



Culture contra radicalization

Prisons as spaces of radicalization

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Larger project

- Objectives:
 - Do radical groups serve as a place for belonging for prisoners in provincial prisons and how are such groups viewed by prisoners?
 - What are correctional perceptions on radical groups and how does the correctional system gauge and define radicalization within its institutions?
 - What are the staff's perceptions of what works when encountering radical groups and radicalized inmates in the prison system, what challenges do these individuals (and groups) pose to prison staff, and how might they be addressed?
- Approved by provincial correctional agency in 2016
- Ethics clearance through the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board

Data collection

- 4 provincial prisons
 - 2 remand facilities, one mixed facility, and one sentenced facility
- Team of two main collaborators (Drs. Sandra Bucerius and Kevin Haggerty) and 6 research assistants (graduate students)
- Interviews with currently incarcerated men and women and with correctional officers and staff

Data collection

- Prisoner recruitment on the respective prison units
 - Were asked to pitch the project's objective to be about life experiences in provincial prisons
 - Overwhelming response
 - Interviews were on average 1 hour and 27 minutes long
 - 683 prisoners total
- Officer recruitment through email to staff, presentations at Muster meetings, and building personal rapport on the units
 - quickly had to broaden our focus to security threat groups more generally (i.e., including gangs)
 - Interviews were on average 52 minutes long
 - 122 interviews total

