Disengaging and Rehabilitating High-Value Detainees: A Small-Scale Qualitative Study

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Abstract

In an era of international terrorism, interviews with high-value detainees may have the dual purpose of extracting useful information and of disengagement. We conducted a small-scale, qualitative study using in-depth, individual interviews with 11 experienced interviewers in the Southeast Asia region and Australia, in order to provide insights into the types of interviewing strategies employed in terrorist rehabilitation. Our findings highlight the potential efficacy of creating a physically comfortable and relaxed interview setting, and of using interview strategies that focus on rapport-building, principles of social persuasion and elements of procedural justice, along with a patient and flexible stance to questioning. We suggest that interviewers performing rehabilitation interviews with high-value detainees ought to be trained to use the social approach to interviewing.

Introduction

The purpose of interviewing a detainee has evolved in the era of international terrorism. Skilled law enforcement and military officers who typically undertake interviews of high-value detainees may seek to do more than secure a confession or disclosure of useful intelligence. Interviewers may also seek to start the detainee on a process of deradicalization or disengagement (Gunaratna, 2013), in other words, rehabilitation.

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Despite the plethora of laboratory research on the effectiveness of various interview practices in increasing disclosures, very little is known about how interviews may affect rehabilitation efforts. Developing rapport and forming trusting, respectful relationships with high-value detainees are likely to have a positive effect on the process of deradicalization or rehabilitation (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2013). Indeed, interpersonal relationships are seen as essential to support individuals disengaging from extremist violence and to promote positive change (Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2012). Deradicalization may often hinge on the relationship with a mentor or friend (Garfinkel, 2007; Spalek & Davies, 2012), who could be the interviewer.

Disengagement and Deradicalization

Disengagement concentrates on behavioral change, while deradicalization refers to changes in ideology and attitudes (Horgan, 2008), that is, a cognitive change. Hettiarachchi defined deradicalization as the ability "to disengage from violence and re-engage in harmonious living" (2013, p. 117)—a "process that goes beyond disengagement" (2018, p. 267) and reflects the process of rehabilitation in general programs conducted with criminals, regardless of the type of offence. Desistance from criminal and violent behavior is a complex process that cannot be attributed to a single factor or a single turning point (Maruna, 2000). Thus, the combination of maturation, sociogenic factors and a narrative process (e.g., reflective thoughts) contribute to desistance. In all, both "push" and "pull" factors need to be considered in association with engagement and disengagement of criminal behavior in groups (Ferguson, 2016). These are internal factors and motivations that drive an individual towards or away from group membership (push) and external factors, such as perceived benefits of that group or the lifestyle or alternatives to these (pull).

In a systematic review of disengagement, Tonks and Stephenson (2019) identified multiple factors associated with disengagement from street gangs i.e., social contacts, parenthood, fear of or actual victimization of oneself or significant others, disillusionment and maturation. Some of the factors, such as victimization, might not apply to certain radicalized

and terrorist groups given that many recent terrorist attacks entail self-harm through suicide bombings. A more general conclusion of this research was that a successful method of disengagement is the creation of ambivalence about group affiliation and lifestyle at a vulnerable point in the terrorist's life.

Many rehabilitation programs build on models of disengagement from criminal behavior developed in other domains and tie them to the needs of radicalized groups (but see Spalek & Davies, 2012 regarding the applicability of these models). The Sri Lankan rehabilitation program, for instance, aims to change the behavior and cognition of members of the militant organisation Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam who were involved in the Civil War in that country (Hettiarachchi, 2013). By adapting Singapore's rehabilitation model, the Sri Lankan program implemented custodial and community rehabilitation (for a detailed description of the Sri Lankan rehabilitation program, see Hettiarachchi, 2013, 2018). The first component, custodial rehabilitation, includes educational (formal and informal), vocational, spiritual (e.g., mediation, mindfulness), recreational (e.g., sports, board games, gardening), psychosocial (e.g., engagement at social and community level, creative therapies), and social, cultural, and family rehabilitation (e.g., meeting other ethnic groups, redeveloping family bonds). The second component, community rehabilitation or reintegration, includes aftercare in the community when high-value detainees are returned to their own environments and exposed to the risk of potential re-radicalization. The key ether of the program is procedural justice, especially elements of care and respect, as well as close rapport between the ex-combatants and staff. To ensure success of the rehabilitation program, investigation and rehabilitation processes are kept separate from each other, and disclosures of incriminating information are seen as part of the treatment.

