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Structured Interviews of Experienced HUMINT Interrogators

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Summary: The task force that led to the creation of the High-Value Detainee Interrogation Group (HIG) recommended that the HIG fund a program of research aimed at establishing scientifically supported interrogative best practices. One of the ways to identify 'best practices' is to rely on direct reporting from subject-matter experts. In this study, 42 highly experienced military and intelligence interrogators were interviewed about their interrogation-related practices and beliefs, including such topics as training and selection, the role of rapport, perceptions regarding the techniques employed, lie detection, and the roles of interpreters and analysts. Interrogators indicated that excellent interpersonal skills on the part of an interrogator, an emphasis on rapport and relationship-building techniques, and the assistance of well-prepared interpreters and analysts are key components of a successful interrogation. It is our hope that the results of this study will stimulate research, influence training models, and ultimately contribute toward an interrogative best-practice model. Copyright © 2014 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

The internal workings of interrogations have long been hidden behind closed doors. The U.S. Supreme Court in *Miranda v. Arizona* (1966) acknowledged that the Court 'could not truly know' what occurs during interrogation owing to the 'innate secrecy of such proceedings' (p. 532). Researchers have nonetheless attempted to lift this veil of secrecy in a variety of inventive ways, including by examining interrogation manuals (e.g., Narchet, Coffman, Russano, & Meissner, 2005), conducting observational studies (e.g., Leo, 1996; Ofshe & Leo, 1997), and completing surveys of both police officers (e.g., Kassin et al., 2007; Reppucci, Meyer, & Kostelnik, 2010) and the subjects of interrogations (e.g., Gudjonsson, Sigurdsson, Asgeirsdottir, & Sigfusdottir, 2006). In addition, many leading researchers have strongly advocated for the mandatory electronic recording of interrogations in their entirety (which has been met with modest success, although most states and jurisdictions still do not routinely record interrogation proceedings; Kassin et al., 2010). Importantly, these collective efforts at making the interrogation process more transparent have occurred almost exclusively in the criminal law enforcement realm. There may be important differences between criminal law enforcement interrogations and human intelligence (HUMINT[1]) interrogations (Evans, Meissner, Brandon, Russano, & Kleinman, 2010), and even less is known about what actually occurs during interrogations in the military and intelligence domains than in the criminal law enforcement domain. Importantly, we lack knowledge about best practices with respect to the elicitation of reliable information from HUMINT targets,[2] and the purpose of current study was to begin to address that gap in our knowledge by conducting structured interviews of highly experienced military and intelligence interrogators about their perceptions with and of the interrogation process.

Researchers have been directly studying interrogations in the criminal law enforcement domain for over two decades (e.g., Kassin & Kiechel, 1996; Leo & Ofshe, 1998; Moston, Stephenson, & Williamson, 1992). Early interest was likely driven by fascination with and concern over false confessions, which play a role in a significant number of wrongful conviction cases (www.innocenceproject.org). Much has been learned about false confession risk factors (see Kassin et al., 2010, for a thorough review of these issues), and researchers have now broadened their focus to investigate how to improve the reliability of confession evidence generally (e.g., Meissner, Hartwig, & Russano, 2010; Russano, Meissner, Narchet, & Kassin, 2005).

After the high profile and controversial events surrounding the interrogations of terrorism suspects after the 9/11 attacks and foreign detainees during the Iraq War, President Obama created an interagency organization in 2009 called the High-Value Detainee Interrogation Group (HIG) to oversee interrogations of selected terrorism suspects (James, 2010). In addition, the HIG was tasked with funding scientific research that would systematically explore and produce a deeper understanding of methods for conducting empirically supported yet ethically sound interrogations ('Special Taskforce', 2009). On the basis of the assumption that a multi-faceted approach to researching interrogation in intelligence and military settings will provide the most complete and accurate understanding of interrogation possible (e.g., surveys of deployed interrogators, observational studies, reviews of current training programs), researchers have now begun the process of empirically studying the process of HUMINT interrogation. For example, Evans et al. (2013) developed a novel laboratory paradigm for studying interrogations in the HUMINT context; in their first demonstration of the paradigm, inquisitorial, information-gathering approaches led to greater information gain than accusatorial approaches. Other researchers have begun the process of

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[1] Human intelligence is the standard term of reference for the method of intelligence collection that involves gathering information directly from human sources (such as a detainee or suspect).

[2] For the purpose of continuity of this report, we use the term 'target' to denote the subject, detainee, source, or source associated with an interrogation.

surveying U.S. interrogation communities about their interrogative practices (e.g., Redlich, Kelly, & Miller, 2014).

The task force that suggested creation of the HIG also recommended the development of 'best practice' guidelines for interrogations ('Special Taskforce', 2009). One method to achieve this objective is to document the beliefs and practices of highly experienced interrogators as well as those of related interrogation personnel, such as analysts and interpreters. To date, no one to our knowledge has published a systematic and publically available study examining best practice beliefs among a sample of highly experienced HUMINT and/or military interrogators. However, we can look to a limited number of surveys of law enforcement and intelligence officers as a starting point. For example, Kassin et al. (2007) surveyed 631 police officers in North America about their interrogation practices. They found that police officers most frequently reported using *context manipulation* techniques (i.e., isolation; interrogating in a small room), *presentation of evidence* techniques (i.e., identifying contradictions in story; confronting target with evidence of guilt), *rapport and relationship building* (i.e., building rapport; establishing trust), and *emotion provocation* in the form of appealing to the target's self-interest. Also of note, Kassin et al. had officers indicate the percentage of time they are able to accurately determine when a target is lying to them. A compelling body of literature suggests that police officers are generally no better than chance at detecting deception (see Bond & DePaulo, 2008, for a meta-analysis on detecting deceit), which suggests that the participants of Kassin et al. are overconfident in their 77% accuracy estimate.

Redlich et al. (2014) surveyed U.S. HUMINT, military, and criminal law enforcement interrogators, with a wide range of practical experience, about their interrogation practices. In reporting their results, Redlich et al. relied on a new taxonomy for classifying interrogation techniques (which will also be used to present a portion of the data from the current study), proposed by Kelly, Miller, Redlich, and Kleinman (2013). Kelly et al. (2013) suggest that all interrogation techniques can be classified into six conceptual domains: *rapport and relationship building*, *context manipulation*, *emotion provocation*, *confrontation/competition*, *collaboration*, and *presentation of evidence*. With respect to the *rapport and relationship building* domain, they define rapport as 'a working relationship between operator and source based on a mutually shared understanding of each other's goals and needs which can lead to useful, actionable intelligence or information' (p. 169), and techniques designed to facilitate this relationship fall under this category (e.g., finding commonalities, meeting basic needs, and showing concern for the suspect's situation). *Context manipulation* consists of individual techniques that involve managing or changing the physical or temporal interrogation space for the purpose of priming or influencing behaviors (e.g., interrogating in a small space, conducting the interrogation at a specific time of day, and making the room culturally attractive). The *emotion provocation* domain includes techniques that share the commonality of capitalizing on a target's base emotions, including how those emotions relate to their perception of their fate (e.g., boost ego, appeal to self-interest, and capitalize on fears). The individual techniques in the *confrontation/competition* domain generally involve a 'battle of wills' in which the target or the interrogator becomes the victor of the interrogation, depending on whether the target is ultimately cooperative or not (e.g., insult the target, direct accusations, and interrogator emphasizes authority over target). In contrast, the interrogation techniques in the *collaboration* domain are geared at facilitating a team approach/mentality between the target and the interrogator (e.g., appeal to sense of cooperation and offer rewards in exchange for information). Finally, the *presentation of evidence* domain involves the use of techniques that aim to leverage the knowledge that an interrogator has about perceived or actual evidence in order to elicit more information from a target (e.g., use of physiological measures, such as the polygraph, confront with true or fabricated evidence, and identify contradictions in the target's story). See Kelly et al. for a full listing of individual techniques under each domain. Interrogators in the Redlich et al. study reported using relationship and rapport-building techniques with greater frequency than techniques from the arguably 'harsher' domains (i.e., confrontation/competition and emotion provocation), and they perceived relationship and rapport-building techniques as most effective.

