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Assessing intervention outcomes targeting radicalised offenders: Testing the pro integration model of extremist disengagement as an evaluation tool

Adrian Cherney  and Emma Belton

School of Social Science, University of Queensland, Brisbane, St Lucia, Australia

ABSTRACT

The evaluation of interventions aimed at countering violent extremism (CVE) remains an underdeveloped field. While various evaluation frameworks and metrics have been proposed in the literature, few have been tested against actual program data. The same observation applies to theories of disengagement, which can provide guidance on the types of changes CVE program evaluations should aim to measure. In this paper, we use one theory of extremist disengagement – Barrelle’s pro-integration model (PIM) – to examine outcomes for clients who have participated in an Australian intervention targeting convicted terrorists and prison inmates identified as at risk of radicalization, the Proactive Integrated Support Model (PRISM) intervention. PRISM has been operated by Corrective Services New South Wales since 2016. The PIM looks at extremist disengagement across five domains – “Social Relations”, “Coping”, “Identity”, “Ideology” and “Action Orientation” – with each constituted by a series of sub-domains. We undertake an exploratory case study across three PRISM clients and code different data sources for observations related to these five PIM domains. The aim is to inform CVE evaluation design and decisions about the types of metrics that can be used to assess programs targeting individuals at risk of radicalization or convicted of terrorism. We acknowledge limitations in the study’s design.

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Countering violent extremism; deradicalization; evaluation; radicalized offenders; pro-integration; interventions

Introduction

The evaluation of interventions aimed at countering violent extremism (CVE) is a pressing challenge (El-Said, 2015; Williams & Kleinman, 2014). One reason is the lack of evaluation frameworks and merits that can be used to guide the assessment of such programs (Koehler, 2017b; LaFree & Freilich, 2018; Mastroe & Szmania, 2016; Romaniuk, 2015; van der Heide & Schuurman, 2018; van Hemert et al., 2014). This does not mean that useful measures and frameworks have not been proposed (see, for example, Baruch, Ling, Warnes, & Hofman, 2018; Feddes & Gallucci, 2015; Gielen, 2018; Helmus et al., 2017; Marsden, 2015; Mastroe & Szmania, 2016; Webber et al., 2018; Williams, Horgan, & Evans, 2016; Williams & Kleinman, 2014), some of which have been tested in the field (see, for example, Webber et al., 2018; Williams et al., 2016). However, accessing CVE program data for evaluation

CONTACT Adrian Cherney  a.cherney@uq.edu.au

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purposes remains an ongoing challenge (Koehler, 2017a, 2017b; Mastroe & Szmania, 2016), and, as argued by Koehler (2017b), the assessment of CVE interventions against valid methodological standards and the identification of metrics that accord with a coherent theory of deradicalization still remain underdeveloped.

Theories of deradicalization and disengagement have proposed a number of ways these processes can occur, spanning forms of change relating to individual beliefs and actions and facilitated by a shift in a person's social and economic circumstances and broader political environment (Altier, Leonard Boyle, Shortland, & Horgan, 2017; Altier, Thoroughgood, & Horgan, 2014; Bjørge, 2009; Chernov-Hwang, 2018; Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2018; Ferguson, 2016; Ferguson, Burgess, & Hollywood, 2015; Sumpter, Wardhani, & Priyanto, 2019). Within the literature, deradicalization is often conceptualized as encompassing cognitive change, while disengagement relates to behavioural change (Clubb & Tapley, 2018). The question remains, though, as to what indicators one looks for in radicalized individuals to determine whether such changes have occurred. This is particularly pertinent when it comes to evaluating CVE interventions that have as their basis individualized intervention and treatment plans. This contrasts to strategies that use generalized approaches aimed at building community resilience, for instance (Grossman, Peucker, Smith, & Dellal, 2016). Whilst CVE can encompass a broad range of program types with evaluation metrics varying across strategies aimed at the primary, secondary and territory level (Cherney, Bell, Leslie, Cherney, & Mazerolle, 2018), this paper is concerned with interventions targeting individuals identified as at risk of radicalization due to extremist behaviours or associations or those who have been convicted of terrorism.

It is argued that theories and frameworks of terrorist disengagement can provide guidance on the development of indicators to inform CVE program metrics (Gielen, 2017, 2018; Koehler, 2017a; Mastroe & Szmania, 2016). This aligns closely with arguments made in the evaluation literature more broadly around the use of theories of change to guide evaluation design and the identification of program outcomes (Rogers, 2008). What rarely has been done within the CVE field is the testing of existing theories of extremist disengagement against data on clients who have been subject to a particular intervention. The current paper fills this gap in the existing research.

