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Evaluating Case-Managed Approaches to Counter Radicalization and Violent Extremism: An Example of the Proactive Integrated Support Model (PRISM) Intervention

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ABSTRACT

In recent years there has been the proliferation of counterradicalization programs that incorporate a case management approach involving individually tailored intervention plans. The evaluation of case-managed countering violent extremism (CVE) interventions is challenging. This article provides results from research that evaluated a custody-based case-managed intervention delivered to convicted terrorists and individuals identified as at risk of radicalization in the Australian state of New South Wales, called the Proactive Integrated Support Model. A quantitative assessment of disengagement based on the coding of client case note data is provided. Results provide data on the background of clients, their intervention goals, and illustrate client change over time. Lessons for CVE evaluation and the role of formal interventions in facilitating disengagement are highlighted.

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In 2016, Corrective Services New South Wales in Australia implemented a custody-based program termed the Proactive Integrated Support Model (PRISM) intervention. PRISM targets inmates who have been convicted of terrorism-related offenses, or have been identified as at risk of radicalization due to demonstrating extremist views and/or associations. PRISM is a voluntary program delivered by a team of psychologists who work in partnership with a range of other stakeholders identified for involvement in an inmate's case assessment and intervention plan.

PRISM reflects a number of features common to programs aimed at countering violent extremism (CVE) operating in other jurisdictions, which are underpinned by a case-managed approach that incorporates individually tailored intervention plans (e.g., the Channel program in the United Kingdom¹). However, like many CVE interventions these models have not been subject to any formal evaluation.² While there exists qualitative assessments of such programs,³ measuring quantitative outcomes relating to de-radicalization and disengagement has not received as much attention. While there have been important developments in the measurement of de-radicalization and

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disengagement,⁴ and CVE evaluation more generally,⁵ there are challenges surrounding the operationalization and testing of valid indicators. For case-managed interventions this relates to the fact that they do not often present ideal research sites under which to conduct evaluation studies. For example, control groups may be absent, the client sample size small, or there can be data access issues and sensitivities.⁶

The aim of this article is twofold. One is to provide results from an attempt to quantitatively measure the impact of PRISM across indicators of disengagement. The second is to highlight broader lessons for CVE evaluation and illustrate how particular evaluation challenges relating to CVE interventions can be tackled to provide meaningful measures of intervention outcomes. It needs to be highlighted that the data reported here are part of a larger evaluation of the PRISM intervention, and that the methodological approach outlined (i.e., the coding of case note data) does have limitations. The methodological approach was partly in response to the retrospective nature of the evaluation and was also adopted given this did not allow for the use of a pre- and post-test design.

The article is organized as follows. First, a brief description of case-managed CVE interventions is provided. This is then followed by a discussion of the evaluation challenges surrounding the assessment of these interventions relating to their design and implementation, including identifying and developing indicators of de-radicalization and disengagement, demonstrating causation and how program delivery and the client base can preclude the adoption of certain evaluation methods often recognized as the gold standard (e.g., the use of randomized control trials and control groups).⁷ This is then followed by an outline of the PRISM intervention and a description of the research design. Data on the client sample are provided, including information on the scope of their intervention plans. In this article, client change on the PRISM intervention is measured through the coding of client case note data drawing on different indicators of disengagement. This method is explained and justified, which does include an acknowledgment of its limitations. Quantitative results from the data analysis are provided, which include testing for disengagement among our sample of PRISM clients and demonstrating client change over time, which allows for aggregation and the tracking of individual progress. The findings are then considered in relation to what they indicate about the effectiveness of the PRISM intervention and also what lessons they provide for CVE program evaluation more generally and the role of formal interventions in facilitating disengagement.

Evaluation Challenges of Case-Managed CVE Interventions

CVE programs can encompass a broad range of activities. They can include initiatives as diverse as community-based projects to enhance social cohesion, sport-based schemes, counternarrative campaigns, interventions targeting returned foreign fighters, terrorist inmates and their family members, and community engagement initiatives.⁸ One common approach that has emerged are interventions that adopt a case management approach, which typically are concerned with secondary and tertiary prevention (e.g., they target individuals identified as at risk of radicalization or those convicted of terrorist offenses). These case management approaches to counterradicalization have been adopted in such countries as Australia (e.g., state-based diversion initiatives

implemented by the police⁹), the United Kingdom (e.g., the Channel program¹⁰), and the Netherlands (e.g., Dutch “Team-ter”/Exit intervention¹¹). Unlike approaches that target a broad population group (e.g., tackling social cohesion and a sense of belonging among ethnic or religious minorities), case-managed programs involve the referral of individuals to assessment teams/panels and the development of individually tailored intervention plans.

The evaluation of such case-managed interventions is not straightforward. Often the main focus has been on getting these programs up and running, with a concern being to roll out interventions as quickly as possible. This means evaluation has often been an afterthought. The consequence is that when the decision is made to evaluate these interventions there can be little data to inform their evaluation or it is not in a form conducive to being readily used for evaluation purposes.

Within the CVE field radicalization is typically seen as encompassing beliefs relating to an increasing commitment to an extremist political or religious ideology, while violent extremism is the behavioral outcome of becoming radicalized.¹² This distinction between beliefs and actions creates some challenge in selecting valid indicators of change as it relates to de-radicalization and disengagement. Within the literature the former is typically defined as a form of cognitive shift away from extremist beliefs, while the latter encompasses behavioral change.¹³ A key choice is whether interventions should be focused on de-radicalization or disengagement, with it recognized in the literature you can get one without the other, in that one can be disengaged but still harbor extremist views (e.g., believe in the cause but reject violence as a legitimate tactic).¹⁴ It is argued that disengagement is a more realistic goal of CVE programs, particularly those targeting convicted terrorists.¹⁵ However, given CVE case-managed interventions are also about decreasing the risk of future extremist acts, a desire among police and governments can be that they do de-radicalize individual clients. The problem though is that whether this is attainable is unclear.¹⁶

Compounding these difficult choices is also that currently within the literature there is no agreed-on way by which to measure either de-radicalization or disengagement. This is not to say that particular measures have not been tested in the field. For example, the significance quest theory (SQR), which conceptualizes radicalization as about a search for meaning and purpose driven by individual motivation, cultural ideologies, and social networks,¹⁷ has been operationalized as a scale to examine the effectiveness of a de-radicalization program in Sri Lanka targeting inmates who were members of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).¹⁸ The results showed that participants expressed lower levels of extremism pre- and post-release into the community.¹⁹ However, Western countries do not experience the type of counterinsurgency characteristic of LTTE. Also, radicalization and de-radicalization are context specific,²⁰ so for anyone making a choice about how to evaluate intervention outcomes the relevance of such a measure as SQR can be unclear.