The purpose of the current study was to focus on documenting the experiences and perceptions of a group of highly experienced HUMINT and military interrogators, a subset of which had experience interrogating high-value targets (HVTs). Via in-depth structured interviews, we explored a variety of topic areas, including training and selection, the role of rapport, perceptions regarding the techniques employed (i.e., most commonly employed, and most and least effective), approaches to lie detection, the roles that interpreters and analysts play, reliability of information elicited, and differences between HVT and non-HVT interrogations. It is our hope that the results of this study will (i) establish baseline information about HUMINT interrogations from the perspective of interrogators, (ii) provide avenues of future research, (iii) influence training models for interrogators, and (iv) ultimately contribute to an interrogative best-practice model.

METHOD

Participants

Forty-two highly experienced interrogators across U.S. military and federal law enforcement agencies were interviewed over the course of two phases of data collection (Phase 1 involved interrogators without HVT experience; Phase 2 focused only on interrogators with HVT experience).[3] Participants were recruited using purposive sampling through

[3] According to a senior U.S. military intelligence officer with direct experience in HVT interrogation operations, there are important procedural, contextual, and even managerial differences in the interrogation of a target labeled as an HVT as opposed to one who is not. There is a much higher level of interest in HVTs (at the command, the policymaking, and intelligence levels); as a result, such interrogations are almost generally conducted by the most experienced practitioners and their activities more closely supervised and assessed. HVTs, by definition, are believed to possess more sensitive information than other targets and are more likely to protect that information from the interrogator. Moreover, there is a much higher probability that an HVT will have had some form of resistance to interrogation training.

listings of operational interrogators provided by contacts within the Department of Defense, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the HIG, and the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS), as well as via snowball sampling through participants in the sample.[4] The primary target populations included FBI counterterrorism agents, NCIS agents, and senior interrogators across military branches. Our goal was to identify people who would consider themselves highly experienced and/or who would be considered highly experienced by their peers. The logic in seeking this sample was to document best practices from an elite group (i.e., 'the best of the best') in order to inform the research and operational communities.

The majority of participants were men (90.5%, $n = 38$), and one third had HVT experience (34.2%, $n = 17$). The sample was evenly split between those with a law enforcement background (50%, $n = 21$) and those with a military background (47.6%, $n = 20$), while one participant's background (2.4%) was solely in intelligence. With regard to agency affiliations, 45.2% ($n = 19$) indicated the U.S. Army, 33.3% ($n = 14$) FBI Counterterrorism, 21.4% ($n = 9$) NCIS, 11.9% ($n = 5$) state or local law enforcement,[5] 7.1% ($n = 3$) Defense Intelligence Agency, 4.8% ($n = 2$) CIA, and 16.7% ($n = 7$) other (e.g., Department of Homeland Security and Air Force Office of Special Investigations). Few discernible response patterns emerged between military and law enforcement participants or between HVT and non-HVT participants; as a result, data from all participants were generally combined and will be presented in aggregate (exceptions are noted throughout the text). It is important to note that agency affiliations were not distributed equally among the HVT and non-HVT samples—historically, HVTs are handled by select agencies (generally with the use of strategic, long-term interrogations). As such, only two of our HVT interrogators had a military background (law enforcement, $n = 14$; CIA, $n = 1$), whereas the non-HVT sample consisted of 18 interrogators with a military background and seven with a law enforcement background. A subset of participants ($n = 30$) provided responses regarding the locations of their interrogations (this question was added to the protocol after the completion of a portion of interviews): 80% ($n = 24$) had experience interrogating in the Middle East, 40% ($n = 12$) Guantanamo Bay, 30% ($n = 9$) Africa, 26.7% ($n = 8$) Europe, 20% ($n = 6$) Asia, and 10% ($n = 3$) other/too many to specify. Of those who had experience in the Middle East, Iraq ($n = 17$) and Afghanistan ($n = 13$) were the most common locations.

We collected three experience level measures from interviewees. All participants were asked to rate their experience level as an interrogator (Likert scale ranging from 1 = *novice or limited experience* to 10 = *expert*). Participants generally rated themselves as highly experienced ($M = 7.8$, $s = 1.5$; $Mdn = 7.5$, range = 5 to 10). When asked how many years they had been conducting interrogations, the mean response was 14.8 years ($s = 9.0$; $Mdn = 15$), with a range of 1 to 40. Not surprisingly, HVT interrogators had more years of experience ($M = 20.0$; $s = 8.4$) than non-HVT interrogators ($M = 11.3$; $s = 7.8$) conducting interrogations, $t(40) = 3.44$, $p = .001$. Finally, participants ($n = 41$) were asked to estimate how many interrogations they had conducted over the course of their careers—the mean response was 1,068 interrogations ($s = 1{,}674$; $Mdn = 400$), with a range of 4 to 8000; however, there was a significant degree of skewness (2.72, $SE = 0.37$) and kurtosis (7.88, $SE = 0.72$) owing to outliers.[6] Although there was a significant positive correlation between number of years conducting interrogations and self-reported experience level ($r = .48$, $p = .001$), there was no relationship between the number of years conducting interrogations and number of interrogations conducted ($r = -.06$, $p = .71$) or between number of interrogations conducted and self-reported experience level ($r = .08$, $p = .64$).

In terms of the number of different HVTs that interrogators with HVT experience ($n = 17$) had interrogated, there was significant variability in responses (range = 3 to 200 HVTs), with an average of 36 HVTs ($s = 55.0$; $Mdn = 12$). The most common definitions for an HVT provided by HVT participants ($n = 15$) were someone who possesses strategic information related to national security (73.3%; $n = 11$) and someone who is involved in terrorism (73.3%; $n = 11$).

Design and materials

The structured interview protocol used in Phase 1 (non-HVT) and Phase 2 (HVT) were identical, with the exception that the HVT participants were asked additional questions (some that are specific to the HVT experience and others that were added on the basis of insights gleaned from Phase 1). During Phase 1, the interview consisted of approximately 43 questions, whereas in Phase 2, the interview consisted of approximately 73 questions. The majority of questions required an open-ended response, with some requiring a numerical rating. In this paper, we focus on questions involving seven areas that participants from both phases were asked, including training and selection, the role of rapport, perceptions of the most commonly used techniques/approaches, the perceived effectiveness of techniques/approaches, approaches to lie detection, the use of interpreters, and the reliability of information elicited during interrogations. We also report findings on two topic areas that only the HVT participants were asked about, namely the role of analysts and the HVT interrogation process.

[4] Given the nature of the type of sampling techniques used, it is difficult to estimate the exact number of potential participants who were approached or the exact number of people who declined to participate. However, of the five people that we know declined to participate, the majority reported doing so owing to logistical constraints (e.g., upcoming deployment, unable to schedule a workable interview time, and difficulty securing permission to participate from chain of command in a timely manner).

[5] Participants with a criminal law enforcement background were asked to focus primarily on their HUMINT experience when responding to our questions, although it is impossible to know the extent to which they were able to disentangle their criminal law enforcement and HUMINT experiences.

[6] The nature of HUMINT interrogations can vary greatly. For example, a tactical interrogation (more often conducted in a military setting) is generally a one-time event with short-term objectives, whereas strategic interrogations (which have long-term goals) may consist of many sessions, across the course of days, weeks, or even months (U.S. Department of the Army, 2006). Participants with very high estimates likely engaged in a high number of tactical interrogations or counted multiple sessions with the same target as different interrogations. In contrast, those with very low interrogation estimates likely engaged in long-term, strategic interrogations that consisted of multiple sessions, yet they counted each strategic interrogation target as only one interrogation.