The aim of this paper is to evaluate change amongst clients subject to a custody-based intervention implemented in the Australian state of New South Wales, called the Proactive Integrated Model (PRISM) intervention, against indicators derived from Barrelle's (2015) pro-integration model (PIM) of extremist disengagement. PRISM targets convicted terrorists and individuals identified as at risk of radicalization within the NSW prison system. This intervention has been subject to a series of evaluation studies, from which the current paper arises (Cherney, 2018a, 2018b; Cherney & Belton, 2019). In reference to Barrelle's (2015) PIM, this is a framework that looks at change across a number of domains relevant to the social reintegration of former extremists, which Barrelle argues provides the foundation for extremist disengagement. One reason for choosing Barrelle's model is that it informed initial thinking around the conceptualization of the PRISM intervention¹ and also underpinned the development of what is termed the "RADAR risk and needs assessment tool",² which has been used to assess PRISM clients' needs and risks and help develop intervention plans for them (Cherney & Belton, 2019).³

It must be emphasized that this is an exploratory piece of research and our intention is not to undertake a validation study of Barrelle's PIM as an evaluation tool. This would

require a larger volume of data and a bigger sample size than is drawn on here. Also, it should be acknowledged that while the PIM was developed to help inform the design of interventions (Barrelle, 2015, p. 141), it was not conceived as an evaluation framework per se. Hence, our study should be understood as a pilot of its application to CVE evaluation. We also acknowledge limitations in our methodology and analysis. We only test indicators relevant to the PIM model across three PRISM clients – so our sample size is small – but the reason for this relates to the availability of consistent data sources across our sample. The approach we adopt is best described as a case study design, which aims to test the utility of a particular theory (PIM) as a method of measuring outcomes from a specific program (Yin, 1992; Yin & Davis, 2007). Such an approach is applicable because of the individual and contingent nature of the disengagement process, which requires methodologies and tools that can measure change, in an individually nuanced manner. This links to the rich history of case studies as evaluation evidence and their contribution to measuring program outcomes, particularly in contexts where it is difficult to demonstrate uniform effects (Patton, 1990; Yin, 1994; Yin & Davis, 2007).

The article is organized as follows: We briefly review scholarship around CVE evaluation so as to orientate the reader to key debates within the field, before discussing in more detail Barrelle's (2015) PIM. The PRISM intervention is then outlined followed by the study's methodology. We examine progress in the PRISM intervention across three clients, analysing intervention outcomes against different domains of the PIM through the coding of multiple data sources against these dimensions. We conclude by discussing the implications of our results, which includes an acknowledgement of the study's limitations.

CVE evaluation frameworks and metrics

Within the literature, a number of approaches to the evaluation of CVE interventions have been proposed (see, for Koehler, 2016, 2017b, 2019; Williams et al., 2016). There is not enough space to cover them all here in detail. Some examples include frameworks that aim to provide broad principles applicable to CVE evaluations derived from other fields of research. One example is the utilized-focused evaluation perspective outlined by Williams and Kleinman (2014), which is concerned with providing a "road map" (p. 103) for conducting impact evaluations of programs that have already been implemented. The authors draw on the influential work of Michael Quinn Patton (2008). Williams and Kleinman (2014) emphasize that CVE evaluations need to look at more than whether a program reduced post-detainment terrorism engagement rates. Another technique proposed is Horgan and Braddock's (2010) Multi-Attribute Utility Technology (MAUT) technique. One of the key issues highlighted by Horgan and Braddock (2010) is the need to "consult multiple stakeholders to decide which measures and characteristics of success are important to them" (Koehler, 2019, p. 64). This should then inform decisions around which outcomes to measure. The authors argue, though, that CVE evaluation cannot rely on only one data source, but must draw on various data sources to allow for triangulation. Helmus et al. (2017) also provide some general principles and checklists for practitioners completing CVE evaluations, emphasizing the need to develop a logic model focused on identifying core components around inputs, activities and objectives. The authors do state that different program activities will have varying outcomes for program participants – hence the need to develop multiple indicators. The model of realistic

evaluation, adopted from the field of criminal justice evaluation (Pawson, 2006), has also been advocated with a focus on understanding what is termed context, mechanism and outcome configurations to identify what works, for whom, and in what circumstances (see Gielen, 2017). One common theme highlighted by these models is that, given the low base rate of extremist acts, reoffending rates can be a fairly blunt measure of program effectiveness; for this reason, one needs to examine other more nuanced changes around, for example, social functioning and cognitive beliefs (Cherney, 2018b; Clubb & Tapley, 2018; Marsden, 2015). This is where frameworks like Barrelle's PIM can be useful because they focus on outcomes beyond recidivism rates.

There have also been efforts to stipulate more precise CVE metrics. For example, to set out a measurement framework for CVE programs, Baruch et al. (2018) identify a range of attributes commonly acknowledged in the literature as constituting states and manifestations of radicalization. The term "states" refers to feelings and emotions, while the term "manifestations" refers to behaviours. They then outline indicators and propose methods of measurement spanning different dimensions for each. Their distinction between states and manifestations reflects arguments in the terrorism literature relating to deradicalization and disengagement (see above). Another proposed metric is the "quest for significance" measure developed by Kruglanski, Jasko, Chernikova, Dugas, and Webber (2017) (see also Dugas & Kruglanski, 2014; Webber et al., 2018). This is one of the few measures that have been tested in the field and used to evaluate the impact of an intervention targeting detained terrorists in Sri Lanka (see Webber et al., 2018). The quest for significance theory conceptualizes radicalization as a search for meaning and purpose involving a motivational shift in which a given need (quest for significance to balance, for instance, perceived grievances) becomes dominant and overrides other needs (Kruglanski et al., 2017, p. 221). This quest is influenced by a combination of factors encompassing individual motivation for personal significance, cultural ideologies supporting violence as a means to finding significance and social networks that help reinforce such violent ideologies (Webber et al., 2018). This model, like a number of existing theories on radicalization, draws attention to how pathways towards and away from violent extremism are shaped by a sense of identity (Dean, 2017). This is also emphasized in Barrelle's PIM, which we now outline in more detail.

