



CREST

Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats



Protective Factors in Risk Assessment: Practitioner Perspectives

SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT

NOVEMBER 2022

JAMES HEWITT

BENJAMIN LEE

SARAH MARSDEN

Protective Factors in Risk Assessment: Practitioner Perspectives

SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT

James Hewitt
Benjamin Lee
Sarah Marsden

This CREST report was produced from the Constraining Violence project. The project looks at how individual, social, and subcultural factors constrain the potential for extremist violence. You can find all the outputs from this project at: www.crestresearch.ac.uk/project/constraining-violence

ABOUT CREST

The Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats (CREST) is a national hub for understanding, countering, and mitigating security threats. It is an independent centre, commissioned by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and funded in part by the UK security and intelligence agencies (ESRC Award: ES/N009614/1).

www.crestresearch.ac.uk



TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----------|
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | 4 |
| Introduction | 4 |
| Risk Assessment Frameworks..... | 4 |
| Practitioner Perspectives | 4 |
| Conclusions..... | 5 |
| INTRODUCTION..... | 6 |
| PROTECTIVE FACTORS IN EXISTING RISK GUIDANCE | 8 |
| Risk based approaches and their critics..... | 8 |
| Strengths-based approaches to protective factors | 8 |
| Social-ecological and subcultural contexts..... | 8 |
| Strengths-based model for interpreting protective factors | 8 |
| Summary..... | 13 |
| PRACTITIONER PERSPECTIVES | 14 |
| Data & Methods | 14 |
| Analysis..... | 15 |
| Conceptualising protective factors..... | 16 |
| Summary..... | 22 |
| CONCLUSIONS | 24 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 25 |
| APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE | 27 |
| Interview Schedule..... | 27 |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

This report supplements the Evidence Gap Map and associated report which reviewed the academic literature on protective factors with two new sources of data:

- A review of available information about risk assessment guidelines.
- Interviews with a range of practitioners.

RISK ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORKS

In order to better assess the risk assessment frameworks on offer we reviewed six frameworks about which there was some publicly available information. We did not have access to the full tools except in one instance.

Most of the guidance we reviewed adopted a structure professional judgment approach (SPJ). SPJ is designed to provide practitioners with guidance but allow them discretion in determining the relative importance of different factors and reach judgements in individual cases.

Of the risk assessment frameworks covered in this review, only the VERA-2R explicitly includes protective factors.

Other tools, such as ERG 22+, stress the importance of practitioners considering protective factors in their assessments, but do not specify independent protective indicators.

Overall, all the risk guidance tools strongly emphasised risk factors which was consistent with the overall balance of academic evidence identified in our earlier report.

The available information overlapped with the previously produced evidence map in some cases (e.g., family support for non-violence) but other factors were either less clearly represented or not represented at all.

PRACTITIONER PERSPECTIVES

In addition to reviewing publicly available information on existing forms of risk guidance we interviewed ten practitioners with varied roles in risk assessment and analysed them thematically. We identified three key findings:

- Practitioner conceptualisation of protective factors was nuanced. Practitioners stressed the variance they found in protective factors, how idiosyncratic they could be, and the need to consider protective factors alongside and in interaction with risk factors.
- Practitioners described a range of guidance they used in decision-making, but these were all seen as fitting within the SPJ model. Above all, practitioners emphasised that every case was different and that protection needed to be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Practitioners identified a range of potential barriers to considering protective factors in their decision-making. They concurred with earlier research which found a relatively limited evidence base for protective factors. They also noted existing social and political biases which resulted in greater emphasis being placed on risk over protection.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, our analysis suggests the following:

- There is a lack of empirical evidence underpinning protective factors in the case of terrorism and a limited understanding of how they work.
- The available research and risk guidance strongly emphasise the consideration of risk factors in assessments.
- Despite this, the SPJ approach as well as practitioner understanding means that consideration of protective factors do play an integral part in how risk assessments are made.
- To move forward, rather than augmenting existing risk-oriented perspectives to incorporate protective factors, there are potential gains from drawing on strength-based approaches as an alternative paradigm to the dominance of risk.
- Taking this broad approach as its starting point, the next phase of our research is to test a strength-based approach to protective factors to understand, empirically, its potential to support work in this area.

INTRODUCTION

This report supplements the Evidence Gap Map and associated report which reviewed the academic literature on protective factors (Marsden & Lee, 2022). It introduces two new sources of data about protective factors: a review of publicly available information on existing risk guidance with a specific focus on protective factors; and the findings from a series of interviews on the subject of protective factors undertaken with a range of frontline practitioners.

These additional sources of data provide further detail on the current understanding and role of protective factors in risk assessment processes. They do so first, by taking into account the role of protective factors in some of the commonly used risk guidance tools; and secondly by incorporating the perspective of practitioners directly involved with risk assessment and management.

Our earlier report focused on academic understandings of protective factors, taking into consideration the empirical evidence base and the theoretical landscape. This report looks at protective factors from the other direction, allowing us to take account of practitioner perspectives.

The sample of ten interviewees includes those involved in secondary interventions which try to prevent and counter violent extremism (P/CVE), and criminal justice contexts working with those convicted of terrorism offences. It also includes interviewees who work across both these spaces.

Our analysis suggests that understanding of protective factors is limited in current risk management decision-making, at least formally. Of the tools we were able to review only one (VERA-2R) explicitly incorporated protective factors, while others (e.g., ERG22+) stressed their importance but did not make them explicit. This is consistent with our earlier

findings on the state of academic knowledge and the overall evidence base. To date, protective factors have been weakly theorised and evidenced.

However, interviews with practitioners point to a more nuanced picture. All the practitioners we spoke with had a well-developed understanding of protective factors. In some roles this was rooted in very pragmatic considerations which focused on the protective role of access to housing and jobs. In some cases however, this extended to take account of the emotional and psychological factors that perform a protective function including a strong sense of identity and resilience.

Although protection was often thought of in terms of its relationship to risk, practitioners also acknowledged the dynamic nature of protective factors and the potential for them to have non-linear, or perhaps even independent relationships to risk factors. Overall, the interviews suggest that protection is more than simply the other side of risk.

A key emergent theme from the interviews was the balance between applying formalised tools and evidence on the one hand, and using a practitioner's own skills and experience on another. Despite the limited evidence base and apparent absence of protective factors from many formal risk assessment tools, risk management decisions were constantly presented as being on a 'case-by-case' basis which took account of the presence and possible role of protective factors. While tools and evidence were seen as valuable, interviewees stressed they needed to be understood through the prism of the practitioner's own judgements. This was most clearly operationalised through the Structured Professional Judgement (SPJ) approach.

What follows explores these findings across three sections. The first part provides an overview of six risk guidance tools based on the limited amount of publicly available information on these approaches, focusing specifically on the role of protective factors in each of the tools. The second part outlines the data collection approach and results from ten interviews with practitioners with roles in risk management. Findings are oriented around three themes: conceptualising protective factors; applying protective factors in risk assessment; barriers to considering protective factors, alongside second order themes focused on the dynamic nature of protective factors, and the need for an individualised ‘case-by-case’ approach. The concluding section summarises our findings and integrates them with our previous report.

