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# Combating the Terrorist Stigma: Communicating Rehabilitation and Reducing Barriers to Reintegration

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## ABSTRACT



Stigmatizing behavior and a lack of supportive behavior can act as a barrier to successfully reintegrating terrorist offenders, potentially resulting in reoffending. As such, there have been several efforts to understand how to build community support for reintegration of terrorist offenders, for example through community engagement or messaging from trusted authorities. Research on the drivers of community support for reintegrating criminal offenders further suggests the perceived redeemability of an offender is significant at overcoming stigmatization and promoting support for rehabilitation and re-entry into society. In this study, we deploy an experimental survey design to isolate the causal effect of information which signals offender redeemability and then analyze its effect on four measures of supportive and stigmatizing behavior toward a terrorist offender. We also examine the individual characteristics of those more or less likely to report supportive or stigmatizing behaviors toward the reintegrating offender. The findings show that signaling redeemability decreases one measure of stigmatizing behavior and increases one measure of supportive behavior. While trusted messengers may be important in building community support for reintegration, our findings demonstrate the salience of communicating that an offender has completed a rehabilitation program, even among audiences typically opposed to reintegration.


## KEYWORDS

Reintegration; terrorist; stigmatization; rehabilitation; deradicalization

Since 2014, there has been a greater emphasis on the need for governments to develop programs to rehabilitate and reintegrate terrorist offenders, for example, through United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2178 (2014) and Resolution 2396 (2017) and over 36 government programs now exist globally.<sup>1</sup> Research has focused primarily on the effectiveness of these programs at re-integrating former terrorist offenders,<sup>2</sup> however there is a growing recognition of the need to understand and build community support for reintegration.<sup>3</sup> In response to this problem, new research has sought to explore community attitudes to the process of reintegration and to rehabilitation programs,<sup>4</sup> as well as how to increase community support for these endeavors.<sup>5</sup>

Most studies, however, focus on attitudinal support with few examining behavioral support, specifically how communities intend to socially interact with a reintegrating terrorist offender (the one exception being Blair et al).<sup>6</sup> Social acceptance and positive interaction with the community are important because they are essential for returning terrorist offenders to build pro-social ties with family, friends and neighbors.<sup>7</sup> These pro-social ties underpin successful reintegration and deter

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recidivism.<sup>8</sup> Terrorist offenders, however, often confront significant stigmatization in the community, which serves as a barrier to their successful reintegration and makes re-engagement and recidivism more likely.<sup>9</sup> Negative interactions such as stigmatization can also escalate into a community backlash and even vigilante attacks, which stall reintegration.<sup>10</sup>

This article contributes to this literature by seeking to understand ways to increase supportive and reduce stigmatizing behavior for a terrorist offender's reintegration. Specifically, we examine the effects of communicating completion of a rehabilitation program on community behavioral support for a terrorist offender's reintegration. We draw on criminological theories and empirical research on prisoner re-entry, which highlight the influence of communicating offenders' participation in rehabilitation programs on community responses to their reintegration.<sup>11</sup> Studies in criminology suggest that such programs can signal the offender's "redeemability" and increase public support for their reintegration.<sup>12</sup> To test this supposition in the context of terrorism, we conducted a survey of a representative sample of 1,800 U.K. residents. To test whether communicating information that an offender has completed a rehabilitation program increases behavioral support for reintegration, we embed an experiment in our survey, which allows us to isolate the effects of signaling offender redeemability upon behavioral support for reintegration. We measure the effects of messaging on behavioral support for reintegration through four measures, which encompass the intent to engage in stigmatizing behavior or supportive behavior. Our findings contribute to emerging evidence on community support for reintegration by demonstrating that messaging which signals offender redeemability can increase pro-social behaviors and decrease stigmatization in the community towards the reintegrating terrorist offender. The study then identifies certain subgroup dispositions—ethnocentrism, fear of crime, and trust in police—to help understand what factors are associated with behavioral support and stigmatization toward terrorist offenders. We explore heterogeneous treatment effects to explore whether information signaling redeemability works similarly across all of these subgroups.

## Public support for reintegrating terrorist offenders

A wealth of research across disciplines indicates that some degree of community support is necessary for the successful reintegration of terrorist offenders. The over thirty-year literature on the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (or DDR) of civil war ex-combatants (many of whom could be categorized as violent extremists) concludes quite convincingly that successful reintegration requires social reintegration—that is, acceptance by one's family, friends, and peers.<sup>13</sup> Research shows that the economic and political reintegration of these individuals, even in developed democracies, is impossible without community acceptance.<sup>14</sup> When ex-combatants are stigmatized and discriminated against, it is difficult for them to find work, loans, or housing,<sup>15</sup> build relationships outside the armed group,<sup>16</sup> or envision themselves in a pro-social role,<sup>17</sup> with a study on Colombia showing the absence of reintegration programs makes a return to violence and criminality more likely.<sup>18</sup>

Decades of research in criminology similarly concludes that the establishment of pro-social ties, often through work, education, or family, is associated with the decline and cessation of offending and a lower risk of recidivism.<sup>19</sup> These ties provide individuals with alternatives and inducements not to reoffend and strengthen their respect for social norms.<sup>20</sup> Building off these robust findings in criminology, a smaller literature on the reintegration of terrorist offenders similarly documents that pro-social ties provide alternatives outside of violent extremism,<sup>21</sup> which foster pro-social behavior, and over time, attitudes<sup>22</sup> and aid in reintegration.<sup>23</sup>