In Indonesia, efforts have been made to "re-humanise" detainees and show that the security forces can be kind, humanitarian individuals (International Crisis Group, 2007; Woodward, Amin & Rohmaniyah, 2010; for a review see Sumpter, 2017). Indonesia's focus on building trust and emotionally supportive relationships with terrorist detainees led those prisoners to provide information on other prisoners' radical activities (Istiqomah, 2011).

European studies on radicalized youth concluded that resilient, trusting relationships play an indispensable role in rehabilitation (Weilnböck, 2012). More generally, positive treatment of detainees appears to enhance the operation of a rehabilitation program (Chowdhury Fink & El-Said, 2011; International Crisis Group, 2007).

All of the aforementioned programs have in common the fact that they build on procedural justice elements and rapport. Procedural justice has an important role in rehabilitation, in particular of terrorists, considering that perceptions of injustice and unfairness are the catalysts "to fuel radical beliefs and extremist behaviours" (Van den Bos, 2018, p. 10). Positive relationships with, and among detainees, assist in rehabilitation, bearing in mind that close contact and equal status with out-groups, common goals, cooperation, and support of authorities assist in reducing prejudice, as was posited by Allport's (1954) Intergroup Contact Hypothesis (see also Pettigrew & Tropp, 2005).

Interviewing Approaches

Four broad approaches to conducting investigative and intelligence interviews are distinguished, namely, social, cognitive, physical and legalistic (Goodman-Delahunty, Martschuk, & Dhami, 2014; see also Kelly, Miller, Kleinman, & Redlich, 2013). Each approach encompasses specific strategies that can also be applied in rehabilitation interviews.

The social approach focuses on the interpersonal relationship between the interviewer and interviewee. Interviewers may employ strategies that include rapport-building as opposed to asserting control and authority (Abbe & Brandon, 2013; Alison, Alison, Noone, Elntib, & Christiansen, 2013), using principles of social persuasion (Cialdini, 2001), and elements of procedural justice (Roberts, 2011). Rapport is an elusive concept, and one that has both verbal, paraverbal and nonverbal components (Dhami, Goodman-Delahunty, & Desai, 2017). High levels of rapport have been associated with increased disclosures and confessions (Collins & Carthy, 2019; Leahy-Harland & Bull, 2017; Wachi et al., 2014). Studies have also demonstrated that rapport-based strategies were more effective in securing cooperation than a control/authority based interpersonal style (Alison et al., 2013; Bull & Milne, 2004; Meissner,

Redlich, Bhatt & Brandon, 2012; Ord, Shaw, & Green, 2008), even with high-value detainees (Gelles, McFadden, Borum, & Vossekuil, 2006; Goodman-Delahunty et al., 2014).

Interviewers may also use principles of social persuasion such as reciprocity because, for example, providing incentives to the detainee such as a compliment, cigarette, or refreshments may facilitate cooperation in return. Indeed, Goodman-Delahunty and Howes (2016) revealed that reciprocity was the most prevalent principle of social persuasion used in intelligence interviews. The use of reciprocity in high-stakes interviews was associated with a higher rate of information disclosure by detainees (Goodman-Delahunty et al., 2014; Goodman-Delahunty & Martschuk, 2018; Matsumoto & Hwang, 2018). Thus, principles of social persuasion may also be effective in rehabilitation interviews.