The pro-integration model

A number of theories on extremist disengagement have been proposed in the literature (see Koehler, 2017a). One of the unique features of Barrelle's PIM is that it was developed based on primary source data derived from 22 interviews with former extremists from a range of ideological backgrounds. It was one of the first theories of deradicalization introduced to the field (Koehler, 2017a, p. 80). Based on an examination of the self-reported data from her sample on why individuals left their respective extremist groups, Barrelle (2015) concludes that:

Most of the participants underwent some combination of three related identity processes as they left: a reduction in the intensity of their connection to the extremist group, an emergence of their personal self and finding something else to do or identify with. (p. 133)

Drawing on this finding, PIM outlines different domains of extremist disengagement. Barrelle (2015) does argue that this process will differ from individual to individual.

Barrelle's (2015) PIM proposes five main domains that promote disengagement and facilitate reintegration. These are: "Social Relations", "Coping", "Identity", "Ideology" and "Action Orientation". The term "pro-integration" is used to capture the full potential of social engagement across these five domains. The domain Social Relations refers to the types of external relations a person has with their environment, other individuals and society more broadly that help to promote integration. Coping refers to the need for individuals to develop coping skills and resources to deal with their mental and emotional needs relating to disengagement. The domain of Identity refers to the exploration of an alternative sense of belonging that does not align with extremism. A moderation and change in beliefs (Ideology domain) are essential to having the ability to question one's original underlying extremist positions and to educating oneself about the complexity surrounding, for instance, the Islamic faith. Finally, disengagement is facilitated when a radicalized offender engages in activities that distance them from radical influencers such as pro-social activities (Action Orientation domain). Each of these five domains is constituted by different sub-domains or components that capture its various dimensions and constitute forms of change that demonstrate disengagement. Table 1 lists these sub-domains as adapted from Barrelle (2015) and the RADAR Risk and Need Countering Violent Extremism Intervention Tool, which expands upon each of the domains articulated by Barrelle (2015).

As already noted, PIM overlaps with a number of existing frameworks that, for instance, emphasize the importance of changes in identity to disengagement and the reintegration of former extremists (see Chernov-Hwang, 2018; Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2018; Marsden, 2017). While PIM was not developed as a program evaluation tool, Koehler (2017a) argues that it draws "an initial map of long-term key issues to be supported by deradicalization and disengagement programs to raise the chance of sustained disengagement" (p. 25). Also,

Table 1. Domains and sub-domains across the pro-integration model used to determine extremist disengagement.

| Domain | Sub-domains |
|--------------------|--|
| Social Relations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Significant personal relationships ● Improvements to family relationships ● Relations with others in their immediate environment ● Engagement with their environment ● Sense of belonging and contributing to Australian society |
| Coping | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Development of social supports ● Dealing with personal issues ● Uncertainty tolerance |
| Identity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dignity, purpose and independent functioning ● Development of personal identity and sense of self ● Identification to extreme identity ● Other group identifications ● Shift in "us vs them" mentality ● Consistency between personal and social identity |
| Ideology | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Support for political system ● Moderation of religious beliefs ● Improve depth of knowledge about religious beliefs ● Critical re-evaluation of views ● Acceptance of a plurality of views |
| Action Orientation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Involvement in mainstream activities ● Dis-association with extremists/radicalized offenders/co-accused ● Self-reflection about attitudes towards own extremist activities ● Engagement in civic activities/non-violent activism |

PIM is a model that allows each individual's landscape of relevant issues to be identified across its various domains, and therefore it allows for progress or change over time to be reviewed. This lends itself to the argument that it could be used as an evaluation measurement tool.⁴ Hence, it potentially helps draw attention to the types of changes that programs need to facilitate and can act as a benchmarking tool for identifying outcomes for specific clients. For example, Gielen (2018) draws on the model to identify program outcomes for interventions targeting female jihadists in the Netherlands. We aim to do the same here as it relates to PRISM clients. We first outline the PRISM intervention from which our client sample was drawn.

The PRISM intervention

The PRISM intervention is delivered by Corrective Services New South Wales (CSNSW) and targets convicted terrorists and individuals identified as at risk of radicalization within the NSW prison system. It has been operating since 2016 and targets individuals across the ideological spectrum. Inmates are approached to participate and can be referred based on their offences, associations or institutional behaviour. Referrals to the program come from a variety of sources, such as the Correctional Intelligence Group, correctional centre psychologists or correctional centre governors.⁵ Inmates can also self-refer to the program. It is a voluntary program in which inmates must consent to participate. Consent is also provided for members of the PRISM team to access and share information about the client and to contact family members and community supports. Once consent is obtained, a risk and needs assessment is carried out, which informs the development of a client's intervention plan. The plan is delivered by a team of psychologists who work in partnership with a range of other stakeholders involved in an inmate's intervention plan – for example, a religious support officer (RSO) and Services and Programs Officers (SAPOs) who identify relevant services and programs within the correctional system and connect with family members and allied health professionals. PRISM does not have a series of set modules. It is a support service that aims to address the psychological, social, theological and ideological needs of radicalized offenders. The primary objective is to redirect clients away from extremism (i.e., facilitate disengagement) and help them to transition out of custody (i.e., assist in their reintegration). This is achieved through individually tailored intervention plans, which means that specific intervention goals can vary from client to client (Cherney & Belton, 2019).