Given the importance of the development of pro-social ties for successful reintegration, a number of studies have sought to gauge community attitudes toward those reintegrating. The DDR literature suggests that although in some cases ex-combatants are welcomed home as war-heroes or defenders of the community<sup>24</sup>; in most instances, community attitudes towards the returnees are negative.<sup>25</sup> One large-scale survey in Colombia found that 82 percent of respondents distrust and 41 percent fear ex-

combatants,<sup>26</sup> while another study discovered that many believed working with ex-combatants would make them potential targets.<sup>27</sup> Experimental research in Northern Uganda further demonstrates that even when communities report accepting ex-combatants and ex-combatants are well connected to others, they receive 15 percent fewer resources.<sup>28</sup> Studies also reveal that reintegration program providers similarly fear participants and that government and NGOs often frame them as security threats.<sup>29</sup> Some research, however, suggests that public sensitization measures that provide information about the importance of reintegration and nature of the returnees via media, schools, NGO-run groups etc. increase community buy-in.<sup>30</sup>

Recent research also examines community attitudes toward re-integrating terrorist offenders, or attitudes toward programs responsible for their reintegration. Msall conducted a survey of 176 Kuwaiti students which focused on attitudes toward the de-radicalization of violent extremists.<sup>31</sup> He found that support for de-radicalization tends to be divided, with participants' attitudes varying in terms of whether program participants are deemed to deserve a second chance. In the case of Nigeria, Ike et al discussed perceived indifference and fear among communities regarding the ability of former Boko Haram combatants to genuinely repent from terrorist acts.<sup>32</sup> Looking at community perceptions of reintegrating al-Shabaab returnees, Juma and Githigaro argue that reintegration is marred by stigma, a lack of trust and negative labelling due to a lack of structures to ensure proper involvement of host communities in the reintegration of returnees.<sup>33</sup> In Iraq, Revkin and Kao find that a long prison sentence does not increase public willingness to allow the reintegration of ISIS collaborators, but a non-carceral community-based restorative justice punishment (6 months of community service) does.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, Revkin and Kao show that respondents are more likely to report attitudinal support for reintegration if asked to do so by a tribal or religious leader or if the returnee had completed a rehabilitation program.<sup>35</sup> In Nigeria, Godefroidt and Langer similarly find that respondents are more supportive of reintegrating Boko Haram militants who signal remorse afterwards, including through participation in a de-radicalization program, although it is unclear whether this translates into behavioral support or a reduction in stigmatization.<sup>36</sup> Finally, Blair et al's findings for Boko Haram show, similar to Revkin and Kao's study in Iraq, that messages from trusted religious authorities can shift social norms to accepting former members of violent extremist groups.<sup>37</sup> The message, however, used in the experiment emphasizes the importance of forgiveness which may also account for the positive shift in support.

A few studies have also examined community support for terrorist offender rehabilitation programming in developed democracies. Clubb et al. found that the inclusion of de-radicalization in the description of a rehabilitation program for violent extremists in the U.K. led to a small increase in support, but a decrease in the perceived effectiveness of the program.<sup>38</sup> In the United States, Altier showed that the public is less supportive of post-release rehabilitation programming for terrorists than other criminal offenders.<sup>39</sup> Support is also lower when an Islamist rather than a white nationalist offender is referenced and support increases when the offender is described as a juvenile convicted of a less serious offence.<sup>40</sup> Altier's findings further suggest that the factor most likely to increase public support for rehabilitation programming is evidence of program effectiveness.<sup>41</sup>

## **Communicating offender rehabilitation & individual characteristics: Insights from criminology**

While some of the studies reviewed above emphasize the role of trust and trusted messengers<sup>42</sup> or potentially perceived effectiveness of a reintegration program<sup>43</sup> in shaping support, another perspective has emphasized that participation in a rehabilitation program can signal repentance.<sup>44</sup> These different factors, of course, are not mutually exclusive as shown by Revkin and Kao and perceived effectiveness or completion of a program would also function to signal offender redeemability.<sup>45</sup> In this section, we draw on decades of research on public attitudes toward criminal reentry to offer important theoretical insights to help us better understand support for the reintegration of terrorist offenders and the role of offenders' participation in rehabilitation and reintegration programs.<sup>46</sup>

Research on the United States, which has the largest number of criminal offenders released annually and thus is the most studied, finds that community support for prisoner re-entry or reintegration programming is relatively high overall with a clear majority of the population supporting such measures.<sup>47</sup> However, as Altier demonstrates, the public is less likely to support similar programming for terrorist offenders.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, research in criminology finds the public is less supportive of rehabilitating offenders involved in more serious or violent crimes. Studies show that the public endorses more punitive approaches for “violent, sexual, and repeat offenders”<sup>49</sup> or those who they believe cannot be rehabilitated.<sup>50</sup> Subsequently, certain types of offenders, like sex offenders and terrorists, are stigmatized which can pose challenges for their successful reintegration and contribute to a higher risk of recidivism.<sup>51</sup>

