Running Head: Communication and Interrogation

Suspect Interrogation:
Communication Strategies and Key Personality Constructs

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Abstract

Interrogations are conducted by law enforcement officials in an effort to seek confessions and develop details about crimes. The goal of this study was to examine the communication strategies currently being used during the interrogation process as well as the key personality constructs that are integral to successful interrogation. A multi-method approach was used. Interviews with ten officers with interrogation experience were conducted in addition to collecting information via a web-based questionnaire (N=22). The findings suggest an overwhelming need to “play nice” by beginning most interrogations with rapport building tactics. Additional strategies include the use of theme development, modeling interviews some ways but diverging in other necessary ways, and critical emphasis about on-the-job training with this specific job role. Results suggest a positive relationship between cognitive complexity and communication competence; verbal aggressiveness and cognitive complexity; and negative relationships between cognitive verbal aggressiveness and communication competence. Explanations for the findings and results are provided in addition to the mention of the study’s limitations.
Introduction and Overview

Crime is an enduring social problem. As a result, we rely on law enforcement officials to temper crime and to protect and serve the citizens of our communities. A major factor in the reduction of crime and determining guilt is suspect interrogation. Communication is key to the art of interrogation. In recent years, particular interrogation tactics have come under tremendous scrutiny in terms of humane treatment of people—especially with some unorthodox tactics used in investigating terrorists. My goal in researching this topic is to discover what communication strategies are commonly used for suspect interrogation, which tactics are suggested by law enforcement to elicit the best results, and what the relationship is between those results and particular personality traits. More specifically, how are verbal aggressiveness and cognitive complexity related to the communication outcomes associated with interrogation? As a result, I plan on examining the tactics used and the unique differences between interrogators to include a) how the interviewer best knows which tactic to employ and b) if these tactics are perceived as successful.

Interviewing and interrogation certainly have similar aspects to one another. They are both simple ways of obtaining information, involve “purposeful conversation”, and both have the same purpose and result (Aubry and Caputo, 176-177). However, there are distinct differences between the two. There are several interrogation tactics, which are: direct confrontation, theme development, dealing with resistance, alternative questions, and developing details (Blair, 45). This study will seek to answer which tactics are used in certain situations. Cognitive complexity and verbal aggressiveness will also be looked at to determine whether the two have a relationship.
to successful interrogations. Since there is a direct relationship between cognitive complexity and communication effectiveness (Delia), it can be expected that officers with a high level of cognitive complexity are successful at interrogating. However, many people assume that officers that interrogate are verbally aggressive, yet people who are especially aggressive have lower communication skills (Infante, Trebing, Shepherd & Seeds, 1984).

In addition to the literature based on interrogation, interviewing, and communication, I also relied on information from three communication studies courses; the courses I used to inform my study include Theories of Human Communication, Legal Communication, and Persuasion. My theoretical frame is cognitive complexity, a major component of Jessie Delia’s theory of constructivism, was derived from the Theories of Human Communication class. I used information regarding questioning and interviews from Legal Communication. From the Persuasion, I extracted basic ideas of how persuasion relates to communication in general, and more specifically I related it to interrogation. One of the officers I interviewed even said, “We (interrogators) are like used cars salesmen. But instead of selling a junky car to someone, we have to sell the idea that confessing is the best thing to do.”

Review of Literature

Interrogation techniques

An interrogation is essentially an interview. But unlike traditional interviews, interrogations are often perceived as much more hostile, antagonistic, and perhaps to some degree, even frightening. They begin much like traditional interviews. The basic goal is to obtain and secure information and they do this by having the interviewer ask questions and use purposeful conversation (Aubry & Caputo, 1972). According to Hamilton (2005), interrogations have a communication goal: the involved parties discuss a topic of interest and the interviewer
(or interrogator) makes an assessment of the interviewee (or suspect) based on verbal responses as well as nonverbal behavior clues. While interrogations and interviews both use strategic communication, it is important to understand how interviews and interrogations are similar and how they are different. Although an interview can generally be determined successful if the information needed is acquired, an interrogation is deemed successful if the suspect confesses to the crime (and/or leaks information about another perpetrator) and/or provides more details about the crime itself.

While they have a common goal, interviews and interrogations differ in their communication tactics: “An interview is a non-accusatory dialogue used to develop information that is relevant to a case, and an interrogation is an accusatory monologue, dominated by the interrogator, that is used to get the truth from an individual suspect of committing a crime” (Blair, 2005). Persons involved in interviews typically schedule a set amount of time for the interview. Interviewers do not hurry, but often operate in an efficient manner. Interrogations cannot always be predicted. They are based on an unhurried interview that will ultimately lead to the best results. Interrogations are hardly viewed as an efficient kind of communication process and can also last several hours or longer (Inbau, 1999).

Interviewers rely on informative tactics that will allow the interviewee to reveal pertinent information in an effort to be viewed as a desirable hire. In fact, interviewees are often more persuasive than interviewers. Conversely, interrogators rely heavily on persuasive tactics to get the suspect to confess. While interrogating a suspect that seems guilty, interrogators try to persuade the suspect that confessing is the best thing to do. Interrogators do this by altering the suspect’s perceptions of the situation and its consequences (Blair, 2005). Like persuasion, interrogations also involve the formation, development, and alteration of attitudes. Persuasion in
an interrogation can be difficult because the suspect has a strong belief in maintaining that they are innocent and this belief may be difficult to change. The interrogator must have a basic knowledge of human personality and psychology in order to persuade effectively. Interrogations often rely on the persuasive tactic of a fear-arousing appeal and attempt to reassure the suspect that confessing is the best possible solution (Aubry & Caputo, 1972). Persuasion focuses are different in interrogations than they are in interviews. In an interview, the interviewer is the target of persuasion and the interviewee attempts to persuade the interviewer that they are qualified, reliable, and desirable, but in an interrogation, the suspect is the target of persuasion.