PRISM was subject to a series of evaluations by the authors of this paper, covering the operational period of 2016 to mid-2018. This includes an interim assessment of PRISM's early implementation (Cherney, 2018a); a follow-up evaluation of qualitative outcomes comparing data derived from interviews with PRISM clients and staff (Cherney, 2018b); and a quantitative assessment of disengagement patterns over time, including an analysis of intervention goals and client backgrounds (Cherney & Belton, 2019). The current paper draws on data derived from this body of work. This research secured ethics approval from both the University of Queensland Research Ethics Committee and the Corrective Services NSW Research Ethics Committee, and it also followed protocols relating to the informed consent of interviewees, anonymity and confidentiality, as well as the de-identification of all data.

This piece of evaluation work on PRISM involved a mixed-methods approach drawing on case note data, interviews with clients and staff, progress reports and risk and needs assessments. Given PRISM has been operating since 2016, with clients entering the program at different times, and with variations in the scope and intensity of a client's intervention plan, a pre- and post-test evaluation design was not possible. Nor was it feasible to have clients sit on a waitlist to serve as a control group. Hence, a quasi-experimental or experimental design was also not possible. These constraints and limitations are not uncommon in the evaluation of CVE interventions (Cherney & Belton, 2019; Gielen, 2017; van der Heide & Schuurman, 2018). In summary, the results from this existing research on PRISM indicate that when it comes to program outcomes, PRISM addresses a range of needs relevant to facilitating disengagement and assisting in reintegration, with staff and clients verifying that it leads to client change (Cherney, 2018b). The analysis also shows that the longer clients are engaged in PRISM, the more likely they are to show change over time that can be related to indicators of disengagement (Cherney & Belton, 2019). Hence, the length and consistency of participation seem to play a role in the impact of case-managed interventions, such as PRISM. It must be acknowledged, though, that like any social intervention, there will be failures or episodes where clients regress, either in the context of general criminality or engagement in extremist-related activities. As we have argued elsewhere, it is too early to know the impact of PRISM on extremist-related recidivism (Cherney & Belton, 2019). Our aim here is to build on these insights and examine another way to assess client change during PRISM.

While PRISM is a dedicated in-custody-based intervention targeting terrorist inmates and radicalized offenders, it contains a number of features common to CVE interventions internationally. For example, it is underpinned by a case management approach involving individually tailored intervention plans, similar to interventions targeting extremist offenders in Europe (e.g., van der Heide & Schuurman, 2018; Weggemans & de Gaaf, 2017), parts of the United States (see Lowry, 2018) and at-risk individuals targeted for early intervention (e.g., the Channel program in the UK). These types of interventions generally try to facilitate client change by focusing on (1) education; (2) employment; (3) lifestyle, e.g., sports, hobbies, personal health; (4) psychological support; (5) family support; and (6) religious mentoring.

Method and results

As outlined, Barrelle's PIM asserts that disengagement should be understood as occurring across five domains: Social Relations, Coping, Identity, Ideology and Action Orientation. Here, we use these domains as outcome measures to assess client change during the PRISM intervention. Barrelle (2015) argued that the level of individual engagement across each domain occurs along a continuum, from minimal, to cautious, to positive. We did not aim to quantify this level of engagement across each domain amongst our client sample, because our data did not provide an opportunity to do this and it would have required assessments that could not be adequately validated. We do tackle the issue of validity in our data analysis by only including PIM domains across which we were able to attain a reliable number of observations.

Methods and coding

In assessing client progress against Barrelle's five domains, we did not wish to limit ourselves to just one data source. This was to allow for triangulation, which was important to the verification of our observations and to minimizing bias that could arise by relying on only one data source. We chose PRISM clients for whom we had four different data sources to determine whether progress was demonstrated across the five key pro-integration domains. These data sources included client and staff interviews (completed by the first author), progress reports written by PRISM staff and case notes. Three clients met this threshold of having these four available data sources.⁶ These clients constituted two Muslims charged for terrorism-related offences and one white supremacist.⁷ Each client had been interviewed face-to-face about their participation in PRISM (two of the three were interviewed twice), and interviews with PRISM staff canvassed their progress during the intervention. Progress reports were completed by PRISM psychologists and included observations about client engagement in the intervention over time and cited improvements, and also included a broad range of information relating to risk assessments and other forms of testing (e.g., psychometric). Client case notes were completed by a variety of program staff and included data and observations relating to a client's background (e.g., upbringing and family environment), offence and criminal history, radicalization source, identified risk and protective factors, religious and/or ideological understanding and knowledge, intervention goals and progress towards those goals, as well as information on family engagement from the PRISM team and results from psychological assessments. These case notes varied in length and were in some cases up to 85 pages long. Like all source documents, these notes were de-identified for analysis by the first author and cross-checked a number of times for completeness.