Similarly, interviewers may apply the four elements of procedural justice which include voice (e.g., active listening and not interrupting detainee), respect (e.g., treating detainees with dignity and showing consideration of their demographic characteristics), trustworthiness (e.g., showing empathy and genuine concern for the detainee, and being transparent), and being neutral or unbiased (Goodman-Delahunty, 2010; Sivasubramaniam & Goodman-Delahunty, 2019). Research with extremists has revealed that their needs and drives are similar to those of the rest of the population, i.e., missing loved ones, longing for a normal life, feelings of guilt, and burnout (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2013), and so it may be appropriate to treat extremists as we would non-offenders. Adherence to the tenets of procedural justice may be effective when interviewing a high-risk detainee. Indeed, interviewer behavior consistent with these elements has been shown to result in more complete disclosure (Goodman-Delahunty et al., 2014), adduced more information and positive behavior from terrorist suspects (Alison et al., 2013; Goodman-Delahunty & Martschuk, 2018; Surmon-Böhr, Alison, Christiansen, & Alison, 2020), and reduced their use of counter-interrogation tactics (Alison et al., 2014). A consensus seems to exist among interviewers that supports the use of procedural fairness in building rapport and eliciting reliable information from suspects (Goodman-Delahunty, O'Brien, & Gumbert-Jourjon, 2013). Huang and Teoh (2019) distinguish between relationship-based and procedure-based rapport strategies. They found

that confessions were more forthcoming under the latter condition than the former. Unsurprisingly, the Sri Lankan rehabilitation program described above also relies on rapport-building and procedural justice and points to these as the key elements of its success (e.g., Hettiarachchi, 2013, 2018; Istiqomah, 2011; Weilnböck, 2012).

The cognitive approach aims to influence the interviewee's thinking. Several strategies may be employed. Here, we focus on cognitive strategies that assist in rehabilitation. These include changing the mind-set of detainees through interpersonal engagement with rehabilitation staff (Hettiarachchi, 2013), developing resilience and critical thinking, that is, "strengthen cognitive skills" (Marsden, 2017, p. 68) and deepening understanding of ideology and extremism, instead of challenging radical ideas. Self-reflection and re-evaluation of own goals in light of the association with a criminal group is an important process in desistance and disengagement (Harris, Turner, Garrett, & Atkinson, 2011; Tonks & Stephenson, 2019). Another skill that may assist, in particular with less cooperative persons, is perspective-taking or the cognitive capacity to take an alternative viewpoint (Galinsky, Maddux, Gilin, & White, 2008; Oleszkiewicz & Granhag, 2020).

The physical approach to interviewing refers to elements of an interview setting that are objectively ascertainable. These include the location of the interview and physical aspects of the environment that may influence the degree of comfort experienced by the detainee (e.g., climate control, nature and quality of furnishings, and availability of items for religious observance etc.). Other physical aspects of the interview are time of day, the duration of interview session(s), and provision of rest breaks, food and refreshments. Providing a more positive interviewing environment can make interviewees feel more comfortable and consequently improve the interaction between the interviewer and interviewee (Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Rowden, Wallace, Tait, Hanson, & Jones, 2013). The spaciousness of the interview room has been shown to influence the extent of disclosures. Dawson, Hartwig, Brimbal, and Denisenkov (2017) found that interviewees disclosed more information about a mock terrorism plot when they were interviewed in a more spacious interview room with a window as opposed to a smaller room without a window. An important aspect of the physical

approach for rehabilitation programs is the physical isolation of the detainees, a key factor influencing an individual's decision to leave a criminal group (Tonks & Stephenson, 2019).

Finally, the legalistic approach refers to strategies that seek to influence a detainee by referring to the power of law, such as communications about the legal features of the investigation or case, the detainee's culpability and legal rights, as well as legal incentives for the detainee (e.g., leniency in sentencing in exchange for information). Past research has demonstrated that a detainee's decision to admit wrongdoing or to confess is associated with legalistic aspects of the interview, and the receipt of legal advice (Moston & Engelberg, 1993; Moston, Stephenson, & Williamson, 1992; Stephenson & Moston, 1994).

The Present Study

The main purpose of the present study was to understand the prevalence of different interviewing strategies in an interview where rehabilitation is a goal or in high-stakes interviews that lead to rehabilitation. Little research exists on this topic. In fact, there is as yet only a relatively small body of research involving interviewers of high-value detainees (notably Alison et al., 2013, 2014; Cherney, 2018a, 2018b ; Christiansen, Alison, & Alison, 2018; Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Goodman-Delahunty et al., 2014; Russano, Narchet, Kleinman, & Meissner, 2014; Sivasubramaniam & Goodman-Delahunty, 2019; Surmon-Böhr et al., 2020).