There are several different interrogation tactics used by law enforcement. These are direct confrontation, theme development, dealing with resistance, alternative questions, and developing details (Blair, 2005). All the tactics can be applied in any one interrogation. However, depending on the context and the suspect, certain tactics may be more applicable, and others may not be used at all.

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, direct confrontation occurs at the beginning the interrogation. A direct positive confrontation occurs. This is especially important at the beginning because the investigator must initially control and direct the conversation (Boetig, 2005). Direct confrontation occurs when the investigator suggests they know that the suspect has committed the crime. They basically say, “I know you did it, you know you did it, just admit it, and we can move on.” However, if the suspect’s response or reaction does not result in a confession or provide an indication of guilt, then the investigator must proceed with a new approach. The approach that most commonly follows direct confrontation is theme development.
Theme development is the second technique or tactic used by law enforcement agencies. It is defined as offering the suspect a moral excuse and the investigator presents the suspect with reasons to confess by offering possible rationalizations, projections of blame, or even minimizations. The first way is offering a rationalization. Rationalization is where the interrogator makes the crime seem socially acceptable and even reasonable given the circumstances because the rewards outweighed the consequences. For example, investigators may rationalize a bank robbery by telling the suspect that given the state of the economy, other people are making this same decision because of their financial situations. The second kind of theme development, projections of blame, relocates or transfers some of the blame to someone or something else entirely—such as the victim or society. In other words, the interrogator will construct a message that suggests that some “other” caused them to act as they did. For example, if a woman is suspected of vandalizing her boyfriend’s car, the interrogator can put blame on the boyfriend for treating her poorly. The third way a theme is developed is through the use of minimization. This occurs when the investigator works to diminish the severity or shocking nature of the crime. Given the last example of vandalism, the interrogator can minimize the woman’s shame and guilt by praising her for not taking the crime further and committing worse criminal acts. These themes are based on theories of criminology (Boetig, 2005). Theme development occurs in one of three ways—a rationalization theme, a projection of blame theme, or a minimization theme. This can be an effective communication strategy because it utilizes moral and ethical justifications for the crimes in hopes the suspect will process and accept these justifications, which will ultimately lead to the truth.

The third technique is known as dealing with resistance. Resistance is the refusal to comply and it is viewed as a strategy because the interrogator is bound to experience resistance
and must know how to overcome it. There are specific ways of dealing with resistance (Inbau, Reid, Buckley, & Jayne, 2001); these include denial, objection, and withdrawal. According to Inbau et al. (2001), there are certain ways to overcome resistance. They suggest the use of domination; this is where the investigator does not allow the suspect to talk. They continue to talk, talk over, and talk louder than the suspect. They also suggest interrogators attempt to draw an objection from the suspect and use it to form a new theme. An objection is a reason why the accusation of guilt is incorrect. For example, if a suspect accused of armed robbery objects to owning a gun, this fact should be pulled out to form a new theme. The third type of resistance is withdrawal and one strategy to overcome this is to get the suspect more engaged. The interrogator should use tag lines in questions. For example, they may ask, “You care about this, don’t you?” The interrogator can also move closer to the suspect and focus on maintaining eye contact.

A fourth technique to get a suspect to confess is by employing alternative questioning techniques. It is best to use this tactic when the suspect appears to be on the verge of confessing. The key here is to present the suspect with a choice between two possible explanations for why the crime was committed. In this case, only one choice is more attractive than the other. One example given is a case involving theft in which the suspect is asked, “Did you take the money because you needed it for bills or for drugs?” (Blair, 2005). In argumentation this can be referred to as a false dilemma, but it can be an effective strategy because one (or more) of these reasons may account for the reasoning behind the crime. The suspect may believe that the interrogator knows something. If the suspect accepts either one of these, they are admitting their guilt. In some cases, they may offer a third possibility, which again is the admittance of guilt.
The final approach is used when the suspect makes their first verbal signs of guilt. This strategy is referred to as *developing details*. The interrogator begins to withdraw a bit from the intensity and begins to modify their communication. At this point, the interrogation begins to feel more as an interview rather than an interrogation. The interrogator starts to ask the suspect non-leading and more open-ended questions instead of dominating the conversation. For example, the interrogator may begin asking the suspect why they committed the crime and let the suspect tell their version of events. This allows the suspect to give detailed explanations of the crime (Blair, 2005), and a solid case or understanding of the crime can be developed.

Although these techniques are the most commonly accepted techniques used for interrogations, there are other approaches. For example, the Reid Technique of Interrogation employs a more benign approach. They conduct a non-accusatory interview before the investigator engages in any accusatory interrogation. In their interrogation manual, Aubry and Caputo (1972) suggest the interrogation should always begin like an interview. However, Boetig (2005) disagrees and argues that an interrogation should begin with a direct confrontation strategy. With the Reid Technique, the interview and interrogation are only, and distinctly, separated by several minutes. However, the Reid Technique utilizes theme development as its priority function and also makes use of a number of alternative question techniques (Buckley, 2000).