Structured Professional Judgement (SPJ)

Structured Professional Judgement (SPJ) is an approach to violence risk assessment which sits alongside actuarial approaches. SPJ is believed to have distinct advantages over purely actuarial approaches as it allows for the identification of salient risk factors in individual cases and for risks to be managed or reduced. Guidelines based on SPJ approaches are produced based on systematic reviews of available evidence, but it is left to individual decision makers to decide how much

weight a given factor may have in an individual case. Formulaic and numerical approaches to risk factors are discouraged in favour of considering the way factors manifest in individual cases and the relevance of factors in each specific case. The overall aim of SPJ is preventative rather than predictive and the approach is designed to identify and support the selection of potential interventions to limit risk (Guy et al 2012: 271-272).

PROTECTIVE FACTORS IN EXISTING RISK GUIDANCE

Despite the apparent neglect of protective factors in the academic literature, they are a vital part of interpreting and assessing risk. They are also able to provide insights into radicalisation processes and have the potential to help interpret and support deradicalisation and disengagement. However, research on protective factors against extremism is far outweighed by research on risk factors, and the extent to which protective factors are included in extremism risk assessment tools varies considerably. Based on a review of the open source literature (Lloyd, 2019; Hart et al., 2017; Richards, 2018; Meloy, 2018; Cole et al., 2010; Sumpter, 2020)¹, we sought to understand whether and how protective factors are taken account of in risk assessment frameworks.

The table on the next page provides an overview of the extent to which protective factors are included in six of the risk assessment frameworks most commonly used in the context of extremism, most of which take a Structured Professional Judgement approach (Lloyd, 2019). The discussion that follows elaborates on these findings by looking in more detail at each of the risk assessment tools, highlighting some points of debate in the literature.

¹ An additional tool, the Evaluation Criteria for the Prevention of Islamism (Evis) has been developed for the German context (Ullrich et al., 2019). However, this is only available in German so is not reviewed here.

Table 1: Protective Factors in Risk Guidance Tools

| Assessment tool | Description | Inclusion of protective factors |
|--|---|---|
| Violent Extremism Risk Assessment - Version 2 Revised (VERA-2R) | SPJ tool, designed for use with any type of violent extremists and in a range of judicial settings, pre- or post-crime. VERA-2R consists of 34 risk indicators across 5 primary domains – including 6 protective factors – plus 11 additional indicators. | The VERA-2R explicitly includes 6 protective or risk-mitigating factors: 1. Re-interpretation of ideology less rigid, absolute; 2. Rejection of violence to obtain goals; 3. Change of vision of enemy; 4. Involvement with non-violent, de-radicalization, offence-related programmes; 5. Community support for non-violence; 6. Family support for non-violence. |
| Extremism Risk Guidance (ERG 22+) | SPJ tool, designed for assessing risk and needs among extremist offenders, for use in the Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). There are 22 identified risk indicators, with the ‘+’ accommodating the inclusion of additional factors that may appear relevant through assessment. | Assessors are expected to consider how any of the 22+ risk indicators included in the model may be mitigated by protective influences, but specific protective factors are not detailed. |
| Terrorist Radicalization Assessment Protocol (TRAP-18) | SPJ instrument designed to assess the terrorist threat of individuals. It is primarily concerned with lone-actor terrorists. The model is coded according to the presence or absence of certain indicators, which include eight proximal warning behaviours and ten distal characteristics. | Protective factors are not explicitly included, but the absence of certain risk factors may be considered as protective. |
| Islamic Radicalization (IR-46) | SPJ risk assessment model developed by the Dutch National Police. It is specifically concerned with assessing the risk of Islamist terrorism. | Protective factors are reportedly included and unlimited, but what these protective factors are and how they are assessed is not detailed in publicly available literature. |
| Multi-Level Guidelines (MLG version 2) | SPJ framework for assessing and managing group-based violence. The MLG version 2 includes sixteen risk factors across four levels: individual, individual-group, group, and group-societal. | Protective factors are not included, but assessors are encouraged to consider case-specific protective influences. |
| Identifying Vulnerable People (IVP) | SPJ instrument to assess individuals’ vulnerability to recruitment to violent extremism, designed to be used by public sectors workers to identify people potentially at risk of radicalisation. | Protective factors are not considered in the IVP framework. |

(Sources: Lloyd, 2019; Hart et al., 2017; Richards, 2018; Meloy, 2018; Cole et al., 2010; Sumpter, 2020)

VIOLENT EXTREMISM RISK ASSESSMENT - VERSION 2 REVISED (VERA-2R)

The VERA-2R is an updated and revised version of earlier forms of VERA, developed by Elaine Pressman and John Flockton. It is based on an SPJ approach (Lloyd, 2019). The original VERA was composed of twenty-eight risk indicators: Twenty-five relating to attitudinal, contextual, historical, and protective factors, with the remaining three relating to demographic factors of sex, marriage and age (Pressman, 2009; Webster et al., 2017). In the second version (VERA 2; Pressman & Flockton, 2012) thirty-one indicators were included for consideration across five domains and the demographic factors were removed (Smith & Nolan, 2016). VERA-2R, the latest revision, consists of 34 indicators across 5 primary domains – including 6 protective factors – plus 11 additional indicators. These items are assessed on a 3-point scale: Low, Moderate, or High (Lloyd, 2019).

Pressman, one of the originators of VERA, described protective factors as:

“the factors that if present, mitigate risk of future violence. The protective factors are rated in terms of the level or extent they are present. If the identified factors are not present, risk of violence is less likely mitigated. Awareness of the presence or absence of these protective factors are useful for intervention program planning.”

(Pressman, 2009, p. 38)

The original version contained five protective factors: 1. Shift in ideology; 2. Rejection of violence to achieve goals; 3. Change of vision and concept of ‘enemy’; 4. Interest in constructive political involvement; 5. Significant community support (Pressman, 2009, pp. 38-39).

VERA-2 contained six protective factors: 1. Re-interpretation of ideology less rigid, absolute; 2. Rejection of violence to obtain goals; 3. Change of vision of enemy; 4. Involvement with non-violent, de-radicalization, offence-related programmes; 5. Community support for non-violence; 6. Family support for non-violence (cited in Hart et al., 2017; Richards, 2018).

The revised version (VERA-2R) also explicitly includes six protective or risk-mitigating factors. The inclusion of these protective factors has been cited as a strength of the tool (Lloyd, 2019). Smith and Nolan (2016, p. 173) suggested the inclusion of protective factors may make VERA-2R more accurate than other models, such as the ERG22+, because taking account of protective factors may significantly influence a score that was otherwise determined only on the basis of positive risk factors.

However, the generic nature of the six protective factors has been noted as a limitation: the “protective indicators are general risk mitigating and/or disengagement indicators, that do not substitute for individually relevant protective influences” (Lloyd, 2019, p. 46). The protective factors included in VERA-2R have also been criticised as “de facto inverted risk factors,” (Herzog-Evans, 2018, p. 19), meaning that these elements are measured twice – both positively and negatively. Herzog-Evans goes on to argue that if the six protective factors are the inverse of some risk factors, then it is not clear why only six were chosen rather than all of the risk factors (Herzog-Evans, 2018, p. 19).

Herzog-Evans (2018) also questions the lack of clarity over when it is relevant to measure these protective factors. Noting that the influence of protective factors could wane over time, Herzog-Evans suggests measuring them both at the start and end, and possibly throughout, the programme in order to assess change. However, because of the way some of the protective factors are formulated, (e.g., changes in interpretation in ideology), Herzog-Evans suggests they may only be relevant at the completion of the programme.