When conducting evaluations on CVE interventions there can be sensitivities related to providing researchers access to data (e.g., on individual clients). Such data can have national security implications or be in the form of police or correctional intelligence. Without the necessary security approvals academics interested in CVE evaluation can have difficulties in accessing client data and clients themselves. Accessing intervention

clients also can raise ethical issues.²¹ This is not unique to CVE evaluation but more generally relates to accessing primary data for terrorism research.²²

Another key challenge is demonstrating causation (i.e., the intervention causes disengagement or de-radicalization). This encompasses a number of issues. One is that a case-managed intervention can have a small client group. For example, of all the individuals who are referred to the U.K. Channel program each year only a small number are subject to formal support.²³ This means it can be hard to identify a meaningful comparison or control group. Given the small sample size, evaluation approaches such as randomized control trials may not be possible, which is compounded by the fact that many case-managed interventions have been operating for some years, which means an evaluation needs to be both retrospective and prospective. It is also understandable that agencies may not be willing to have convicted terrorists or at-risk individuals allocated to a wait list to serve as a control group, or be unwilling to consent to them having some alternative support option (or no support) compared to an experimental group.²⁴

Also, demonstrating causation is compounded by the fact that there can be variation in the intervention cohort in relation to their radicalization pathways and hence their risks and needs will differ. Hence, the intensity of an intervention will vary based on individual contexts and circumstances.²⁵ This means that identifying which components matter more (e.g., religious mentoring vs. employment vs. education vs. family engagement) in triggering de-radicalization and disengagement can be difficult due to variation in the focus of intervention plans, which is the outcome of individual needs and risk. Compounding this is that research indicates individuals do eventually disengage from violent extremism as a result of age or burnout and do so without any formal intervention.²⁶ Hence, knowing or identifying if an intervention makes a difference can be challenging.

A final problem compounding the evaluation of case-managed interventions is that de-radicalization and disengagement is an iterative ongoing process that occurs over time.²⁷ This raises questions about how long should an intervention run for and if the length of participation matters and when is the ideal time to discharge a client. This means progress invariably needs to be examined over an extended period of time.²⁸ This also relates to choosing a reliable period over which to examine reintegration and recidivism.

The discussion above has aimed to indicate that the design and delivery of case-managed CVE interventions do not offer ideal research environments within which to undertake evaluation studies. They can impose constraints and limitations on the types of methodologies chosen and how outcomes can be demonstrated. This also has implications for understanding how processes such as disengagement and de-radicalization occur and can be facilitated through formal interventions. The constraints and challenges outlined above were confronted by the authors when it came to the evaluation of the PRISM intervention. In the sections to follow, we outline one approach and method adopted to assess client change on the intervention and provide results from this analysis. First we provide more detail on the PRISM intervention.

PRISM

Beginning in February 2016 and initially operating as a pilot intervention, PRISM is aimed at prison inmates who have a conviction for terrorism, or have been identified as

at risk of radicalization due to demonstrating extremist views and/or associations. Inmates charged for terrorism-related offenses in New South Wales (NSW) are classified as AA inmates.²⁹ At the time of writing, there were thirty-one AA inmates in the NSW prison system.³⁰ NSW has the highest number of convicted terrorists in Australia compared to any other state.³¹ PRISM is currently the only dedicated custody-based intervention aimed at violent extremists and radicalized offenders in Australia. However similar to other countries, CVE programs in Australia encompass a broad spectrum of activities beyond the disengagement and reintegration of known extremists.³²

PRISM is a voluntary program that is delivered by a team of psychologists who work in partnership with a religious support officer, Services and Programs officers, allied health professionals, and other agencies identified for involvement in an individual's case assessment and intervention plan. Referrals into the program come from a variety of sources, such as the Correctional Intelligence Group.³³ Once consent is obtained from an inmate, a risk and needs assessment is undertaken that informs the development of an individual's treatment plan/goals. Consent is also provided for members of the PRISM team to contact family members and community supports. PRISM does not operate like a traditional correctional intervention that has set modules. It is a support service that helps to address the psychological, social, theological, and ideological needs of radicalized offenders and aims to redirect them away from extremism and help them transition out of custody. This is achieved through individually tailored intervention plans. Results from a qualitative interim assessment of PRISM has been reported elsewhere.³⁴ This article draws on new data that form part of a second, larger evaluation study.³⁵

Data and Method

Data Sources

In this article our key data sources were case note data (what can also be referred to as client progress notes) recorded on PRISM clients and also what are referred to as RADAR need and risk assessments.³⁶ We draw on PRISM case notes for fourteen clients and RADAR assessments completed on eleven of these fourteen clients. This included ten previous clients, some of whom had been released on parole and four individuals who at the time of completing this study were still participating in the intervention. These data sources do not capture all past and current PRISM clients, some of whose case notes and RADAR assessments were not accessed (e.g., one client who was still on remand at the time and another who had only recently consented). At the time of completing this research a total of eighteen inmates (including current and previous clients) had participated in the intervention, which includes one female.