Table 1. Types of formal courses/seminars ($N = 42$)

50.0%	Reid Training	16.7%	Behavior Analysis Interview
42.9%	Basic Interrogator Training Course at Fort Huachuca	16.7%	FLETC Training
31.0%	FBI Academy Training	16.7%	NCIS Training
19.0%	Joint Analyst–Interrogator Collaboration Course	14.3%	Joint Senior Interrogator Course

Procedure

Each interrogator completed an in-person structured interview that typically lasted between 2 and 3 hours.[7] Participants were interviewed individually and in a private setting. Participation in this study was strictly confidential and voluntary (no compensation was provided), and participants were instructed to provide all responses at the unclassified level. With the exception of one participant who opted not to be recorded, each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed by a professional transcription service in order to facilitate coding and analysis.

RESULTS

Overview

Coding schemes were developed for all qualitative items. After two independent coders established an acceptable level of inter-rater reliability for the interview measure (overall percent agreement = 87.8%), each interview was coded by one of the trained coders. Frequency data are reported for the open-ended questions, and where appropriate, limited chi-square analyses were conducted to explore differences between the non-HVT and HVT participants. Please note that percentages may not add up to 100% given that participants could often provide more than one response. Where appropriate and useful, we provide summary themes that emerged from the data and exemplar quotes, primarily in table form. Unless otherwise noted, data are from all participants ($N = 42$).

Training and selection of interrogators

Participants were asked a series of questions about their formal and informal training, perceptions of the effectiveness of formal training, beliefs about the best way to train new interrogators, and whether they believed certain qualities might be associated with being a good interrogator. All of the interviewees had received formal training on interrogation in the form of courses or seminars (see Table 1 for most common courses), although a majority of participants either were not sure (19.5%; $n = 8$) or believed their training did *not* (53.7%; $n = 22$) prepare them for the interrogation-related challenges they faced in the field ($n = 41$). The reasons cited for the inadequacy of formal training ($n = 30$) included that classroom-based learning was insufficient and field experience was needed (63.3%; $n = 19$), that training was too basic (23.3%; $n = 7$), it oversimplified things (23.3%; $n = 7$), or it did not apply (20.0%; $n = 6$; e.g., the material was geared toward the Cold War era). See Table 2 for exemplar quotes about perceptions of formal training. In addition, virtually all participants (97.6%; $n = 41$) reported receiving informal training of some kind, most commonly in the form of on-the-job experience (92.7%; $n = 38$), observation of others (85.4%; $n = 35$), or a mentorship relationship (68.3%; $n = 28$).

Table 2. Exemplar quotes about perceptions of formal training

'No. It was completely inadequate.'

'No. By the time I got trained, I was a pretty senior agent. I went to Reid School in, I think, 1995. I was a civilian agent working cases since 1980 before I heard how the Reid people would talk about their philosophy and approach, and they were echoing what I already knew and what I had already participated in.'

'No. Because we're talking strictly counterterrorism issues. People who were at that time doing the instructing really never did it before. So they're going by, they're reading a book and then telling you what the book says, and they don't have the feel for doing it. Maybe now ten years after 9/11, you'll have people coming back from Afghanistan or people coming from Gitmo, or wherever, and they've had the opportunity to do these types of interviews, and hopefully they've learned by trial and error, not through a book. Because people who do it that way have a better feel and sense of how an interrogation goes and for people's reactions. Doing it from a book, you just can't.'

'I think the training I received complemented what I got from my mentor. Had I not had the mentor, the formal training would not have been as effective.'

'I think it did. I think there's no substitute for experience, so I think they taught as much as they could realistically teach at that time.'

When asked about the most effective ways to train new interrogators, 71.4% ($n = 30$) of the sample emphasized formal training, 59.5% ($n = 25$) discussed the importance of informal training, 33.3% ($n = 14$) indicated a need for more true-to-life training (such as more realistic role-playing exercises and the use of videos of actual interrogations), 21.4% ($n = 9$) noted the utility of cultural training, and 23.8% ($n = 10$) mentioned additional training on key aspects of an interrogation (e.g., more training on rapport-based approaches; training on how to work with an interpreter). Finally, when asked what qualities they believe make a 'good interrogator', participants emphasized excellent interpersonal skills (64.3%; $n = 27$), being flexible/adaptable (35.7%; $n = 15$), and maturity (31.0%; $n = 13$). See Table 3 for exemplar quotes on qualities that make a 'good' interrogator.

Themes: *Current formal training appears to be insufficient to meet field demands (largely because it relies upon dated or irrelevant material), and interrogators seek advanced insight and training experiences that reflect more real-world, 'in-the-booth' interactions. Interviewees viewed*

[7] The majority of audio files were deleted prior to us recording duration of each interview. Of the 15 interviews for which we still had audio files, the interviews ranged in length from 91 to 214 minutes, with a mean length of 2 hours, 22 minutes ($s = 35$ minutes).

Table 3. Exemplar quotes about qualities of a good interrogator

'I think that the ones who are really good kind have an innate gift for it. And that gift comes from being able to deal effectively with all kinds of people.'
'I think generally having the capacity and curiosity to learn. Somebody who is older, better educated, more experienced.'
'You have to adapt. You have to learn all the time. You have to have a changeable personality.'
'Maturity level…I would say that is probably the most important. To be able to understand that you're not the greatest at everything all the time.'
'Empathy, good listening skills…being culturally aware, sensitive to their culture.'
'An ability to communicate with people. Basically, if they would make a good salesman, they would probably make a good interrogator. And then some type of intelligence, and the ability to think on their feet.'
'You really, really need to have patience. You can't lose your cool, which is hard to do sometimes. You can't display what I would consider negative emotion. I think positive emotion's fine. You know, when you're sharing experiences with the detainee. I think that positive emotion, whether it's real or whether it's invented, is good for the interview. What he feels like at that point is that he is connecting.'
'A natural curiosity, an inclination to want to get to know what makes a person tick. Interpersonal skills … it's kind of like someone who's naturally a good conversationalist, or does well on a first date scenario. Patience. Endurance.'

Table 4. Exemplar quotes about the definition of rapport

'Getting the person comfortable with you. Being able to go back and forth with conversation, without having to constantly draw things out of them.'
'I would say it is building that bond. Building the bond, either trust, bond, cooperation, you know, whatever word you want to use, but building that bridge to get the information back and forth.'
'It's developing a line of communication that furthers dialogue or that furthers the relationship in some way, shape, or form.'
'It's becoming somebody's friend really quickly.'
'Rapport is the lubrication that makes approaches work… rapport is the lubrication for the exploitation.'
'It's not getting the other person to like you. I mean, it can be, but it's not completely about that. It's not being a doormat in any way, or losing control of the interrogation, you know, when it starts, when it stops, how it's going, those kind of things. It's also not about little tactics, like dwelling on refreshments, morale, welfare, and those kind of things. But what it *is* is a compendium of different interactions between the interviewer and the subject in order to form some kind of an understanding about why the individuals are there and some kind of a relationship, whether it's a formal, businesslike, or whether it's actually becoming more like friendship, at least to the point where the subject looks forward to the interviewer coming back to talk again. It's forming some kind of an accord where it very well could be, "I'm going to help you, you help me, we have a quid pro quo". Or it could be an understanding that, "I'm just not going to talk about certain things, and there's nothing you can do to get me to do that", and then working with that. Or it can be to where, "Hey, I'm ready to tell my story. Get ready to go at dictation speed".'
'A Supreme Court justice once said about pornography, "I know it when I see it. May not be able to define it, but I know it when I see it." It's the same for rapport.'

successful interrogators as people who demonstrate strong interpersonal skills and are adaptive to the particular context or interaction.