Building on these findings, scholars have sought to explain what determines attitudes toward the reintegration of different offenders and how to reduce their stigmatization. Several studies show that the public tends to have more positive attitudes toward criminal offenders who have participated in a rehabilitation program compared to those who have not participated. Using a survey experiment on an opportunistic sample of 250 respondents in the U.K., Rogers et al. find that mentioning a released sex offender completed a sex offender treatment (as opposed to a car maintenance program) while in prison increased public perceptions of the offender’s ability to change and led to greater support for reintegration.<sup>52</sup> Hardcastle et al. similarly found that mentioning a criminal offender had completed an offence-related rehabilitation program increased: 1) public support for government assistance with employment and housing for the released offender and 2) stated comfort with living or working in close proximity to the released offender.<sup>53</sup>

Research in criminology further shows that the public’s belief in redeemability (or the capacity of individuals to change) is negatively related to punitive attitudes.<sup>54</sup> Two of the few studies which look directly at public attitudes toward reintegration (or re-entry) argue that support for a reentry program is predicted by a person’s belief in the redeemability of the offender. It builds upon implicit theory which suggests that stigmatization may be explained through beliefs regarding the invariable (fixed mindset) or malleable (growth mindset) nature of human behavior.<sup>55</sup> They maintain that support for reintegration is related to the respondent’s mindset regarding prisoner redeemability: “people with a growth mindset may be more likely to make situational attributions, believing that ex-offenders can change through successful rehabilitation,” whereas those with a fixed mindset may be skeptical about the ability of criminals to change.<sup>56</sup> Rade et al find that respondents with growth mindsets are more likely to support reintegration and exposing respondents to information about the redeemable nature of criminals can lead to greater support for reintegration,<sup>57</sup> even after controlling for relevant sociodemographic characteristics.<sup>58</sup> Building upon this research and in line with the work of Rade et al specifically,<sup>59</sup> we therefore hypothesize that providing information about successful completion of a rehabilitation program will signal offender redeemability, which is likely to increase behavioral support for reintegration:

**H1:** Exposing respondents to information that a terrorist offender successfully completed a rehabilitation program will increase supportive behavior toward the offender and reduce stigmatizing behavior.

Existing studies on public support for the reintegration of violent extremists or their supporters have primarily focused on participation in rehabilitation programming and messaging by trusted authorities. Few studies look at the individual characteristics of those most likely to support their reintegration. One exception is Altier, but she focuses on attitudinal support for reentry programs.<sup>60</sup> As such, we still know very little about *who* in the community is most likely to engage pro-socially with reintegrating terrorist offenders, and who is likely to partake in stigmatizing behaviors. Several studies in criminology offer useful insights, which we review below to generate hypotheses as to what kinds of individuals are more or less likely to stigmatize or support reintegrating terrorist offenders.

Research on the reintegration of ordinary criminal offenders finds that conservative-leaning individuals are typically less supportive of rehabilitation and reintegration than those who are

liberal-leaning<sup>61</sup> and Altier finds that this is also true for terrorist offenders.<sup>62</sup> Several studies in criminology further show that people with right-wing authoritarian views tend to exhibit higher levels of support for punitive responses to crime<sup>63</sup> and stigmatizing behavior toward criminals.<sup>64</sup> However, studies have shown that holding right-wing views does not predict opposition to rehabilitation.<sup>65</sup> Ethnocentrism, which is correlated with right-wing authoritarianism,<sup>66</sup> on the other hand, is more strongly associated with attitudes to counter-terrorism policy<sup>67</sup> and may account for why the ideology of the person being reintegrated has also been shown to have a negative effect on support.<sup>68</sup> Ethnocentrism refers to a set of attitudes which are informed by viewing one's in-group as superior and virtuous while the out-group is viewed as contemptible and inferior. Behaviors associated with ethnocentrism include cooperative relations with the in-group and the absence of relations with the out-group.<sup>69</sup> In a case where the reintegrated terrorist offender is assumed to be Islamist, holding ethnocentric views will most likely relate to avoidance and stigmatizing behavior. Thus, we hypothesize:

**H2:** Higher ethnocentric beliefs are associated with higher intended stigmatizing behavior toward the offender and lower intended supportive behavior toward the offender.

Research in criminology further shows that fear of crime underpins punitive attitudes toward offenders.<sup>70</sup> Grossi's findings demonstrate that stigmatizing behaviors such as avoidance are also typically driven by fear of crime,<sup>71</sup> and research similarly shows that fear of becoming a casualty of terrorism leads to general avoidance behaviors such as staying home.<sup>72</sup> Several studies show that fear of crime (including terrorism) and punitive attitudes and avoidance behaviors are mediated by emotional responses.<sup>73</sup> We therefore hypothesize:

**H3:** Higher fear of terrorism is associated with higher intended stigmatizing behaviors toward the offender and lower intended supportive behavior toward the offender.

Finally, the relationship between trust and support for reintegrating terrorist offenders is contested and underexplored.<sup>74</sup> Although several studies show a relationship between messages from trusted authorities and support for reintegration,<sup>75</sup> Revkin and Kao found no correlation between trust in the justice system and support for the reintegration of individuals associated with ISIS and,<sup>76</sup> in criminology, studies have shown that lower trust in the justice system erodes the stigma of incarceration.<sup>77</sup> Yet, other research in criminology demonstrates that support for the reintegration of offenders into the community through restorative justice is shaped by trust in effective community policing.<sup>78</sup> Low trust in police increases punitiveness as a preferred crime reduction technique<sup>79</sup> which indicates higher levels of trust increasing support for rehabilitative techniques. Given the expected role of fear of terrorism and support for reintegration, and the role of trust in police in reducing the fear of crime,<sup>80</sup> we hypothesize:

**H4:** Higher levels of trust in local police will be associated with higher intended supportive behavior toward the offender.

