Risk Assessment of Radicalization to Violence
Applications of VERA-2 in Prisons

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What is Risk Assessment

Risk is ubiquitous - omnipresent

RISK ASSESSMENT INCLUDES

1. THE IDENTIFICATION (variables),
2. THE EVALUATION (indicators),
3. THE ESTIMATION OF LEVEL of RISK

RISK ASSESSMENTS FOR VIOLENCE DIFFER NOT ONLY ONE KIND OF RISK ASSESSMENT
RISK ASSESSMENT APPLICATIONS RELEVANT BUT NOT LIMITED TO PRISONS

PRISONS & JUSTICE: DIFFERENT TYPES TOOLS NEEDED TO RESPOND TO NEEDS

– General violence/recidivism (Traditional)
– Radicalization to violence – (New- not same as OCVO requires new solutions, different outcomes)

– RISK ASSESSMENT BROAD CONTEXT OUTSIDE PRISONS-also examples
– Business Risks; Risk to Critical Infrastructure; - Defence/Military, CYBER, Other
IDENTIFYING RISK AND THREAT: Definitions

• **RISK** = probability (of injury or damage) \( \times \) severity of the loss (harm) \[ R= p \times h \]
  
  – RISK – THE ACTOR (producing the harm \( \times \) severity of loss or damage)
  
  – RISK – OBJECT – (object of harm \( \times \) severity)

• **THREAT** = Intention to act -extremist violence) \( \times \) capacity-successfully carry out act \[ T=i \times c \]
TERMS AND MEANING:
RADICALIZATION & VIOLENT RADICALIZATION

• Radicalization: the process of adopting or promoting an extremist IDEOLOGY OR BELIEF intended to advance political, religious or social change.

• Violent Radicalization: PROCESS of adopting an EXTREMIST BELIEF SYSTEM with the intention and justification of USING VIOLENCE to achieve political, religious or social goals = violent extremism
VIOLENT EXTREMISM & TERRORISM: DIFFICULT TO DEFINE

- **EXTREMISM**: Refers to any political theory that holds to uncompromising and rigid policies or ideology.

- **EXTREMIST**: One who holds to such views (lawful).

- **VIOLENT EXTREMIST**: One who uses (supports) violence to advance these views or related actions defined by statute as unlawful in furtherance of an ideology or proscribed group - [PROCESS TO VIOLENT EXTREMISM]

- **TERRORIST**: - One who uses ideological based violence to further goals with the intention to cause fear in a civilian population.
WHAT IS THE VERA*-2?

*VIOLENT EXTREMIST RISK ASSESSMENT

• **RISK ASSESSMENT TOOL**
  - 1. DEVELOPED SPECIFICALLY FOR RISK ASSESSMENT OF RADICALIZATION TO VIOLENT EXTREMISM [TERRORISM]
  - 2. VERA DEVELOPED IN 2008-9 PSC website
  - 3. REVISED IN 2010 as VERA-2 & 2015 VERA-2+REM
    - WITH NETHERLANDS INSTITUTE OF FORENSIC PSYCHIATRY & PSYCHOLOGY [NIFP] MIN. SECURITY AND JUSTICE, NL.

• **TO ESTABLISH RISK LEVEL MEASURE FOR EACH INDICATOR AND OVERALL RISK** (criterion defined levels)

• **USED IN PRISONS + NATIONAL SECURITY APPLICATIONS, POLICING AND/OR PRISONS on 4 CONTINENTS** - uses dynamic indicators - process
VERA 2 +REM RISK INDICATORS N=34
COMPLEX DYNAMIC CAUSAL MODEL

Beliefs
Attitudes
Ideology
7

Context
Intention
7

Commitment
Motivation
6 + 3

History
Capability
6

Protective
Factors
5
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<td>Attitudes (10)</td>
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<td>Protective (5)</td>
<td>Commitment/Motivation (5)</td>
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<td>Demographic (3)</td>
<td>Protective (6)</td>
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NEW VERA DEVELOPMENTS
VERA-2 + REM*
NL, GERMANY SWITZERLAND, BELGIUM, UK

VERA 2 (2010) n=31
Beliefs & Attitudes (7)
Context & Intent (7)
History & Capability (6)
Commitment/Motivation (5)
Protective (6)