Rapport

Participants were asked a series of questions about the role of rapport during interrogations, including topics such as the importance of rapport, the definition of rapport, and the most and least effective ways to establish rapport. All of our participants emphasized that rapport was critical to the success of an interrogation; however, despite this widespread consensus, there was less agreement on the definition of rapport. The most common definitions provided were that rapport refers to a working relationship in which progress is made (45.2%; $n = 19$), the person is simply willing to talk (40.5%; $n = 17$), trust built between the interrogator and target (28.6%; $n = 12$), and mutual respect (19.0%; $n = 8$). See Table 4 for exemplar quotes on the definition of rapport.

When asked what strategies they believed were *most* effective in establishing rapport, the majority of participants emphasized treating the person kindly and humanely (61.9%; $n = 26$), finding commonalities (42.9%; $n = 18$), just getting the person talking (38.1%; $n = 16$), and the use of incentives, such as special food (28.6%; $n = 12$). When asked what strategies they thought were *least* effective in establishing rapport ($n = 41$), the most common responses included being disingenuous (31.8%; $n = 13$), the use of confrontational tactics (24.4%; $n = 10$), and trying too hard to be the person's 'buddy' (22.0%; $n = 9$). Finally, when asked how they knew when rapport had been established, 88.1% ($n = 37$) mentioned visual cues, 69.0% ($n = 29$) said the target talks freely, and 57.1% ($n = 22$) indicated that the target takes initiative by actively engaging the interrogator (e.g., bringing up new topics). The most common visual cues mentioned ($n = 35$) were a relaxed demeanor (51.4%; $n = 18$), open posture (28.6%; $n = 10$), leaning forward (28.6%; $n = 10$), making eye contact (28.6%; $n = 10$), and smiling (25.7%; $n = 9$).

Themes: *Although interrogators recognize and emphasize the value of rapport, there is less consensus on how it might be defined, achieved, or identified.*

Most commonly used techniques

Participants were asked what techniques they most commonly use during an interrogation, and these data were coded using the Kelly et al. (2013) conceptual domains. It is important to note that these are the techniques that interrogators *believe* they use most often; however, our data cannot speak to the accuracy of these perceptions (and whether and to what extent they are subject to biased responding). Participants ($n = 41$) most frequently reported using techniques from the *rapport and relationship building* (87.8%; $n = 36$) and *emotional provocation* (87.8%; $n = 36$) domains, followed by *presentation of evidence* (46.3%; $n = 19$), *collaboration* (41.5%; $n = 17$), and *confrontation/competition* (39.0%; $n = 16$).

With respect to the specific techniques cited under each domain, approaches within the *rapport and relationship building* domain most commonly included generic, non-

Table 5. Exemplar quotes about most commonly used techniques

'I mean, rapport is what we do. I was trying to think of why I've had success or we as a team have had success with these guys, and you know, I think in some respect that they are interested to tell their story, they're interested to tell the "why." So I think talking to them in a way that is non-judgmental. I'm going be as nice as I need to be and sit around and have lunch and laugh and giggle and do whatever needs to get done.'
'You know, a non-threatening approach is the one I more often use.'
'Most of the time emotional love of something and pride and ego up is a big one.'
'I let them vent, and then I talk. I become their friend. I become their only friend there, and eventually after three, four interrogations, they start confiding. That's what we call rapport building. I noticed that one thing that's really bad while deployed is that military interrogators are being forced to go in uniform and interrogate, and I think that's a very bad practice.'
'Fear down, coupled with an incentive of early release. I like to explain to people the situation that they're in. I think a lot of times I've gotten better results from just being frank with a detainee as opposed to playing games with him.'
'Flattery in the sense of for some people, a lot of people, that often produces results. And it tends to be transcultural, too, whether it's a shame-based society, guilt-based society, East, West, that kind of thing. With most human beings, to one extent or another, something like flattery can be effective.'
'I believe in being a good cop, because you catch flies with honey, not with vinegar.'

specific 'rapport building' ($n = 35$) and showing concern for the target's situation ($n = 12$). The most commonly cited techniques in the *emotion provocation* domain involved appealing to self-interest/implying leniency ($n = 18$), offering rationalizations ($n = 16$), appealing to a target's positive feelings for individuals or organizations ($n = 16$), or flattering the target ($n = 15$). Under the *presentation of evidence* domain, the most frequently mentioned techniques included identifying contradictions within the story ($n = 13$), summarizing the evidence ($n = 10$), and confronting with true evidence ($n = 4$). The only techniques cited from the *collaboration* domain included using basic or special rewards for cooperation ($n = 17$) and bargaining with the target ($n = 4$), generally with respect to their case outcome. Finally, the most commonly used techniques from the *confrontation/competition* domain included challenging the target's values ($n = 7$) and expressing impatience, frustration, or anger ($n = 4$). See Table 5 for exemplar quotes about most commonly used techniques.

Differences emerged between interrogators HVT and non-HVT participants.[8] HVT interrogators were more likely to mention commonly using *rapport and relationship building* techniques (100%) as compared with non-HVT interrogators (79.2%), $\chi^2(1) = 4.03$, $p = .045$, $\Phi = 0.31$. In addition, HVT interrogators indicated that they commonly used *collaboration* techniques (70.6%), $\chi^2(1) = 10.15$, $p = .001$, $\Phi = 0.50$, and *presentation of evidence* techniques (76.5%), $\chi^2(1) = 10.60$, $p = .001$, $\Phi = 0.51$, to a greater extent than non-HVT interrogators (20.8% and 25.0%, respectively).

Themes: *Few surprises emerged with respect to the most commonly used techniques. Frequent use of rapport-based techniques and emotion provocation techniques (such as appealing to self-interest/implying leniency, providing rationalizations, and boosting a target's ego) is largely consistent with formal training models (*U.S. Department of the Army, 2006*), prior survey research (*e.g., Kassin et al., 2007*) and U.S. interrogation practice in general (*Kassin et al., 2010*). HVT interrogators were more likely to mention commonly using rapport-based, collaborative, and evidence-based approaches than non-HVT interrogators.*

Perceived effectiveness of techniques

Participants were asked what techniques they believed were *most* and *least* effective at eliciting reliable information from a target. In addition to the Kelly et al. (2013) domains, we added a seventh domain ('*illegal*'), which includes clearly coercive techniques such as torture, physical pain, and psychological pain. Participants ($n = 41$) most often cited techniques from the *rapport and relationship building* (78.1%; $n = 32$) domain as *most* effective, followed by *emotion provocation* (73.2%; $n = 30$), *presentation of evidence* (43.9%; $n = 18$), *collaboration* (22.0%; $n = 9$), *confrontation/competition* (22.0%; $n = 9$), and *context manipulation* (2.4%; $n = 1$, in the form of isolating the target). No participants referenced tactics within the illegal category.

Non-specific 'rapport-building' ($n = 26$) and showing concern for the target's situation ($n = 6$) were the most commonly cited techniques in the *rapport and relationship building* domain. There was considerable spread across techniques discussed from the *emotion provocation* domain, with appealing to a target's positive feelings for individuals or organizations ($n = 15$), offering rationalizations ($n = 9$), appealing to self-interest/implied leniency ($n = 9$), and reducing the target's fears ($n = 9$) perceived as the most effective techniques. Participants most frequently cited summarizing the evidence ($n = 8$) and pretending to know everything about a case/individual ($n = 8$) as the most effective techniques from the *presentation of evidence* domain. Finally, offering basic or special rewards for cooperation ($n = 9$) was the technique most often mentioned from the *collaboration* domain, whereas challenging the values of the target ($n = 5$) and asking the same question repeatedly ($n = 4$) were most frequently cited from the *confrontation/competition* domain. See Table 6 for exemplar quotes about perceived most effective techniques. Also of note is that most participants were quick to point out that what 'works best' is largely dependent on context. They emphasized the importance of matching a particular person to the appropriate techniques, and they generally make this determination by assessing the background of the target (e.g., by reviewing information provided by an analyst), using their intuition, and via trial and error.