PRISM staff are responsible for inputting data and observations into these documents. Case notes and RADAR assessments include a variety of data and observations relating to client background (e.g., upbringing and family environment), offense and criminal history, radicalization source, identified risk and protective factors, religious understanding and knowledge, intervention goals and progress toward those goals, including information on family engagement by the PRISM team and results from psychological assessments. Prior to analysis these sources of data were de-identified.

We recognize that data sources such as assessment tools and written case notes on client participation and progress have their limitations, in that they may reflect particular biases of those individuals completing the assessment tools and case notes, and what they deem as important information and observations that are worth recording or highlighting. However, the PRISM client case notes for instance are a rich source of information spanning numerous client engagements, and while the content and quality did vary, ranging in length from three pages up to eighty-five pages, they included multiple observations that allowed for analysis. Also, PRISM clients' case notes were not always completed by the same person, with various PRISM staff members (i.e., psychologists, Religious Support Offices; Service and Program Officers) contributing to the case notes. This reduces the risk of potential bias by ensuring they do not reflect the observations and inputs of only one staff member. Also, previous research has demonstrated that case files on convicted terrorists or individuals identified as at risk of radicalization can be a rich and useful data source.³⁷

Compilation of Data on Client Social Demographic Histories

In order to quantitatively report client social demographic histories, PRISM case notes and RADAR assessments were read and analyzed to determine a set of case attributes. The PRISM case notes and RADAR assessments were matched across each client to avoid any double counting (i.e., client case note 001 was matched to the RADAR assessment for client 001). A final list of attributes was compiled by the authors after screening all case notes and completed RADAR assessments. This encompassed a total of fifty-seven variables spanning demographic information, offense type and criminal history, childhood and adult experiences, religion, radicalization source, and intervention-related variables (e.g., reason and source of referral). These case attributes were developed to numerically capture a variety of client background information.

In order to convert qualitative data from case notes and RADAR assessments into quantitative data, a threshold for identifying the presence of each attribute (variable) was determined. A threshold was chosen in order to reduce the likelihood of overestimating the existence of particular characteristics or sociodemographic variables within the cohort. The threshold for capturing data was a simple dichotomous present/absence measure. If information on an attribute was mentioned on a single occasion within our sources it was reported as present. The amount each attribute was mentioned or detected did not hold weight in how it was captured in the final data set. For example, the presence of a previous "adult conviction" was reported as either "yes," "no," or "missing." The number of adult convictions were not taken into account. In other words, one inmate could have had eight previous convictions compared to another who had one and in these instances both inmates would be captured in the data as having a prior adult conviction. Data from the RADAR assessments was captured using the same threshold. The analysis of both data sources was used to develop a quantitative data set of PRISM clients' social demographic histories.

Compilation of Data on Client Intervention Goals

Similar to the compilation of client social demographic variables we used the same case notes and RADAR assessments. Again they were matched across clients. Intervention goals had to be clearly stated in both sources. Goals were only required to be stated or discussed once to be captured in the data. Some goals could be easily defined and interpreted in our sources and clear examples of how these goals might be achieved could be identified. For example, in these data sources the goal of “Development of prosocial supports” was often identified and referred to increasing prosocial relationships (i.e., with family members and partners and religious leaders) that provide various types of support and promote a prosocial lifestyle. Another example consistently identified and defined for participants was “Improve insights about extremist associates.”

On the other hand, some goals were not clearly stated and written content did not identify specific activities or provide an explanation of the actions that would encompass these goals. For example, while consistently listed, it was difficult to identify the types of activities that encompassed the goal of “Improve alternative social identity.” One way this goal was captured by the authors was to interpret conversations/notes (in the case notes) that revolved around identity and determine if these were alluding to the need for an alternate social identity or if there was any confusion in the client’s sense of identity.

Compilation of Data on Client Progress

In order to formulate our PRISM client progress data, we undertook what is commonly referred to as content analysis.³⁸ Client progress data was drawn only from the PRISM case notes. It needs to be acknowledged that the detail and length of these case notes did vary. This was often determined by how long an individual had been engaged in the PRISM intervention. As mentioned these case notes were completed by different PRISM staff and included numerous dated observations relating to a client’s background and progress, as well as additional data relating to assessments and family engagements.

From these recorded case notes client progress was recorded across a total of 147 different engagement dates. Date stamps corresponding to each individual were entered into a client progress Excel spreadsheet for our sample of fourteen PRISM clients. Date stamps (engagement dates) included all sessions captured in the case notes that related to assessments conducted for the purpose of developing intervention plans and goals (e.g., historical information relating to educational achievements, family upbringing and psycho/social functioning, and offense-related information); identification and actioning of intervention goals and pro-social activities (e.g., education and work); observations relating to religious education/dialogue; and plans for release. Date stamps did not include the following sessions: sessions canvassing initial consent to participate; sessions involving PRISM staff engagements with family members; notes recording meeting outcomes between PRISM staff; and consultations with external service providers or agencies. The reason that the engagements relating to the initial assessments of clients were included is because there can be recorded observations of behaviors and beliefs in these background/historical assessments that provide indicators of disengagement related to shifts in attitudes and behaviors. Given initial client assessments can in some

circumstances extend over a lengthy period of time (e.g., months), client change may be evident during these engagement periods and hence were included in our analysis.