EXTREMISM RISK GUIDANCE (ERG 22+)

The ERG22+ is an SPJ tool designed for assessing risk and needs among extremist offenders, for use in prison and probation settings (Lloyd, 2019). In contrast to VERA, the ERG22+ was developed specifically to assess extremist offenders, including those convicted of extremist offences that did not involve violence.

The ERG22+ was designed to identify dynamic needs and susceptibilities in an individual that may develop over time. It is structured according to three dimensions: engagement, intent, and capability. There are 22+ identified risk indicators, with the '+' accommodating the inclusion of additional factors may become relevant through assessment. Rather than measuring the presence or absence of a factor, the ERG considers that factor's role in the offence, enabling a more nuanced assessment of risk and protection (Lloyd & Dean, 2015, p. 16).

The ERG does not explicitly list distinct protective factors, as per the VERA-2R. However, those utilising the ERG22+ are expected to consider how any of the 22+ risk factors included in the model may be mitigated by protective influences (Lloyd, 2019, p. 15). The developers of the ERG22+, emphasise that through the assessment process assessors should consider influences that could protect the individual from reoffending in the future (Lloyd & Dean, 2015).

Protective influences are also covered as part of the two-day training programme for ERG22+ users (Lloyd, 2019, p. 16). Herzog-Evans (2018, p. 16) argued that it is an advantage of the ERG22+ that it does not specify particular protective factors, suggesting that there is a lack of empirical evidence for the effectiveness of any particular protective factors or how protective factors may interact with, or compensate for risk factors.

TERRORIST RADICALIZATION ASSESSMENT PROTOCOL (TRAP-18)

TRAP-18 is an SPJ instrument designed to assess the terrorist threat of individuals. Unlike other risk assessment frameworks, it is primarily concerned with lone-actor terrorists. The model is coded according to the presence or absence of particular indicators, which include eight proximal warning behaviours and ten distal characteristics. Practitioners weigh the importance of each factor and create a narrative understanding for each case to assess the degree of concern about the individual (Meloy, 2018).

Protective factors are not explicitly mentioned in the TRAP-18 model. The originating author, Dr. J. Reid Meloy, states: "Although protective factors are not formally included, the absence of certain indicators, both proximal warning behaviours and distal characteristics are protective. The narrative questions also explicitly ask about protective factors that may be present in the individual case" (cited in Lloyd, 2019, p. 34). However, there is a lack of consensus about whether it is appropriate to assume the absence of risk indicators to be protective (Lloyd, 2019, p. 8). In several studies of the TRAP-18, the absence of protective factors is mentioned as a potential weakness of the model (Goodwill & Meloy, 2019; Guldemann & Meloy, 2020; Meloy et al., 2021).

ISLAMIC RADICALIZATION (IR-46)

IR-46 is a pre-crime risk assessment model that utilises an SPJ approach, developed by the Dutch National Police. It has been in operation since 2010. As the name suggests, it is specifically concerned with assessing the risk of Islamist radicalisation and terrorism. The model seeks to assess the threat of Islamist violence by assessing an individual's behaviours; readiness to use violence; and capability to do so. IR-46 is structured around two axes: (i) ideology indicators, and (ii) social context indicators. There are twenty-six ideology indicators and twenty social context indicators that relate to the degree of radicalisation (Lloyd, 2019).

PROTECTIVE FACTORS IN EXISTING RISK GUIDANCE

Protective Factors in Risk Assessment

IR-46 is confidential to the Dutch police and security services so there is very little publicly accessible information about the model. It is reported that “protective factors are included and unlimited in the model” (Lloyd, 2019, p. 20). However, what these protective factors are and how they are assessed is not specified.

IDENTIFYING VULNERABLE PEOPLE (IVP)

The IVP model is a pre-crime instrument to assess individuals' vulnerability to recruitment to violent extremism, designed for public sectors workers to help them identify people potentially at risk of radicalisation. Developed in 2008 and in use since 2010, it is now used as an SPJ instrument, although it was originally designed as a checklist-based screening tool (Lloyd, 2019). The IVP guidance was developed as part of the Prevent agenda, with the aim of ‘target hardening’, that is, making it more difficult for vulnerable people to be recruited into extremism (Cole et al., 2010).

The IVP framework includes eleven ‘criteria for identifying vulnerable people,’ and five ‘red category behaviours.’ The eleven criteria are: 1. cultural and/or religious isolation; 2. Isolation from family; 3. Risk taking behaviours; 4. Sudden change in religious practice; 5. Violent rhetoric; 6. Negative peer influences; 7. Isolated peer group; 8. Hate rhetoric; 9. Political activism; 10. Basic paramilitary training; 11. Travel/residence abroad. The red category behaviours are: 1. Death rhetoric; 2. Member of an extremist group; 3. Contact with known recruiters/extremists; 4. Advanced paramilitary training; 5. Overseas combat (Cole et al., 2010).

Protective factors are not considered in the IVP framework. Although, in the guidance document written by the IVP's authors, the authors state that the family can be seen as both a risk factor and protective factor. On the one hand, the family can be a source of social support that can protect an individual from negative influences, so isolation from one's family can

create vulnerabilities. On the other hand, as a source of social learning able to transmit norms, beliefs and behaviours, some family environments may be a source of harm and vulnerability (Cole et al., 2010, p. 8). The guidance document also mentions religious observance as a potential protective factor:

“it should be noted that religious observance is a strong protective factor against engaging in risk taking behaviour for many young people and a strong understanding of religion will protect an individual being drawn in by abusive narratives and misinterpretations of religion.”

(Cole et al., 2010, p. 8)

MULTI-LEVEL GUIDELINES (MLG VERSION 2)

The MLG provides SPJ guidelines for assessing and managing group-based violence. Unlike the other frameworks included in this review, the focus of the MLG is on group-based violence and is therefore relevant beyond the extremism context to include other forms of group-based violence, such as criminal gang violence. The original version of the MLG, developed as part of Alana Cook's doctoral thesis, contained 20 factors (Cook, 2014), but the second version includes sixteen risk factors across four levels: individual, individual-group, group, and group-societal (Hart et al., 2017). There are no protective factors in addition to the risk factors included in the MLG. Although, when utilising the MLG, assessors are encouraged to consider protective factors that are case-specific and relevant to the individual being assessed (Lloyd, 2019, p. 29).

SUMMARY

This review of six tools used to inform risk assessment processes seems to indicate a neglect of protective factors. However, it should be noted that, with the exception of the IVP guidance by Cole et al (2010), we did not have direct access to the risk guidance tools, and several of them have been described in secondary literature as taking account of protective factors.

Two of the tools were notable for their more explicit consideration of risk factors. VERA-2R includes six protective factors (of 34 indicators), however these have been described as potentially too generic and simplistic inversions of risk factors. The ERG22+ did not include explicit consideration of protective factors but was designed flexibly with the intention that practitioners should consider protection alongside the risks that the tool outlined.

Of the protective factors that were described in the risk assessment tools reviewed above – specifically the VERA-2R – one was explicitly identified in our Evidence Map: ‘family support for non-violence’. A second was less directly represented: ‘community support for non-violence’ may be considered broadly comparable to ‘non-violent peers’. The other protections identified in the VERA-2R are tangentially reflected in the Evidence Map, for example ‘rejection of violence to obtain goals’ echoes the ‘peaceful religious activism’ and ‘legitimate political protest’ measures identified in the Evidence Map.