Interrogators with HVT experience were more likely to endorse *rapport and relationship building* techniques as

[8] This analysis, along with the HVT versus non-HVT analyses in the perceived effectiveness of techniques section, relies on spontaneous mention of techniques. It could be argued that this method of data collection does not lend itself to the type of significance testing reported here. However, to our knowledge, these are the first HVT versus non-HVT comparisons of their kind, and we provide them here as a mechanism for stimulating future research.

Table 6. Exemplar quotes about most effective techniques

'Being nice. Being nice is far and away going to be more fruitful than being an asshole. I could scare the crap out of you in the next ten seconds, if I really wanted to. But, you know, what is that going to do? There's not a lot of good indications for its use. Occasionally you drop a hint that, you know, "Hey, you know, I'd like to keep you here," or "It might not be so cozy in an Afghan prison." You can drop those kind of hints, which are tactically to fear up. But as far as trying to get this guy all wrapped up thinking about the horrible things that are going to happen to him, I'd rather not have him thinking about that particularly dark path.'
'I just try to be friendly and, you know, do it just as a part of a conversation and learning about the person.'
'You have to present a very empathetic, supportive environment.'
'Because I happen to think you catch more flies with honey than you do with vinegar, in general, I try to establish, very clearly, who I am and why it is we are there. I don't want to put them on the defensive, and I don't want to be culturally insensitive, and I don't want them to develop hostility toward me before I have a chance to talk to them.'
'So almost every approach I've ever run has some type of incentive of early release. And you couple that with, "Hey, you know, this is the situation that you're in. If you don't talk to me, there's nothing I can do and you're probably going to be in prison a long time." But I found that being direct and making it appear that I'm honest gets much more results than trying to play games with them. You know, treating them like a person, like they want to be treated. And that means sincere pride and ego up.'
'I think the approach of making them feel comfortable, relaxed. That they aren't there to be beaten up, that they will be rewarded, comforted for cooperation.'
'You know, the relationship-based, or the intellectual, thoughtful approach. Finding out their motivations and then manipulating those motivations to get useful information is the most successful approach.'
'I generally use emotional love of something quite a bit. Because I think it's important to tie them to something emotionally. Because when people are more emotionally charged, they're less careful with what they're saying.'
'Oh, in the AFM it defines them. There's emotional love, emotional hate, emotional pride and ego, up and down, emotional futility, all those emotional approaches from the AFM. Because if someone isn't emotionally vested in what you're trying to do, you're not going to get what you want.'

most effective (100%) as compared with those without HVT experience (62.5%), $\chi^2(1) = 8.17$, $p = .004$, $\Phi = 0.45$. On the other hand, non-HVT interrogators were more likely to believe *confrontation/competition* techniques are most effective (37.5%) in comparison with HVT interrogators (0%), $\chi^2(1) = 8.17$, $p = .004$, $\Phi = -0.45$.

In terms of perceived *least* effective techniques, interrogators ($n = 37$) were most likely to cite techniques from the *confrontation/competition* domain (78.4%; $n = 29$), followed by *emotion provocation*[9] (35.1%; $n = 13$), illegal (21.6%; $n = 8$), *presentation of evidence* (10.8%; $n = 4$), collaboration (8.1%; $n = 3$), *context manipulation* (2.7%; $n = 1$), and *rapport and relationship building* (0%; $n = 0$). The most commonly cited least effective *confrontation/competition* techniques included expressing impatience, frustration, or anger ($n = 16$), challenging the target's values ($n = 10$), and threatening the suspect with consequences of non-compliance ($n = 8$). The sole technique noted from the *emotion provocation* domain ($n = 13$) as least effective was appealing to the target's negative feelings for individuals or organizations. Torture or 'enhanced interrogation' techniques ($n = 8$) from the *illegal* domain, the use of basic or special rewards for cooperation ($n = 3$) from the *collaboration* domain, pretending to know everything about a case/individual ($n = 3$) and using visual aids, notably a fake file or dossier ($n = 3$) from the *presentation of evidence* domain, and altering the setting by having a second interrogator enter the room from the *context manipulation* domain ($n = 1$) were the other most commonly cited least effective techniques. See Table 7 for exemplar quotes about perceived least effective techniques.

High-value target interrogators were more likely to report believing that *illegal* techniques were least effective (37.5%) as compared with non-HVT interrogators (9.5%), $\chi^2(1) = 4.19$, $p = .041$, $\Phi = 0.34$. However, this difference may be explained by a greater hesitancy on the part of non-HVT interrogators to discuss the issue of 'enhanced interrogation'. At the same time, even practitioners have been shown to be influenced by media portrayals of interrogations (including those depicting the employment of coercive practices; Regan, 2007), and non-HVT interrogators may be more likely to maintain a subjective sense for the efficacy of 'enhanced interrogation' methods with HVTs than those practitioners who have actually interrogated such sources.

Themes: *Interrogators' perceptions of the effectiveness of techniques/approaches are largely consistent with the techniques they report most commonly using. Rapport-based methods are seen as most effective and confrontational/competitive approaches as least effective for eliciting reliable information.*

Detecting deceit

Interviewees were asked several questions regarding their approaches to lie detection, including how accurate they are in detecting deception (as compared with their peers) and how they know when a person is being deceitful. When asked what percentage of time they thought they could tell when someone is lying to them, participants ($n = 39$) purported a greater-than-chance level of accuracy; the mean response was 69.9% of the time ($s = 13.6$; $Mdn = 75$; range = 40–90%). Participants were slightly less confident in their peers' lie detection abilities as compared with their own. They estimated that their peers are accurate 61.8% of the time ($s = 15.9$; $Mdn = 65$; range 23–85%; $n = 33$).

When asked how to tell if a target is lying ($n = 41$), the most common responses included verbal cues (80.5%;

[9] The emotion provocation domain features relatively prominently on both the most and least effective lists, which at first glance may seem surprising. However, a closer examination of the data sheds light on this pattern; whereas multiple techniques from the emotion provocation domain were cited as *most* effective, only a single technique from the emotional provocation domain was cited as least effective (appealing to a target's negative feelings about an individual or organization).

Table 7. Exemplar quotes about least effective techniques

'Playing the bad cop. It doesn't work. Being nasty, being confrontational, pounding the desk, throwing things. You know, calling the person names. Just anything that you would expect that would just turn somebody off from wanting to talk to you.' 'Screaming and yelling immediately. It puts up a wall. I can give you a great example of that: acting like Sipowicz [from NYPD Blue} and having no knowledge of the subject.'
'Keeping a very rigid, very formal environment … you know, classic western interview or interrogation techniques. You know, bright light on the person, or trying to manipulate the environment to make it uncomfortable for the individual in the interrogation setting. I don't think that's effective, or at least it wouldn't be effective for me.'
'I know, again, some of the military interrogators, you know, have different things where they to get people super anxious, or yell at them. I've never been a big believer in that. I just don't think it's effective.'
'I think anything that involves violence is going to be fairly ineffective. Again, because the goal is not just to get information, but it's to get truthful information. I think lying is going to get you in trouble. Some interrogators try to discover what a detainee's weakness is, and then exploit that, but negatively. For example, and I actually did this one time, and it really, really bit me in the butt. You know, the guy's got a family, and then you start building on, "You're never going to see your family again." "Your wife's alone. She's probably being raped." Or, "She probably married some other guy." You know, that kind of thing. And you think that that is going to elicit some sort of positive response. That is done very, very often. It's taught by the Army. Find the weakness, exploit it. I would stay away from that. I think the opposite works 100% better. Just find the weakness and nurture it instead of exploiting it negatively. I've gotten the best results by finding out what bothers them the most, what their weakness is, and then just playing mom to that, nurturing it. What you're doing is you're giving somebody hope. You're giving somebody something else to think about other than the interrogation. If you start exploiting their weaknesses, what you start doing is you start hardening them. And they start believing "Yeah, I'll never see my wife again. I'm never going to see my kids again. You're probably right. My wife probably is with somebody else." And they start believing "Yup. This is it. This is my destiny. This is what Allah willed me to do." And then what does that feed into? "Now, this is my Jihad, to fight in this camp, and my battle is now every time we come to the interview room." So I just think that's a bad thing to do, and it's done a lot. If you find the weakness, I think you should nurture it. You're still using it, still exploiting it, but you are nurturing it.'
'The so-called EITs (Enhanced Interrogation Techniques).'