Levels of progress captured within the case notes (i.e., change over time) was recorded by three indicators. The indicators are as follows: a reported change, no change, and unsure of change. Indicators were attributed to the following symbols (x, →, →?) for coding purposes and entered into an Excel spreadsheet for each of the fourteen clients. Evidence of change (→) occurring for each date stamp was determined based on a set of parameters capturing attitudinal and behavioral indicators. The parameters were as follows: any reported notes on a change in attitude/beliefs or identification of reintegration goals; improvements in psychological coping skills; moderation of extremist beliefs; rejection of extremist groups such as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and Al Qaeda; identification of the influence of negative associates; actions involving distancing from associates; recognition of seriousness of offense; acceptance and working toward pro-social activities (e.g., engaging in work and education). These indicators were selected based on the existing literature on disengagement³⁹ and were also emphasized during interviews with PRISM staff and other corrective services personnel.⁴⁰

No change (x) for a client was recorded if there were no indicators of change present in the case note information for a particular date. A recording of no change does not represent any form of regression in progress or an incident indicating a negative development (e.g., an incident of extremist activity, extremist beliefs/behaviors have re-emerged). No change was coded if case notes did not discuss any relevant information (e.g., the session focused mainly on background historical detail; e.g., a client's childhood or discussions around a recent parole decision). Hence, no change does not mean nothing positive had occurred; rather, it simply means the case notes for a particular engagement date did not record information that met our criteria for change (indicator of progress). Unfortunately, from our data we were not able to code for any form of regression due to insufficient data on this observation (i.e., it was not consistently captured) and hence we defaulted to no change as our baseline. The final indicator of client progress was unsure of change (→?), which was selected if a case note identified a positive client change relating to our criteria of disengagement, but also recorded in the same session some type of inconsistency or contradiction relating to that criteria. For example, a client may reject an extremist group such as ISIS but then later on in a session it is recorded they endorsed a group such as Al Qaeda or reject the belief of the permissibility of *jihad* as a defensive or offensive act against Australian citizens, yet endorse such actions by Al Qaeda or ISIS overseas. They may recognize the role of associates as influencing their radicalization but refuse to actively dissociate themselves from these individuals. A client may also show indicators relating to planning for release (e.g., engaging family members), but it is recorded they fail to recognize the challenges they will face when released into the community. Such instances in case notes were coded as unsure of change. These indicators were then transformed into categorical numbers 1 (change), 0 (no change), and 2 (unsure of change) for analysis.

The case note data were coded separately by the first and second author according to the above predetermined indicators. This coding was done at separate times. Decisions were not discussed between coders (the authors) so as to achieve any consensus on ratings, which was to ensure coders could not influence each other's decisions and that

decisions were based exclusively off the case note data. There was only a single wave of coding done by each coder on two separate spreadsheets.

Based on a total of 147 engagement dates across fourteen offenders, both coders came to a unanimous agreement on 122 (82 percent) of the engagement dates reporting one of three indicators (x, →, →?). This demonstrates a high level of agreement between coders, suggesting a good indicator of interrater reliability. However, in order to test statically for consistency across both coders, a Krippendorff's Alpha Reliability Estimate was calculated.⁴¹ This is a reliable and statistically valid measure of testing for intercoder reliability as it relates to content analysis.⁴² This first result generated a Krippendorff's alpha of .72. As a standard for acceptable reliability is .7,⁴³ and this score indicates that the data are reliable and that the coding procedure across both coders was consistently applied to the case notes.

The primary aim of this exercise was to develop a single dataset by which we could assess client progress. So, in the final combined dataset where both coders came to the same rating of a session as unsure of change, or instances where both coders recorded two different ratings (e.g., one coder reported change, while the other reported no change), those engagement dates were defaulted to no change (x). This was done to decrease the risk that we had a final coded dataset that overinflated the impact of the intervention or risked being overly biased towards success. In this second wave a Krippendorff's alpha of .98 was generated. The procedure we adopted above meets four key criteria of accepted standards of reliability and validity in content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004):

1. Duplicate coding was completed by two coders separately without any discussion. That is, the coders worked independently of each other and used the same coding instructions and recording devices and sources of data.
2. A test of intercoder reliability was undertaken to test the application of the coding scheme.
3. We counted and included coder idiosyncrasies as disagreements (different ratings of progress across the case notes) and did not undertake a consensus-based approach in order to come to a decision which coder's rating was more accurate.
4. The procedure was conducted a second time after the two conditions (any disagreements in ratings or ratings recorded as unsure of change) were defaulted to no change so as to minimize bias in the data.

Results

Sample Background

Here we provide a selection of information on the social demographics of our sample of PRISM clients, including past behaviors and experiences so as to give an indication of some of their overall background characteristics. Given our small sample size we have also included both percentages and counts so the former can be interpreted in context.

Based on our data sources the average age of our PRISM sample was 33 years at the time of writing with a minimum age of 23 and maximum age of 49. Almost all clients (92.9 percent, $n = 13$) were Muslim. Over half of these clients (64.3 percent, $n = 9$) were from a North African and Middle Eastern cultural and ethnic background. Three

PRISM clients (21.4 percent) were from an Oceanian cultural background, including two from an Australian background (14.3 percent) and one who identified as Polynesian. One inmate was from a South East Asian background and one from an unknown background. Less than half (42.9 percent, $n = 6$) immigrated to Australia, 50 percent ($n = 7$) were born in Australia, and one participant's immigration status is unknown. Parental immigration status was slightly higher (71.4 percent, $n = 10$), with one participant's parents still remaining overseas. Two of the client's parents were born in Australia, with one parent's immigration status unknown.

Of our sample, six PRISM clients reported they were married (42.9 percent). The remaining participants were either single (35.7 percent, $n = 5$), in a relationship (14.3 percent, $n = 2$), or divorced (7.1 percent, $n = 1$). Of these, 42.9 percent ($n = 6$) had children. Half of the participants ($n = 7$) had completed secondary school, 21.4 percent ($n = 3$) completed Technical and Further Education (TAFE) courses and 14.3 percent ($n = 2$) had a tertiary education. The remaining participants (14.3 percent, $n = 2$) had not completed any schooling past primary school. Prior to incarceration 35.7 percent ($n = 5$) of participants maintained full-time work, over half (57.1 percent, $n = 8$) engaged in intermittent periods of work, and one gave no indication of their level of work involvement prior to incarceration.

