## forensic clinical interviewing

practical skills for threat assessment professionals

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#### overview

- background
  - interviewing for risk versus threat assessments
- interviewing skills for threat assessment
  - towards an integrated approach
- ethical considerations
  - in brief
- summary & conclusions

#### aim

to have you accept the possibility that interviewing clients or 3<sup>rd</sup> party sources for the purpose of threat assessment is a specialist undertaking requiring the application of a range skills and techniques best drawn from a combination of the forensic and the clinical (risk) interviewing fields

### **BACKGROUND**

#### violence risk assessment and management

(clinical interviewing skills & techniques)

versus

#### threat assessment and management

(forensic or investigative interviewing skills and techniques)

### focus

risk assessment & management

- on the potential perpetrator
- on harmful outcomes, which may be impulsive/reactive/affective or premeditated/instrumental, against a known or unknown victim
- on historic information about past incidents of harm and their antecedents and consequences, as well as the individual's history of personal problems
- on individuals acting alone
- on the prevention of general kinds of harmful outcomes

threat assessment & management

- on the relationship between the potential perpetrator and victim
- on predatory, targeted, intended violence
- on situational, environmental, contextual and motivational variables
- on individuals acting alone *or* as part of a coordinated group
- on the prevention of specific outcomes (e.g., a school shooting, a terrorist attack)

### evaluator

risk assessment & management

threat assessment & management

mainly practitioners in (forensic) mental health, corrections and social services

mainly law enforcement and security services

#### process

risk assessment & management

threat assessment & management

slow, an event for a specific purpose or date (e.g., an annual review, a court hearing)

often rapid, a continual process of intelligence-gathering and (re)evaluation to guide ongoing action in an evolving, real-time situation

#### assessment context

risk assessment & management

threat assessment & management

consultative, assisting legal decision-making (e.g., sentencing)

operational, guiding front-line action

#### assessment evidence

risk assessment & management

threat assessment & management

evidence typically
emphasises more static
historic and dispositional
variables, including
psychiatric diagnoses
from a range of sources,
including in most cases,
direct interviewing of the
potential perpetrator

evidence typically emphasises dynamic situational, environmental and contextual variables, which could include current psychiatric symptoms, collated around a timeline from a range of sources, including the direct interviewing of the potential perpetrator(s) and 3<sup>rd</sup> party sources

#### outcomes

risk assessment & management

threat assessment & management

prevention, through the careful steering of the person away from harmful outcomes (balance of risk and protective factors) through collaborative working, ideally

prevention through
monitoring and eventual
disruption via arrest (risk
factors – little interest in
protective factors)

includes indirect assessments through 3<sup>rd</sup> party interviews

> direct assessment via interviews

e.g., sexually violent predator; a defensive or hostile potential violent extremist; an uncommunicative client with an autism spectrum condition and an obsessional interest in weapons; a paranoid and hostile stalker

a feature of *both* risk and threat assessment and management

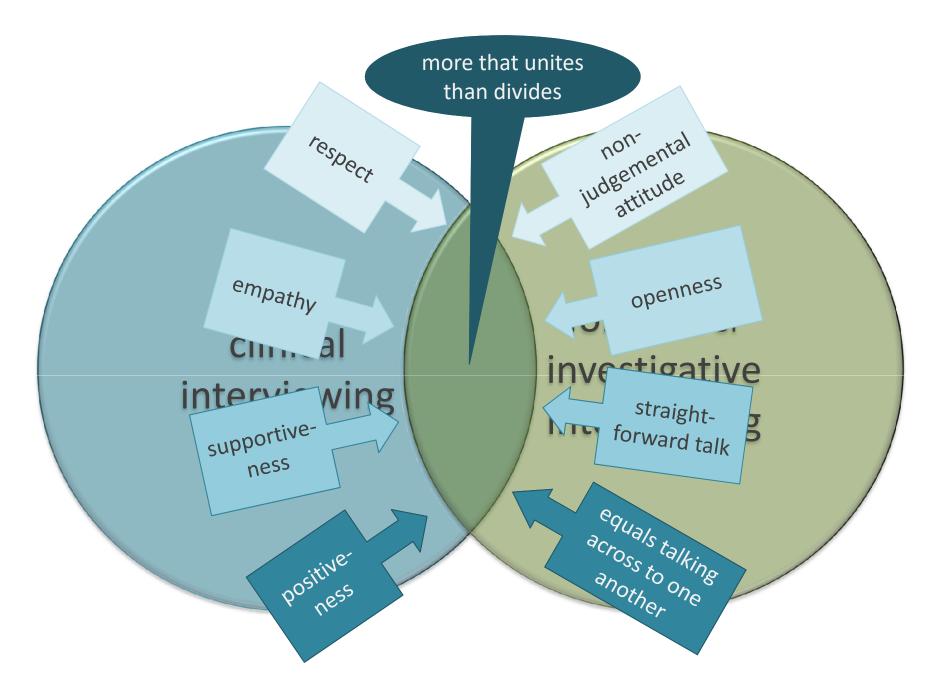
different practitioners working with the same clients at different points in the trajectory