The present study was conducted as part of a larger project examining interviewing techniques to secure cooperation by high-value detainees. In that project, a total of 78 interviewing practitioners (n = 46) and high-value detainees (n = 32) were sourced in five countries (Australia, Indonesia, Norway, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka). The interviewers were police, military practitioners and deradicalization professionals (including researchers and mental health practitioners) who were recruited through their employers. The detainees were recruited through professional networks. The present study reports a small set of interviews in which the main topic was the rehabilitation of high-value detainees. These data

have not been previously published. Findings from interviews that were not conducted in order to rehabilitate were reported in Goodman-Delahunty et al. (2014).

Method

Participants

We report data collected from natural language, in-depth, individual interviews with 11 participants. They were experienced interviewers (practitioners) in the Australasian region (i.e., 7 from Sri Lanka, 3 from Indonesia, 1 from Australia). Practitioners were between 32 and 52 years old (the ages of 4 were unknown); nine were men and two were women. They had from two to 11 years of experience in their role (this information was unknown for 4). Participants reported their experience of conducting interviews with high-value detainees that had an ultimate goal of rehabilitation.

Interview Protocol

In order to gain externally valid data, analysis of transcripts or videotapes of actual interviews with high-value detainees is best. However, gaining research access to those records of interviews can be challenging. Alternatively, useful information can be gleaned from asking practising interviewers about their own experiences (see Russano et al., 2014). This is the method we employed.

Specifically, a semi-structured interview protocol was used to collect data. The questions were derived from a review of the published literature on investigative interviewing and were informed by the research team's previous work in this area (see Goodman-Delahunty et al., 2014).

All participants were asked to recount an actual interview and respond to questions addressing the following topics: circumstances of arrest, interview preparation, interview strategies used (legalistic, physical, cognitive and social), detainee responses, and participant demographics. At the start of the interview, interviewers were asked if they had conducted an

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interview with a high-value target who was initially either cooperative or resistant, and during the interview, the detainee's response changed. High-value targets were defined as suspected terrorists.

Procedure

Ethics approval was obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee of Charles Sturt University (No. 2012/213), the Federal Bureau of Investigation Institutional Review Board (256-13), and Corrective Services New South Wales. Participants received an information sheet and written consent form with the interview invitation. Informed consent was confirmed orally before starting each interview to ensure interviewees understood that: participation was voluntary, withdrawal at any stage was permissible, questions appearing intrusive did not have to be answered, and participation would not assist in reducing time in custody or result in preferential treatment. Participants were advised that the interview did not inquire about violations of US and/or domestic laws, and that the researchers were obligated to report admissions that US laws were violated. They were encouraged to consult a legal representative if they had questions about this. Practitioners were recruited for the study via their employers, namely New South Wales Police Force Joint Counter-Terrorism Team, Indonesia Republic National Police Special Detachment 88, and Sri Lanka Police Service and State Intelligence Service. Participation was voluntary and participants were not offered any financial incentive for their participation. Interviews were conducted by the second author individually, face-to-face in a mutually convenient site (e.g., participant's office) or via Skype. All interviews were conducted in English, two with the assistance of an interpreter, and all but one were audio-recorded. The interviews lasted approximately one hour (M = 51.21 mins, SD = 19.45), ranging between 26 and 90 minutes. The data were transcribed verbatim by a contracting agency and research assistants.

Analysis

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The sample of 11 participants described a total of 12 cases. These cases were thematically coded by the first author (and were confirmed by the third author). The approach to coding was primarily deductive, since it used preliminary codes derived from other studies (see Goodman-Delahunty et al., 2014), instead of a fully inductive, bottom-up approach based on the data themselves. However, some novel themes were developed inductively from the data during the coding process. Combining deductive and inductive analysis is an accepted practice in qualitative research (e.g., Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Saldana, 2009). Below, we first present and discuss the themes that were apparent in responses of more than half of the sample.