The following tabulated results demonstrate information on historical factors of our sample's upbringing, criminal history, behavior, mental health, family history, and life-style. The tables do not capture the number of instances that a historical event may have occurred for an individual. Table 1 indicates that a large percentage of our PRISM sample had a history of criminality and previous contact with the criminal justice system. While our sample is small this reflects similar findings from overseas studies on individuals who have radicalized to violent extremism in the United States⁴⁴ and Europe.⁴⁵

Table 2 outlines some of the historical experiences of our PRISM sample, encompassing their family situation and experience of conflict, violence, abuse, and trauma. While over half of the sample grew up in a two-parent household, over half experienced some type of adversity in their upbringing. Such adversity has been linked to pathways into radicalization.⁴⁶

The sample was also reported to have a history of school misconduct, anti-social behavior, and violence (see Table 3). It would appear that, for our sample, experiences of adversity, conflict, and violence were not uncommon. It should be stated that these results only apply to our sample of PRISM clients. We do not know if it is also reflective of the terrorist and at-risk cohort within the NSW prison system or those convicted of terrorist-related offenses in Australia.

Table 1. Criminal history.

	Yes		No		Missing	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Record of criminal history	12	85.7	2	14.3	0	0.0
Previous adult conviction	11	78.6	3	21.4	0	0.0
Previous juvenile conviction	5	35.7	9	64.3	0	0.0
Any overseas convictions	2	14.3	12	85.7	0	0.0
Incarceration as juvenile or adult	7	50.0	7	50.0	0	0.0
Previous police contact	12	85.7	2	14.3	0	0.0

Table 2. Upbringing.

	Yes		No		Missing	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Single parent upbringing	3	21.4	10	71.4	1	7.1
Conflict in the home	7	50.0	6	42.9	1	7.1
Exposure to violence ^a	12	85.7	2	14.3	0	0.0
History of trauma ^b	9	64.3	4	28.6	1	7.1
History of abuse ^c	8	57.1	6	42.9	0	0.0

Note. ^aThis includes exposure to violence in the home and in the community.

^bTrauma can encompass exposure to war, overseas conflict, or violence resulting in death or serious injury.

^cAbuse refers to the presence of both physical and/or psychological abuse in the home.

Table 3. Lifestyle, behavioral, and mental health history.

	Yes		No		Missing	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
School misconduct	11	78.6	2	14.3	1	7.1
History of AOD* use	11	78.6	3	21.4	0	0.0
History of mental health	9	64.3	5	35.7	0	0.0
History of self-harm	5	35.7	8	57.1	1	7.1
History of violent behavior	11	78.6	3	21.4	0	0.0
History of anti-social behavior	12	85.7	2	14.3	0	0.0
History of weapon use	11	78.6	3	21.4	0	0.0
Member of a gang	2	14.3	12	85.7	0	0.0

Note. *Alcohol and other Drugs.

When it came to sources of a participant's radicalization, [Table 4](#) indicates that all of our sample were identified as having been influenced by their associates. Other causes of radicalization included grievances (e.g., Muslims are a victimized minority, Muslims are not free to practice their religion); ideologies (Islamist or far-right ideologies⁴⁷), and perceptions of us versus them (in-group and out-group distinctions) as a source of a client's radicalization.

Scope of Intervention Plans

When it came to the type of intervention goals across our PRISM sample, there was a total number of twenty identified. [Table 5](#) lists the types of intervention goals identified in our data sources ordered by the frequency of their occurrence across our sample, demonstrating the types of strategies targeting this population.

The number of intervention goals per client also varied greatly. The number of intervention goals per client is outlined in [Table 6](#). The average number of intervention goals identified for each participant was thirteen. The minimum number of intervention goals identified was eleven, with a maximum of seventeen goals identified for two clients.

Analysis of Client Progress Data

Now we turn to the main results of our analysis, measuring client change on the intervention according to our selected indicators of disengagement. As outlined above we coded the content of PRISM client case notes across three indicators (change; no change; unsure of change), with our coding tested for reliability and validity. As highlighted in the literature review disengagement needs to be examined over time. To do

Table 4. Sources of radicalization.

	Yes		No	
	Count	%	Count	%
Radicalization due to associates	14	100	0	0
Radicalization due to grievances	10	71.4	4	28.6
Radicalization due to ideologies	10	71.4	4	28.6
Radicalization due to us versus them perception	9	64.3	5	35.7

Note. Presence of these sources is not necessarily a depiction of a participant’s current alignment with terrorism. Sources were reported and captured based on at least a single case of identification in the past or present.

Table 5. Frequency of intervention goals identified.

	Yes		No		Missing	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Development of prosocial supports	14	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Development of prosocial activities	14	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Improve insights about extremist associates	14	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Improve alternative social identity	13	92.9	0	0.0	1	7.1
Improve religious knowledge and understanding	12	85.7	2	14.3	0	0.0
Enhance understanding of reintegration challenges	12	85.7	2	14.3	0	0.0
Develop coping skills	11	78.6	2	14.3	1	7.1
Moderation of current religious beliefs	10	71.4	4	28.6	0	0.0
Improve insights into offending	10	71.4	4	28.6	0	0.0
Maintain family relationships	9	64.3	3	21.4	2	14.3
Lifestyle	9	64.3	5	35.7	0	0.0
Assistance transferring to a less restrictive environment	9	64.3	4	28.6	1	7.1
Assessment of mental health needs	9	64.3	4	28.6	1	7.1
Complete other in-custody programs	8	57.1	6	42.9	0	0.0
Address violent tendencies	8	57.1	6	42.9	0	0.0
Maintenance of employment	7	50.0	5	35.7	2	14.3
Tackle substance abuse	5	35.7	8	57.1	1	7.1
Develop Australian identity	5	35.7	7	50.0	2	14.3
Family assistance	5	35.7	7	50.0	2	14.3
Education needs	5	35.7	7	50.0	2	14.3

Table 6. Intervention goals per client.