In order to analyse each sub-domain of Barrelle's pro-integration model across our four data sources, we undertook what is commonly referred to as content analysis and established a coding system to record our observations across the four data sources, given our data were qualitative (Krippendorff, 2013). This coding system was designed to numerically measure the status of each sub-domain, for each client, across the four different data sources (client and staff interviews, progress reports and case notes). The coding system comprised four separate identifiers with an associated numerical value. The identifiers are listed in [Table 2](#).

The authors read each data source and, based on this reading, then assigned (coded) identified observations in each data source as applicable to one of the numerical values below pertaining to each sub-domain. For example, under the domain of Social Relations, the sub-domain "Significant personal relationships" was coded with the appropriate numeric value depending on its judged level of presence across the four

Table 2. Numerical value assigned to data sources to measure levels of disengagement across each domain of pro-integration.

0 = N/A: *Sub-domain not applicable to that client.*

1 = Present, showing improvement: Sub-domain component/action/attitude/behaviour was present or evident for client and was showing improvement.

2 = Present, not showing improvement: Sub-domain component/action/attitude/behaviour was present or evident for client, but was not showing any obvious improvement

3 = Not present: No clearly identifiable evidence in sources of that sub-domain component/action/attitude/behaviour.

Table 3. Example coding matrix.

| Social Relations | Client interviews | | Staff interview | | Report | | Progress notes | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|---|-----------------|---|--------|---|----------------|---|
| Significant personal relationships | 3 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |

Note: in the column the numbers on the left refer to Coder 1 and numbers on the right refer to Coder 2. The numbers accord with the identifiers outlined in Table 2: (0) N/A: sub-domain not applicable to that client; (1) present, showing improvement: sub-domain component/action/attitude/behaviour was present or evident for client and was showing improvement; (2) present, not showing improvement: sub-domain component/action/attitude/behaviour was present or evident for client, but was not showing any obvious improvement; (3) not present: No clearly identifiable evidence in sources of that sub-domain component/action/attitude/behaviour.

data sources. The coders looked for improvements in personal relationships relating to instances of increased engagement with family members and appropriate mentors – for example, religious support officers. In the Ideology domain, indicators relating to the moderation of ideological beliefs were coded, which included such episodes as the repudiation of extremist groups or questioning certain ideological predilections. Hence, we looked for observations of behavioural and cognitive indicators. Prior to coding, the authors briefly sought consensus on the types of behaviours that should be identified within each data source across each sub-domain, but the actual coding of the data was done at separate times. Coding decisions were not discussed amongst coders (the authors) so as to achieve consensus on the ratings given to each client across the four data sources, and to ensure coders could not influence each other's decisions and that decisions were based exclusively on these data sources. Only a single wave of coding was done for each client across each data source. Table 3 provides an example of the coding matrix used to assess the various data sources across one sub-domain within the Social Relations domain.

Testing inter-coder reliability and selecting valid domains

To ensure a high level of inter-coder reliability, a Krippendorff's reliability estimate was calculated for each client for each of the five key domains of pro-integration. This was done by analysing the level of agreement across a sub-domain that made up each domain. Results from each coder for all sub-domains were used to calculate a Krippendorff's reliability estimate to determine the level of agreement between coders for each data source across the five domains. The reason we aggregated the five key domains of pro-integration was to allow us to have enough observations to calculate a Krippendorff's coefficient, thus ensuring we only selected domains that had reliable observations and that had a high level of inter-coder reliability. Where 1 is perfect agreement, tentative conclusions can be drawn from an alpha level of $> .667$ (Krippendorff, 2013). Results for each domain varied from case to case, and only the domains that produced an agreement level of $.667$ or higher were used in the results reported here. Coded domains for each client with an alpha below $.667$ were removed so we were only drawing on domains for which there was a high level of inter-coder reliability. This was to ensure we only used observations that had some validity. For each of the three clients, the resulting Krippendorff's alpha is noted in Tables 4–6, including the domains for analysis (bolded).

Table 4. Case study 1.

| Domain | Krippendorff's α |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Social relations | .93 |
| Coping | .64 |
| Identity | .30 |
| Ideology | .79 |
| Action orientation | .69 |

Table 5. Case study 2.

| Domain | Krippendorff's α |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Social Relations | .38 |
| Coping | .77 |
| Identity | .90 |
| Ideology | .74 |
| Action orientation | .64 |

Table 6. Case study 3.

| Domain | Krippendorff's α |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Social Relations | .53 |
| Coping | .58 |
| Identity | .51 |
| Ideology | 1 |
| Action orientation | .73 |

Results – client progress against different domains of pro-integration

As noted, we only used those domains that received a Krippendorff's alpha of .667 or higher; hence, progression against all sub-domains of pro-integration could not be determined. The coded data were combined into one dataset and, to ensure we could visually display these results, an overall value was determined to represent each sub-domain across the four data sources. This value was determined by combining the authors' numeric values assigned to that sub-domain during the coding process. A set of conditions was created in order to determine each value for each sub-domain so we could then create one dataset by which to display the data. These conditions were:

- A rating value (0; 1; 2; 3 – see [Table 1](#)) was automatically chosen if it was the dominant value chosen.
- In the remaining instances where the values were tied, the value 1 (present, showing improvement) was chosen as the default value. This was decided because there were a lot of instances where values were tied across the values of 3 (evidence not present) and 1 (present, showing improvement). This suggests there was evidence of progress across some data sources, but it may not have been present across all four sources due to a lack of evidence in a particular area (e.g., client interviews vs. case notes). Refer to [Table 7](#) for an example of the above condition. In the case illustrated in [Table 7](#), the overall value for the sub-domain "Sense of belonging and contributing to Australian society" is 1 (present, showing improvement) because it was present in four out of eight observations.

