

Structured Interviews of Human Intelligence (HUMINT) Police Officers



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Abstract

This research explores the perceptions and experiences of police officers who gather intelligence from human sources. This research will be of interest to agencies who operate a range of covert sources.



Methodology

Ethical Approval

- University of Portsmouth.
- CREST.
- PoliceOrganisations.

Sampling

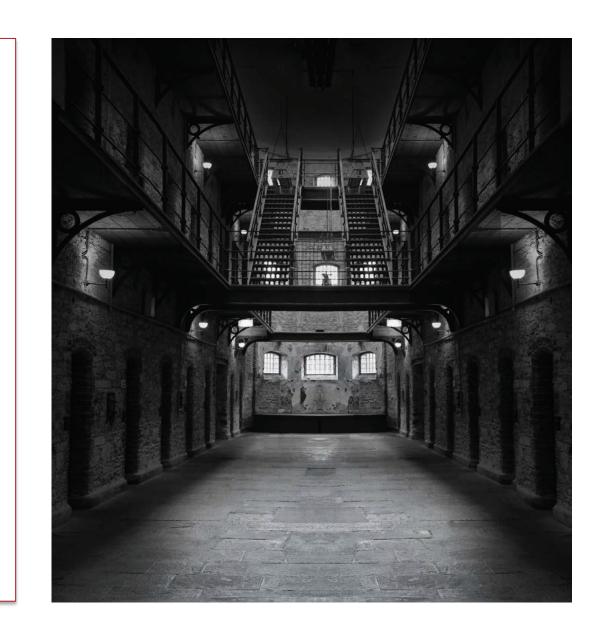
- Purposive sampling.
- Access to colleagues
 with relevant
 expertise.
- Snowball sampling.

Method

- Structured interviews were conducted via:
- Audio recorded face-to-face.
- Audio recorded via phone.
- Written responses via email.

Preliminary Participants (N=10)

- HUMINT police officers.
- Mean years of age = 44.8.
- Mean years of experience = 8.6.
- 2 Authorising Officers, 2 Source
 Controllers, and 6 Source Handlers.



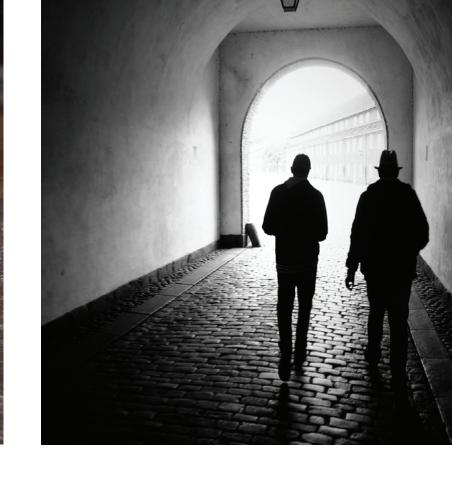
Background

In recent years there has been a renewed focus on intelligence led policing, which is a proactive measure to counter criminal activity. Agencies can use a variety of methods to collect intelligence in order to police England and Wales. Human Intelligence (HUMINT), one of the methods, comprises of legitimate covert practices, such as the use of Covert Human Intelligence Sources (CHIS). This research is situated within HUMINT and pays particular attention to the use of CHIS. CHIS report to their handlers about past and future events, which can potentially disrupt serious crime and create new investigative leads. However, research is yet to explore the perceptions and experiences of police officers who gather HUMINT within England and Wales.

Research rationale

- This research provides an insight into the current successes and challenges in gathering intelligence, covering key topics such as training, rapport, intelligence gathering approaches, memory, and communication.
- As research funded by the High Value-Detainee Interrogation Group (HIG) demonstrates, there are gains to be made from utilising evidence-based practices in this area.





Results

HUMINT Training

Positive Aspects

- P2: "Role play scenarios and live deployments to reinforce learning."
- P3: "Structured for progressive learning."
- P7: "Gives handlers better awareness of methods and hooks to use."

Negative Aspects

- P6: "You will not be able to cover every eventuality."
- P4: Training courses would benefit from routine follow-ups and continuous development or refresher sessions."

Rapport

The Importance of Rapport

- P1: "If the interviewee does not trust you... they will close down."
- P2: "No rapport = no intelligence."
- P3: "In terms of intelligence gathering it is probably the most important aspect of an encounter."

Can Rapport be Trained?

- P1: "Some strategies can be taught that assist but there needs to be a natural talent."
- P9: "I believe that certain aspects of structuring the meeting can be trained in order to provide a structure to assist rapport building."

Gathering Intelligence

Commonly Used Interview Techniques

- P1: "None making it up as you go along."
- P4: "This varies from handler to handler."
- P6: "PEACE model Open questions/ effective silence/ paraphrasing/ summarising/ testing knowledge."

Impact of an Interpreter

- P1: "Makes it very difficult."
- P2: "Lose the flow of conversations."
- P6: "This is a barrier but obviously necessary.
 Knowledge of the interpreter would assist with rapport."

Research Challenges

- Access to a sensitive data set established an effective working relationship with a policing practitioner.
- Sensitive data clarified sections thought to be classified/operationally sensitive and sections removed upon participant's request.

Next Steps

- Conduct a further 20-30 structured interviews with police HUMINT officers in order to undertake an empirical exploration of their perceptions and experiences of gathering intelligence from human sources.
- This research will form the core basis from which the empirical research will stem, which aims to develop evidence-based intelligence gathering tools.
- Publish research findings to impact upon HUMINT policy and practice.



Point of Contact

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