Client #	Number of intervention goals identified
0003	17/20
0010	17/20
0004	15/20
0009	15/20
0011	14/20
0006	15/20
0012	13/20
0008	13/20
0014	13/20
0015	12/20
0005	12/20
0013	11/20
0002	11/20
0001	11/20

this, several analyses were conducted to determine the relationship between time of engagement in the PRISM intervention and progress toward disengagement (i.e., change as we defined it).

First, we provide some descriptive data on client engagements. To understand the overall amount of time each participant in our sample was engaged, engagement was

measured by counting the number of visits per engagement date (i.e., each engagement date = 1 visit). Overall, based on the periods that the case notes covered (2016–mid 2018), the average time engaged (visits) across our sample of participants was ten engagements with a minimum of three, and maximum of twenty-three. As explained above, to measure the level of disengagement for each participant, our measure of change was captured as a dichotomous present/absent variable where the presence of change = 1 and absence of change = 0. Overall disengagement was calculated by the sum of all instances of observed change, regardless of the number of engagements. Higher sums of change indicate higher levels of disengagement, the minimum level of observed change was zero, and the maximum level was twelve. The average for all participants was 3.36 ($SD = 3.75$) recorded episodes of disengagement as defined by our parameters for change.

To compare differences between PRISM participants who were convicted of a terrorist-related offense, to those who were referred into the program due to being identified as at risk of radicalization, participants were divided into two groups: “Terrorist” or “at-risk” group. The terrorist group had a total of five participants who were all convicted of a terrorist-related offense. The at-risk group had a total of nine participants, which was comprised of those who had committed a variety of nonterrorist-related offenses (e.g., armed robbery).

The average visits for participants in the terrorist group was 15.60 ($SD = 7.79$) while the at-risk group was engaged for an average of 7.67 visits ($SD = 3.16$). An independent *t*-test showed a statistically significant difference in the total number of average visits between the terrorist and at-risk group ($t(12) = -2.741$, $p = .018$). The average time it took for participants in the terrorist group to show change according to our criteria for disengagement was 2.50 visits. On average the at-risk group took 3.86 visits before change was evident. The proportion of visits (i.e., total change/total engagement dates) that demonstrated change for the terrorist group was .254 and .250 for the at-risk group, indicating consistency across both groups.

Next, a Pearson’s correlation was calculated to assess the relationship between time engaged and client change. A significant positive correlation was found ($r(14) = .859$, $p < .001$). What this means is that the length of engagement appears to be correlated with disengagement (change); that is, the more often a person is engaged in PRISM over time the more likely they are to exhibit behaviors and attitudes that demonstrate disengagement. While we are not testing causation here, and bearing in mind the limitations of using case notes, the results show that the intensity of the intervention (number of engagements/visits) seems to make a difference.⁴⁸ We also tested for whether the number of intervention goals per client was at all related to observations of client change. A Pearson’s correlation was used to assess the relationship between the number of intervention goals and client progress. There was no significant correlation found between the two variables ($r = .245$, $n = 14$, $p = .289$). That is, the number of intervention goals a client had did not predict overall client progress. Based on a linear regression model we also did not find that the number of intervention goals for each client, regardless of whether they have been convicted of a terrorist offense or identified as at risk of radicalization, predicted that clients are more likely to exhibit progress toward disengagement ($F(2,11) = .241$, $p = .502$).⁴⁹ It is likely that the small sample size has

facilitated insignificant results; as such, an increase in the number of participants could produce more accurate effects on the relationship between the number of intervention goals and client progress.

For the purpose of illustrating disengagement progress over time for each group, a line graph with point markers was produced (see Figure 1 and Figure 2 for the terrorist and at-risk group). Line graphs are particularly useful in displaying the relationship between two types of information, in this case, time engaged and progress, particularly in reporting evaluation results.⁵⁰

Each participant was given a baseline. This baseline is not an indication of any type of regression in a PRISM client’s progress or that an incident of extremist activity had occurred. The data provided here that we based these results off simply demonstrate baseline data points as an indication of no significant progress of change. As we mentioned above, given this measure of change is coded from the case notes, a measure of no-change is simply the outcome that case notes did not mention any relevant information that fell within our definition of disengagement. The placement of each baseline on the y-axis (vertical axis) do not hold any significance and have been situated (staggered) for presentation purposes only. The x-axis (horizontal axis) for each graph represents the number of engagement dates for each participant. What these data illustrate are individual progress during the intervention. For example, in the terrorist group (Figure 1), participant 2 had a total of eight engagement dates and change was identified at engagement date 2 and 6. Participant 3 had a total of twenty-three engagement dates and change was identified at engagement dates 3, 4, 6, 10, 12, 13, 14 15, 17, 19, 20, and 21.

In the at-risk group (Figure 2), client 6 showed change in session 1 (indicating he was disengaging prior to engagement in PRISM), 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8. He returned to