However, the factors linked to ‘re-interpretation of ideology less rigid, absolute’; ‘change of vision of enemy’; and ‘involvement with non-violent, de-radicalization, offence-related programmes’ are less clearly represented in the Evidence Map. This may be because most of the evidence that informed the map was drawn from samples of the general population who were asked about attitudes and intentions, rather than populations of extremist offenders concerned with violent or illegal behaviour. Hence the research may have a stronger (albeit still limited) understanding of what might be protective in the general population,

and less of an empirical understanding of the role of more offence-specific factors such as involvement in intervention programmes, the evidence about which is extremely limited (Hassan et al., 2021).

Our analysis also shows that risk guidance tools are heavily informed by SPJ; all of the models took this approach. They also strongly emphasise risk factors, which is consistent with the overall balance of the academic evidence (see Marsden & Lee, 2022). However, taken in isolation this interpretation of risk guidance tools provides only a partial picture. Given the reliance on SPJ approaches, although the formal consideration of protection may be limited, individual decision-makers have considerable leeway to exercise their own judgement. They are also typically encouraged to take account of protective factors in much of the guidance that accompanies the risk assessment tools. Understanding how practitioners consider protective factors in their approach to risk assessment and management demands a more detailed account of how they approach this work; something the next section develops.

PRACTITIONER PERSPECTIVES

In addition to reviewing publicly available information on existing forms of risk guidance, this report offers an analysis of data collected from interviews with a range of practitioners connected to risk management in terrorism and extremism cases, both with convicted offenders (e.g., probation officers) and with those considered at risk of involvement in extremism (e.g., Prevent practitioners). This provides an additional perspective on risk management decision-making and allows us to situate the use of risk guidance tools and broader academic evidence within a more practical context.

DATA & METHODS

Ten interviews were conducted with people from a range of backgrounds. Their various responsibilities included engaging with extremist and terrorist actors at various stages of radicalisation and offending. This included a mix of interviewees who had responsibilities for risk management with those considered at risk of radicalisation and those tasked with managing convicted terrorist and extremist offenders.

Interviewees were contacted through two channels. Either they were already known to the research team through professional contacts, or they were introduced to the team by people already known to the team (“gatekeepers”). The resulting sample is not random and some care is needed in generalising from these ten interviews. However, interviewees also come from a range of backgrounds and a range of roles and offered multiple, sometimes contrasting perspectives on risk management processes.

Interviews were semi-structured, interviewers worked from a question schedule (Appendix A) but were free to deviate as the flow of the conversation dictated. Interviews were in most cases conducted remotely via video chat software (Microsoft Teams). This was done partly to conserve resources by reducing the need to travel, but also to minimise risk in the context of the on-going coronavirus pandemic. Interviews took place between January and May 2022.

Several of the interviewees held security sensitive roles which meant there were some restrictions in how we could report findings. In one case an interviewee was interviewed by a third party who wrote the conversation up in note form. In four other cases video chats were not recorded and handwritten notes were taken, typed up, and then confirmed with interviewees for accuracy and to ensure that security sensitive information was not disclosed. In the remaining five cases verbatim transcription was made, in several cases with the aid of Microsoft Team’s auto transcribe feature, although this proved insufficiently accurate to negate the need for human transcription.

Given the mixture of interviewees and records of interviews, we took the decision not to use direct quotes from interviews as part of this report. As a result, many of the specific details included in the analysis are paraphrased.

Interviewees are summarised in the table below. Each interviewee was assigned a pseudonym. These are not gender or ethnicity specific and serve only to identify individual cases in a natural way for readers.

| Name | Role | Transcription |
|-----------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Abed | Probation Officer | Verbatim |
| Bernardo | Former Probation Officer | Verbatim |
| Catrina | Other risk management | Third party interview, notes only |
| Deborah | Other risk management | Notes only |
| Eric | Other risk management | Notes only |
| Fatima | Other risk management | Notes only |
| Gabriella | Police Officer | Verbatim |
| Henry | Other risk management | Notes only |
| Ivan | Researcher | Verbatim |
| Jacinta | Researcher | Verbatim |

Table 2: Interviewees

ANALYSIS

Analysis was thematic. Thematic analysis is a commonly used tool in qualitative analysis favoured for its flexibility and lack of theoretical baggage that often accompanies other methods available to qualitative researchers. It can be applied to a wide range of data types including participants' perspectives and experiences, and can also be used to capture research observations (Braun & Clarke 2006: 78; Clarke & Braun 2017: 297).

In thematic analysis, data - in this case interviews - are coded and key themes identified. Depending on epistemological persuasion, researchers can either present the resulting analysis as is, i.e., giving direct voice to participants, or they may choose to incorporate findings into a pre-established understanding of how the phenomenon being studied operates i.e., taking a more theoretically-informed approach. A middle path, critical realism, is frequently adopted but seldom made explicit by researchers. A critical realist epistemology seeks to navigate between purely realist and constructivist positions, recognising the ways individuals "make meaning of their experience, and, in

turn, the ways the broader social context impinges on those meanings, while retaining focus on the material and other limits of 'reality.'" (Braun & Clarke 2006: 81). This is the approach taken here. In the following thematic analysis, attention is focused on the experiences of a range of professionals involved in risk assessment and management. The interview transcripts form the corpus of the data that was analysed. With the help of NVIVO, a computer-aided qualitative data analysis tool, the interview transcripts were coded and potentially interesting observations were identified. This process was not wholly inductive but instead was driven by our theoretical interest in the concept of protective factors and the previous work undertaken for this work stream.

In particular, our work drawing attention to the weak conceptualisation of protective factors, and the limited knowledge about how they are taken account of in risk assessment processes. Despite this focus, there was sufficient flexibility to allow for the incorporation of emergent themes. The analytical process was iterative, and codes were revisited on multiple occasions to achieve the clearest picture for the analysis.

Our findings were roughly grouped under three headings:

- Conceptualisation of protective factors
- Application of protective factors in risk assessment
- Barriers to considering protective factors

Detailed findings are reported below but summarised here:

- Practitioner conceptualisation of protective factors was nuanced. Practitioners stressed the variance they found in protective factors, how idiosyncratic they could be, and the need to consider protective factors alongside and in interaction with risk factors.
- Practitioners described a range of guidance they used in decision-making, but these were all seen as fitting within the SPJ model. Above all, practitioners emphasised that every case was different and that protection needed to be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Practitioners identified a range of potential barriers to considering protective factors in their decision-making. They concurred with earlier research which found a relatively limited evidence base for protective factors (Marsden & Lee 2022). They also noted existing social and political biases which resulted in greater emphasis being placed on risk over protection.

CONCEPTUALISING PROTECTIVE FACTORS

A key question we were interested in was understanding how participants thought about and conceptualised protective factors. There was broad agreement between interviewees that protective factors were those things that either mitigated risk, or reduced the likelihood of offending (Eric). Beyond this broad generalisation the interviewees demonstrated a sophisticated and nuanced understanding of what protective factors were and how they informed their decision-making.