According to the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), many police departments approach interrogations more like an interview (e.g., ACPO Investigative Interviewing Strategy, 2007). For example, at the South Yorkshire, UK department, they have adopted the PEACE model for all interviewing settings. This includes the manner in which they interview suspects as well as witnesses and victims. The five phases of their approach include: planning and
preparation, engagement and explanation, account, closure, and evaluation. Their design ensures that all questioning is conducted ethically and efficiently after certain weaknesses such as:

assumption of guilt, persistent questioning and poor technique were identified. This model was adopted in 1993 and has addressed the weaknesses hindering many police departments.

Understanding the most effective interrogation technique is not an easy task. As explained, there are several different approaches and they fall somewhere on a continuum of aggressiveness. Additionally, within these techniques, there are sub-approaches and methods of adapting to specific clues and information provided by a suspect during the course of an interview. In another article by the FBI (2002), they identify particular suspect challenges that interrogators need to recognize and determine how to manage based on the suspect and situation. The first challenge is in understanding how to read the suspect’s behavior. The FBI suggests that not every person will react the same way under pressure. They recommend following the facts (This simply means that investigative and evidentiary facts must take more precedence over simply following instincts). While it is important for investigators to follow their intuition, it is just as important they align their instincts with the facts and evidence available. It is often a challenge for most interrogators to remove an emotional model and only operate under a rational model when they encounter a lot of injustice and wrongdoings. Another challenge interrogators face is their struggle to avoid contaminating the confessions. A confession is contaminated when questions are asked that use specific crime scene data and results. For example, crime scene photos that were not made public may be shown to the suspect. In these cases, a confession can no longer be considered valid because the suspect may have become more “educated” on the crime through the interrogation and simply repeats knowledge learned. As a result, it could appear that the suspect offered a confession when their interests were motivated by a desire to
end the interrogation. The imperative must be to preserve the evidence. The article states:

“Investigators must receive answers to open-ended questions without any type of judgment, reaction, or interruption. By allowing suspects to tell their stories without interruption, investigators fulfill the basic purpose of an interview to obtain information.” In order words, it is critical that the interrogator allow the suspect to provide the information, not lead them, and not reveal any unnecessary information about the crime. Suspects tend to reveal information inadvertently when provided an open forum to talk. Competent interrogators should be able to recognize these instances and corroborate with the suspect to secure a confession (Napier, 2002). Thus it is critical that the competent interrogator thinks quickly and recognizes a line of communication, or a suspect’s behaviors, to determine if they should try a new tactic or approach. The most effective thinkers and communicators of that thought process are often suggested to be cognitively complex individuals. In this next section, cognitive complexity as it relates to communication is discussed.

*Constructivism and Cognitive Complexity*

Constructivism offers a cognitive explanation for communicative competence. It is this theory that explains how individuals communicate skillfully in social situations and why some people are better than others (Delia, 2005). Constructivism specifically suggests that individuals who are cognitively complex are more equipped to create sophisticated messages plans. In other words, cognitively complex individuals know what to say, when to say it, and understand how to say it. The communication plans are essentially tailored messages that ultimately allow the communicator to effectively achieve one or more communication goals. Thus, with this theory, Delia is simply suggesting that more cognitively complex people are better communicators—and
certainly have the capacity to be more persuasive than individuals who are less cognitively complex.

Cognitive complexity is defined as the mental ability to distinguish subtle personality and behavior differences among people (Burleson, 1988). They do this by understanding the other communicator. In turn, this understanding helps shape the messages they use with other people. Burleson suggests that people who are cognitively complex have a better ability to produce person-centered messages. These tailor-made messages are relevant for a specific individual and context, and reflect the communicator’s ability to anticipate response and adjust accordingly (Delia, 2005). They do this by perceiving their audience translating that perception into appropriate linguistic choices (Hale, 1980). Hale, (1980) as well as Feffer and Suchotliff (1966), found a positive correlation between cognitive complexity and communication effectiveness. In both cases, they explored the relationship between “an individual’s ability to consider his behavior simultaneously from different viewpoints” and “effective social interaction” (p. 306). They both concluded that cognitively complex individuals are more effective at communicating and interacting with other people.

To illustrate the relation to language and complexity, Burleson suggests, “A cognitive system composed of a comparatively large number of finely articulated, well integrated elements is regarded as relatively complex.” As a result, the Role Category Questionnaire (RCQ) developed by Walter Crockett was developed to measure cognitive complexity. The RCQ is a free response survey that requires the subject to describe two or more people (a liked peer and a disliked peer). Participants are instructed to think of each person and then list the characteristics of each person. The number of characteristics listed is then used to score for several different areas including degree of differentiation, the abstractness of the constructs appearing in the
impression, and the degree of impression organization. Any and all physical traits are removed from the scoring. Differentiation is the chief component of concern and thus the construct measured. Differentiation is measured by the number of characteristics that the person lists (excluding the physical traits). It is basically a tally of the total number of different characteristics or traits. Much support for this as an effective measure of interpersonal cognitive complexity has been given (Burleson & Waltman, 1988). The constructs extracted from the RCQ are assumed to be a representative sample of the subject’s total number of interpersonal constructs. Cognitive complexity is suggested to be a cognitive explanation and, therefore, more of a personality construct that is developed over time. By measuring a person’s cognitive complexity, it would be possible to determine if an individual’s level of cognitive complexity was high, medium, or low. Constructivism and the idea of cognitive complexity can be linked to the communicative process of interrogation. Since cognitively complex individuals are suggested to be (the most) effective communicators, then it is assumed that these individuals would be quite skilled as interrogators. Thus, their interrogation skills are likely to be high because they will not only have a clear read of their suspect, but will be able to construct messages that will ultimately lead them to their interrogation goals.