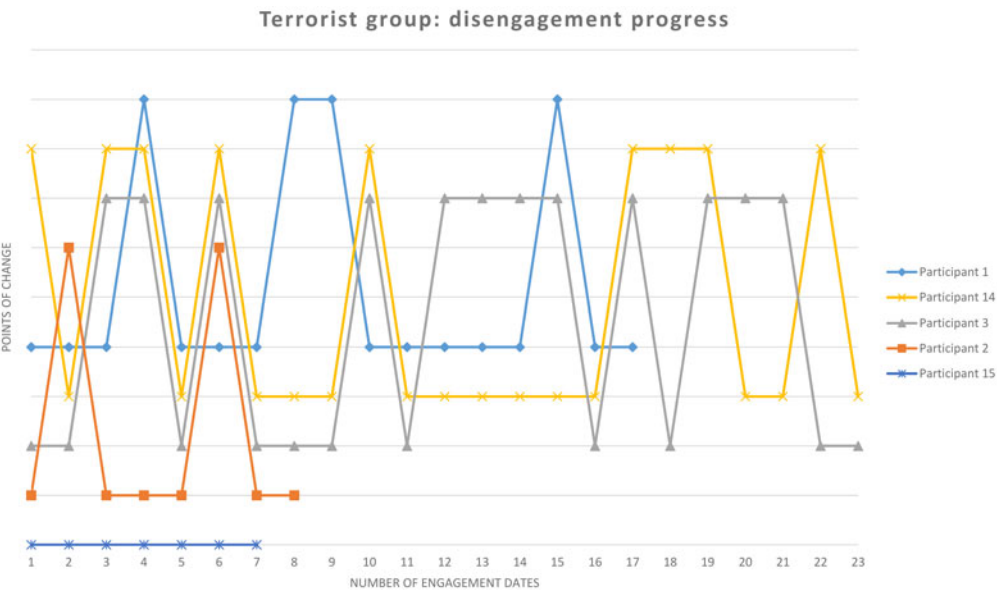


Figure 1. Disengagement progress for those convicted of a terrorist-related offense across engagement dates.

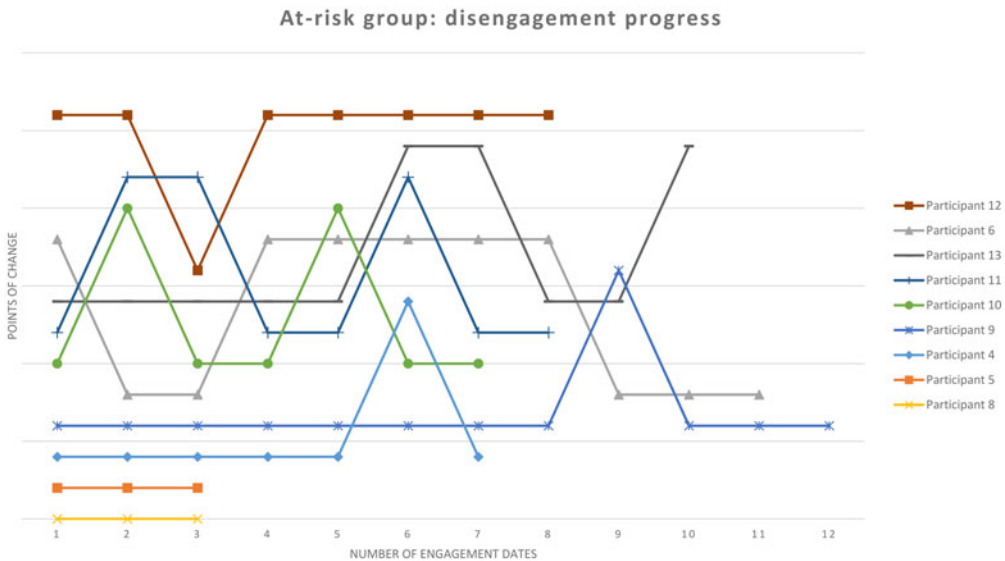


Figure 2. Disengagement progress for at-risk cohort across engagement dates.

baseline at engagement 9, 10, and 11. When consulting the case notes for this client, these engagement periods were when he was informed that he would be paroled and there were some challenges in preparing him for release, with his anxiety and expectations needing to be managed. Likewise, with participant 12, disengagement was evident at engagement date 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8. This is the benefit of these disengagement graphs in that they help illustrate change over time and indicate, in the absence of a control group, client progress in the intervention. Reasons for a return to baseline can also be identified per individual.

Discussion and Conclusion

Before discussing the implications of our results we need to acknowledge limitations with the evaluation design. We have already acknowledged limitations with our data sources. We have not been able to demonstrate causation given we have no experimental and control group. As already outlined this is not that unusual when it comes to the evaluation of case-managed interventions such as PRISM. We are not able to definitively say the PRISM intervention causes client change as measured against our indicators of disengagement. The PRISM cohort is small so success can be overinflated. However, our coding of client change was conservative (and statistically valid) and we purposively tried to avoid overinflating coded observations of change. Generalization is always difficult given the size of the PRISM cohort and with no control group we do not know if outcomes are unique to radicalized offenders who participate in PRISM. However, we aimed to tackle this limitation by assessing disengagement over time, which allowed us to draw on multiple observations of client progress. This makes methodological sense because, as argued in the literature, desistance from extremism and pathways away from radicalization are iterative and progress over time.⁵¹ This means participation and progress in programs like PRISM also need to be examined over an

extended period of time.⁵² Another criticism that could be raised is that we have not truly measured intervention outcomes but instead simply examined program throughputs. We would argue that our measure of client change captures both behavioral and cognitive indicators of disengagement as manifest during different periods of client participation. This is a dynamic process and hence different outcomes from the intervention will become evident at different periods of time. While we have not been able to disaggregate our measure of change per client or whether there are differences between clients charged for terrorism and those identified as at risk, or who are paroled and those still in custody, we do measure relevant patterns of disengagement arising from participation in the intervention.

The above also raises the issue of why we have not also examined the recidivism rate of PRISM clients. Of the fourteen PRISM clients we assessed for indicators of change, eight have been released on parole, none of whom at the time of writing have committed an extremist-related act. There have been minor parole violations, but this is not unexpected given the background of these clients. Also, there is the problem of date specificity that makes the accurate measurement of recidivism challenging relating to the period over which you set out to observe its occurrence. One answer would be to assess recidivism three to six months following release into the community given research shows that generally within this period most released inmates from prison are more likely to re-offend.⁵³ But there is every possibility a previously radicalized offender may reengage in extremist-related activities years following discharge. Currently it is too early to know the impact of PRISM on extremist-related recidivism.

The PRISM program presents one of the first attempts by a correctional authority in Australia to intervene with convicted terrorists and offenders identified as at risk of radicalization in a custodial environment. While at the time there existed programs to rehabilitate convicted terrorists in countries abroad,⁵⁴ it was largely an untested intervention in the Australian context. When examining the background of PRISM clients some key characteristics do emerge. The background of clients indicates early experiences (e.g., previous criminal justice contact and exposure to violence) that create potential vulnerabilities to radicalization.

