look like when it comes to police engagement of the Muslim community? To answer this question attention is now turned to examining efforts made by the AFP to build partnerships with Muslim communities in Australia. The aim is to examine how principles of procedural justice might be reflected in actual practice. The AFP is Australia's national law enforcement body. The AFP takes a national lead role in counterterrorism investigations and operations. One aspect of the AFP's counterterrorism efforts includes community outreach that is undertaken by its Community Liaison Team (CLT). The CLT is a small unit with team members located in Brisbane, Melbourne, Sydney, and Perth.³³

The role of the CLT is to initiate collaborations with Muslim community leaders and agencies. This includes for instance attending Eid events celebrating the end of Ramadan and providing funding to community groups and mosques for local projects. What is particularly important about the work of the CLT is that members never actively seek to illicit information and intelligence from Muslims about terrorist threats or particular "radicalized" individuals—doing so is seen as risking their engagement work and neutrality. Rather, their role is about relationship building and it is here that helping groups access government funds for community initiatives are important. CLT members ensure they have small successes with individuals and mosques, such as helping community members prepare for Hajj and the potential attention and questioning they may attract from airport security when leaving Australia for Saudi Arabia. Efforts are also made to reach out to Muslim youth and listen to their concerns, with CLT members facilitating access to government departments and in some instances politicians to provide opportunities for Muslim youth to voice their concerns to key decision makers. Both examples display *benevolence* that CLT members—and hopefully by default the AFP—have the best interests of Muslims in mind.³⁴

Liaison officers are transparent in who they engage with, and are open with community members about the fact that they will engage all Muslims regardless of denomination or religious outlook—this can even involve reaching out to *Salafists* or young Muslims angry with how they are treated by police. This approach projects *neutrality* in the way police deal with different members of the Muslim community. Liaison team members conduct post-resolution meetings with Muslim organizations and mosque leaders following major terrorist arrests to explain the operation and what occurred. This has two purposes. One is to address any rumor and suspicion about the arrests that may begin to circulate within the Muslim community. The second is that it enables questions to be asked about the operation and the process that will be followed post arrest. This demonstrates an opportunity for *voice*—albeit in a limited fashion. Liaison team members also identify intermediaries within the community that can help them reach out to young people or

Muslims who may feel marginalized and thus susceptible to radicalization. By using trusted intermediaries liaison officers are able to build their reputations for being trustworthy among groups who are suspicious of police. Liaison officers also educate counterterrorism investigators about the Islamic religion and practices and the sensitivities of entering a mosque or handling the Koran. Here *respect* for Muslims and Islam is promoted.³⁵

It needs to be kept in mind that the AFP have not consciously set out to incorporate elements of procedural justice into their community engagement practices. These practices have simply been analyzed to illustrate how abstract and theoretical concepts (e.g., neutrality, benevolence, respect, and voice), might potentially be operationalized into practice when it comes to counterterrorism policing. The aim has been to provide concrete examples and to interpret these practices in light of the principles that were found in the survey data to increase community cooperation in counterterrorism efforts. The missing piece in the analysis is whether Muslims themselves regard these community engagement practices as reflecting features of procedural justice. Reports in the Australian media do indicate that the AFP has some way to go in building improved relations with sectors of the Australian Muslim community.³⁶ The literature shows that the fractured nature of the Muslim community does make community engagement a challenging task and that this diversity makes a uniform approach to community-based counterterrorism difficult to identify.³⁷

Conclusion

It needs to be recognized there are limitations with the data that have been presented. For example, both the focus group and survey data only reflect the attitudinal views of Muslim respondents. The approach of the AFP to community engagement is not necessarily an exemplar among police services in Australia or abroad. While specific to Australia the results do show that in the context of community-based approaches to counterterrorism there are actions and approaches that police can adopt to improve relations with the Muslim community and increase their cooperation in efforts to tackle terrorism. If designed appropriately these practices can also reduce the degree to which Muslims feel targeted that can result from the broader social and political atmosphere surrounding terrorism. This requires police to build trust with the Muslim community and adopting practices based on procedural justice can help in this regard.

Police need to maximize the opportunities that contact with Muslims can provide for building trust and breaking down barriers to meaningful engagement. This can yield dividends for police counterterrorism efforts (e.g., more trust means greater willingness to work with police), with procedural justice part of the toolkit to build improved relationships with Muslim communities. This comes down to the types of interactions police have with Muslim communities and the quality of those interactions are ultimately in the hands of police to control.