Many participants were able to list examples of concrete protective factors they had come across in their own work. These were practical and everyday factors believed to reduce the risk of offending including: having access to accommodation, family support, employment, education, receiving fair-treatment from the state and criminal justice practitioners, maintaining relationships with prosocial peers, having both psychological and material needs (such as a sense of identity and access to housing) met, the lack of a violent history, practical constraints that prevent action (e.g., probation conditions), and having ideological doubts.

RISK AND PROTECTION

When asked if protective factors were a corollary of risk, or if they could be independent of risk factors, interviewees most often suggested that protective factors could be both. One interviewee did note that the way risk assessment work was structured (i.e., through the use of risk guidance) meant that protective and risk factors were often presented as existing on different ends of the same spectrum (Bernardo).

However, interviewees were also keen to go further, stressing that protective factors were not simply the opposite of risk factors and that relationships between protection and risk were often interactive (Fatima). One example offered was the risk presented by traumas suffered earlier in life such as childhood violence. These risks could not be removed, however protective

factors have the potential to reduce or mitigate the risks shaped by these factors (Catrina).

Although many participants provided specific examples of protective factors, many were also cautious about applying protective factors universally or generalising them to all cases (Bernardo). Protective factors were described as heavily dependent on specific circumstances. Factors that may be considered protective in one case may be less protective or even a risk factor in another. One example of this was the role of family members. Where families were less willing to provide support, or where they held extreme views, they were considered more likely to present a risk to an offender coming out of prison, however, a supportive, non-radical family could be considered highly protective (Abed, Deborah).

Practitioners acknowledged that protective factors were tied to more deep-seated mechanisms such as emotion, identity, and motivation as well as immediate practical issues (Catrina). Several participants discussed the role of identity, suggesting that a weak sense of identity was often tied to radicalisation processes during which actors were searching for meaning. Conversely, a strong sense of identity, where an individual knows who they are was typically viewed as protective (Abed). Another cluster of protective factors was suggested around skills and aptitudes that may contribute to more observable factors such as interpersonal skills and aptitude for employment (Bernardo). Being in employment was not inherently thought to be protective but having the capacity to obtain and maintain employment was.

Two interviewees summarised protective factors as being either protective or promotive (Deborah; Jacinta). Protective factors were those that explicitly mitigated, reduced, or acted as a buffer for risk factors, while promotive factors were independent factors that built strengths and resilience as well as increasing the likelihood of disengagement or desistance (Deborah). However, it was acknowledged that the distinction between protection and promotion was not always clear (Jacinta).

Some interviewees were cautious about dividing risk and protection from one another, suggesting that understanding both was necessary for good risk management (Ivan; Jacinta). Both interviewees linked this to a wider need to understand risk and protection on a more complex and human level (Jacinta), taking into consideration a broad array of factors, their relevance, and how they interacted with one another (Ivan). This was developed further in comments about case formulation (below).

DYNAMIC AND INDIVIDUALISED

The majority of interviewees emphasised that risk assessments and the role of protective factors were dynamic and changed over time. One interviewee noted that risk could potentially change very quickly (Catrina). External protective factors such as positive family relationships and other pro-social contexts were seen as potentially developing over time, which would alter the overall risk assessment picture (Bernardo). Changes in particular factors could also be uneven. Some factors such as education may change relatively slowly, while others may be more fast moving such as accommodation (Gabriella).

Protective factors which took longer to develop (such as educational attainment) represented a greater investment of time and resources, while faster moving factors could potentially be addressed pretty quickly, for example where someone may lose access to accommodation (Catrina).

Some risk assessment models that were informed by pathways through extremism were thought to be too static by one interviewee (Catrina). In some cases, not being able to consider change over time was felt to contribute to a lower predictive validity for risk assessments (Catrina). Getting a sense of historical norms was also considered important. Historical behaviours were thought to be useful as points of comparison for contemporaneous assessments. Although events in the past could not be changed, their significance may vary over time, which may impact the way risk and protection is assessed in

PRACTITIONER PERSPECTIVES

Protective Factors in Risk Assessment

contemporary reports (Deborah). Understanding what has changed between points of offending and non-offending was thought to be a potential indicator as to which risk and protective factors were important for individuals (Henry).

COMPARISONS WITH THE ACADEMIC LITERATURE

These practitioner perspectives echo themes found in the academic literature. Protective factors are conceptualised in a variety of ways, including as the opposite of risk factors, independent of them, and as factors which interacted with protections (Lösel et al., 2018). Some interviewees also reflected the distinction made in the literature between protective and promotive factors (Loeber et al., 2008).

The range of protective factors described by the interviewees tallies with many of the factors identified in our Evidence Gap Map, including psychological characteristics (e.g., emotionality); practical, socio-economic factors (e.g., employment); personal attributes (e.g., life skills); social networks (e.g., supportive, non-extremist families); and attitudes (e.g., having ideological doubts). Although the factors identified by the practitioners were wide-ranging, they typically focused on individual-level characteristics and their immediate environment.

Some of the broader-level factors not reflected in the interviews, but which were featured in the Evidence Gap Map included the potentially protective function of activism, religiosity, and civic attachment. The role of peers, educational attainment, and attitudes towards society, for example, in relation to social integration or cohesion were also more pronounced in the review of the literature. This is perhaps not surprising as those involved in risk assessment and management are typically more concerned with proximal, individual-level factors that are more accessible and assessable. However, it does perhaps point to the potential benefits of taking greater account of the way protections operate and interact across different levels of analysis.

Together, the interviews paint a nuanced picture of how protective factors are conceptualised by practitioners. This takes account of their role in mitigating, buffering, interacting with, or act independently of risk factors, in ways which operate across different levels of analysis, including at the individual, family, and societal levels.

APPLYING PROTECTIVE FACTORS

As well as reflecting on how to conceptualise protective factors, we also invited interviewees to discuss how they were applied alongside risk guidance tools in their practical work. Interviewees came from a variety of backgrounds and so applied their understanding of protective factors in a range of contexts.

MULTI-AGENCY WORKING AND DATA TRIANGULATION

Of the interviewees that were front or near-frontline practitioners, none had sole responsibility for making decisions about risk. Instead, their views most commonly formed part of a wider risk assessment and management process. One interviewee working in probation noted that their reporting contributed to parole board decisions, but that these decisions were the responsibility of the parole board. This meant that the interviewee needed to consider all possible outcomes of parole board decisions in their planning (Bernardo).

Several interviewees described being part of specific offender management arrangements such as Multi Agency Public Protection Partnerships (MAPPAs). These involve several agencies, including the police and probation, coordinating information, resources, and decision making about specific cases (Abed, Bernardo). MAPPAs were viewed in a favourable light as it allowed multiple perspectives to come together and enabled information to be pooled (Abed). Other interviewees whose work did not involve MAPPAs still typically worked in multi-disciplinary teams that brought a range of perspectives and experiences to bear on risk management decisions (Fatima).

When asked about the data that went into decision making about risk, interviewees described a range of potential sources. These included psychological reports, mental health assessments, open-source material (e.g., social media data), intelligence and police reports, offending histories, information from other agencies engaged with the case (Abed, Henry, Ivan, Catrina). In some cases, the available information was seen as being only a snapshot in time and of questionable quality (Catrina).

Interviewees reported favouring a diverse range of sources and perspectives to make their decisions (Bernardo, Fatima). One interviewee noted that the relationships and information sharing processes between different agencies were becoming more structured, but that this had not always been the case. Good relationships between different agencies were considered important for gaining access to the data needed to feed into risk assessments (Bernardo).