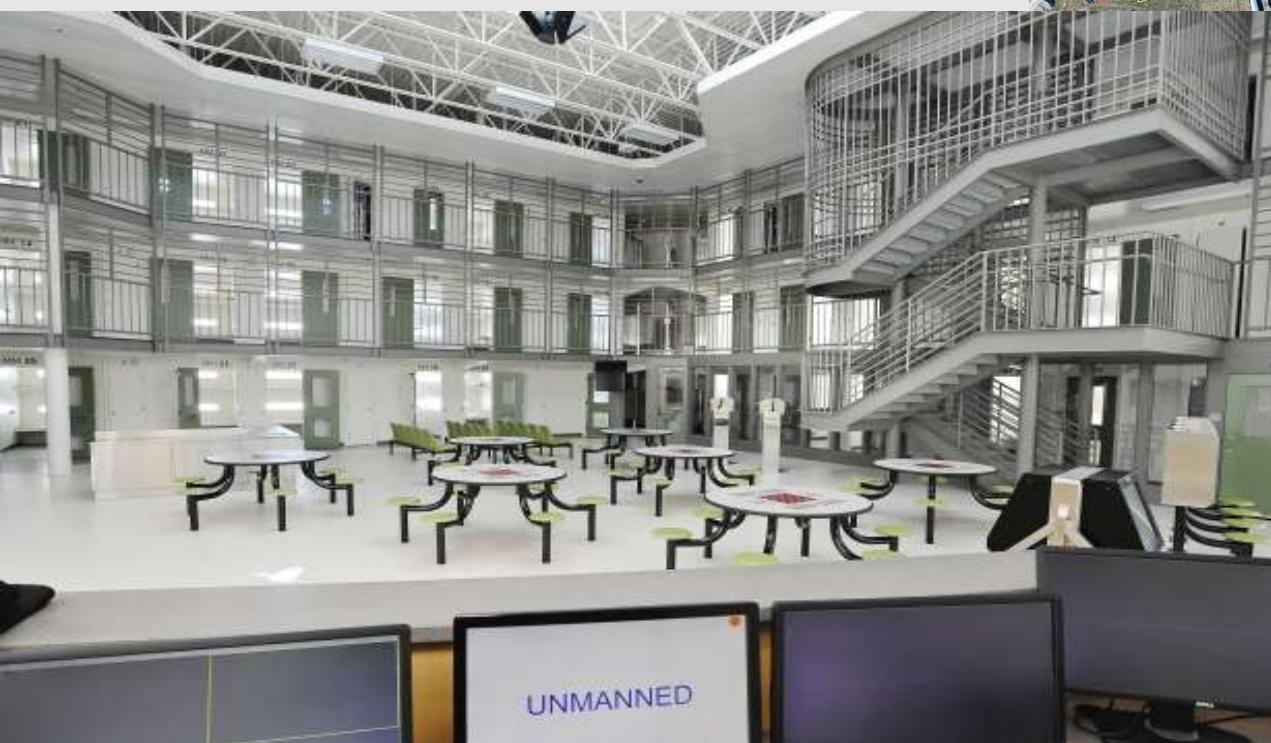
Interviews

Prison	Male prisoners	Female prisoners	Total number of prisoners interviewed	Correctional officers	Data collection period
Prison 1 Remand	220	24	244	35	September/ October 2016
Prison 2 Mixed	89	29	118	38	December 2016
Prison 3 Sentenced	122	(N/A)	122	28	April 2017
Prison 4 Remand	161	38	199	21	September/ October 2017

Other topics

- Opioids, especially fentanyl and carfentanyl
- Gangs and racial dynamics
- Charismatic leaders
- Victim/offender overlap (quant survey data)
- Protective custody units
- Officer vulnerability
- Access to health care/programming etc.

Institution 1



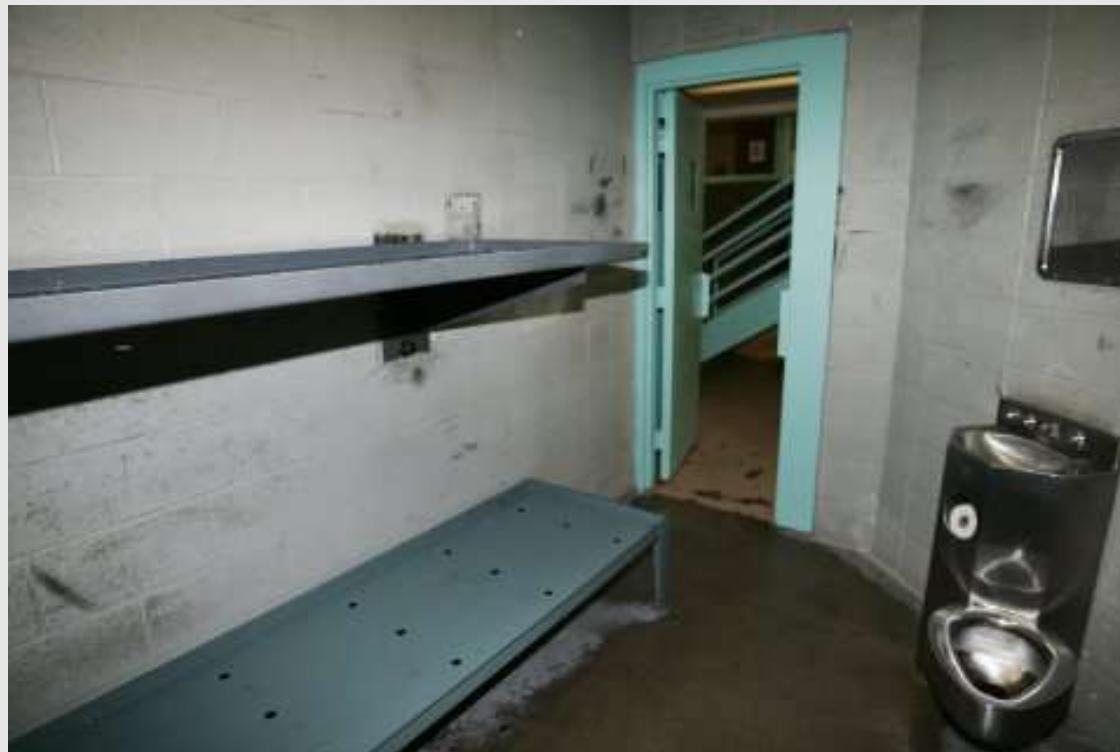
Institution 2 and 4



Institution 3



Institution 1,3, and 4 | Cells



Definition of Radicalization

- “. . . the process by which individuals. . . are introduced to an overtly ideological message and belief system that encourages movement from moderate, mainstream beliefs toward extreme views . . . it becomes a threat to national security when [people] espouse or engage in violence or direct action as a means of promoting political, ideological or religious extremism” (RCMP, 2009, p. 1)