By identifying factors that correlate with support and opposition to terrorist offender reintegration, we can better understand who in the community is more likely to engage in supportive versus stigmatizing behavior. We also explore in our analysis heterogeneous treatment effects of the message in our experiment. Heterogeneous treatment effect refers to a difference in the effect an intervention may have across subgroups.<sup>81</sup> Building on Rade et al's findings,<sup>82</sup> we would expect there to be no difference—in other words, communicating information about an offender's rehabilitation should increase support for reintegration among



subgroups which typically oppose reintegration as well as subgroups which typically support reintegration.

## Methods

To test our hypotheses, we utilize data from a survey fielded in April 2021. The purpose of the survey was to examine British public attitudes towards Prevent, including its rehabilitation and re-integration program for terrorism offenders known as the Desistance and Disengagement Program. The UK's Desistance and Disengagement Program, first launched as a pilot in October 2016, aims to facilitate the successful rehabilitation and reintegration of terrorist offenders due for release through a series of psychological, ideological, and theological rehabilitative measures.<sup>83</sup> The survey was administered by ICM, which recruited 1,800 U.K. residents from their panel. To approximate a nationally representative sample, quotas were set for age, gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic groups. The control and treatment group consist of approximately 900 participants each, providing a large sample size to assess heterogeneous treatment effects.<sup>84</sup>

The experiment embedded in the survey focuses on terrorist offenders to be as relevant as possible to the audience (our U.K. sample) and to reflect the type of offenders who would be released from prison potentially as part of the rehabilitation and reintegration program (i.e. the Desistance and Disengagement Program). Thus, by using the term “terrorist” we are referring to individuals legally charged with a terrorism-related offence. For clarity, we use the term “rehabilitation program” because this captures the essence of such programs, which often focus on the drivers of terrorist behavior and the promotion of disengagement and reintegration, rather than de-radicalization. Moreover, the use of the term “rehabilitation program” helps to signify offender redeemability. Rehabilitation and reintegration programs can also work with a wide range of actors, such as individuals deemed as violent extremists, terrorist offenders, “ordinary” offenders, and (non-state) combatants.

To test **H1**, we employ an experimental design where half of our respondents (900 respondents) are given a prompt which claims an offender successfully completed a rehabilitation program (below, in bold), while the control group (900 respondents) is not provided with this information (Figure 1). Both the control and the treatment group receive information about the prospect of a neighbor who has served a terrorism-related prison sentence who is due to be released back into the community. We chose a low-level terrorism-related offence (incitement to terrorism) to make the scenario as realistic as possible, with terrorism-related offences responsible for deaths are less likely to be released on

Imagine you have a neighbour who has served a full prison sentence for incitement to terrorism and has now been released on probation into your community.

**While in prison, the neighbour successfully completed a rehabilitation program according to prison service experts.** *[Control group passage excludes this bolded sentence]*

How likely are you to engage in these actions?

1. To invite the neighbour to join in local social activities
2. To try and avoid the neighbour
3. To give advice and recommendations if they asked for help in finding a job or a course of study
4. To warn others about the neighbour and his/her past offense

**Figure 1.** Vignette (control and treatment) and dependent variables.



probation. The prompt emphasizes the offender is a neighbor. Since the objective of the study is to capture community behavioral support, we sought to make the scenario and the prospect of meeting the offender (as a neighbor) more plausible to the respondent. The treatment condition signals the offender's redeemability by stating they successfully completed a rehabilitation program, and while this may or may not speak to the effectiveness of the program, it serves to signify an offender's willingness to change. The treatment—the statement the offender has completed a rehabilitation program—is attributed to a prison services official to provide credibility to the claim and avoid respondents speculating on the source.

Upon reading the vignette, respondents were asked to complete four measures of behavioral support—two measures captured (positive) supportive behavior and two measures captured (negative) stigmatizing behavior. For each of these two measures of supportive and stigmatizing behavior, respondents are asked to indicate their intended behavior using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Very Unlikely, . . . 7 = Very Likely) with an 8th option of “Don't Know.” We treat these outcome variables as continuous and model them with linear regression models.<sup>85</sup> The results, however, are robust to using an ordered logit specification (see Supplemental Appendix).

Measures of public support for reintegration are generally grouped into two categories: attitudes towards programs and policies and attitudes toward offenders. Of the studies examining terrorism-related offenders, the measure is typically stated as attitudinal support for a rehabilitation program<sup>86</sup> or attitudinal support for reintegration.<sup>87</sup> Msall looks at attitudes toward offenders, specifically whether respondents would feel safe living next to reformed extremists.<sup>88</sup> Research on a wider range of criminal offenders is broadly similar in terms of its focus on attitudinal support for rehabilitation and reintegration programs and policies<sup>89</sup> and attitudes toward offenders.<sup>90</sup> However, a number of studies also include measures which capture some forms of behavioral intent toward criminal offenders.<sup>91</sup> In this study, we draw upon this literature to consider forms of behavioral intent related to the building of pro-social ties with terrorist offenders.