Findings and Discussion

From the perspective of the practitioners, most interviews with high-value detainees described in this sample had the overall and long-term goal of rehabilitation. This point is represented in the following remarks made by interviewers (practitioners):

> Interviewing is not just extracting information; it is also neutralizing that person's intention to be a future terrorist (Sri Lanka 54).

> [The focus of the police approach is on] winning hearts and changing minds (Sri Lanka 53).

> …how we communicate with them, we have to touch their hearts, not their brain (Sri Lanka 43).

Interviewing Strategies within the Rehabilitation Efforts

Although interviewers mentioned using strategies within the four broad types of interview approaches reviewed above (i.e., legalistic, physical, cognitive and social;

Goodman-Delahunty et al., 2014), the legalistic approach was rarely mentioned. The most commonly used approaches were social, followed by cognitive—a combination of strategies perceived as the keys to success in rehabilitation programs with terrorists (Hettiarachchi, 2013, 2018; Istiqomah, 2011; Weilnböck, 2012).

Rapport-building. Strategies that fell within the social approach to interviewing dominated participants' comments with all 11 interviewers referring to these. Nine interviewers mentioned building rapport and a friendship or bond with the detainee created through simple social gestures such as a handshake, small talk and humour. The following quotes provide examples of this, and underscore that rapport-building is an important element of rehabilitation programs (Cherney, 2018a; Dean, Lloyd, Keane, Powys, & Randhawa, 2018; Istiqomah, 2011; Rabasa, Pettyjohn, Ghez, & Boucek, 2010):

> I wanted to build a rapport with them because lack of understanding, lack of exposure to each other's cultures and languages and norms create a lot of distance between different communities. (Sri Lanka 46)

> And we are singing like that, we are doing something to build our friendship. (Sri Lanka 43)

> You have to make a personal friendship with him… (Sri Lanka 54)

> I spent about one hour as the what we call 'chit-chat' or building the rapport, and then after that I started to ask the main questions. (Indonesia 65)

> So we have rapport, you've got to build that, then once you've crossed the bridge of the rapport part, you define their motivations. (Australia 4)

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These examples contradict the perceived skepticism about the effectiveness of rapport in high-stakes contexts (Dixon, 2007, 2008). Instead, they support findings that expert police interviewers believe that rapport-building is best practice (Russano, Narchet, Kleinman, & Meissner, 2014), and which can have a positive impact on cooperation among high-value detainees (Gelles et al., 2006; Goodman-Delahunty et al., 2014; Wachi et al., 2014).

Social persuasion. Interviewers described using two principles of social persuasion i.e., reciprocity and affinity. Nine interviewers said they used reciprocity. Specifically, interviewers talked about providing detainees with tangible benefits or physical incentives (e.g., accommodation, medical attention, clothing, money, gifts, and educational and sporting opportunities) and social incentives, such as allowing detainees to have contact with their families or offering to have contact on their behalf. While there is suggestion, particularly in Western countries, that tangible inducements provided for rehabilitation were tantamount to "rewards" for terrorist activity (Neumann, 2010), practical support can be critical in helping detainees rebuild their lives and create new social identities outside of extremist groups. Such supports and inducements may also act as pull factors, considered important for rehabilitation and disengagement (Bjørgo, 2005; Garfinkel, 2007; Horgan, 2008; Rabasa et al., 2010).

In our sample, seven interviewers referred to another principle of social persuasion when they described efforts to induce affinity (or liking) within the detainees by allowing them to become familiar with the interviewer, and by highlighting similarities/commonalities between the detainee and interviewer. This strategy is evidenced in the following quotes:

When we talk with them, we have first to talk about ourselves. (Indonesia 15)

…just telling some stories about me. Especially about me. What is my family … (Sri Lanka 43)

And sometimes when they talk about their family, they ask whether you are married or have children, to share the experience with them. (Sri Lanka 44)

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I tell him my background, my interests…my family and my hobby and my opinion… (Sri Lanka 66)

In the beginning I talked about my kids because I asked about his kids… (Indonesia 65)

… his body language was really shut, and he's even turned away from us, so he wouldn't even look at us. And then I said to him, this is when I made the disclosure that I'm of the Muslim faith as well. (Australia 4)

You have to assess that person's mood, and be like that. You have to be always, if he's happy you have to be happy, if he is sad, you have to be sad. (Sri Lanka 54)

Participants (interviewers) were cautious, however, not to disclose any information that might compromise their safety or security (or that of their loved ones). Others have noted that disclosing personal or more intimate information increases mutual liking (Collins & Miller, 1994), and can smooth the path for discussion of the suspect's guilt in interrogation contexts (Kidwell & Martínez, 2010).

