



Research at a glance

Study 3 of 3: Estimating Susceptibility to Prison Radicalization

KEY WORDS: *radicalization, violent extremists, security threat group, terrorism*

What it means

The ability to estimate which inmates may be more susceptible to radicalizing influences and potentially intervene with those individuals prior to them being exposed or converted to a radical ideology would be of benefit to the Correctional Service Canada (CSC).

This project identified basic constructs related to susceptibility to radicalization from the theoretical literature and determined possible indicators among data available in CSC's Offender Management System (OMS) database. These results are a first step in an effort to quantitatively measure offenders' level of susceptibility in a prison environment. This review also produced a list of constructs thought to be important to susceptibility to radicalization that are not currently represented in CSC databases. These factors may be important in future studies where additional data are collected and may inform operational assessments of susceptibility to radicalization in the future.

What we found

Subsequent to the theoretical literature review and identification of potential indicators to measure these basic constructs, a Principle Component Analysis (PCA) was completed on indicator variables to measure each of the basic constructs. A number of promising indicator variables were determined for each basic construct, as follows (number of individual variables indicated in parentheses), Limited Attachment Skills (3), Poor Family Support (4), Violent Attitudes (5), Negative Attitudes Toward Conventional Society (4), Disorderly Life (5), Family Violence (3), Grievances (1), Employment (7), and Concern for Personal Safety (2).

For example, variables to measure the presence of Unstable Accommodation, Financial Instability, Limited Community Attachment, a Lack of Constructive Leisure Activities, and Having Used Social Assistance can reasonably be thought to represent facets of the basic construct Disorderly Life.

Why we did this study

As a partner in the Chemical, Biological, Radiological-Nuclear and Explosive (CBRNE) Research and Technology Initiative (CRTI), the Research Branch, CSC, was tasked with contributing to the level of quantitative knowledge surrounding violent extremists in Canada by undertaking an assessment of the data surrounding violent extremists in federal institutions.

As such, three inter-related studies on radicalized offenders in federal institutions (see also Research at a Glance R-313-1 and R-313-2) were undertaken in an effort to both address the knowledge gap surrounding radicalized offenders and to inform correctional policy and operations.

What we did

As one of these three inter-related studies, this study included a review of the theoretical literature on prison based radicalization to determine the most common basic constructs considered important. Subsequently, CSC's OMS database was examined in order to find individual indicator variables representing some facet of a basic construct. Those individual variables were then analysed using Principle Component Analysis to identify those most closely related to a basic construct.

For more information

Stys, Y., Gobeil, R., Harris, A. J. R., & Michel, S. (2014). *Violent extremists in federal institutions: Estimating radicalization and susceptibility to radicalization in the federal offender population* (Research Report R-313). Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

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