Other observations on data collection included collecting information from family members and liaising with potential employers (Bernardo), and an overall preference from collecting data directly through in-person interviews with subjects whenever possible as opposed to relying on second-hand reporting or transcribed interviews (Catrina). Some interviewees also noted that the amount of time they spent on an individual case could vary depending on time pressures (Catrina). One interviewee noted that information sharing between agencies could be improved and that at times there was very little data to inform decision-making (Deborah).

RISK ASSESSMENT AND STRUCTURED PROFESSIONAL JUDGEMENT

Interviewees mentioned a range of tools they had access to structure risk management decisions. These included ERG22+, STEER, VERA, OASys, SAPROF, HCR20, as well as specific risk assessment frameworks, guidance and protocols developed within organisations (Abed, Deborah, Eric, Fatima, Ivan). Tools were generally seen as not addressing

protective factors specifically (with the exception of SAPROF) (Henry, Deborah).

These tools were not treated as definitive instruments but were instead conceptualised as sitting alongside the interviewee's own professional judgement which formed the other element of the decision-making process (Gabriella). One interviewee described the tools as being good for sensitising them to particular factors and avoiding biases that came with individual interests or specialisms (Catrina). Another noted that risk guidance tools could not predict individual risk and blanket statements about risk levels or percentages were not useful in determining risk for individuals (Jacinta).

The SPJ model was common across interviewees, and specific risk assessment tools were seen as useful prompts to guide assessments and ensure that a variety of factors were considered. One interviewee discussed the need to consider the presence of risk or protective factors as well as their relevance in specific cases (Henry). Another described the available tools as useful checks on biases and overall sense (Eric). Whilst another interviewee noted that the available tools were particularly useful when they first started in their role but that they found it easier to make decisions without relying on them as they gained experience (Gabriella).

This fitted a wider theme that emphasised the idiosyncratic nature of risk and protective factors. Although tools and broader datasets were thought to provide some general guidelines, practitioners often returned to the idea that risk assessment was more nuanced and specific than these approaches allowed for (Eric, Deborah, Abed, Bernardo, Catrina). Protective factors specifically were thought to be unique to an individual and not always well represented by quantitative approaches. One practitioner explained that one person's risk could be interpreted as another's protection (Eric). In some cases, a single protective factor was felt to outweigh several potential risks (Fatima), reflecting the importance of understanding

PRACTITIONER PERSPECTIVES

Protective Factors in Risk Assessment

and weighting the relevance of specific factors in an individual's life.

Overall, there was a great deal of resistance to the idea of universal or generalised models of risk and protection. While tools and research evidence were considered valuable additions to decision-making, all the interviewees emphasised the need to focus on individual cases and made the point that risk and protection were heavily context dependent.

Two interviewees in particular (Ivan; Jacinta), both with research backgrounds, argued that a much greater focus on case formulation was needed amongst practitioners. This involved practitioners going beyond considering the presence or absence of specific protective factors and instead placing protective factors into a more detailed account of radicalisation and desistance which considered the mechanics at work in individual cases. This makes it possible to understand not just the presence, but also the relevance of those factors.

This approach was informed by an interest in developing a broader picture in each case that considered more than isolated risk and protective factors. In other words, to see the whole person and their situation (Jacinta). These narrative style accounts of risk and protection were seen as more informative for decision-makers, allowing them to better understand levels of risk than summary assessments such as percentages (Jacinta). This type of approach was seen as more demanding and requiring clinical-level skill to make work (Ivan).

Overall, despite working in different settings, the interviewees were positive about the role of the various risk guidance tools on offer. However, none of the interviewees was content to rely solely on these tools, instead they were described as augmenting their own professional judgements about risk. They were seen as a useful check on bias and for structuring judgements within the SPJ model.

BARRIERS TO CONSIDERING PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Interviewees were asked about potential barriers to considering protective factors in risk assessment and placing greater emphasis on protection in their decision-making.

A major barrier identified by interviewees was the overriding focus most processes placed on risk. This was attributed to a range of factors including better availability of resources for risk-oriented practices (Bernardo); psychologists tending to anticipate the worst from offenders (Eric); that risk was simply a more natural focus for practitioners (Henry); and that it was easier for psychologists to be more risk adverse (Eric). One interviewee suggested that in risk assessment more generally (i.e., outside extremism) risk was often considered ahead of protection (Ivan).

SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT

Interviewees talked about how social and political considerations played into their work. Describing heavy external scrutiny; political sensitivities; and a lack of public sympathy for terrorist and extremist offenders as all contributing to a clear emphasis on risk.

Interviewees recognised the tension between external scrutiny, especially following high profile incidents such as Fishmonger's Hall, and their own knowledge and experience of risk management decision-making. One interviewee noted that many stakeholders did not have regular experience of front-line risk management (Jacinta). Structured tools were felt to be more valuable for practitioners where decisions needed to be defensible and were likely to be scrutinised after the fact, providing something for practitioners to fall back on to evidence their decisions (Jacinta).

The recent decision that terrorist offenders would be required to complete two thirds of their sentence before being considered for release was suggested by one interviewee (Eric) as an example of how political considerations made it harder to place

greater emphasis on protective factors in decision-making. The prevailing political climate was seen as being risk adverse.

Limited access to housing and employment were one way in which societal aversion to terrorist offenders played out, although despite this, the appetite for considering protective factors amongst practitioners was still considered strong (Fatima). Another interviewee used a comparison between victims of sexual exploitation and extremists. While public perception of victims of sexual exploitation focused on their vulnerability and generated public sympathy, extremist offenders were not seen in the same way (Gabriella).

LIMITED EVIDENCE BASE

Protective factors were felt by some interviewees as harder to identify and evidence for practitioners. Protective factors were suggested by one interviewee to still be in an early phase of understanding (Henry). Risk factors were often more prevalent in the evidence available to practitioners than factors which afforded protection. For example, more detail was often recorded about risk factors in relation to past offending, than on protective factors, which are usually less apparent from the available data and less well-documented (Henry).

When asked about the available research on protective factors, interviewees believed that more work was needed (Jacinta). One interviewee described the available evidence base as poor (Deborah). Multiple interviewees highlighted that the existing evidence base was heavily focused on risk over protection (Catrina, Fatima). Whilst one stressed that there was no empirical evidence to demonstrate that protective factors reduce reoffending (Ivan), and another that the limited overall evidence base led to practitioners extrapolating from theory (Catrina). A specific form of evidence felt to be missing by one interviewee was in relation to the effectiveness of interventions and how they are linked to differing forms of protection, and risk although the difficulties around

data collection able to address these questions were acknowledged (Fatima).

The evidence base was critiqued as too heavily driven by academic interest over the needs of practitioners, creating a mismatch between the kinds of evidence available to those responsible for risk assessment and management, and the decisions that practitioners had to make or contribute to (Deborah). At the same time, the interviewees understood the challenges preventing more applied research, in particular the difficulties accessing robust data (Deborah).

Interviewees noted the relatively recent focus on extremism as a subject of interest, highlighting that there was much better evidence available for other forms of offending with a longer history of research and practice (Abed, Gabriella, Henry). Another suggested that extremist risk assessment frequently relied on evidence and experience gleaned from other contexts such as violence or sexual offending (Eric). Although others suggested that this may not be a problem as there were overlapping vulnerabilities between extremist offending and other forms of criminal activity (Ivan; Jacinta).