Elements of procedural justice. All interviewers mentioned using elements of procedural justice (i.e., voice, trust, respect and neutrality), with trust being the most common. Nine interviewers referred to the importance of being genuine and of showing concern and interest in the detainee.

… the way I talk to them, there is nobody that I will go and tell this to, nobody that I debrief, so whatever I hear stays with me (Sri Lanka 44).

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But my whole view in this [smoking with the detainee] was trying to make him comfortable, make him think that we're no threat, we're no harm (Australia 4).

Since the first, I talked him, I'm the police and then I told him my job how to, how to can help you, if you have problem. Yeah, please talk to me, I will help you (Indonesia 15).

So they have realized our efforts are genuine, and because of that, they have confidence in us… (Sri Lanka 42).

Trust is considered useful for rehabilitation (Dalgaard-Nielson, 2013; Rabasa et al., 2010). For example, a study of anti-hate crime programs in Germany and internationally concluded that rehabilitation interventions should build trust with extremists (Weilnböck, 2012). Similarly, trust is emphasised in both Indonesian (Woodward et al., 2010) and Sri Lankan (Hettiarachchi, 2013, 2018) terrorist rehabilitation programs.

We also found that, in some circumstances, the use of a trust strategy could not be disentangled from other procedural justice-based strategies because, as illustrated in the quotes below, interviewers said they used them together rather than in isolation.

Trust and voice: "This is my common method to make him trust me. Become a good listener." (Indonesia 66)

Trust and neutrality: "… he thanked me for being concerned with him and giving him an encouragement.… a non-judgemental attitude, it actually helps." (Indonesia 65)

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Trust and affinity: "I did spend more time by asking if his wife had visited him or his family, and I asked him what he missed about his kids. And then we just talked about our kids and family for some time." (Indonesia 9)

Cognitive strategies. The cognitive approach to interviewing was another strategy on which eight interviewers said that they relied. Cognitive strategies may assist in changing extremist beliefs (Hettiarachchi, 2013), as well as building resilience (Marsden, 2017). The most common strategy, mentioned by six interviewers in our sample, was to be patient and flexible. This involved waiting to conduct the interview until the detainee was familiar with the interviewer; asking "easy" questions first that did not incriminate the detainee; and only asking about the detainees' past life in a terrorist group when they volunteered to talk about it themselves. Interviewers stressed the importance of not continuing to discuss an issue that the detainee did not want to talk about, and of changing the question if the detainee appeared uncomfortable answering it. The patience and flexibility of interviewers are demonstrated in the following quotes:

…you shouldn't go at once and talk with someone. … You go frequently,… you move in slowly … and you make them feel that you are…they'll feel comfortable to talk to you. (Sri Lanka 44)

… they are reluctant to talk about certain things at the beginning … we should not ask that information. (Sri Lanka 46)

And initially, I didn't ask any heavy questions because I thought that I must discuss something that he feels comfortable because if I asked him a question that would immediately implicate him, he would not have responded very openly. (Sri Lanka 54)

If he feel uncomfortable … I change my question into something else. (Indonesia 66)

… the key of success was not being pushy. So that's why I took a break … (Indonesia 65)

Interviewers did not tend to mention the presentation or withholding of real evidence, or the use of manufactured evidence, which some research suggests reduces cooperation (Baldwin, 1993; Dixon, 1997; Goodman-Delahunty et al., 2014). Rather, interviewers demonstrated sensitivity in confronting detainees and were aware of the potentially deleterious impact of asking incriminating questions too soon or too harshly.