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Notes

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8. Adrian Cherney and Kristina Murphy, "Being a Suspect Community in a Post 9/11 World: The Impact of the War on Terror on Muslim Communities in Australia," *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology* (2015). doi: 10.1177/0004865815585392; Vermeulen and Bovenkerk, *Engaging With Violent Islamic Extremism*.
9. Cherney and Murphy, "Being a Suspect Community in a Post 9/11 World."
10. See Rohan Gunaratna, Jolene Jerard, and Salim M. Nasir, eds., *Countering Extremism: Building Social Resilience through Community Engagement* (London: Imperial College Press, 2013); Daniel P. Silk, Basia Spalek, and Mary O'Rawe, eds., *Preventing Ideological Violence: Communities, Police and Case Studies of Success*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Vermeulen and Bovenkerk, *Engaging With Violent Islamic Extremism*.
11. For example see Alex P. Schmid, ed., *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research* (New York: Routledge, 2011).
12. See Adrian Cherney and Kristina Murphy, "Being a Suspect Community in a Post 9/11 World."
13. For detail about the methodology and the challenges in conducting the research see Kristina Murphy, Adrian Cherney and Julie Barkworth, *Avoiding Community Backlash in the Fight Against Terrorism*: Research report (Australia Research Council Discovery project DP130100392; 2015).
14. Ibid.
15. The low response rate is not surprising, given the efficacy of finding Muslims using an ethnic naming system, and due to Muslims being cautious about outsiders, particularly for a study focused on counterterrorism policing.
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27. The specific seven questions used to construct the targeted scale can be found in the Appendix.
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32. See Mazerolle et al., *Procedural Justice and Legitimacy in Policing*.
33. See <http://www.afp.gov.au/> for more detail about the AFP. State police in Australia also have designated Community Liaison Officers, with the AFP and state police liaison officers collaborating and exchanging information when necessary. State police liaison officers have a broader remit beyond counterterrorism and wear a distinct uniform that distinguishes them from other police. For example, in Queensland Police Community Liaison Officers have yellow epilates on their uniform. While AFP officers wear a uniform, AFP liaison officers can and often work in plain clothes and can comprise sworn and unsworn officers. It is difficult to know exactly whether when making assessments of the police Australian Muslims distinguish between State and Federal police, although in a focus group with Muslim youth, participants stated they had no problems with the State police and were critical of the AFP and their dealings with Muslim communities. However, it is unknown whether this sentiment is widespread throughout the Australian Muslim community.
34. These data are derived from interviews the first author undertook with AFP community liaison team members. At the time of writing there were a total of eight members in the unit, all of whom were interviewed face-to-face in July and August 2015. The sample comprised four men

and four women and a mix of five sworn and three unsworn officers. Interviews focused on how AFP liaison team members engage the Muslim community in their respective jurisdictions.

35. Ibid.

36. For example, see Rachel Olding, "Australian Federal Police Cancel Eid Dinner after Backlash from Muslim Community," *The Sydney Morning Herald* 13 July 2015. Available at <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/australian-federal-police-cancel-eid-dinner-after-backlash-from-muslim-community-20150713-gib4ps.html> (accessed 13 July 2015).

37. Vermeulen and Bovenkerk, *Engaging With Violent Islamic Extremism*.

Appendix

The Appendix lists the survey questions used to construct the scales reported in this article.

* denotes reverse coding of item.

Feeling Targeted

Cronbach's alpha = 0.92; scores on a 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree scale. A higher score indicates a greater feeling of being targeted.

- I feel at risk of being accused of terrorist activities because of my faith
- Others in my community feel at risk of being accused of terrorism because of their faith
- I feel under more scrutiny by police and authorities because of my faith
- I feel under more scrutiny by the media and the public because of my faith
- The War on Terror disproportionately targets Muslims
- I sometimes feel police view me as a potential terrorist because of my faith
- I sometimes feel the Australian public views me as a potential terrorist because of my faith

Trust in Police to Combat Terrorism

Cronbach's alpha = 0.90; scores on a 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree scale. A higher score indicates greater trust and confidence in police in their efforts to fight terrorism.

- You trust police to make decisions that are good for everyone when they are investigating and prosecuting terrorism
- People's rights are generally well protected by police when they are investigating and prosecuting terrorism
- You have confidence in police to effectively deal with terrorism
- You have confidence in police when they investigate and prosecute terrorism
- When the police fight terrorism they gain respect
- Policing terrorism negatively affects police–citizen relations*
- Police activities in fighting terrorism impair their relationships with Muslim communities in Australia*

Willingness to Work with Police to Combat Terrorism

Cronbach's alpha = 0.92; scores on a 1 = very unlikely to 5 = very likely scale. A higher score indicates greater willingness to work with police to educate members in their community about the threats of terrorism.

If the situation arose, how likely would you be to...

- Work with police to educate people in your community about the dangers of terrorism and terrorists
- Encourage members of your community to generally cooperate with police efforts to fight terrorism
- Attend a community forum held at your local Mosque to discuss with police how terrorism can be prevented

Report Terrorism Related Information

Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.96$; scores on a 1 = very unlikely to 5 = very likely scale. A higher score indicates greater willingness to report terrorism related information to police.

If you saw or heard about the following, how likely would you be to report it to police.

- A person saying he or she had joined a group you consider politically radical
- A person overheard discussing their decision to help plant explosives in a terrorist attack
- A person visiting Internet chat rooms or websites in which there is material posted that supports Al Qaeda
- A person reading religious literature you believe to be extremist
- A person giving money to organizations that people say are associated with terrorists
- A person talking about traveling overseas to fight for Muslims
- A person distributing material expressing support for Al Qaeda

Procedural Justice

Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.95$; scores on a 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree scale. A higher score indicates greater perceptions of procedural justice being used by police when dealing with Muslims regarding counterterrorism (Mean = 3.93; $SD = 0.74$).

When dealing with people in your community concerning issues of terrorism, the police...

- Give people a chance to express their views before making decisions
- Make their decisions based upon facts, not their personal opinions
- Apply the law consistently to everyone, regardless of who they are
- Consider people's views when deciding what to do
- Take account of the needs and concerns of the people they deal with
- Respect people's rights
- Treat people with dignity and respect
- Treat people fairly
- Try to be fair when making decisions
- Are polite when dealing with people