



Research at a glance

Assessing Susceptibility to Group-Based Influence

Involvement in a Security Threat Group is associated with factors easily scored from information available at intake into federal custody

Why we did this study

Offenders with radical beliefs and ideologies or those associated with threat groups pose a potential security risk both within the custodial context, as well as in the community upon release. Understanding the factors that put offenders at an increased risk of becoming engaged in a radicalized or other Security Threat Group (STG) is an important first step in being able to mitigate the risk they pose. The primary purpose of this research was to determine if it was possible to develop an assessment of susceptibility to group-based influence using administrative data collected on offenders upon intake into federal custody in Canada.

What we did

A total of 1,495 offenders admitted to federal custody between January 3, 2003 and August 17, 2014 who had a verified gang-affiliated designation (i.e., any identification of affiliation, no matter when it occurred) or had been identified as a radicalized offender were included in the STG. A sample of 14,754 non-STG affiliated offenders admitted to custody during the same time frame comprised the comparison group. These groups were split into a development and validation sample using a 50/50 split, to ensure sufficient cases for meaningful analysis. A total of 300 predictors were selected from intake indicators based on information available within 90 days of intake into custody.

What we found

The majority of offenders in the study were men (94.0%). The majority of the comparison and other STG groups were Caucasian while most of the radicalized group were categorized as 'other' ethnicity. Offenders in the STG group were younger than the comparison group, with a mean age of about 29 years. Using data reduction techniques, a total of 300 initial variables were reduced to 17 items which clustered into 4 sub-scales including: *violence and*

victims, employment history, antisocial history and attitudes, and criminal history.

A total score was created by adding the items together to predict the outcome *involvement in STG*. High predictive accuracy was determined, with the subscale *antisocial associates and attitudes* performing the best.

What it means

The results of this study are consistent and in the same direction with other research in the field. What remains to be determined is the best combination of risk factors that signal a risk of becoming involved in an ideologically-motivated radicalized group. This research was an important first step in refining the notion of susceptibility and has identified a need to approach the measurement in a more operationalized and systematic way. To better equip the Service in rapidly identifying vulnerable individuals susceptible to engaging in gangs, criminal organizations, or radical groups for intervention and management purposes, additional research is needed to determine more precise indicators of susceptibility, particularly for different types of STGs (i.e., radicalized offenders).

For more information

Scott, T. (2017). *Assessing Susceptibility to Group-Based Influence* (Research Report R-390). Ottawa, Ontario: Correctional Service of Canada.

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