The need for patience and flexibility in questioning detainees was underscored by the fact that interviewers typically had regular encounters with a detainee over a long period of time, and many of the discussions during interviews were not directly related to the reason for detention. This latter point draws us to the major finding of the present study, namely the dominance of a social approach to interviewing. In all, interviewers emphasized the importance of maintaining a positive relationship over a long period of time so that the detainees were motivated to meet them again (see also Brandon, Wells & Seale, 2018 on the importance of closing an interview without damaging the relationship to foster future communication).

Finally, all interviewers generally believed that use of the foregoing strategies instilled cooperation and elicited useful information in terms of, for example, intelligence, full disclosures and guilty pleas. Full disclosure sometimes occurred after initial deception on the part of the detainee or after initial non-disclosure (Goodman-Delahunty & Martschuk, 2019). In fact, some interviewers reported that the above strategies led detainees to volunteer to act as informants or to provide intelligence.

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Physical comfort. When referring to the physical approach, interviewers generally said they attempted to make the detainee as "comfortable" and "relaxed" as possible, for example, by providing seating, meeting rooms, rest breaks, food and refreshments, rather than using coercive physical strategies such as handcuffs. The potential impact in criminal justice contexts of the physical setting has previously been identified (Kelly et al., 2013; Rowden et al., 2013). Studies have shown the positive impact of physical comfort on the cooperation of high-value detainees (Dawson et al., 2017; Goodman-Delahunty et al., 2014). Similarly, an experimental study showed that disclosure of taboo-related topics was more likely in a comfortable than a neutral environment (Okken, van Rompay, & Pruyn, 2013), supporting the findings that physical strategies impacted interviewer-interviewee rapport and thus contributed to the success or failure of an interview (see review by Kelly et al., 2013).

Others have highlighted the importance of ensuring good treatment of detainees undergoing rehabilitation (Chowdhury Fink & El-Said, 2011; International Crisis Group, 2007). Notably, one Australian interviewer in our sample recalled an unsuccessful interview with a convicted offender who became radicalized and converted to Islam in prison (Australia 4). The interviewer described the detainee as uncooperative from the outset of the interview, and did not believe that subsequent interviews would be any more successful. Any strategies that he applied, for example, building rapport, showing interest, finding similarities (i.e., joint religion) failed, despite their widely known effectiveness with high-stakes detainees (e.g., Goodman-Delahunty et al., 2014). In this context, possible factors impeding success were that the interviewee believed the police representing Australian laws were automatically enemies of Sharia law; that the interviewee lacked motivation to change his views due to his ongoing imprisonment and the low prospect of release. In addition, physical removal of the detainee from exposure to the radical group in prison—an important factor in disengagement from criminal groups (Tonks & Stephenson, 2019)—was impossible due to the incarceration policy at that time. Constant exposure of the detainee to the radical group within the prison and likelihood of perceived protection associated with group membership might have been pull

factors to join and remain with the radicalized group (Ferguson, 2016; Horan, Dean, & Sutcliffe, 2015).

Deradicalization Program: Post-release Outcomes

Deradicalization efforts may yield different outcomes. Some have demonstrated the benefits that detainees may glean from deradicalization efforts such as education and skill development useful for building a life upon release (Cherney, 2018a). Others point out that although ex-detainees may lead non-violent lives after release, this does not ensure that they are no longer psychologically committed to the cause for which they initially fought, as suggested by research in Northern Ireland (Ferguson, 2016). In our sample, some interviewers described the new lives that ex-detainees had created for themselves (with some official support), reflecting the success of their efforts to start the detainee on the path of rehabilitation via interviewing:

> She was a child soldier. So now she's working as a civil defence … officer. (Sri Lanka 43)

> He has become a very popular singer, and he has got his own musical group, and he is performing all over the country. (Sri Lanka 42)

> He wrote already a full book about the terrorist's mindset … he is part of the [rehabilitation program]. (Indonesia 15)

> They are all volunteers [for the rehabilitation program]. (Sri Lanka 43)

> There are so many cases. There is another guy who has opened up a hotel in [location deleted] about 50-60 rooms, and he is doing very well. And he has provided a lot of employment opportunities to the youth in the area.… There is

another girl who opened up a video shop in [location deleted] who has also given some employment opportunities to the youth in the area. (Sri Lanka 42)

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

The obvious strength of our study was using first-person accounts provided by experienced interviewers of actual encounters with high-value detainees. As mentioned, the 11 practitioners referred to 12 real cases. However, this study, like so many others on this general topic, is limited by its small sample size and reliance on retrospective self-report data. We encountered barriers when attempting to gain access to official audio- or video-recordings of actual interviews, such as declinations by the agencies.