Verbal Aggression

Verbally aggressive communication is often perceived as hostile or at the very least uncomfortable. It can be destructive and attack people’s self-concept. However, verbal aggressiveness can, at times, allow communicators to achieve intended goals. For example, a verbally aggressive individual may be able to garner (or force) information from someone because the other person may feel threatened or scared. Infante and Wigley (1986) were particularly interested in the concept of verbal aggressiveness and its relationship to interpersonal
communication. In particular, they were concerned with understanding what kind of communication is perceived as verbal aggressiveness and the outcomes of this verbally aggressive communication. Infante and Wigley define verbal aggressiveness as “a personality trait in which people attack the self-concepts of other people instead of, or in addition to, their positions on topics of communication.” Hostility, assertiveness, and argumentativeness directly relate to the concept of verbal aggressiveness. Verbal aggression attacks the self-concepts of others to make them think less highly of themselves. Although they outline verbal aggressiveness as attack, Infante and Wigley suggest that verbal aggressiveness is often not situational, but rather an enduring personality construct that individuals are often said to possess on a continuum. In other words, like cognitive complexity, individuals possess a high, medium or low verbal aggressiveness measure.

Infante outlines the various ways of being verbally aggressive. These include the use of character attacks, competence attacks, insults, maledictions, teasing, ridicule, profanity and nonverbal emblems (Infante & Wigley, 1986). It is suggested that people are verbally aggressive for a number of reasons. These include frustration, social learning, psychopathology, and argumentative skill deficiency. Social learning refers to people being conditioned to behave aggressively. Psychopathology is when people attack using verbally aggressive behaviors because they feel like the other person represents unresolved conflict. Argumentative skill deficiency states that the person uses verbal aggression because they lack the cognitive and verbal skills for dealing with conflict in a more constructive way. Therefore, it is not surprising that Infante and Wigley (1986) found that verbal aggressiveness negatively correlates with cognitive complexity.
A common method of verbal aggressiveness is the use of intense language. Language intensity refers to language characteristics that indicate the extent to which the source deviates from neutrality. Emotional intensity is measured by the amount of affect expressed in the language choices and linguistic specificity is “the degree to which a source makes precise reference to attitude objects in a message” (Hamilton & Stewart, 1993). Research has suggested that high credibility sources can successfully employ more intense language, but low credibility sources are less effective when they use intense language (Bradac, Bowers, & Courtright, 1979). In other words, if people see the communicator as a reputable source, then it is acceptable for them to employ more intense language. However, if the receiver perceives the source as someone with limited credibility, then it would be less acceptable for the source to use this linguistic strategy. Intense language can be successfully employed, but it depends on a couple of conditions. More specifically, the topic and context of the message must be perceived as favorable (Frymier & Nadler, 2007). In other words, if a communicator possesses high level of perceived credibility from a target (receiver), then a much larger latitude of acceptance exists for the type of language choices they can use and still be able to communicate effectively. On the other hand, if the communicator garners very little respect from the target (e.g., if an interrogator is perceived as a bully or someone out the get them), then intense language will damage their effectiveness.

Although verbal aggression can be successful in achieving goals in certain situations, more likely than not, it only serves to damage a person’s (the receiver’s) self-concept. The media often portrays the process of interrogation as hostile with verbally aggressive interrogators. However, it stands to reason that if cognitively complex individuals are effective communicators that reach their communication goals often and successfully, then verbal aggression is negatively
related to cognitive complexity. Interrogators, by perception, are often portrayed as verbally aggressive personality types. It becomes important to unpack these constructs in tandem. By examining an interrogator’s verbal aggression, cognitive complexity, and communication competence, it can be determined if there is a direct relationship between these constructs.

Rationale for Research Questions

Interrogations are often more accusatory and harsher than a traditional interview. Since both interrogations and interviews have a common goal of obtaining salient information to make a decision, some methods to achieve this will undoubtedly be the same. However, interrogators are the source of persuasion (rather than the receiver of persuasion). Interrogators are more likely to employ intense (or verbally aggressive) language (rather than invite two-way communication inquiry). Interrogations seek to obtain a confession (rather than determine if someone is fit for an organization). Interrogations can last for hours (rather than a pre-determined amount of time).

By studying different interrogation techniques, this study hopes to elucidate how the interrogators use communicator strategies to acquire confessions. The purpose of this study is to be able to reveal what strategies or tactics are currently being utilized by law enforcement officials involved in the interrogation process today and, additionally, to understand the relationship between the context/situation, the individual differences of the assailant, and the particular tactic used. To further learn about these strategies and the difference between interrogations and interviews, the following research question is posed:

RQ1: What communication strategies are used for suspect interrogation and how do these differ from typical interviewing techniques?

Moreover, research has suggested a very strong and direct relationship between cognitive complexity and the ability to achieve desired outcomes (Delia, 2008). In particular, Applegate
(1980) argues that more cognitive complexity will create a sophisticated, audience-centered message plan that is effectively keen at achieving persuasive ends (O’Keefe & Shepherd, 1991). Cognitively complex individuals are more skilled at performing a variety of tasks related to communication, such as recognizing effect (Burleson, 1994), decoding nonverbals (Woods, 1996), integrating information (O’Keefe, Delia, & O’Keefe, 1977) or engaging in role taking or perspective taking (Kline, Pelias, & Delia, 1991). Given this reasoning: the more cognitively complex an individual, the more effective the interrogator (or interrogation).