Existing studies in criminology which measure behavioral support for offender reintegration have typically focused on social distance. Social distance is a frequently used measure of stigmatizing attitudes and anticipatory behavior toward offenders. Measures include a willingness to have offenders released as a neighbor and acquaintance, whether they would introduce them to their social group, or would they employ them or rent a house to them.<sup>92</sup> Thus, in the following study we measure supportive behavior through: 1) a willingness to invite the offender to a social activity, which signals some form of public acceptance and 2) a willingness to provide support with employment and education, which is a more private form of helping behavior. We look at intent to provide support in finding employment and education opportunities as the typical measure of *offering* employment or housing is a form of behavior which most people have little capacity to deliver.

In addition to analyzing supportive behaviors, we also examine stigmatizing behaviors, which may act as a barrier to the offender's ability to develop pro-social ties. Stigma is a form of deviance that leads others to judge someone as illegitimate for social interaction.<sup>93</sup> Other studies examine stigmatizing attitudes such as perceived dangerousness, perceived dishonesty<sup>94</sup> and stereotyping attitudes toward offenders.<sup>95</sup> These factors are typically strong predictors of behavioral intent such as avoidance or rejection of drug users.<sup>96</sup> These measures speak to behaviors which relate to the development of pro-social ties; however, we adapt these to more evenly capture stigmatizing behavior. To that end, we examine whether the respondent would try to avoid the offender in the community (passive stigmatization) or warn others about the offender and his or her past offense (a more active form of stigmatization).

To test hypotheses H2-H4 on the individual characteristics associated with behavioral support for reintegration, we include measures of ethnocentrism, fear of terrorism, and trust in the local police. Our ethnocentrism measure is a score that captures respondents': 1) interest in the values and customs of other cultures, 2) beliefs on whether immigration enriches British culture, and 3) whether people in their culture could learn a lot from other cultures. To capture fear of terrorism, we ask respondents how likely they think a member of their family will be a victim of a terrorist attack in the next few years. To measure trust in the local police, we ask respondents to rate on a scale of 1 (strongly distrust)

**Table 1.** Summary statistics for key variables

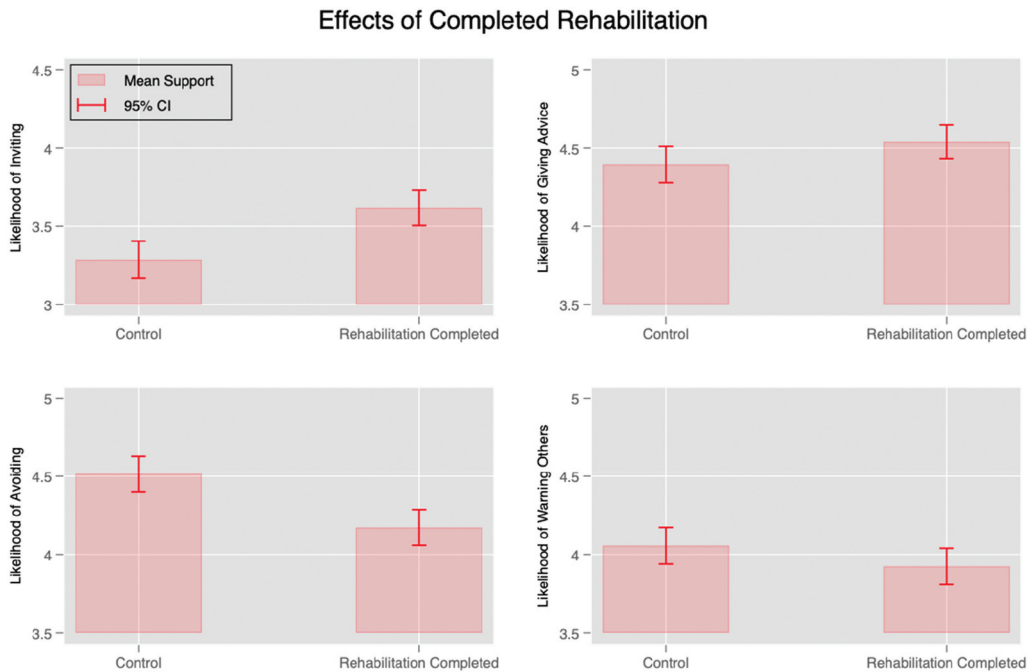
Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max	Description
Invite	1,628	3.45	1.69	1	7	To invite the neighbor (terrorist offender) to join in local social activities (1 = Extremely Unlikely, . . . 7 = Extremely Likely)
Avoid	1,676	4.34	1.69	1	7	To try and avoid the neighbor (terrorist offender) 1 = Extremely Unlikely, . . . 7 = Extremely Likely
Help	1,615	4.47	1.63	1	7	To give advice and recommendations if they (terrorist offender) asked for help in finding a job or course of study 1 = Extremely Unlikely, . . . 7 = Extremely Likely
Warn	1,615	3.99	1.68	1	7	To warn others about the neighbor (terrorist offender) and his/her past offense 1 = Extremely Unlikely, . . . 7 = Extremely Likely
Treatment: completed rehabilitation	1800	0.50	0.50	0	1	1 = Information about successful completion of rehabilitation program; 0 = Control/no information about rehabilitation program
Ethnocentrism	1,800	0.00	0.80	-1.35	2.60	Score captures: 1) interest in the values and customs of other cultures, 2) whether immigration enriches British culture, and 3) whether people in my culture could learn a lot from other cultures
Fear family attack	1,800	3.28	1.58	1	7	Fear family victim of terrorist attack in next few years (1 = Extremely Unlikely, . . . 7 = Extremely Likely)
Trust local police	1,800	2.93	0.78	1	4	Trust in local police (1 = Strongly distrust, . . . 4 = Strongly trust)
Ideology	1,568	3.03	0.90	1	5	1 = Very Left, . . . 5 = Very Right
Authoritarian	1, 800	0.46	0.33	0	1	Score captures authoritarian personality via: 1) obedience/self-reliance, 2) good manners/curiosity, 3) well behaved/considerate, and respect for elders/independence
Female	1,798	0.53	0.50	0	1	1 = Female, 0 = Male
University	1,789	0.37	0.48	0	1	1 = University Degree, 0 = No University Degree
Muslim	1,779	0.03	0.17	0	1	1 = Muslim, 0 = Non-Muslim