While the use of a semi-structured interview method enabled us to obtain data that was not fully anticipated, it also meant that we did not manage to collect data on some issues of interest. In particular, we cannot comment on the impact that the legalistic approach may have on interviewing high-value detainees for rehabilitation because participants rarely mentioned strategies which fall within this approach. Future researchers may wish to employ a structured method to elicit interviewers' responses in relation to the use of the legalistic approach.

Conclusion

One of the principal desired outcomes of interviewing high-value detainees, beyond extracting useful information, is rehabilitation or disengagement. Until now, relatively little has been written about specific approaches that may be useful when conducting such high-stakes interviews. Our small-scale, qualitative study revealed that experienced interviewers used several strategies which yielded positive outcomes. Notably, we found little evidence of the use of prohibited coercive strategies that, as Gelles et al. (2006) point out, are applied when national security and public safety are at the forefront of an interviewer's mind. This may be due to the fact that the aim of these interviews was disengagement from violence and not elicitation of information.

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The social approach was the most commonly used approach in our sample. This comprised efforts to build *rapport* between the interviewer and detainee; the use of *reciprocity* and inducing *affinity* (liking) in the detainee for the interviewer, which are both principles of social persuasion (Cialdini, 2001); and efforts to increase the detainee's *trust* in the interviewer, which is an element of procedural justice (Goodman-Delahunty, 2010). Interviewers described their attempts to encourage the detainees to trust them by, for example, showing concern and acting in confidence. Further, we found that a cognitive approach to interviewing which relied on interviewer *patience* and *flexibility* in questioning was prevalent among the strategies used by interviewers in our sample. Elements of the social and cognitive approach underlie what is called 'motivational interviewing' which can be effective in behavior change (Clark, 2019; see also Surmon-Böhr et al., 2020).

Although it is theoretically useful to distinguish between different approaches to interviews (i.e., physical, legalistic, cognitive and social) as well as between different types of strategies that may be encompassed within a specific approach, our findings suggest that it may not be easy to do so when strategies are applied in practice. This is partly because some strategies are not very well defined, at least in our self-report data. In particular, rapport-building strategies may overlap with strategies described in terms of social persuasion and procedural justice. For instance, rapport may be built via small talk, being friendly, expressing interest and concern, and self-disclosure.

In addition, strategies are often used in tandem, as observed in the current sample. We found that the trust strategy could not be readily disentangled from other elements of procedural justice such as voice and neutrality. Using the "patient and flexible" interviewing strategy requires a combination of the social and physical approach. For instance, participants said the detainee needed to become familiar with the interviewer first, and that a rest break was used to diffuse any discomfort the detainee might feel about discussing specific topics. Thus, those researchers wishing to know the direct effects of precise strategies may need to use alternative methods such as experimentation, although these have their own limitations.

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In sum, our findings highlight the potential efficacy of creating a physically comfortable and relaxed interview setting. This setting is made possible by the use of interview strategies that focus on rapport-building, principles of social persuasion and elements of procedural justice, along with a patient and flexible stance to questioning. Although the present findings were based on a small-scale qualitative study, they are consistent with the findings of field research using larger samples and quantitative analyses (Alison et al., 2013, 2014; Goodman-Delahunty et al., 2014; Surmon-Böhr et al., 2020), including research focusing on the detainee's perspective (Goodman-Delahunty et al., 2014). These findings augment a substantial body of research on evidence-based policing that relies on "soft" social psychological behavioral science to prioritize interviewers' relational skills (Goodman-Delahunty, Corbo Crehan & Brandon, 2020). Therefore, interviewers performing rehabilitation interviews with high-value detainees ought to be trained to use the social approach to interviewing.

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