Alarmist perspective

- “Historically, prisons have served as incubators of extreme ideas ... Prisoners form a captive audience and often exhibit many characteristics that render them vulnerable to radicalization, including alienation, anti-social attitudes, cultural disillusionment, social isolation, and violent tendencies” (Ciluffo, Cardash & Whitehead, 2007, p. 114)

European Context

- Roy, 2017: “Khaled Kelkal, France’s first homegrown terrorist, and the Kouachi brothers (Charlie Hebdo, Paris, 2015) share a number of common features: second generation; *fairly well integrated at first; period of petty crime; radicalization in prison; attack and death* – weapons in hand – in a standoff with the police” (emphasis added)
- Williams, 2016: “According to Europol, Jihadist terrorism and foreign fighters represent the largest proportion of arrests in the EU over the past three years”

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Extremists to be put in special prison units

22 August 2016 | UK | Share



The report comes days after it was revealed radical cleric Anjem Choudary was convicted for inviting others to support so-called Islamic State

AFP

Extremist prisoners who "seek to poison the minds of others" will be put in special units in English and Welsh jails, the government has said.

BBC, 2016

Canadian Context

- **Officer Jason:*** “*Fuck your research on radicals man . . . I bet you’re coming back with under three percent. And I would say even under one percent.*”

* All names are pseudonyms

Prison Radicalization Research

- Hamm, 2009 – *Prison Islam in the Age of Sacred Terror*
- Hamm, 2013 – *The Spectacular Few*
- Liebling, Arnold, and Straub, 2011 – *An exploration of staff–prisoner relationships at HMP Whitemoor: 12 years on* (U.K. Ministry of Justice report)
- Khosrokhavar, 2013 – *Radicalization in Prison: The French Case*
- Useem and Clayton, 2009 – *Radicalization of U.S. Prisoners*
- More recently, LoneStar project headed by Scott Decker and David Pyrooz

Objective

None of these works empirically analyze ***the mechanisms*** within prison which might be working to limit ideological group membership

Objective: assess *whether* and *how* prison subcultures in our research settings inhibit or foster prison radicalization

Radicalization angle

- Why do specific prisons, in specific jurisdictions, seem more prone to producing radical inmates than others?

How to deal with radicals?

- I: ... *like if some guy here [was radical] ...?*
- **Daniel:** *No, he gets locked right up a hundred percent.*
- I: *By you guys?*
- **Daniel:** *Oh, yeah, right in the range [living unit ...] We're so against that.*

Perceptions of Muslim prisoners

- Distinguished between quasi-mythical “radical Muslim” and Muslim prisoners they knew and interacted with on a regular basis;
- Mostly tolerated or were indifferent towards what they judged to be valid Islamic practice;
- At the same time, all prisoners’ religious practices were viewed with suspicion and questioned for their sincerity
- Generally positive: Allport’s contact hypothesis (1954)?

How to deal with radicals

- **Officer Eduardo:** *It'd be pretty hard—pretty lonely to be an ISIS-type in this prison, because these [prisoners] are not exactly the most caring types. Even if you're a Muslim—a softer Muslim-type guy. We had a Muslim guy who had to check off "A" range, because all the other offenders on the block were calling him a terrorist. Doesn't even matter whether you're actually associated with them or not.*

What factors inhibit radicalized messaging?