to 5 (strongly trust). We also include several control variables in our analysis of the individual characteristics associated with supportive and stigmatizing behaviors. We control for political ideology and authoritarian personality as research in criminology, as noted, shows a positive relationship between conservative ideology and authoritarianism, and more punitive approaches.<sup>97</sup> Altier also found a negative relationship between conservative political ideology and support for terrorist re-entry programming.<sup>98</sup> Studies in criminology also show that women, those with a higher level of education, and minorities are more likely to support rehabilitative approaches.<sup>99</sup> We therefore control for gender, university education, and Muslim religion (given perceptions about who is likely to constitute a terrorist offender in the U.K.<sup>100</sup> Summary statistics for all variables are presented in Table 1.

## Results

We first examine the distributions of our four outcome variables (Table 1). We find, irrespective of treatment, the intention to engage in more passive/private forms of supportive and stigmatizing behavior is more commonly reported than active/public ones. In the full sample, the mean response for offering advice to a terrorist offender stands at 4.47, positioned between “neither likely nor unlikely” (4) and “slightly likely” (5). Contrastingly, the mean response for inviting the offender to participate in local social activities is significantly lower at 3.45 (between “unlikely” (3) and “neither likely nor unlikely” (4)), indicating a lesser inclination towards this form of public, supportive behavior. In terms of stigmatizing behaviors, the mean response for avoiding the neighbor is 4.34, while warning others about the neighbor’s past offense—a more active form of stigmatization—has a slightly lower average of 3.99. These findings are generally consistent with prior research on attitudes toward rehabilitation programming and the reintegration of offenders, which suggests a divided public opinion. However, our results particularly highlight a general reluctance to engage in public, behavioral support for reintegration, as evidenced by the low willingness to involve the offender in community social activities.

We next examine the effect of our treatment—providing information about the offender’s completion of a rehabilitation program—on our four indicators of intended behavioral support



**Figure 2.** Information about completion of a rehabilitation program and behavioral support for reintegration.

for reintegration. Figure 2 reports the results of t-tests on the difference in mean levels of support between our control and treatment groups and demonstrates, consistent with **H1**, that providing information reduces the likelihood that respondents would avoid the offender ( $t(1,674) = 4.18$ ,  $p < .000$ ) and increases the likelihood that they would invite the offender to join in local social activities ( $t(1,626) = -3.97$ ,  $p < .000$ ). We observe a similar effect of information provision in reducing one's likelihood to warn others about the offender and increasing their likelihood of providing advice about a job or course of study. However, the effect on giving advice about a job or course of study is only marginally statistically significant ( $t(1,616) = -1.78$ ,  $p < .075$ ) while the effect on warning others about the offender is not statistically significant ( $t(1,613) = 1.58$ ,  $p < .114$ ). Even though there was strong support for our hypothesis in only two of the four measures of behavioral support we analyzed, the treatment had an effect on both supportive and stigmatizing behavior. Further, the treatment increased the likelihood respondents would invite the offender to join in social activities, our most active/public measure of community acceptance of the offender.

Our results demonstrate the treatment—communicating completion of a rehabilitation program—leads to a greater willingness to invite offenders to social activities and a reduction in avoidance. The absence of significant results in the other two measures may be a result of the treatment's implicit and ambiguous statement on the malleability of criminal behavior—we might expect stronger effects across all measures if, like in Rade and Desmaris's study,<sup>101</sup> the treatment conveyed evidence of the changeable nature of criminal behavior. Our results show intent to warn is not significantly affected by the treatment, although the coefficient is in the expected direction. This may be because respondents who are more likely to warn others may have stronger dispositions on the perceived redeemability of an offender. The positive but only marginally significant treatment effect we observe on intent to help may be explained by some respondents believing it is the responsibility of the program to provide such support—increased awareness of a rehabilitation program through the treatment may signal the offender already received adequate support in locating a job or program of study.