Practitioner perspectives aligned with the wider academic commentary on protective factors set out in our previous report (Marsden & Lee, 2022) in a number of ways. The dominance of the risk paradigm is a feature of the wider academic research, our interviewees' experience, and the risk assessment tools reviewed in the first part of this report. Corollaries of this include the comparatively limited evidence base on which researchers and practitioners are able to draw, and a lack of practical tools that take account of protective factors. Relatedly, there is a lack of evidence available to determine the relative benefit of addressing protective factors in interventions. These issues are exacerbated by a disconnect between the perceived interests of researchers and the needs of practitioners.

These more practical, empirical questions are contextualised by broader social and political

PRACTITIONER PERSPECTIVES

Protective Factors in Risk Assessment

dynamics. The sensitivities of foregrounding protection over or alongside risk, were articulated by the interviewees in ways which echo research that has highlighted the challenges of adopting what some might perceive to be a ‘softer’ approach to those with a history of involvement in terrorism and extremism.

SUMMARY

These interviews are only a narrow window into the practice of risk-management. They are not representative of all types of risk management practice or practitioners, and the findings cannot be treated as universal. Despite this, the interviews provide some insight into how a diverse group of practitioners understand and apply the concept of protective factors. These findings provide an important perspective that tempers some of the earlier findings about the role of protective factors in risk assessment and management.

Our analysis of empirical academic evidence and the publicly available data on risk assessment guidance suggested that protective factors were a secondary consideration in a domain focused heavily on risk. To some extent the interviews with practitioners have confirmed this risk-first type of approach. Driven by external pressure; concerns about the consequences of making a bad decision; a lack of evidence about the potential role of protective factors; the limited availability of tools which foreground questions of protection; and a heavily risk-oriented outlook in the wider criminal justice system, practitioners typically take a cautious approach to interpreting and assessing risk.

Despite this, many of the practitioners we spoke to were alive to the importance of protective factors and – typically in the context of an SPJ approach – took account of events, experiences, contexts, and characteristics that might perform a protective function. Examples of protective factors were variable. They ranged from relatively pragmatic issues of housing and access to employment to deeper concerns around the emotional, relational, and psychological processes that

inform the mechanisms by which risk and protection might function.

The interviewees universally argued that protective factors were more than simply the opposite of risk. However, they also pushed back slightly on the idea of protective factors as something independent and discrete. The dominant perspective arising from the interviews is of protective factors as complex, relational, and individualised. Further, that they are often interconnected and interact with broader patterns of risk, all of which can shift over time.

This complex picture dulls slightly the role of empirical evidence in risk assessment. While calls for more evidence and research on the role of protective factors in violent extremism were common, the interviewees also recognised that such evidence is only likely to work as guidance for risk assessments. Ultimately, they relied on their own ability and experience to develop an understanding of what kinds of protections might be relevant and interpreted these in the context of individual cases, in most cases, mediated through the SPJ approach.

Existing assessment tools and the wider evidence base were thought to be useful, but mainly as guidelines and a means for structuring judgements. This suggests that there is a need to improve the available evidence base and integrate it into tools available to practitioners, but also a competing need to resist turning risk assessment practice into a tick-box exercise. Interviewees suggested that the best risk assessment processes are ones where they are given the ability to reach judgements based on the available evidence in the context of each specific case. Two interviewees in particular emphasised the role of case formulation within risk assessment practice, which involves developing an explanation of the individual mechanics at work in a specific case.

Overall, the interviewees were well disposed towards incorporating protective factors into their work and they believed that there was a good understanding of the concept amongst colleagues.

However, they identified several barriers to placing greater emphasis on protection. One being the consequences of making mistakes and a natural risk aversity associated with managing potentially violent people or dangerous situations. There was also a sense that focusing on protection, and especially on promotive factors (i.e., developing strengths), was made harder by political and cultural norms as extremists were not seen as vulnerable in the same way that other offenders may be.

CONCLUSIONS

Drawing together the insights from the review of the evidence on protective factors consolidated in our Evidence Gap Map and associated report (Marsden & Lee, 2022); the analysis of risk assessment tools; and the interviews with practitioners, a number of observations are possible.

Most obviously, there is a lack of empirical evidence underpinning which protective factors might be relevant in the case of terrorism, and a limited understanding of how they function. Although broad claims that they are dynamic, interact with risk factors, and that they can be both independent of and on a spectrum with risk are helpful, they only go some way in helping to conceptualise how they work, and hence how they should be incorporated into risk assessment processes.

The interviews with practitioners point the way towards a more nuanced and conceptually sophisticated way of thinking about protective factors by focusing on the mechanisms by which protection functions. This is somewhat distinct - although not necessarily at odds with - efforts to identify a specific list of factors. Not only does a more mechanism-led approach reflect how practitioners talk about protective factors, it also offers greater explanatory power by providing a route not only to describing which factors might be relevant but how and why they work in individual cases.

A second point that echoes across our research to date is the heavy emphasis on risk in the academic literature, risk assessment tools, and practitioners' experience and contexts. There are long-standing historical and socio-political reasons for this. The risk paradigm has dominated criminal justice practice for several decades, and the wider sensitivities and perceived risk from terrorism shapes public opinion, policy and practice.

To move forward, it seems helpful to consider a different starting point through which to develop an account of protective factors. Rather than augmenting existing risk-oriented perspectives to incorporate protective factors, there are potential gains from drawing on a different paradigm that has been held up as an alternative to the dominance of risk: that is, strength-based approaches.

Broadly speaking strength-based perspectives focus on developing an individual's skills, capacities and strengths so they are able to meet their needs in legal, normative and pro-social ways (Wanamaker et al., 2018). This is distinct from risk oriented approaches which typically concentrate on addressing deficits and mitigating risks (Maruna & Lebel, 2003). It has been proposed as a route to theorising and conceptualising how protective factors work (Dickson et al., 2018), and has already been used to support terrorist offender rehabilitation and reintegration (Dean, 2014; Marsden, 2017).