Furthermore, there is reason to suggest that verbally aggressive individuals may be effective at interrogation because these individuals are able to attach the self-concepts of others, attempting to cause psychological pain (Infante & Wigley, 1985). However, they will not be perceived as credible (CITE). Because they often attach the target’s character, competence, and appearance (and commonly make verbal and nonverbal threats) receivers of communication will not only resent them, but will often resist their (persuasive) communication attempts. Research also suggests that individuals who are especially aggressive have lower communication skills (Infante, Trebing, Shepherd & Seeds, 1984) and engage in more physical aggression (Kassing, Pearce & Infante, 2000). In addition to the fact that these types of people are unsuccessful as teachers, managers, and even as roommates, they are likely not going to be successful at garnering the persuasive end that most interrogations need to achieve the goal of this communication act. Yet, at least at face value, it is often presumed that these individuals are often drawn to law enforcement.

Thus, we know the following: (1) Cognitive complexity is related to effective communication; (2) Verbally aggressive individuals are often drawn into law enforcement; (3) Verbal aggression is negatively related to cognitive complexity; and (4) Law enforcement
officials employ persuasive communication tactics with the goal of achieving communication goals. If we know these claims to be true, then what is the relationship between these constructs and is it possible for law enforcement officials, typically not cognitively complex, often verbally aggressive individuals, to conduct effective interrogations? To unpack what appears to be a break in logic, and to help explain the relationship between cognitive complexity, verbal aggressiveness, and communication competence, the following research question also is proposed:

RQ2: What, if any, relationship exists between verbal aggressiveness, cognitive complexity, and tactics used to achieve interviewer goals and successful interrogation?

Methods

Qualitative Method

Procedure and Participation

To answer my first research question, I interviewed past and current law enforcement officials who were/are responsible for conducting interrogations. Participants were recruited through the Riley County Police Department, the researcher’s social network, and through a snowball sample. A total of ten interrogation officers were interviewed. On October 21, I took the interview questions and surveys to the Riley County Police Department so the department could review them. The Riley County PD approved the protocol and four of their detectives were later interviewed. The other six participants were contacted and interviewed from November 4-6. Seven of the participants were male and three were female. Of the participants, nine had police and detective backgrounds from several precincts in the U.S. (e.g., KCPD, Riley County PD), and one was an attorney for the United States Department of Justice. The interviews lasted an average of 30 minutes and were conducted at a variety of locations. Four took place at the Riley
County Police Department, two at the Kansas City Metropolitan Crime Commission, three over the phone, and one at the participant’s house.

The objective of my interview was to learn how interrogations differ from interviews, how officers are trained to do interrogations, what techniques are used, and how they know how to approach the interrogation based on the suspect and crime. An interview guide was used to ensure consistency with all of my interviews (see Appendix A). Some questions include, “What different interrogation techniques are used in standard questioning?” and “What can you tell me about how you were trained to interrogate suspects?” During each interview, I took copious and detailed notes of the interview responses. Notes were later coded for emergent themes.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed by reviewing the participants’ responses and by determining common and emergent themes about how interrogations work. A total of 24 pages of handwritten notes were gathered from the interviews and I used a process of open coding to find and develop common themes. These themes were located by producing meaning from utterances and phrase—and from the context of the interview. Once the themes began to emerge initially, larger codes were collapsed into four smaller and more dominant themes. Common themes include coverage about interrogation training, coverage about the common tactics used, understanding of the differences between interviews and interrogations, and the critical tactic of using communication to build a connection with the suspect. Once coded, I also applied the findings to what the interviewee told me about their tactics to see if they matched my previous research.

Quantitative Method

Procedure and Participants
A web-based questionnaire was used. Participants were recruited several ways. First, the participants from the interviews were invited to participate in the questionnaire. After the interview, these participants were emailed separately with a message a) thanking them for the interview and b) containing a link to the online questionnaire. A second way participants were recruited was by snowball sampling from the interviews. These participants were encouraged to forward the survey to people they work with. I also sent an email to several area police departments requesting their participation in the survey. I explained to them what I was working on and sent them a link. I also made sure to inform them that the survey was voluntary and completely anonymous. The survey opened on October 21 and closed on December 2, 2009.

The online questionnaire consisted of three scales: a Role Category Questionnaire (RCQ), Verbal Aggressiveness Scale, and Communication Competence Scale (see Appendix B). The participants that completed the interview also completed the survey. Once the participants had followed the web link, they were confronted with an informed consent page, which had to be completed before the online survey could be accessed. The survey’s goal was to link certain behaviors to interrogations, while the interviews were to learn more about interrogation tactics.

Twenty-seven participants started the questionnaires. However, five were removed because they were incomplete. As a result, there were a total twenty-two completed (N=22). Of the twenty-two participants, eighteen were men (81.8%) and four were women (18.2%). The participants were very experienced in interrogations; four had conducted 21-50 interrogations (18.2%) and eighteen had conducted over 50 interrogations (81.8%).

Instrumentation

Three scales were used to determine the relationship between cognitive complexity, verbal aggressiveness, and communication competence. Two existing instrument scales were
used (cognitive complexity and verbal aggressiveness) and one was created (communication competence) for this study. In addition, there was a section for demographics and interrogation experience.