Table 8. Exemplar quotes about cues to deceit

'I have information that flies in the face of what the individual says.'
'Studies have shown that even with some courses in detecting deception that you're probably about 52 to 55% percent right. So it's about as much as flipping a coin. However, I try to assess deception by the topics that are involved, with the detainee and the responses that are given and his postures.'
'So deception is really detected by taking the information he gave you and analyzing it later. Or, if you already know it, you can do it real time. But real-time deception, to me, maybe I'm just poor at it, real-time deception detection, to me, is difficult to do just based on body posture and mannerisms and stuff like that, because of the people you're dealing with. It was difficult for me to tell during the interview. I usually have to figure it out afterwards by analyzing the answers. And if we didn't know the answer, check. Verify it.'
'I'll know he's lying because the facts just tell he's lying, because I have information otherwise.'
'Well, there's body posture…body language or lack of gestures. Eye movements, word choices. How I was trained and what I've experienced is you look for clusters of things.'
'So you have to continue with non-pertinent, then you throw in another stressor; non-pertinent and another stressor when they don't expect it, and that's what gives you the baseline behavior; baseline meaning this is how they are when they're truthful, and then deceptive behavior, which is when they deviate from that basic behavior…crossing arms…if you're looking at the body, crossing arms, scratching nose, scalp, ears…because those are very sensitive areas, and when blood rushes your blood pressure rises. The blood will rush into your nose, and ears, and scalp.'
'It's not cookie cutter. It is absolutely on the individual. You have to establish that baseline, and just like I was saying before, you're on this line of questioning and you're hitting these different topics and the person has a specific nonverbal communication that they're giving you, and they're talkative, and they're saying this, and they're saying that. Then all of a sudden you hit on something and it changes.'
'Lack of detail.'
'I find one of the biggest things is hesitation. Do they have to think about their answer? All the other things are sort of classic. You know, folding the arms, pushing back, leaning back, looking the other way, not making eye contact.'

$n = 33$), that the target's behavior differs from an established baseline (70.7%; $n = 29$), and non-verbal cues (70.7%; $n = 29$). The most commonly mentioned verbal cues were that the target's story contradicts either the evidence or what the interrogator knows (51.5%; $n = 17$) and that the target's story is not internally consistent (33.3%; $n = 11$). The most commonly mentioned non-verbal cues were deceptive body language/demeanor (69.0%; $n = 20$), lack of eye contact/evasive eye movement (48.3%; $n = 14$), and fidgeting (37.9%; $n = 11$). See Table 8 for exemplar quotes regarding cues to deceit.

Themes: *On average, interrogators report a greater-than-chance accuracy level in terms of detecting deception. Future research needs to assess whether this confidence is justified, especially given that interrogators report relying on a mixture of diagnostic (*e.g.*, statement-evidence consistency) and non-diagnostic (*e.g.*, lack of eye contact) cues (*Bond & DePaulo, 2008*).*

Use of interpreters

On average, participants ($n = 39$) indicated that they used an interpreter during an interrogation 59.4% of the time ($s = 36.4$; $Mdn = 70$; range 1–100%). When asked whether they thought an interpreter influenced the flow of an interrogation, all said 'yes' (83.3%; $n = 35$) or 'sometimes' (16.7%; $n = 7$). Participants indicated that the effect of an interpreter could be positive or negative, depending largely on the skill level of the interpreter. We asked the interrogators what strategies, if any, they used to minimize the impact of an interpreter ($n = 41$)—the most frequently mentioned strategies included reducing the visibility of the interpreter (63.4%; $n = 26$, e.g., by placing the interpreter off to the side), instructing the target to speak directly to them as opposed

to the interpreter (53.7%; $n = 22$), discussing their expectations with the interpreter prior to the interrogation (34.1%; $n = 14$), and directing the interpreter to translate everything rather than summarize (31.7%; $n = 13$). We also asked interviewees how, if at all, they attempted capitalize on the impact of an interpreter ($n = 38$)—the most common responses involved discussing the interrogation strategy with the interpreter ahead of time (47.4%; $n = 18$), relying on the interpreter as a 'subject matter expert' with regard to culture and language (47.4%; $n = 18$), using a familiar interpreter if possible (28.9%; $n = 11$), and having the interpreter befriend the target (28.9%; $n = 11$). See Table 9 for exemplar quotes about working with interpreters.

Themes: *Interrogators recognize that interpreters can have either a positive or negative impact, and as such, they have developed strategies for working with interpreters. The effectiveness of these intuitive strategies has yet to be assessed.*

Reliability of information

Participants were asked a series of questions about the possibility of persons who lack relevant knowledge (a.k.a. 'innocent' persons) providing false information during an interrogation. A desire for leniency (38.5%; $n = 15$), to please the interrogator (38.5%; $n = 15$), psychological pressure/coercion (23.1%; $n = 9$), and a desire to end the interrogation (23.1%; $n = 9$) were the most common reasons given for why someone might provide false information during an interrogation ($n = 39$). In terms of specific techniques that would be most likely to elicit false information, participants ($n = 14$ HVT interrogators) emphasized the danger of torture/'enhanced interrogation' (57.1%; $n = 8$) and psychological pressure/coercion (42.9%; $n = 6$). See Table 10 for exemplar quotes about why someone who does not possess relevant information might provide false information. Participants ($n = 34$) generally believe that younger people (20.6%; $n = 7$) and those who are lacking willpower (17.6%; $n = 6$) are most at risk for providing false information.

When asked if they had ever elicited false information from a target who actually lacked relevant knowledge ($n = 37$), 45.9% ($n = 17$) of interrogators said 'no', 37.8% ($n = 14$) said 'yes', 10.8% ($n = 4$) said 'probably', and 5.4% ($n = 2$) said 'I do not know'. The most common explanations for how participants knew they had never elicited false information from a target included that the information was corroborated by other evidence (43.8%; $n = 7$) and that they never received feedback to suggest that the information they gathered was false (37.5%; $n = 6$).[10] In contrast, the primary way participants knew that they had elicited false information was that the evidence did not ultimately match the target's story (73.3%; $n = 11$).

Themes: *A somewhat surprising number of interrogators (over one third of the sample) acknowledge having generated false information from a target, and they were generally cognizant that situational factors (*e.g.*, pressure from the interrogator) can contribute to this phenomenon.*

Role of analysts

All but one of our HVT interrogators had experience using an analyst during the course of an interrogation, and they estimated using an analyst to support approximately 63.7% of their interrogations ($s = 37.3$; $Mdn = 75$; range 0–100%; $n = 13$). When asked about the primary function or role of an analyst, the most common

Table 9. Exemplar quotes about working with interpreters

'Work with them and train them, so that you both understand your roles and what you expect of each other.'
'They have more in common with some of the people. They can talk about history that has happened in Iraq that somebody who lived in the States couldn't talk about necessarily. But the language is a big rapport builder. So as far as being successful, you know, if you have an interpreter that you work well with and you can use them, their attributes, their skills, their knowledge to your advantage, it'll be generally more successful, even though it may take more time.'
'You know, just having that third person in the booth, not knowing the language, you're pretty much reliant on that interpreter 100%.'
'Interpreters have to have training in exactly what their job is; that they're not actually a part of the interrogation.'
'You got to make sure that that individual is on the same page of music that you want him to be on. So just getting this person who has no military experience, who sees himself as a normal civilian employee, directing them to do something in an intelligence capacity is very difficult. And they're supposed to exude all these nuances that you want. On top of that, there are breakdowns in communications. I've had great interpreters, I've had horrible interpreters.'
'I have had that fully-integrated team approach. Like, for example, if the interpreter picks up on some really subtle and nuanced language and cultural cues.'