Taking this broad approach as its starting point, the next phase of our research is to test a strengths-based approach to protective factors to understand, empirically, its potential to support work in this area. As well as reflecting the empirical evidence as to which factors help support positive outcomes, this next piece of work will foreground the mechanisms by which protection functions, and use strengths-based theory to derive and refine a broader framework that indicate not only which factors matter, but how they work, and how they might be applied in individual cases.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Cole, J., Alison, E., Cole, B., & Alison, L. (2010). Guidance for Identifying People Vulnerable to Recruitment into Violent Extremism. University of Liverpool. https://preventforfeandtraining.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/IVP_Guidance_Draft_v0.3_web_version.pdf.
- Cook, A. N. (2014). *Risk assessment and management of group-based violence* [Doctoral dissertation, Simon Fraser University: Department of Psychology]. <https://summit.sfu.ca/item/14289>
- Dean, C. (2014). The Healthy Identity Intervention: The UK's development of a psychologically informed intervention to address extremist offending. In Silke, A. (ed.) *Prisons, Terrorism & Extremism, Critical Issues in Management, Radicalisation and Reform*. London: Routledge.
- Dickson, S. R., Willis, G. M., & Mather, D. (2018). Protective factors and the good lives model: Combining positive approaches to assessment and treatment. In *New Frontiers in Offender Treatment* (pp. 43-56). Springer: Cham.
- Goodwill, A., & Meloy, J. R. (2019). Visualizing the relationship among indicators for lone actor terrorist attacks: Multidimensional scaling and the TRAP-18. *Behavioral sciences & the law*, 37(5), 522-539.
- Guldimann, A., & Meloy, J. R. (2020). Assessing the threat of lone-actor terrorism: the reliability and validity of the TRAP-18. *Forensische Psychiatrie, Psychologie, Kriminologie*, 14(2), 158-166.
- Guy, L. S., Packer, I. K., & Warnken, W. (2012). Assessing risk of violence using structured professional judgment guidelines. *Journal of Forensic Psychology Practice*, 12(3), 270-283.
- Hart, S. D., Cook, A. N., Pressman, D. E., Strang, S., & Lim, Y. L. (2017). A concurrent evaluation of threat assessment tools for the individual assessment of terrorism. *Canadian Network for Research on Terrorism, Security, and Society: Working Paper Series*, 17(1), 1-61.
- Hassan, G., Brouillette-Alarie, S., Ousman, S., Savard, É. L., Kilinc, D., Madriaza, P., Varela, W., Pickup, D., Danis, E., & the CPN-PREV team. (2021c). *A systematic review on the outcomes of tertiary prevention programs in the field of violent radicalization*. Canadian Practitioners Network for the Prevention of Radicalization and Extremist Violence. Retrieved from <https://cpnprev.ca/systematic-review-3/>
- Hassan, G., Brouillette-Alarie, S., Ousman, S., Savard, É. L., Kilinc, D., Madriaza, P., Varela, W., Pickup, D., Danis, E., & the CPN-PREV team. (2021c). *A systematic review on the outcomes of tertiary prevention programs in the field of violent radicalization*. Canadian Practitioners Network for the Prevention of Radicalization and Extremist Violence. Retrieved from <https://cpnprev.ca/systematic-review-3/>
- Herzog-Evans, M. (2018). A comparison of two structured professional judgment tools for violent extremism and their relevance in the French context. *European Journal of Probation*, 10(1), 3-27.
- Lloyd, M. (2019). Extremism Risk Assessment: A Directory. *Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats*. 1-46. <https://crestresearch.ac.uk/resources/extremism-risk-assessment-directory/>
- Lloyd, M., & Dean, C. (2015). The development of structured guidelines for assessing risk in extremist offenders. *Journal of Threat Assessment and Management*, 2(1), 40.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Protective Factors in Risk Assessment

- Loeber, R. E., Farrington, D. P., Stouthamer-Loeber, M. E., & White, H. R. E. (2008). Introduction and key questions. In R. Loeber, D.P. Farrington, M. Southamer-Loeber & H.R. White (Eds.). *Violence and serious theft: Development and prediction from childhood to adulthood*. Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group (pp3-23).
- Lösel, F., Bender, D., Jugl, I., & King, S. (2020). Resilience against political and religious extremism, radicalization, and related violence: A systematic review of studies on protective factors. In D. Weisburd, Savona, E. U., Hasisi, B., & Calderoni, F. (Ed.), *Understanding recruitment to organized crime and terrorism* (pp. 55-84). Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-36639-1>.
- Lösel, F., King, S., Bender, D., & Jugl, I. (2018). Protective Factors Against Extremism and Violent Radicalization: A Systematic Review of Research. *International Journal of Developmental Science*, 12(1–2), 89–102. <https://doi.org/10.3233/DEV-170241>
- Marsden, S.V. (2017b). Reintegrating radicals: A strengths-based approach to ‘deradicalisation’. In O. Lynch, and J. Argomaniz, (Eds.). (2017). *Victims and perpetrators of terrorism: Exploring identities, roles and narratives*. Routledge.
- Maruna, S., & LeBel, T. P. (2003). Welcome home-examining the re-entry court concept from a strengths-based perspective. *W. Criminology Rev.*, 4, 91.
- Meloy, J. R. (2018). The Operational Development and Empirical Testing of the Terrorist Radicalization Assessment Protocol (TRAP–18). *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 100(5), 483-492. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00223891.2018.1481077>
- Meloy, J. R., Goodwill, A., Clemmow, C., & Gill, P. (2021). Time sequencing the TRAP-18 indicators. *Journal of Threat Assessment and Management*. Advance online publication.
- Pressman, D. E. (2009). Risk assessment decisions for violent political extremism. Public Safety Canada, Government of Canada, Cat. No. PS3-1/2009-2-1EPDF. <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/2009-02-rdv/2009-02-rdv-eng.pdf>
- Richards, J. (2018). High risk or low risk: Screening for violent extremists in DDR Programmes. *International Peacekeeping*, 25(3), 373-393.
- Smith, C., & Nolan, M. (2016). Post-sentence continued detention of high-risk terrorist offenders in Australia. *Criminal Law Journal*, 40(3), 163-179.
- Sumpter, C. (2020). Realising violent extremist risk assessments in Indonesia: simplify and collaborate. *Journal for Deradicalization*, 22, 97-121.
- Wanamaker, K.A. Natalie J. Jones and Shelley L. Brown (2018) Strengths Based Assessments for Use with Forensic Populations: A Critical Review. *International Journal of Forensic Mental Health*, 17:2, 202-221, DOI: [10.1080/14999013.2018.1451414](https://doi.org/10.1080/14999013.2018.1451414)
- Webster, S., Kerr, J., & Tompkins, C. (2017). *A process evaluation of the structured risk guidance for extremist offenders*. HM Prison and Probation Service, Ministry of Justice Analytical Series.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

PRACTITIONERS

a) Background

- i) Without jeopardising any confidences, or your own confidentiality, can you tell me how your role brings you into contact with political and/or religious extremists?
- ii) What kinds of decisions do you make/contribute to about extremists?
- iii) What information do you use to make these decisions?
- iv) What guidelines do you follow/tools do you use in reaching these decisions?

b) Protective Factors

- i) What is a protective factor?
- ii) Is it more than just the opposite of risk, something distinct, or the absence of a risk factor?
- iii) Based on your experience and knowledge, what factors do you think reduce the risk that someone may commit a violent offence?
- iv) How do these factors vary:
 - (1) Over time?
 - (2) By location?
 - (3) By circumstance?
 - (4) In relation to other, outside, events?
 - (5) In relation to other factors i.e., risk factors?

- v) Do protective factors differ by ideology/sub-group?
- vi) How well understood in your area would you say these factors are in your experience?
- vii) How easy is it to make determinations about protective factors?
- viii) What is the evidence base for these factors?

c) Subcultures

- i) To what extent do you think existing approaches take into consideration social and cultural factors in addition to additional questions?
- ii) Based on your knowledge and experience how much of a risk factor do you consider extremist subcultures – e.g., fiction, dress, symbols, music, norms and values?
- iii) Can extremist subcultures be protective?

d) Professional Tools

- i) How well are your experiences and knowledge reflected in the professional tools you described before?
- ii) Any more thoughts on the advantages of incorporating protective factors
- iii) What are the challenges?
- iv) How could it be done?
- v) What would help you as a practitioner to think more about protective factors?

For more information on CREST
and other CREST resources, visit
www.crestresearch.ac.uk



CREST

CENTRE FOR RESEARCH AND
EVIDENCE ON SECURITY THREATS