- a) national cultural imaginaries,
- b) the racial profile of a prison,
- c) the operation of gangs, and
- d) the fact that radicalization allowed prisoners and correctional officers to act outside the otherwise agreed upon subcultural rules.

a) National Cultural Imaginaries: Canadian identity

- **Tyler:** Yeah, we're all Canadians here. We're all big hearted even though we're all criminals. But oh yeah, we don't appreciate that shit. We don't wanna hear any of that talk. We hate those kind of people. Like, even skinheads, stuff like that, I don't see that either.
- **Christopher:** That's the thing. [...] We all coincide in jail together. There's no real skinheads. There's no real Nazis. There's no real white Aryan resistance. There's no...Islamic radicals. Because we all do business together.
- **I:** Have you ever met people like that?
- **Christopher:** Not that I've met, no. Nothing. Because, look, Canada is a multicultural society, right?

b) Prison profile and race relations

- **Alex:** *I've never seen a fight that was like to do with religion or skin color. It's always to do with something else, right? Like the way you carry yourself, if your word is good.*
- **Darnell:** *In the States, you stay with your race [in prison]. I'm mixed, but I would go with black [...]. You don't hang with others. Look a man in his eyes when you speak to him, you know? Talk with confidence. I would say for Canadian prisons, I would say [if you do] that, you're fine.*

b) Prison profile and race relations

- **Tommy:** *A Nazi guy would have no chance on a unit like this. Look around: most people are Natives. They would have to fly under the radar or they'd get jumped.*

b) Prison profile and race relations

- *I: Yeah, so who checks those people off?*
- **Julian:** *The group of their own people. [...]. The one that starts shit we'd leave it to them, like, give them the opportunity to take care of it. So that way, it keeps us from like, kicking his ass. Like that shit doesn't fly. So, like... we talk with the guy they talked with, tell them to straighten out their buddy or else get them to leave. So, if he doesn't straighten out then, he leaves one way or another.*

c) Operation of gangs

- **Francois:** *Oh fuck yeah. They'd fuckin' be done in a heartbeat. I would not hesitate for a second. [...] I have kids [gang members] everywhere that'll fuckin' kill for me. And I ever hear of an ISIS... (laughing) I will NOT—I will go to any length possible to get that person [...] The shit that I've heard from them, what they do to women and children—it's just—for all the Christians and Catholics. I'm Catholic, born and raised. I'm confirmed, all that... and—yeah.... I'm not a fan of them...*
- **Interviewer:** *So, we talked about the prison hierarchy earlier. Where would you say they are?*
- **Francois:** *I'd say they're in the top. If I had a choice between a rat [informant], skinner [sex offender] and ISIS, I'd get the ISIS first. And I'd—Rats and skinners are everywhere. ISIS, they don't come around very often, so I'd get them first.*

d) Prison code

- **Aaron:** *There's ISIS guys in [one unit] that one time, but they got them off the unit as soon as people found out about it [and told the correctional officers].*
- *I: So that wouldn't be [considered] snitching?*
- **Aaron:** [...] *No. Anybody in their right mind would agree with [telling officers]. Unless you were part of that stupidity.*

d) Prison code

- **Officer John:** *In the case of some of these Islamic guys, when we go back into incidents in Canada or across the world where two of these guys all of a sudden were saying, “Yeah, good for, way to go ISIS, or ISIL” or whatever you want to call them. It actually disrupted the inmates’ mentality [...]. You saw that change on the unit, and inmates started to react negatively to these individuals. We don’t see the recruiting because of that. There’s going to be people [prisoners] who say, “whoa, this guy shouldn’t be here, we don’t like him, we might assault him because he’s overly preaching to people. He’s making comments that...”. You know what [...] it almost changes how you think of the inmates, where it’s that us-versus them mentality usually, cause they’re actually saying—“This guy, you’ve got to get rid of him, cuz he is a bad person.” It’s different because otherwise they don’t talk to us.* It’s interesting. (emphasis added)

Conclusion: The dog that didn't bark

- Series of cultural factors relating to nationalism and multiculturalism, combined with the prison's ethnic composition and how those factors feed into how gangs police the activities of prisoners mitigated the cultivation or expression of ideological extremism;
- Findings connect prison subcultures to larger social structure;
- Drawing on narratives of multiculturalism has created and fostered resiliency towards radicalization; radicalized prisoners are quickly identified and ostracized;
- Concerns about radicalization unifies correctional staff and prisoners, allowing prisoners to break the subcultural prison code of not speaking to officers and not informing on other prisoners.

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