VERA 2 + REM [NIFP] N=34
Beliefs & Attitudes (7)
Context & Intent (7)
History & Capability (6)
Commitment/Motivation (8)
Protective (6)
VERA Revisions Informed By Empirical Experience & Expert Opinion from:

- Correctional Experts following use
- Forensic psychologists and psychiatrists
- Risk Assessment Methodologists-International Experts
- Law Enforcement-operational users
- Terrorism Researchers
- Input from Canada, USA, Europe, Australia, countries in S.E. Asia
DISTINCT TOOL NEEDED:
MAJOR DIFFERENCES ORDINARY CRIMINAL VIOLENCE AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM

• PREVIOUS VIOLENCE
• YOUNG AGE AT 1ST VIOLENCE
• RELATIONSHIP INSTABILITY
• MALTREATMENT IN YOUTH
• POOR PARENTING
• EDUCATIONAL FAILURE
• EMPLOYMENT PROBLEMS
• PERSONAL GAIN

• MAJOR MENTAL ILLNESS
• PSYCHOPATHY
• PERSONALITY DISORDER
• LACK OF INSIGHT
• STRESS
• IMPULSIVITY
• PATHOLOGICAL LYING
VIOLENT EXTREMISTS: INDICATOR DIFFERENCES

- **DEEP CONVICTION**/ NOT SUPERFICIAL FEELING AS IN PSYCHOPATHY

- **JUSTIFICATION for ACTION**: OFTEN RELATED TO HIGHER AUTHORITY, THAT IS A MORAL JUSTIFICATION

- NOT USUALLY MOTIVATED BY CRIMINOGENIC NEEDS, ALCOHOL, DRUG ADDICTION, PHYSICAL COMPULSIONS
Violent Extremism: Differences from Ordinary Violent Offenders

- **ACTION FOR GLORIFICATION** - **NOT PERSONAL GAIN** + MIXED MOTIVES
- **SELECTIVE EMPATHY**, **NOT ABSENCE OF EMPATHY**
- **EDUCATION OR EMPLOYMENT FAILURE** **NOT NOTABLE**
- **CHILDREARING- ABUSE** **NOT USUALLY RELEVANT**
- **STABLE FAMILY FREQUENT**

- **LESS MENTAL ILLNESS**
- **PSYCHOPATHY NOT TYPICAL**
- **IMPUSLE CONTROL PROBLEMS MINIMAL**
- **ATTITUDES IDEOLOGICAL, MORALISTIC**
- **STRATEGIC LYING; NOT PATHOLOGICAL LYING**
- **PURPOSEFUL, PLANNED- NOT IMPULSIVE**
- **ACCEPTS RESPONSIBILITY**
SPECTRUM OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM: PRISONS: ACTION VERSUS CONVICTION

• ISIS/ISIL; Al-Qaeda inspired actors;
• Right-wing extremism – Left-wing extremism
• Anarchists: Rejection of laws –Freemen; Sov Cit.
• Returning/aspiring Foreign Terrorist Fighters
• Eco-terrorists- (attacks on critical infrastructure +)
• Nationalists, Separatists
• Other ideological-based extremism: political-religious-ideological
• ISIS infiltration of migrant, other populations
WHO CAN USE THE VERA-2

• TRAINED INDIVIDUALS IN VERA 2 PROTOCOL
• REQUIRES KNOWLEDGE OF TERRORISM*
• ANALYTICAL EXPERIENCE DESIRABLE
• PREFERENCE TO USE AS PART OF BATTERY-
• USE WITH ALL REPORTS, CASE FILE DATA, OBSERVATIONS, INTELLIGENCE
• POSSIBLE TO APPLY WITH FILE DATA, REPORT INFORMATION, OBSERVATIONS
  — ACCESS PROBLEMS & ROLE OF DECEPTION
KNOWLEDGE BASE OF TERRORISM (VIOLENT EXTREMISM)

BEHAVIORAL SYSTEMMATIC ASSESSMENT APPROACH

Risk indicators USING SPJ & evidence-based approach
1. NOT ALL RISK ASSESSMENTS RELATE TO MENTAL HEALTH