purposeful encounters with individuals who have information of value

opportunities to learn in respect of interviewing practice

for threat assessment

**INTERVIEWING SKILLS** 



Shepherd & Griffiths, 2013

interviewer characteristics gaining prominence Clarke & Milne

structured information
gathering/elicitation
PEACE, cognitive interview (Milne),
conversational management
(Shepherd)

evidence base

detecting

deception

Vrij et al

riding resistance

pressured settings

rapport & (short-term) relationship building Redlich et al, 2014

1ical

forensic or investigative interviewing

positive confrontation

technique

disclosure, strategic use of evidence, priming, etc

focus
the investigative
question

the art of the challenge

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rapport & (short-term)

relationship building Redlich et al, 2014 forensic or investigative interviewing

positive confrontation

technique

disclosure, strategic use of evidence, priming, etc

the art of the challenge

has potential to exploit personal vulnerabilities leading to false confessions?

Kassin, Gudjonsson

focus the investigative question the delicate dance Shea

compassion Gilbert managing multiple tasks
MSE, diagnosis, risk, M&E

conversational facilics Shea techniques for different contexts & conditions

gender, culture; personality, mood, psychotic disorders (IJFMH special issue)

intentional interviewing Shea

109

(long-term)

relationship

building

interviewing

opportunities for direct intervention

towards a psychological understanding formulation

the art of listening

Shea

the interviewer as part of the dynamic e.g., transference, projection

TOTENSIO

investic

strengths & vulnerabilities motivational interviewing techniques

beyond empathy e.g., paranoid traits

managing stress e.g., facts-feelings

applying psychological theories to guide hypotheses
e.g., attachment

the delicate dance Shea

compassion Gilbert

intentional interviewing

Shea

making excuses?

tolerating bad behaviour

opportunities for

direct intervention

managing multiple tasks MSE, diagnosis, risk, M&E

> conversational facilics Shea

poor application of structure? directive vs non-directive

Invest

discomfort with challenge? challenges compassion

e.g., paranoid traits

managing stress

beyond empathy

e.g., facts-feelings

towards a psychological understanding

formulation

(long-term)

