

Presentation title:

Counter-narratives for the prevention of violent radicalisation

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This 2020 Campbell Collaboration systematic review is sponsored by the USA Department of Homeland Security for the Five Research and Development (5RD) Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) network. The review aims to provide a synthesis of the effectiveness of counter-narratives in reducing the risk of violent radicalisation. Counter-narrative interventions which target a specific, dominant narrative can have an effect on certain risk factors for violent radicalisation. However, these effects vary according to intervention type, as well as the outcome targeted. Using counter-stereotypical exemplars, alternative narratives, and inoculation techniques (eliciting resistance through the production of counter-arguments) were all found to reduce overall risk factors for violent radicalisation. Persuasion did not have a significant effect. The most pronounced effects were for secondary outcomes (i.e., risk factors), which included realistic threat perceptions towards an adversarial group, in-group favouritism, and out-group hostility. Evidence on the effectiveness of the intervention at targeting primary outcomes (such as intent to act violently) is inconclusive. The concept of using a communication strategy to directly counter a dominant narrative, while intuitive, likely requires a great deal of theoretical complexity in order to work effectively in the area of counter-terrorism. Nonetheless, the targeted counter-narrative approach shows promise. With the emergence of further, rigorous research, the extent of its ability to effectively prevent violent radicalisation will become clearer. We will discuss the policy and research implications of these findings.