2. VERA-2 ADMINISTRATION: NOT NECESSARILY BY PSYCHOLOGISTS: (e.g. Intelligence personnel, social work, other counselors)

3. DIRECT ACCESS TO CLIENT NOT ESSENTIAL: (e.g. use of file data, observations, reports, trajectory of risk)

4. DIFFERENT TYPES OF VALIDITY EXIST: NOT ONLY PREDICTIVE VALIDITY- RELEVANCE TO DYNAMIC PROCESSES & PURPOSEFUL ACTION
1. Systematic, STRUCTURED way to make decisions
2. Criterion-definition based ratings provide reliability
3. Accepted methodology used in other violence risk tools (HCR-20, SAVRY,...)
4. Appropriate for indicator complexity of VE (not binary)
5. Provides judgment of the likelihood of re-offending-(estimation) – based on inductive logic
6. Assists decision transparency (e.g. court)
7. Provides for repeat administrations for identifying/measuring change
8. Assist judgment, not replaces judgment
ROLE IN PRISONS

• CLASSIFICATION
• PROGRAMS
• PLACEMENT
• EARLY RELEASE
• DETAINED AWAITING TRIAL
• PROGRAMS PLANNING /IMPLEMENTATION: [RAN]
  CASE-BY CASE: NEED DETAILS OF INDIVIDUAL TO IDENTIFY SPECIFIC GOALS
• AWARNESS * FIRST LINE CONTACTS [RAN]
Example of Rehabilitation Program Model USING VERA-2

RISK ASSESSMENT

Ideologues
- Disengagement: UNLIKELY
- REPRESSION: Segregation

Follower
- Disengagement: POSSIBLE
- INTERVENTION: Disengagement/Integration

Criminal opportunists
- Disengagement: LIKELY
- PREVENTION: Counter Radicalization Crime/Violence
VIOLENT EXTREMIST Risk Assessment

Linked intelligence/security information, behavioral analysis +

General crime/violence risk +

Terrorism risk (VERA-2)

RISK JUDGEMENT

Decisions/Action
Classification, Placement, Associations, Programs, Progression
WHY USE THE VERA-2 + REM

• 1. **RELEVANCE:** Appropriate indicators for ideologically motivated violence- spectrum

• 2. **NEED:** in prison setting for violent extremists

• 3. **VALIDITY:** independent study support 2013

  CONSTRUCT VALIDITY; CONTENT VALIDITY;
  USER/EXPERT CONSUMER VALIDITY; DEDUCTIVE
  VALIDITY, FACE VALIDITY: DATA /ACCESS /BASE-RATE
  PROBLEMS: PLANS FOR INTERNATIONAL DATA BASE

• 4. **RELIABILITY:** independent support- 2013 +
WHY USE THE VERA-2+ REM

5. **SPJ: ACCEPTED, APPROPRIATE METHOD**
   Actuarial not feasible, less structured is less accurate

6. **PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT:**
   Role retained: important for a complex dynamic model

7. **USERS IN METHOD- COMPETENCE**
   Prison staff, intelligence officers, * availability

8. **MEASUREMENT CAPABILITY**
   Ratings permit collection of information to provide behavioral evidence of change

9. **MULTI-EU COUNTRY INITIATIVE FOR DATA-BASE DEVELOPMENT – LED BY NL + GERMANY; BELGIUM, SWITZERLAND, UK WITH DISCUSSIONS FOR OTHERS**
VERA-2 [+REM]
INDIVIDUAL RISK ASSESSMENT

• NOT A SILVER BULLET - BEST PRACTICE-
  • Reasoned Systematic, Consistent, Scientific, Transparent Approach
  • Independent support obtained for validity and reliability – important for repeat measures
  • More data required + broader evaluation [NIFP]
SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES CAN BE MET

1) TO OBTAIN INFORMATION ON THE LIKELIHOOD OF VIOLENT EXTREMIST ACTION AND HOW TO TRY TO PREVENT THIS; COLLABORATION; INCREASE AWARENESS IN STAFF WITH INDICATORS

2) TO PROVIDE INFORMATION TO ASSIST INTERVENTION ACTION- CASE-BY-CASE as recommended by [RAN]


3) TO MONITOR PROGRAM EFFICACY

4) EARLY SIGNS OF RADICALIZATION IN PRISONS – MONITORING

5) PERTINENT INFORMATION FOR EARLY RELEASE DECISIONS
Thank you.
Questions?

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