PRISM is underpinned by a well-tested case-management approach that has shown to be effective in assisting other high need populations.⁵⁵ There are differences though in needs and risks within the cohort that result in a variety of intervention goals. However, our analysis of PRISM client documentation revealed some consistent intervention goals, they being the development of prosocial supports and activities (e.g., religious mentoring, family engagement, and engagement in work and education) and improving insights into the influence of associates. The latter is particularly relevant given the identified role of associates in being a radicalizing source within our data, with similar patterns also demonstrated by research on terrorist cohorts in Australia and also in countries abroad.⁵⁶

Our analysis of case note data indicates that participants in PRISM are demonstrating change related to indicators of disengagement. Change among the cohort is evident over time as our quantitative content analysis of client case notes shows. While some clients within the sample were identified as having a smaller number of intervention goals, this should not be interpreted as indicating that those clients required less

guidance or support or were disengaged more than others, given we found no relationship between the number of intervention goals and client change. The fact we found that the length of engagement makes a difference to observed client change is important, because it shows such case-managed approaches cannot necessarily be a short, sharp intervention and have to be sustained over time to promote and consolidate disengagement.

We think our evaluation method of using client case notes illustrates one possible way by which case-managed CVE interventions can be evaluated, given the constraints and contingencies they impose on the adoption of certain evaluation methodologies and the challenges faced in assessing programs outcomes. The utility of quantitatively coding qualitative data has also been demonstrated when measuring the radicalization of terrorist inmates in Indonesia.⁵⁷ We recognize limitations with our design and would argue that while our tracking of client change on PRISM allowed us to understand both individual and overall progress, it is still important to qualitatively unpack processes to understand how specific circumstances and certain supports influence individual progression.

Our evidence shows that case-managed interventions such as PRISM can help generate disengagement. Of course, given that PRISM is an in-custody program, whether this is the same for other case-managed interventions run in the community is largely unknown. The broader lesson though is that you need to evaluate counterradicalization interventions over time to understand their impact and this applies to both those delivered in custody and in the community. We would argue though that while such evaluations have implications for how agencies and authorities understand the risks certain individuals present they are not an assessment of risk reduction. While the evaluation of client progress will have implications for assessments of risk they do not replace such risk assessments, which will take into account broader information (e.g., police and correctional intelligence), that can fall outside the measurement of indicators related to program outcomes.

Given that we found that PRISM client case notes were a rich data source by which to examine outcomes (i.e., client change) it points to the importance for intervention providers and program staff to invest in a consistent case note structure. These should include assessment data; offense history; details of radicalization; psychometric testing; and content of engagements that capture not just what was discussed but how clients reacted, plans for next engagements, identified intervention goals and milestones, and evidence of progression towards those goals. Ideally, following engagements with each client there should be a staff de-brief to further inform case note inputs. Case notes could be examined against particular theories of change underpinning an intervention to further understand program outcomes. Such data sources can be used in combination with any pre- or posttest measure of radicalization, including qualitative interviews with staff and clients. It is only through such holistic evaluation methodologies that we will begin to understand if CVE interventions work. This article has made a contribution to the emerging body of research on the evaluation of CVE interventions. It needs to be recognized that the context and conditions under which such interventions operate do present challenges. This does not mean we should have low expectations about CVE evaluation. It requires a mix of methods that will have their strengths and limitations.

Notes

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29. Classification AA refers to the category of inmates who, in the opinion of the NSW Corrections Commissioner, represent a special risk to national security (e.g., because of a perceived risk that they may engage in, or incite other persons to engage in, terrorist activities) and should at all times be confined in special facilities within a secure physical barrier that includes towers or electronic surveillance equipment (see Corrective Services NSW Offender Classification & Case Management Policy & Procedures Manual 12.3 Category AA and Category 5 Inmates, V 1.5, March 2015, 4).
30. This is specifically as of 24 September 2018, which includes sentenced and un-sentenced offenders. This number does not include inmates who have been identified through police and correctional intelligence as presenting a radicalization risk due to their associates or behavior in prison. These exact numbers cannot be provided due to the sensitivity of such information.
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33. The Correctional Intelligence Group gathers, coordinates, analyzes, and disseminates intelligence throughout the custodial and community-based correctional system in NSW.
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35. This second evaluation also includes assessing qualitative outcomes from the intervention; see Adrian Cherney, "Supporting Disengagement and Reintegration: Qualitative Outcomes from a Custody-Based Counter Radicalisation Intervention," *Journal for Deradicalisation* 19, no. 17 (2018): 1–27.
36. RADAR is a CVE intervention tool developed by a team of Australian researchers that is used to assess client risks and needs across several domains and helps guide the development of intervention goals. It is not specific to PRISM, but is used widely by a number of intervention providers in Australia. It is not a tool that is publically available, but is based on the work of Kate Barrelle, "Pro-integration: Disengagement From and Life after Extremism," *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression* 7, no. 2 (2015): 129–142.
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40. These interviewees emphasized that outcomes from PRISM should be focused on disengagement compared to de-radicalization. This involved thirty-eight interviews comprising corrections and agency staff and included current and past PRISM clients. Corrective services staff were asked about the issue of evaluating PRISM and indicators that should be utilized to demonstrate client outcomes. These staff interviewees emphasized that the intervention is concerned with disengagement compared to de-radicalization, with staff finding the goal of de-radicalization problematic given the lack of clarity around how best to measure it and the fact the program was described to inmates as focused on disengagement and reintegration.
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47. Our sample comprises one White supremacist.
48. It needs to be acknowledged that this result may be an outcome of our data sources in that more engagements result in more case notes being written on clients, which increases the likelihood of some type of change being recorded. Although, ultimately, this is what one would hope is observed.
49. The model output for these statistical tests can be provided on request from the authors.
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