Table 10. Exemplar quotes about why a target might provide false information

'Being able to acquire better treatment in a detention facility, perhaps. Mental defect might be another reason.'
'Extreme physical or mental coercion.'
'I think if they're being harmed, threatened, or let's say abused. I don't want to use the word "torture," because you don't have to physically touch somebody. But I've seen detainees provide false information because they were in fear that their family was going to be killed if they didn't talk.'
'But you can actually pick up somebody, and they'll give you false information if you put too much pressure on them, especially when you go down that path of waterboarding or some kind of torture.'
'If they thought that was going to get them out of trouble. Like they are trying to do is figure out what's important to you, and if they can give that to you, they can leverage their situation. You've got to be careful if you tell someone, "I just want to know this," or "I just need you to tell me this and I'll leave you alone." Because they think that piece of information will let them go free. That's the part when you sort of are a little bit overzealous in telling them what to provide in order to benefit them. You've got to let them offer it.'

[10] A senior intelligence officer advises us that the sheer volume of information collected through interrogations can often exceed analysts' abilities to evaluate that information. As a result, it is uncommon that all information is assessed for its veracity, or that feedback—including that which suggests a target is deceptive or misinformed—will be issued in even the majority of cases.

responses included serving as a subject-matter expert on the individual/group (88.2%; $n = 15$), examining the 'big picture' beyond the specific case (47.1%; $n = 8$), and synthesizing information (23.5%; $n = 4$). In response to the question 'what services/information does an analyst provide that you find most helpful?', HVT interrogators ($n = 16$) most commonly cited corroboration/fact checking (75.0%; $n = 12$), providing intelligence about specific individuals/groups (62.5%; $n = 10$), and providing expertise about the relevant culture/history (31.3%; $n = 5$). See Table 11 for exemplar quotes about working with analysts.

Themes: *Interrogators find value in analysts' abilities to synthesize a large volume of (often complex) information, their subject-matter expertise, and their ability to evaluate statement-evidence consistency*.

High-value target interrogations

High-value target interrogators ($N = 17$) were asked a variety of questions about their experiences with HVTs, including whether and how HVT interrogations differ from non-HVT interrogations and if there are certain skills or training that HVT interrogators need.

Table 11. Exemplar quotes about perceptions of analysts

'I've worked with some analysts, and I think they're highly valuable to the intelligence community.'
'The primary role of an analyst should be to serve as a subject matter expert that can help shape the nature of the questions, to help test credibility. They can really serve as a key element of the overall credibility assessment process.'
'They can get me background information about things. They have access to databases and can do searching and pull together information that will allow me to go further in my questioning.'
'Be my subject-matter expert on the case or the operation or the individual, as well as the events, person, circumstances linked to the individual subject.'
'They've been helpful for me in better understanding motivations, of makes an individual tick. They've been very important in helping form questions once the accord builds and getting more effectively to the matters at hand.'
On the role of an analyst: 'The analyst is going to get you all your pre-interview information and is going to make sense of all that stuff. And then the post-interview stuff, the analyst is going to take everything and is going to analyze it and find all the gaps, fit all the pieces together, and let you know "We've got some gaps here. We need to know more about this. This sounds fishy." Or, "I think this person's lying about this." So the analyst is probably the most important member of the team. And consistently, the analyst needs to be the smartest person on the team. Definitely works the hardest as far as working on the team. Yeah, they are invaluable. The brains of it, really, is the analyst. The real workhorse is going to be your interrogator.'
On working with a good analyst: 'I had a good analyst. She was on it, and she knew her shit. And we would be in the middle of the interview room, and either she would know that he was lying or we would take a break, she would go back up to the skiff, would get on the systems, and would start checking the info and then let us know, "No, that's not true," or, "That's weird," or, "Go into that a little bit more. What he's saying doesn't make sense." So we almost had this real-time intelligence collection going on.'

When asked whether HVT interrogations differ from non-HVT interrogations, the majority of the sample (52.9%; $n = 9$) said 'yes' or 'sometimes' ($n = 7$ and 2; respectively). The most commonly cited differences were that HVT interrogations involve higher stakes (50%; $n = 5$) and more pressure placed on the interrogator to elicit useful intelligence (50%; $n = 5$). Approximately two thirds of interrogators (64.7%; $n = 11$) indicated that the preparation process between HVT and non-HVT interrogations is different, but all of participants indicated that the difference was one of quantity rather than quality (i.e., the substantive preparation process does not differ, but rather HVT cases simply require more preparation time). HVT interrogators reported few, if any, differences between an HVT interrogation and a non-HVT interrogation with respect to the interrogation process itself (e.g., rapport building and perceived most effective techniques). See Table 12 for exemplar quotes about whether and how HVT interrogations differ from non-HVT interrogations. Finally, in terms of the type of training that would be most useful for HVT interrogators, our participants most often suggested subject-matter expertise training (58.8%; $n = 10$) and specialized, advanced interrogation courses (41.7%; $n = 7$).

Themes: *Interrogators with HVT experience report that HVT interrogations involve more pressure on the interrogator given the high-stakes nature of the case. However, they report that the actual interrogation process for HVTs versus non-HVTs does not differ.*

DISCUSSION

Overview

Up until now, there has been little to no systematic, publicly available, research asking highly experienced interrogators to self-report about what actually occurs during intelligence and military interrogations. In this study, we conducted in-depth, structured interviews with interrogators with and without HVT experience in an effort to establish baseline information about a wide range of topics pertaining to the interrogation process. We believe this study has implications for both the

Table 12. Exemplar quotes about whether HVT interrogations differ from non-HVT interrogations

'No. The short answer is no.'
'You know, the process is exactly the same, so if you take out the subject and then you go through the same mental preparation and then the actual operational planning and preparation, it should be the same.'
'No. And I would be real curious if individuals are saying yes.'
'To the extent that we're going to invest a lot more time and resources if it's a high-value detainee, if that's what it takes.'
'Yes, to the extent that there's more at stake. If you have the time and the circumstances, you're going to invest more time in preparation, reading, information-gathering, preparing, to go in with an high-value detainee.'
'If you know someone is important, you're going to spend more time on them, essentially. That's probably the biggest difference.'

operational and research communities because it provides insight into what interrogator subject-matter experts believe[11] works and does not work with regard to the interrogation process and related phenomenon. By considering this research in combination with research on the perceptions of highly experienced analysts and interpreters (Russano, Narchet & Kleinman, 2014), we have begun to triangulate our knowledge base about HUMINT interrogations in order to acquire a comprehensive view of the interrogation process.

Selection and training

When asked directly about what qualities they believe a 'good' interrogator has, participants generally emphasized such characteristics as good interpersonal skills, patience, maturity, and flexibility/adaptability. These data provide potentially useful information for both researchers (e.g., are the traits that our highly experienced interrogators believe are associated with 'good' interrogators actually predictive of 'better' performance?) and practitioners as we consider refining the selection criteria for new interrogators.

Training of interrogators is another area in which we believe these data might prove useful. Although our participants see the value of classroom-based training courses, they are generally pessimistic about the extent to which that formal training can adequately prepare someone for the reality of interrogation in the field. They strongly believe that more true-to-life training is needed, for example, by incorporating more realistic role-playing simulations and the use of videos of actual interrogations during training. Our HVT participants suggested that subject-matter expertise training (e.g., about a specific group/culture) and specialized interrogation courses might be particularly useful for new HVT interrogators. It is also clear, on the basis of how critical our interrogators believe rapport is to the success of an interrogation, that more training on issues of rapport is essential. Not only would interrogators benefit from more direct training on how to build rapport, but it is also likely that information on how the establishment of rapport might differ on the basis of culture and context would be very useful. We would also advocate the creation of more comprehensive interrogation team training on how to work with analysts and interpreters, a sentiment that is echoed by highly experienced members of those groups (Russano et al., 2014). Finally, all of these training issues are ripe for future research, which is needed to support the creation of empirically based training programs.