relationship

building

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the art of listening Shea

techniques for different contexts & conditions

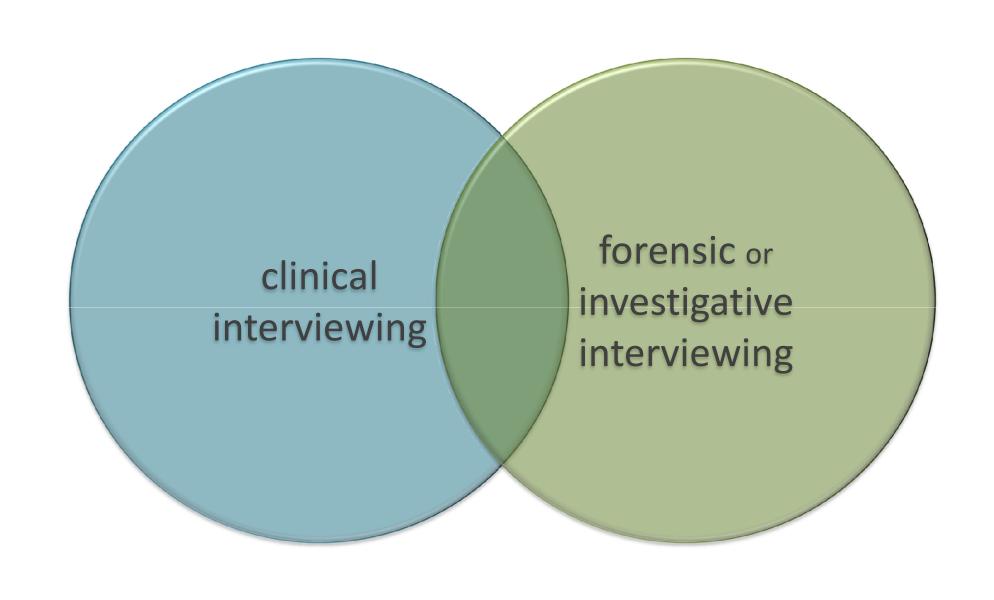
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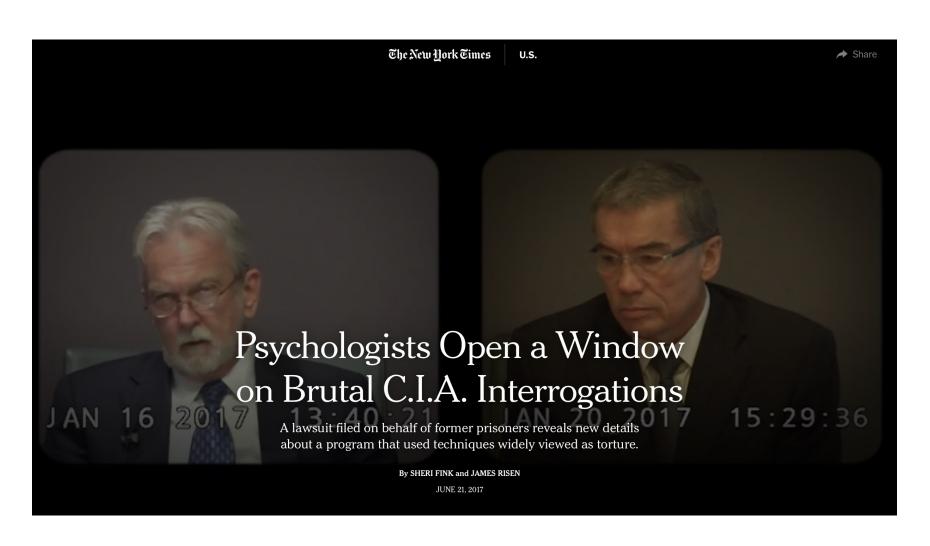




in brief

### **ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

# our darkest days ...



# guiding principles in medical ethics

- autonomy: clients as individuals who choose their own courses of action
- non-maleficence: duty to avoid doing harm or to minimise harm
- beneficence: our duty to do good to clients and to eliminate suffering
- justice: all should be treated as equal

# interviewing

- information gathering from individuals who may not be motivated to provide it
  - potentially coercive
  - a challenge the individual's right to autonomy
- but where there is a obligation to act on the basis of the assessment of harm potential
  - in favour of the principle of non-maleficence

## interviewing

- more understanding of the individual = more options for measured, proportionate and ethical risk/threat management
  - towards diversion rather than arrest
  - in favour of the principles of both nonmaleficence and beneficence

## interviewing

- interviewing direct or via a 3<sup>rd</sup> party is a potential key to that understanding and therefore practice that balances the ethical dilemmas it can present
  - it may feel like tolerating or accepting potentially harmful behaviour or individuals
  - agencies, practitioners may differ in their acceptance of such approaches in interviewing and threat management

### **SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS**

- interviewing clients for the purpose of threat assessment is a specialist undertaking
  - therefore, training and supervised practice
- it requires the application of a range specialist skills best drawn from a *combination* of the forensic and the clinical interviewing fields
  - therefore, the risk and threat assessment fields
- ethical practice is our guide to best practice in the field

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