**Table 2.** Linear regression results, factors associated with supportive & stigmatizing behavior

	Invite		Help		Avoid		Warn	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Treatment: completed rehabilitation	<b>0.34***</b>	<b>0.28**</b>	0.15 <sup>†</sup>	0.14 <sup>†</sup>	<b>−0.35***</b>	<b>−0.34***</b>	−0.13	−0.12
	<b>(0.08)</b>	<b>(0.09)</b>	(0.08)	(0.08)	<b>(0.08)</b>	<b>(0.09)</b>	(0.08)	(0.08)
Ethnocentrism		<b>−0.44***</b>		<b>−0.64***</b>		<b>0.39***</b>		<b>0.37***</b>
		<b>(0.06)</b>		<b>(0.06)</b>		<b>(0.06)</b>		<b>(0.06)</b>
Fear family attack		0.05		0.04		<b>0.10**</b>		<b>0.17***</b>
		(0.03)		(0.03)		<b>(0.03)</b>		<b>(0.03)</b>
Trust local police		<b>0.17**</b>		<b>0.16**</b>		0.09		0.05
		<b>(0.06)</b>		<b>(0.06)</b>		(0.07)		(0.06)
Ideology		−0.01		0.04		0.11 <sup>†</sup>		<b>0.29***</b>
		(0.06)		(0.05)		(0.06)		<b>(0.05)</b>
Authoritarian		−0.10		−0.24		0.01		0.13
		(0.15)		(0.14)		(0.14)		(0.14)
Female		−0.07		−0.02		<b>0.18*</b>		<b>−0.18*</b>
		(0.09)		(0.08)		<b>(0.09)</b>		(0.09)
University		0.03		0.10		0.004		−0.17 <sup>†</sup>
		(0.09)		(0.09)		(0.09)		(0.09)
Muslim		.27		0.27		−0.47 <sup>†</sup>		−0.24
		(0.27)		(0.26)		(.28)		(0.25)
Constant	3.29***	2.77***	4.39***	3.72***	4.51***	3.50***	4.07***	2.60***
	(0.06)	(0.26)	(0.06)	(0.24)	(0.06)	(0.25)	(0.06)	(0.24)
<i>n</i>	1628	1445	1615	1440	1676	1480	1615	1438
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.01	.06	.002	.12	.01	.07	.002	.13

OLS regression results; robust standard errors in parentheses. <sup>†</sup> $p < .10$ , \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

To examine the hypothesized factors associated with intended behavioral support for reintegration controlling for treatment, we conducted a series of linear regression analyses. First, we find, consistent with **H2**, that ethnocentrism has statistically significant effects ( $p < .01$ ) across all four of our measures of behavioral intent (Table 2). Higher ethnocentric beliefs are associated with a greater likelihood of reporting an intent to avoid the offender and warn others about the offender and a lower likelihood of inviting the offender to join in local social activities or help the offender locate a job or course of study. Turning to fear of terrorism, our results reveal, consistent with **H3**, that respondents who are more likely to fear that their family will be the victim of a terrorist attack in the next few years are more likely to report an intent to avoid and warn others about the terrorist offender (Table 2). Thus, increased fear of terrorism is associated with an increased likelihood of stigmatizing behavior toward terrorist offenders. We find little evidence, however, that lower levels of fear of terrorism explain supportive behavior. For hypothesis **H4**, we find, as expected, that trust in the local police increases the likelihood respondents will report both of our measures of intended supportive behavior however we do not find any effect between trust in local police and stigmatizing behaviors (avoid and warn).

With regard to the control variables, we only observe a statistically significant effect for our measure of political ideology, when controlling for ethnocentrism, on the intent to warn variable, with those placing themselves on the political right more likely to engage in this form of stigmatizing behavior. This is not surprising given the relationship between ethnocentrism, political ideology, and authoritarian attitudes and previous research which reveals the importance of ethnocentrism in the counterterrorism realm.<sup>102</sup> Our control for gender suggests women are *less likely* to warn others about the offender; however, our results also provide some indication, women are more likely to avoid the offender.<sup>103</sup>

Finally, we analyzed for possible heterogeneous treatment effects using interaction terms and found very few (see Tables A2–A9, Supplemental Appendix). Generally, the treatment effects we observe in Table 2 on the ‘invite’ and ‘avoid’ measures are not driven by the specific covariates we examined (ethnocentrism, fear, ideology, authoritarianism, gender, education, Muslim religion). However, there were a few exceptions. First, the treatment had less of an effect in reducing avoidance for those who reported authoritarian personality and a greater effect in reducing avoidance for those with a university education though both findings are not robust to the inclusion of the control variables

(Tables A6 & A8, Supplemental Appendix). Second, even though we found no statistically significant effect on the warn variable in the full sample, women who received the treatment about completion of a rehabilitation program were less likely to state an intent to warn others about a terrorist offender (Table A7, Supplemental Appendix).

## Conclusion

The primary objective of the article is to test whether providing information that a terrorist offender has completed a rehabilitation program increases behavioral support for reintegration. Our findings confirm the hypothesis in two of our four measures of supportive and stigmatizing behavior—specifically, the intent to invite the offender to join in social activities and the intent to avoid the offender in the community. This is important insofar as it shows that similar to increasing positive attitudes toward criminal or ordinary sex offenders, reporting participation in rehabilitation increases behavioral support for reintegrating terrorist offenders.<sup>104</sup> This is significant because: a) given the political and often outsized impact of their crimes terrorist offenders are typically viewed differently from other offenders; b) existing literature tends to focus on attitudinal support, but we demonstrate reported completion of a rehabilitation program translates into increased behavioral support, which is central to their developing the pro-social ties necessary for successful reintegration; and c) practitioners are working with communities to overcome barriers to reintegrating terrorist offenders and our findings show that messaging which signals redeemability can support community engagement.