[11] Whereas self-reporting is an inherently subjective endeavor, collecting data that capture what practitioners think they are doing, how they view the efficacy of selected methods, and their perceptions about their colleagues provide a much-needed foundation that will prove invaluable in terms of (i) designing relevant experimental studies going forward, (ii) identifying possible differences between self-reports and observed behaviors, and (iii) better understanding how practitioners arrive at—and respond to—causal relationships among observed phenomenon in the interrogation dynamic.

Frequency of use and perceived effectiveness of interrogation techniques

A consistent pattern emerged in terms of perceptions regarding the most commonly used interrogation techniques and about the relative effectiveness of selected methods. Our interrogators generally perceive the use of interrogation techniques from the *rapport and relationship building* and *emotion provocation* domains as more commonly used and as more effective than techniques from the *confrontation/competition* domain. Although there were some differences found between HVT and non-HVT interrogators, the general trends were similar for both groups. The finding that rapport-based approaches are perceived to be more common and effective than confrontational, accusatorial approaches is highly consistent with reports from North American police officers (Kassin et al., 2007), U.S. HUMINT and law enforcement interrogators (Redlich et al., 2014), experienced HUMINT analysts and interpreters (Russano et al., 2014), and observational studies (e.g., Leo, 1996). In addition, laboratory-based research (e.g., Evans et al., 2013; also see Meissner, Redlich, Bhatt, & Brandon, 2012, for a review) consistently suggests that rapport-based techniques are more effective that accusatorial-based methods at eliciting reliable information.

Our interrogators suggest that effective interrogations in the real world are much more similar to 'the old cliché of watching paint dry' than an episode of the television show '24', indicating that they believe harsh, fear-based tactics are actually counterproductive in eliciting reliable information from targets. However, participants acknowledged that there was no one method that works with every target, and interrogation approaches need to be tailored to fit the particular target and context. Knowing what techniques that very experienced interrogators believe are usually most and least effective has implications for both training and research. Researchers can empirically assess the diagnosticity of the techniques, and training programs, in turn, can focus time and resources on what actually works (i.e., elicits reliable information).

Credibility assessment

Consistent with the Redlich et al. (2014) survey of military and HUMINT interrogators and the Kassin et al. (2007) survey of criminal investigators, our interrogators expressed a greater-than-chance level of confidence in their ability to detect deception. In addition, they were more confident in their own abilities than those of their peers (a pattern also identified by Redlich et al.). The extent to which their confidence is justified is not a question we can answer with our data. However, prior research suggests that most people, including police officers, are generally no better than chance at detecting deception (Bond & DePaulo, 2008). One study suggests that CIA case officers may perform better on certain types of lie detection tasks (Ekman, O'Sullivan, & Frank, 1999; however, see Bond, 2008, for a critique of this research). Ultimately, this is an empirical question; to our knowledge, no one to date has directly assessed the lie detection abilities of highly experienced intelligence/military interrogators.

When asked how they can tell if a target is lying, our sample expressed a strong appreciation for the importance of evaluating certain verbal cues, most notably contradictions in the target's story and contradictions with what the interrogator independently knows to be true. Our non-HVT participants generally placed greater emphasis on assessing non-verbal cues in comparison with a target's baseline behavior than our HVT participants. Whether this strategy is effective is open to empirical assessment (e.g., Can interrogators accurately establish a baseline? If so, how does one do this? How long does it take? What, if any, kinds of deviations from baseline behavior are actually associated with deceit?). Regardless, it is clear that lie detection plays an important role in interrogation, and trainers should incorporate scientifically based methods of lie detection and credibility assessment into their programs.

Interpreters

On the basis of the information gathered from our interviewees, the role and use of interpreters during interrogation are topics in need of further study. All of our interrogators had experience using interpreters, and some of them relied on the use of interpreters for all or most of their interrogations. They indicated that a good interpreter can 'make or break' an interrogation; that is, a skilled interpreter can maximize the likelihood of success during interrogation, whereas someone with lesser skills and/or training can hinder the interaction. Given that the effect of an interpreter can be positive *or* negative and interrogators attempt to minimize or capitalize on their effect accordingly, research is needed on the best strategies for working with interpreters. This research should include a focus on where to place an interpreter in the room; (Russano et al., 2014) found that most experienced interpreters prefer a seating configuration in which they are visible to the target (in contract to the recommended seating configuration in the Army Field Manual 2–22.3; U.S. Department of the Army, 2006). Consistent with this, anecdotally, the majority of interrogators in our study reported that they generally use some sort of triangular configuration (with the interpreter visible to the target), suggesting that best practice among highly experienced interrogators is inconsistent with official policy recommendations. Empirical research on this topic, however, is nonexistent, and research on this and other interpreter issues should be conducted and then incorporated into training programs for interrogators and interpreters alike.

Interrogation diagnosticity

Our sample of highly experienced interrogators generally recognized the possibility of someone who lacks relevant knowledge (a.k.a. an 'innocent' person) providing false information owing to situational interrogation factors (e.g., promises of leniency and high pressure), and HVT interrogators were willing to assert that torture may lead to unreliable information. Anecdotally, however, many non-HVT interrogators suggested that although it was common for targets to provide false information to intentionally mislead the interrogator, absent torture, they believe that the production of false information by an 'innocent' target owing to the interrogation situation is rare. The extent to which this perception is accurate cannot be determined by our data; however, the high rate of documented false confessions in criminal cases (see Kassin et al., 2010, for a review) suggests that the elicitation of unreliable information owing to the interrogation situation may be more common than our interrogators believe.

High-value target interrogations

Our HVT participants provided insight about a few topics not systematically explored with our non-HVT interrogators. Specifically, our HVT interrogators emphasized the importance of working with a skilled analyst as part of the interrogation team, and many expressed the belief that analysts likely have critical insights into the interrogative process that had yet to be studied. They believe that analysts can be instrumental to a successful interrogation, particularly in terms of providing subject-matter expertise and fact checking. However, the role/use of analysts may differ depending on agency, and future research should explore potential nuances in policy and practice. (Russano et al., 2014) found that experienced HUMINT analysts desire more joint training and improved team dynamics to facilitate an improved interrogation process, and it is likely that interrogators would benefit from such training as well. Finally, consistent with the perceptions of experienced analysts and interpreters (Russano et al., 2014), the primary differences reported between HVT and non-HVT interrogations were that HVT interrogations were described as involving higher stakes, more pressure, and more preparation time. However, in terms of rapport building and the interrogation process itself, our participants reported that their strategies were generally the same for HVTs and non-HVTs (in fact, many participants expressed surprise at the notion that the status of the target might matter).

Limitations and future directions

As discussed, we believe that these data provide many avenues for future research as well as direct implications for training. However, it is important to keep in mind that our ability to generalize these results is limited by our sample. Because our participants were very experienced, we do not know the extent to which we can generalize to all interrogators of varying experience levels. In addition, given the great difficulty in identifying members of this particular population, our sample was relatively small and heavily populated by U.S. Army interrogators and FBI counterterrorism agents. Training, operational practice, and belief sets may differ significantly by agency. Therefore, as the research community moves forward and continues to build our subject-matter expertise database, researchers should strive to obtain larger, more diverse samples, which should reflect not only a more balanced representation across U.S. military, federal, and intelligence agencies but also international agencies and perspectives. By triangulating our knowledge base (from highly experienced interrogators, analysts, and interpreters), we can gain a more complete understanding of how to improve the interrogative process and work toward the mission of the HIG of establishing interrogative best-practice guidelines. Researchers can then work to empirically assess operator beliefs and gaps in our knowledge, such as what techniques are most effective

at eliciting reliable information and how best to build rapport with a target when using an interpreter, while training programs and members of the HUMINT community can make changes in practice on the basis of knowledge gleaned from our experienced operators.

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