**Role Category Questionnaire:** Cognitive complexity was measured using O’Keefe and Sypher’s Role Category Questionnaire. Participants were asked to list attributes, mannerisms, and personality traits of a liked peer and a disliked peer. This was a free-response survey and participants were asked to complete it in 5-10 minutes. Participant responses for the RCQ ranged from 9 to 27 attributes. The mean score for attributes listed was 14.36 (men, M=13.7 and women, M=17.25; this was not a significant difference between genders).

**Verbal Aggressiveness Scale:** Verbal aggressiveness was measured using a modified version of Infante and Wigley’s Verbal Aggressiveness Scale (1986). The original scale was 20 questions but only 10 were used on my survey. Participants were asked to think about how they influence other people using a five-point scale (1=almost never true; 5=almost always true). Items included, “I am extremely careful to avoid attacking individuals’ intelligence when I attack their ideas,” or “When I attack a person's ideas, I try not to damage their self concepts.” The mean was 2.02, with the mean for men equaling 2.06 and the mean for women equaling 1.88. As with cognitive complexity, there was not a significant difference between the genders. The alpha reliability for this scale was .772.

**Communication Competence Scale:** Participants were asked to rate the effectiveness of their interrogations. More specifically, they were asked a series of questions about the effectiveness of their communication tactics during actual interrogations. They were asked six questions using a five-point scale (5=strongly agree; 1=strongly disagree). Originally, there were six items. Questions included, “My interrogation techniques always yield success” and “The
suspects I interrogate do not disclose the information I am seeking.” Because the researcher developed this scale, the alpha reliability of the first scale was a little low (.697) and factor analysis determined that this scale was actually loading on two components. As a result, one item was removed (“I am effective at dealing with resistance”) and a 5-item scale was used for analysis. The mean was 3.93 and men ($M=3.94$) and women ($M=3.88$) rated almost identically with their interrogation communication effectiveness. The alpha reliability for the final 5-item scale was .727.

*Experience and Demographics:* The survey also included a section that asked how many interrogations the participant had administered. It also asked that the participant to indicate their gender.

*Data Analysis:* Data was analyzed in accordance with the research questions utilizing SPSS. A series of t-tests were performed to determine the strength of the relationships under examination. The results of the statistical analyses are reported in the next section.

**Findings and Results**

**Findings from the Interviews**

The first research question asked, “What communication strategies are used for suspect interrogation and how do these differ from typical interviewing techniques?” Through the interviews, I learned that many interrogators take a very focused approached. They will pick one strategy—they differ, but they individually select a strategy they are comfortable with to use when they question a suspect. Although these strategies may differ, they report having very common ways of building a bond with the suspect. Interrogators report they typically bond with the suspect by beginning the interrogation like in an interview. Overall, interrogators take control of the interrogation to try to lead the suspect into telling them what they want to hear (to confess
to the crime). The common themes I discovered are: the use of rapport in interrogations, the use of theme development, how interrogation skills are learned and developed, and the differences between an interview and interrogation. The first research question asked:

*RQ1: What communication strategies are used for suspect interrogation and how do these differ from typical interviewing techniques?*

The findings are reported below and categorized within their respective themes.

*Becoming friends with the suspect?*

The first common theme found was the interrogator’s use and importance of establishing rapport and, oddly, they attempt to become friends with the suspect. All ten participants stressed the importance beginning of the interrogation with this strategy because it immediately establishes an integrative tone and enables the suspect to feel more comfortable and have a willingness to talk. *Gary*, from the Kansas City Police Department, noted that most of the people they bring in for questioning have negative perceptions of the police and believe they are not to be trusted. As a result, the interrogators employ this strategy—and do it immediately to overcome issues of trust. Gary says:

> You have to begin an interrogation by establishing rapport because you have to overcome the fact that you are accusing them (the suspect) of something and overcome the biases they probably have towards the police.

*Sandra* from the Riley County Police Department also adds that it is essential to build a connection with the suspect at the beginning of the interrogation. She offers:

> You want to get the suspect talking about themself at the beginning and build a rapport with them. You want to talk with them for a few minutes and build that connection with
them so they don’t feel ashamed. I also feel like I can connect with them because I’m a female and a mom, which makes it easier.

As noted with these instances, as well as the remaining eight participants, interview results show that establishing trust and connecting with suspects must be the first priority for an interrogator or the other tactics will be ineffective.

_Not an interrogation, ‘an accusatory interview’_

All ten participants recognized that while interrogations and interviews both seek information, interrogations are much more accusatory and are centered on acquiring a confession. Despite the diverging end goal, many participants said that standard questioning begins like much like an interview and evolves into an actual interrogation. One reason may be because someone may be interviewed to give information about the crime and it becomes known from the details given that they are involved. One participant explains how an interview turns into an interrogation. She said she was seeking information from a witness about a fire that was set and she soon learned that he was involved:

I was initially interviewing him because he was the star witness. But then I started noticing some inconsistencies throughout the interview and his story was changing. I also noticed this through his nonverbal cues; every time he was going to lie he put his hands on his head. This is when I knew he knew more than he was sharing and was possibly involved so it then turned into an interrogation. (Carol, United States Department of Justice)

Another reason this happens is to continue to make the suspect feel comfortable while also probing for more information about the crime:

When you first start talking to them you will want to use basic, simple questions
to make them feel comfortable. You also do this as a frame of mind for them to open up and this is when the interview turns into an interrogation. *(Rick, Kansas City Metropolitan Crime Commission)*

Interrogations begin as somewhat of an interview in order to read the person being questioned and to gather details about the crime.