Recent studies have emphasized the salience of trusted messengers in building support for reintegration,<sup>105</sup> yet our findings provide a different perspective. Although future research will need to tease out the underlying mechanisms, we theorize that providing information that communicates participation in a rehabilitation program increases behavioral support for the offender's reintegration as a result of a shift in the perceived redeemability of the offender. Perceptions of ordinary criminal offender's redeemability have been shown to predict support for their rehabilitation and reintegration.<sup>106</sup> Furthermore, research in criminology shows that providing the public with information about a reintegration program reduces punitiveness.<sup>107</sup> Rade et al demonstrate that providing students with a text which highlights the malleable nature of human attributes can foster positive attitudes toward ex-offenders and reentry, however they recognize the limitations of a student sample and the possibility that effects are domain-specific.<sup>108</sup> Our article provides further corroboration for the role of implicit theory in relation to terrorist offender and we make a contribution to this theory by showing that signaling redeemability may also apply to increasing supportive and reducing stigmatizing behavior. Our findings suggest that rather than concealing rehabilitation programs, communicating some information about terrorist offenders' completion of a rehabilitation program leads to an increase in the willingness of the community to engage with the offender thereby fostering the offender's ability to develop pro-social ties and successfully reintegrate.

Our study also provides insight into dispositions that inform stigmatizing and supportive attitudes toward reintegrating terrorist offenders. People with higher ethnocentric views are more likely to stigmatize offenders and less likely to support reintegration; people with a higher level of fear of terrorism affecting their family are more likely to stigmatize (avoid and warn) but we found no statistically significant relationship between fear and supportive behavior; people with higher levels of trust in local police are more likely to engage in supportive behavior but we found no statistically significant effect of trust on stigmatization. Firstly, these findings are interesting insofar as they show effects on different dimensions of behavioral support and reintegration, so efforts to build trust with local police, for example, may make people more willing to engage ex-terrorist offenders while efforts to reduce the fear of a terrorist attack on one's family may reduce stigmatizing behavior. Secondly, ethnocentrism appears to be a consistent driver of negative support and stigmatizing behavior toward ex-terrorist offenders, adding to studies that have shown ethnocentrism relates to attitudes toward reintegration and rehabilitation.<sup>109</sup> Thirdly, our test for heterogenous treatment effects show that signalling redeemability had an effect regardless of ethnocentrism or trust in the police. This is significant for two reasons: firstly, given the salience of ethnocentrism in driving stigmatizing behavior

for terrorist offenders, the study shows that messaging can reduce the opposition to reintegration among the audience most likely to oppose it; secondly, the treatment is not moderated by levels of trust, providing some indication that information signalling redeemability may work independently of the credibility of the messenger in reducing stigmatization. Efforts to build community support for reintegration have typically sought to build trust, for example through engaging tribal leaders,<sup>110</sup> and while trust may indeed be salient for increasing support,<sup>111</sup> our findings demonstrate the salience of offender rehabilitation and the communication of this information.

The article takes a significant step forward in understanding community behavior toward terrorist offenders, yet there are several limitations which provide a platform for future research. First, our experiment did not make a direct reference to the ideology of the offender, which is likely to have a significant effect on support for rehabilitation and reintegration.<sup>112</sup> Subsequently, respondents may have made assumptions about the offender's ideology and race, limiting our scope to analyze heterogeneous treatment effects or influencing the significance in some of our measures. Future research could distinguish offenders by ideology, although our findings suggest that while changing the ideology of the offender would shape behavioral intent toward the offender, it may not moderate the effects of the message signalling redeemability—in other words, the messaging may work regardless of the offender's ideology. Second, our study only looks at behavioral intent, and while this may better indicate behavior in comparison to attitudinal support, future research could look at the effects on actual behavior.<sup>113</sup> Future studies could also develop and explore behavioral support toward reintegration by expanding an index, for example to include an intent to protest, and to include a measure of attitudinal support to identify where, if at all, there is a disjuncture between attitudes and behavior. In light of findings published by Blair et al and Revkin and Kao,<sup>114</sup> one possible limitation of this design is the vignette also introduces a potentially trusted messenger. However, this messenger is less likely to make a difference as we reference a prison services officer whereas trusted authorities in other studies tend to be religious figures or tribal leaders. Also as noted above, we find that trust in another government authority figure—the local police—does not moderate our treatment effects. While we cannot exclude the possibility, our experiment differs from Blair et al and Revkin and Kao by including information which signifies redeemability as opposed to a trusted messenger encouraging respondents to support reintegration or encouragements to be more forgiving.<sup>115</sup> Future research designs could distinguish between potentially trusted messengers and a 'redeemability' message or messages about forgiveness and the importance of reintegration to measure the separate effects of the messenger versus the message on support.

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  103. Given the potential multicollinearity between ethnocentrism, political ideology, and authoritarianism, we also run the results removing our measure of ethnocentrism from the models (Models 3, 6, 9, and 12). The results show that ideology has no effect on supportive behavior, but a statistically significant effect on our two measures of stigmatizing behavior, with those on the right more likely to avoid and warn others about the offender. Authoritarianism has a statistically significant effect on one supportive and one stigmatizing behavior. Those who report more authoritarian attitudes also are more likely to report an intent to warn others about the offender and are less likely to help the offender with a job or course of study. We also observe a marginally significant effect ( $p < .10$ ), with those who report authoritarian attitudes less likely to report the intent to invite the offender to join in a local social activity.
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