Table 7. Example of coding matrix for “social relations” domain.

| Coder | | Data sources | | | | | | | |
|-------|------------|--|----|-----------------|----|-----------------|----|----------------|----|
| | | Client interviews | | Staff interview | | Progress report | | Progress notes | |
| | | C1 | C2 | C1 | C2 | C1 | C2 | C1 | C2 |
| | Sub-domain | <i>Sense of belonging and contributing to Australian society</i> | | | | | | | |
| | | 3 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 |

C1 = coder one; C2 = coder two.

Progress against the domains of pro-integration

As noted, we included in our results only those domains in which we had valid and reliable observations as a result of our coding. It should be emphasized that the illustration of progress against these various domains is only reflective of a particular period of time up until mid-2018 and is not reflective of a client’s current or future alignment with these indicators of change. While we provide background information on each client, there are restrictions on the amount of detail that can be outlined given the small number of clients in the PRISM intervention and the risk this presents for potential identification. Also, given each of the three clients were interviewed, it is important steps are taken to maintain their anonymity. The discussion of results for each client is supplemented by a table illustrating where levels of change were or were not evident. Such tables illustrate how policy-makers and practitioners might also capture and visualize progress across the different PIM domains.

Case study 1

Case study 1 is a middle-aged male Muslim who had been charged with a terrorism-related offence. This client had immigrated to Australia as a child and while growing up had also moved to the Middle East to live with extended family members. He returned to Australia as a teenager and completed his final year of high school. He got married in his twenties and secured employment in a series of manual jobs. He attempted to study Islam through overseas university courses, but this study was abandoned. He had known links with extremists both in Australia and overseas, including Al Qaeda and a number of Sheiks linked to jihadists groups. His radicalization was related to his ideological beliefs about Islam and his links to extremist networks overseas.

At the time of completing this analysis, he had been engaged in PRISM for 20 months and his intervention plan was mainly focused on reconnecting him with his wife and family while in prison, moderating his religious views and improving his awareness of his influence on others and the need to distance himself from other radicalized inmates. The latter was particularly important given he tended to portray himself as a religious authority, with radicalized inmates engaging him about religious issues. [Table 8](#) illustrates his progress across the three valid domains that could be selected for this client, based on our coding: Social Relations, Ideology and Action Orientation. For case 1, based on our predictors of progress for each sub-domain, the most progress could be observed in the Social Relations domain, with two out of the five sub-domains showing improvement. This progress revolved around his connections and commitments to his wife and children, who were identified as a strong motivator for change. The least progress was present

Table 8. Case study 1.

| Domain | Sub-domains | Present, showing improvement | Present, not showing improvement | Not present | Not Applicable |
|--------------------|---|------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------|----------------|
| Social Relations | | | | | |
| | • Significant personal relationships | ✓ | | | |
| | • Improvements to family relationships | ✓ | | | |
| | • Relations with others in their immediate environment | | ✓ | | |
| | • Engagement with their environment/ wider community | | | | ✓ |
| | • Sense of belonging and contributing to Australian society | | | ✓ | |
| Ideology | | | | | |
| | • Support for political system | ✓ | | | |
| | • Moderation of religious beliefs | | ✓ | | |
| | • Improve depth of knowledge about religious beliefs | | | | ✓ |
| | • Critical re-evaluation of views | | ✓ | | |
| | • Acceptance of a plurality of views | | | ✓ | |
| Action Orientation | | | | | |
| | • Involvement in mainstream activities | | | ✓ | |
| | • Dis-association with extremists/radicalised offenders/ co-accused | | ✓ | | |
| | • Self-reflection about attitudes towards own extremist activities | | ✓ | | |
| | • Engagement in civic activities/ non-violent activism | | | | ✓ |

within the sub-domains that make up Action Orientation. It would appear that at the time of conducting our analysis, he was not making a lot of improvement in the domain of Ideology, with little progress towards the moderation and re-evaluation of his religious beliefs.

Case study 2

Case study 2 is a young male Muslim who had been participating in the PRISM intervention for 17 months. His parents immigrated to Australia and were a moderate Muslim family who prayed irregularly. While he attended school and studied at university, he engaged in criminal offences such as theft and drug dealing and as a result spent a short time in prison. His friends and associates also had similar criminal histories. After being released from prison, he had a religious awakening and became more interested in learning about Islam. This led him to associate with an extremist peer group, which he was introduced to via a family member.