*Meta Theme: A Theme about themes*

The third theme revealed in the interviews was a universal discussion of creating a central theme in the interrogator and suspect’s narrative. This is not unusual, and participants all suggest the use of theme development in standard questioning. This method plays an integral role in interrogations. *Ryan,* from the Riley Country Police Department, said theme development is crucial in getting a suspect to confess:

> Theme development is a way to give the suspect an out or a justifiable reason for committing the crime. By downplaying the crime or placing the blame on the victim, the suspect is more likely to confess.

Minimization is a common form of theme development that many officers use. One officer, named *Troy,* shared details of a case that involved child pornography. He explains:

> It would have done me little good to instantly confront him with my personal feelings about this crime; he already knew it was wrong. Though I had plenty of physical evidence, I still wanted a good interview and confession. Instead I used a method of minimization. In other words, I acted as if what he was doing, although it made me sick, was really not a big deal. I let him know it was not my thing, but it was likely that we just didn’t enjoy the same things.
He also concluded that the suspect eventually confessed because it was likely that the tactic reframed the offender’s view of his offense and, after the questioning, he had a minimized view of the crime. Since all of the participants interviewed said they use some form of theme development in their interrogations, it can be concluded that this is an effective interrogation technique that ultimately leads to a confession.

*Only OJT works: Interrogating can’t just be learned from a manual*

The fourth major theme is interrogation training. All officers noted that they received training at the academy and received additional training from specialized seminars. But they suggested classroom training is far from real life situations. It is a helpful start, but on-the-job training is the best way to learn how to conduct interrogations—as well as being necessary to learn the style that works best for each individual. Several noted that during their initial training seminars, most were paired with a more experienced officer to observe their interrogations. After that, the officers said they developed their own personal styles and techniques from doing their interrogations. For example, one officer noted:

> We go to numerous schools and they provide useful information but most of the skills I have came from my experience. Through my initial interrogations, I learned my own tricks and how to pick up cues; that’s what makes you a good interrogator. *(Ryan, Riley County Police Department)*

Another office elaborated about the valuable information gained from these seminars, but also explains the limitations with them. He says the interrogator has to learn what works best for him/her:

> I have attended numerous interview and interrogation classes over the years. Like most other training one attends, I think you pick and chose things that will work for you, or for
the situation. I never walked away from any one of these classes thinking, ‘wow – this is it’. It’s more a matter of using those things that work best for you. While these training seminars are necessary, experience is a main factor in being a successful interrogator.

(*Troy*, University of Wyoming Police)

Although different techniques and skills are learned from interrogation manuals and seminars, an interrogator better develops their interrogation techniques by experience. They are able to learn how to read the suspect in order to know how to proceed, which cannot always be taught in a manual.

*Results of the Questionnaire*

Research question two examined the relationship between cognitive complexity, verbal aggressiveness, and interrogation communication effectiveness. Paired t-tests were performed to determine if the constructs under investigation were related.

First, cognitive complexity and communication effectiveness were tested. Results revealed a significant relationship, \( t(21, 9.837), p>.000 \). More specifically, this finding suggests the cognitive complexity is positively related to communication competence; thus, the more cognitively complex an individual, the more effective tactically.

Next, cognitive complexity and verbal aggressiveness were tested. Results also revealed a significant relationship, \( t(21, 11.003), p>.000 \). This finding suggests that cognitive complexity is positively related to verbal aggressiveness; thus the more cognitively complex, the more verbally aggressive. This finding was surprising. According to previous literature, cognitive complexity is not suggested to be positively related to verbal aggressiveness. However, it is not uncommon for law enforcement officials to be verbally aggressive. In addition, the cognitive complexity scores were relatively low (\( M=14.36, sd=5.06 \)). In fact, the average for college students is suggested to
be much higher (e.g., $M=20$; see Griffin, 2009). The low mean scores may be attributed to a limitation of the study. Interpretations will be discussed in the next section.

Finally, verbal aggressiveness and communication effectiveness were tested. As with the other two pairings, these results revealed a third significant relationship $t(21, -10.616)$, $p>.000$. This finding illustrates a negative relationship between verbal aggressiveness and communication effectiveness; thus the greater the verbal aggressiveness, the less effective the interrogator is tactically.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognitive Complexity</th>
<th>Interrogation Effectiveness</th>
<th>Cognitive Complexity</th>
<th>Verbal Aggressiveness</th>
<th>Verbal Aggressiveness</th>
<th>Interrogation Effectiveness</th>
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In sum, the results suggest that cognitively complex interrogators are more effective tactically. Less verbally aggressive interrogators are also more effective tactically. Yet verbal aggressiveness is positively correlated to cognitive complexity (people with high cognitive complexity have more verbally aggressive actions, and less cognitively complex individuals are less verbally aggressive). The next section will discuss these results in relation to the literature about communication and interrogation.
Discussion

This study primarily investigated strategies and techniques used for suspect interrogations and the relationship cognitive complexity, verbal aggressiveness, and interrogation communication competence have to an interrogation. The findings from the interviews reinforced the idea that interviews and interrogations have similar aspects but differ in their main goal and overall tone. Interrogations may begin a bit benign by attempting to create an inviting tone and a place that makes suspects feel comfortable, but they are, in general, more accusatory than interviews and rely on persuasion techniques to acquire confessions. The findings also indicate that officers develop and use their own strategies and techniques based on their experience and the training they have received. The study supports the importance of theme development in getting suspects to confess because they feel as if the reason for committing the crime is justified. Theme development offers the suspect a moral excuse, rationalization, or crutch that will make it easier for the suspect to confess (Inbau et al., 2001).

