

Case needs review: Associates/social interaction domain (R-77, 1998)

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Within the criminological literature there is widespread consensus that the extent to which an offender associates with anti-social peers is critically important to an understanding of the development of criminal behaviour and the prediction of recidivism.

In this investigation a narrative review and meta-analysis of the associates/social domain was conducted. The associates/social domain produced a correlation with recidivism of $r = .18$, replicating the results of a previous meta-analysis which indicated that this domain is one of the most robust predictors of recidivism. Of the three components of the associates/social domain (i.e. companions, neighbourhood, and criminal family), the most useful was the companions category. In addition, a literature search uncovered other measures that assessed the associates/social construct. Specific recommendations were made as to how to improve the Case Needs Identification Analysis (CNIA) measure employed by the Correctional Service of Canada.

Overall, 35 studies were identified as suitable for meta-analysis which generated 75 effect sizes. For those variables where at least 50% of the studies reported information on sample and study characteristics, the results were as follows:

- 97% of effect sizes came from studies which assessed males only or mixed gender samples,
- 71% of effective sizes were associated with adult or mixed adult/juvenile samples,
- effect sizes were evenly distributed across the decades (1960-1990),
- 69% of effective sizes were associated with subjects of mixed risk levels,
- less than 5% of effect sizes were associated with offenders with a violent or sexual offence history,
- 93% of effect sizes came from studies with a minimum 2 year follow-up period,
- 86% of outcomes included conviction, incarceration, or a combination thereof, and
- the vast majority of effect sizes were associated with non-violent recidivism.

The results from this investigation again confirm that the criminal associates domain is one of the most powerful predictors of recidivism. ■