This client's intervention plan focused on religious mentoring and education and strengthening his educational and work goals such as completing external study courses. This was identified as particularly important given his previous enrolment in university studies, with educational aspirations a key motivator for change. Another focus of his treatment plan was helping him to recognize the negative influence of his associates, who had played a major role in influencing his offending. Overall, based on the identified predictors of pro-integration, case 2 showed progress across all three domains that could be used in the analysis, as illustrated in Table 9 (i.e., showing improvements in relation to the domains of Coping and Ideology and the sub-domains of Identity). In fact, improvement across all these domains suggests that this PRISM client demonstrated significant change related to disengagement as identified in the PIM. This should not discount the possibility that setbacks could be experienced by this client. Nonetheless, it would appear

Table 9. Case study 2.

| Domain | Sub-domains | Present, showing improvement | Present, not showing improvement | Not present | Not Applicable |
|----------|--|------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------|----------------|
| Coping | | | | | |
| | • Development of social supports | ✓ | | | |
| | • Dealing with personal issues | ✓ | | | |
| | • Uncertainty tolerance | ✓ | | | |
| Identity | • Dignity, purpose and independent functioning | ✓ | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | • Development of personal identity and sense of self | ✓ | | | |
| | • Identification to extreme identity | ✓ | | | |
| | • Other group identifications | | | ✓ | |
| Ideology | • Shift in 'us vs them' mentality | ✓ | | | |
| | • Consistency between personal and social identity | ✓ | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | • Support for political system | ✓ | | | |
| Ideology | • Moderation of religious beliefs | ✓ | | | |
| | • Improve depth of knowledge about religious beliefs | ✓ | | | |
| | • Critical re-evaluation of views | ✓ | | | |
| | • Acceptance of a plurality of views | ✓ | | | |

that, at the time of completing our analysis, case 2 was making significant improvements in particular domains of disengagement during the PRISM intervention, which were applicable to the objectives of his intervention plan.

Case study 3

Case study 3 is also a young male client. While he was not charged with a terrorism-related offence, he had a history of involvement in white supremacist groups. At the time of conducting this research, he had been participating in the PRISM intervention for 13 months. This client had suffered trauma as a child due to exposure to violence in the home. He was truant from school and became involved in drugs and alcohol as a teenager. He was exposed to white supremacists during these formative years and was a member of different far-right groups, becoming involved in recruitment, fundraising and violence against members of the public and fighting with protestors at marches he attended.

While in custody, this client had already evidenced some tentative changes relating to distancing himself from other white supremacist inmates, associating with inmates of other nationalities and questioning his ideological convictions. Hence, his intervention plan aimed to consolidate his disengagement by requiring him to reflect on his ideological beliefs. Other aspects of his intervention plan also worked on his day-to-day coping while in custody, mental health needs, improving family engagement, seeking employment while in prison and planning for release. Based on our coding of the four available data sources (see Table 10), case 3 demonstrated improvement across the two domains of Ideology and Action Orientation, which also appear to be related to aspects of his intervention plan concerning moderating his beliefs and engaging in pro-social activities.

Discussion and conclusion

In this paper, we have set out to demonstrate how one particular theory of extremist disengagement can be used to assess intervention outcomes for individuals who have

Table 10. Case study 3.

| Domain | Sub-domains | Present, showing improvement | Present, not showing improvement | Not present | Not Applicable |
|--------------------|---|------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------|----------------|
| Ideology | | | | | |
| | • Support for political system | | | ✓ | |
| | • Moderation of religious beliefs | | | | ✓ |
| | • Improve depth of knowledge about religious beliefs | | | | ✓ |
| | • Critical re-evaluation of views | ✓ | | | |
| | • Acceptance of a plurality of views | ✓ | | | |
| Action Orientation | | | | | |
| | • Involvement in mainstream activities | ✓ | | | |
| | • Dis-association with extremists/radicalised offenders/ co-accused | ✓ | | | |
| | • Self-reflection about attitudes towards own extremist activities | ✓ | | | |
| | • Engagement in civic activities/ non-violent activism | | | ✓ | |

participated in the PRISM intervention. It would appear that, based on our analysis, our three selected clients showed change and improvements reflective of different behavioural and cognitive domains that the PIM argues are relevant to disengagement and desistance from violent extremism (Barrelle, 2015). Progression against these domains varied, with cases 2 and 3 showing more progress against different attributes than case 1. By coding client change against these domains, we were able to illustrate where progress had been made and where improvements need to occur – for example, for case 1 around the moderation of his beliefs. As this analysis captures progress at only one point in time, it would be useful to continually test client progress against these domains. One would expect that progress on the intervention would not follow a linear path or trajectory; rather, it would be more likely for clients to experience ups and downs as they navigate a pathway towards disengagement (Cherney & Belton, 2019; Chernov-Hwang, 2018; Marsden, 2017). Also, these observed domains of change are occurring within the prison environment, and so we cannot conclude that they would continue when these offenders are released into the community. This relates to the issue of community maintenance and follow-up, which is applicable to tertiary-based programs like PRISM (see Cherney, 2018a).

The PIM and its corresponding sub-domains appear to offer a useful metric by which to assess different forms of change relating to interventions targeting convicted terrorists or individuals at risk of radicalization. Such individualized programs require metrics that are able to capture client differences. The types of behavioural and cognitive indicators captured across our sample illustrate the nature of disengagement and the content of interventions that aim to generate such change. Our data provide insight into the nature of CVE practice, content knowledge which has recently been identified as lacking within policy and practice (Koehler & Fiebig, 2019).

We acknowledge, though, we cannot claim causation here, given the nature of our research design and analysis. There is every possibility the observed improvements amongst our sample of PRISM clients may have occurred anyway, as research indicates that radicalized offenders do eventually disengage over time without any formal intervention (Altier et al., 2017; Barrelle, 2015; Koehler, 2017b). The PIM, though, is underpinned by a causal model relating to its five key domains (Barrelle, 2015), which constitutes its theory of change. It is not unreasonable to conclude, then, that PRISM is helping to consolidate change across certain domains of pro-integration.

Our coding of client-related information has its limitations, given the data sources were not specifically designed with the application of particular metrics in mind – hence our need to undertake a content analysis of these data sources and code for indicators related to the PIM. We did minimize the subjective assessment of client progress by only choosing those domains across which we had valid and reliable observations as measured through a test for inter-coder reliability, thus helping to minimize bias in our coded data. However, our test for inter-coder reliability yielded mixed results. The quantitative coding of qualitative data is not that uncommon in the area of terrorism research and has been shown to provide valuable insights, as demonstrated by the analysis of open-source data, police case files and biographical accounts of terrorists (e.g., Altier et al., 2017; King et al., 2018; LaFree, Jensen, James, & Safer-Lichtenstein, 2018; Schuurman, 2018). Also, data derived from case notes, progress reports and interviews with staff and clients can potentially have their own inherent bias, such as an overemphasis on the positives compared to the negatives. We did, though, observe positive and negative progression, as demonstrated in case study 1. It needs to be appreciated that interventions like PRISM and the context within which they are implemented do not necessarily offer ideal research environments in which pre- and post-test designs or randomized control trials can be easily adopted. While experimental approaches are the gold standard in evaluation design, their actual adoption and application are less than straightforward, which is particularly the case with highly sensitive programs that target known radicalized individuals.

So what are the implications of this study for CVE evaluation? Our coding of different intervention data sources against attributes of the PIM offers one potential method for evaluating CVE interventions targeting specific individuals, whether in custody or in the community. It would have been ideal to have had pre- and post-measures. However, this is not always possible when it comes to CVE program evaluation, given the priority has been to get interventions up and running with little thought given to how they will be evaluated (Cherney & Belton, 2019; Koehler, 2017b; Williams et al., 2016). Hence, existing program data, with all its obvious limitations, offer an important means to assess intervention outcomes. This draws attention to the need for investment in the detailed capture of a variety of program data relating to client participation. While it can be argued that the evaluation of case-managed CVE interventions like PRISM, with their specific focus on individuals and the development of tailored plans, should be qualitative in nature so as to capture individual trajectories of change, this does not mean that quantitative methods cannot be used to measure program outcomes and identify what these patterns of change relate to. For example, it is valid to argue that assessing change against the PIM could be supplemented by other quantitative metrics such as psychometrically validated tools, institutional behaviours within prison, measures of social identity, sense of belonging and critical thinking (see Cherney et al., 2018 for a review of these metrics).

While there are an increasing number of CVE program evaluations being conducted (e.g., van der Heide & Schuurman, 2018; Williams et al., 2016), it still largely remains an underdeveloped field (Koehler, 2017a). While Romaniuk (2015) argues for the development of uniform metrics to evaluate CVE programs, this can only occur when different measures are actually tested against program data. As stated by Romaniuk (2015), making such attempts publicly available is essential to facilitating comparisons across programs and informing decisions about the types of metrics that can be used. We have gone some

way to achieving this aim. It is important to reiterate that for interventions like PRISM, outcomes will vary across clients over time, and evaluation methods need to capture these changes longitudinally. Theories like Barrelle's PIM can help to identify and quantify the types of outcomes that are being facilitated through CVE interventions targeting radicalized individuals.

Notes

1. This was confirmed through interviews with PRISM staff, which formed part of an evaluation study of PRISM – see Cherney (2018b).
2. RADAR was developed by a team of researchers, which included Barrelle and was designed for the Australian Government to be used as a tool to guide decision-making around identifying and intervening with clients at risk of radicalization. Like the PIM, it breaks down indicators of radicalization according to different dimensions, e.g., ideology, social relations and action orientation (see below and Table 1). It has been used both in the community and correctional contexts. RADAR is not a publicly available tool, nor at the time of writing has there been any published research on the use of RADAR or comparisons of RADAR with other existing tools – see RTI International (2017), pp. 18–19.
3. Although PRISM staff are now using the VERA2R to conduct risk and needs assessments of PRISM clients – see Lloyd (2019) for a discussion of VERA2R and other extremist assessment tools.
4. I would like to acknowledge one of the reviewers for drawing attention to this argument.
5. The Correctional Intelligence Group (CIG) gathers, coordinates, analyses, and disseminates intelligence throughout the custodial and community-based correctional system in New South Wales.
6. At the time of completing this research, a total of 18 individuals (including current and previous clients) had participated in the PRISM intervention.
7. This individual was not serving a sentence for terrorism.

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Notes on contributors

Adrian Cherney is an Associate Professor in the School of Social Science at the University of Queensland. He is also an Australian Research Council (ARC) Future Fellow. His current work focuses

on the evaluation of programs aimed at countering violent extremism and he has undertaken research on the supervision of terrorist offenders in Australia who have been released into the community on parole.

Emma Belton is a research assistant in the School of Social Science at the University of Queensland. She is currently completing her PhD on profiles of individuals who have radicalized in Australian.

ORCID

Adrian Cherney  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1114-7046>

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