The literature also suggests that there are multiple techniques to get a suspect to confess. These are: direct confrontation, theme development, dealing with resistance, the alternative question, and developing details (Blair, 2005). The findings indicated that most officers prefer to develop their own technique initially, based on what they have been taught, but then they prefer to alter or switch techniques based on the behavior of the suspect as well as their own personal preferences. The decision to adapt to the suspect and situation is supported in the literature when writings suggest that alternative tactics should be used if one is not working. Do not continue down a path of no return; interrogators need to try various tactics. For example, if the suspect appears to be rejecting the theme being offered, then the interrogator should try a different one (Blair, 2005). It was unclear from the literature if there was a certain tactic deemed best for
interrogations or which elicited a higher result. The literature simply stated that there were five
tactics used and it is the interrogator’s responsibility to use what is best depending on the context
of the situation. Similarly, the officers suggest said that it is extremely important to be able to
read the suspect’s nonverbal behaviors in order to know which technique to apply, or which
technique to try next.

Interestingly, the literature does not discuss the use of building rapport with the suspect at
the beginning of the interrogation. This was the most dominant theme found in the interviews.
Participants argue that the ability to make the suspect feel comfortable is essential to the
psychology of a confession. In most instances, suspects open up in times of comfort, not in times
of fear. Rapport building is a necessary tactic to achieve communication goals because the
connection built between speakers leads to a willingness to reveal more information. In a study
about women in the workplace, it was found that people feel a kinship with others who like
them, appreciate them, and enjoy the same things as them—and in turn are helpful to them
(Booher, 1999). This applies to interrogations because if the suspect feels he or she is treated
fairly, then he/she will be more willing to be helpful during the questioning.

One of the more common interrogation techniques reported used was the direct
confrontation strategy. With this technique, interrogation begins with the direct positive
confrontation of the suspect. The interrogator directly accuses the suspect at the very beginning
(Inbau et al., 2001). According to Infante and Wigley (1986), this is consistent with verbally
aggressive behavior which may account for its relationship to cognitive complexity, because
alone, and with less cognitively complex individuals, verbal aggressiveness almost never leads to
goal achievement. Yet, contradictorily, the officers also strongly suggest that building a
connection with the suspect at the beginning is extremely important so the suspect feels at ease
and will be more willing to discuss the crime. So, officers are using both positive and negative interactions simultaneously to create a situation of mixed comfort and threat.

The survey investigated the relationship between cognitive complexity, verbal aggressiveness, and communication competence (e.g. the success of the interrogation). From the results, a positive relationship was found between cognitive complexity and communication effectiveness, which was supported by the studies conducted by Hale (1980) and Feffer and Suchotliff (1966). However, overall cognitive complexity scores were fairly low (comparable to general average scores), yet communication competence was fairly high. One reason for this could be that a high level of cognitive complexity is not necessary to be an effective interrogator because the interrogator focuses more on reading the suspect’s nonverbal behaviors to gauge if they are telling the truth. Interrogators do not necessarily have to be overly complex in their thinking; they just need to understand how the interrogation process works—which they are trained to do. For example, an FBI bulletin on interrogation says that an interrogator possessing a basic understanding of the themes (or techniques) of interrogation, can improve their ability to get a confession (Parsi, 2005). The low level of cognitive complexity may also be in part due to the use of rapport building in an interrogation. The interrogator may not be the most cognitively complex, but their interrogations yield success because they make a connection with the suspect.

While cognitive complexity is linked to communication competence, there may be other factors involved in an interrogation since it differs from a normal conversation. The Role Category Questionnaire being administered online may also be a cause for the low levels of cognitive complexity and will be discussed in the limitations section.

One surprising result from the survey was the relationship between cognitive complexity and verbal aggressiveness. The survey suggested that the more cognitively complex a person is,
the more verbally aggressive they are as well. High verbal aggression is linked to lower communication effectiveness yet high cognitive complexity is linked to high communication effectiveness. This does not align with the relationship between cognitive complexity and verbal aggressiveness. The reason for this could be that a certain level of verbal aggression is required to be in the profession of law enforcement. Frustration is a cause of verbal aggressiveness (Infante and Wigley, 1986), which is often experienced in this field due to the difficulty of catching criminals or the resistance present in an interrogation. Even though the survey indicated relatively low levels of verbal aggressiveness, it was still present. Verbal aggressiveness can be seen as a negative trait because it is not constructive, attacks the self-concepts of others and causes psychological pain (Infante and Wigley, 1986). It can be difficult to talk with someone that is lying during questioning so this is why aggressiveness is sometimes used.

Another surprising result from the survey was the amount of verbal aggressiveness that the participants indicated. The mean was 2.02, which was unexpectedly and relatively low. On television (both in dramas and with news reports of suspect questioning) interrogations are almost always portrayed with the interrogator having a high amount of verbal aggression. They often tend to aggressively attack the suspect. They yell and use harsh language—especially if the severity of the crime is high. In addition, the interrogations can often take hours, even days. For example, the interrogation of Amanda Knox, a college student recently convicted for killing her roommate (December 4, 2009), was reported to take 41 hours (abcnews.com). One assumption may be that the crimes discussed in the interviews may not have been as severe as the crimes discussed in the media. This is not the case. In many cases, the crimes the interviewers listed were also severe crimes. Many officers talked about cases dealing with child pornography, rape, and murders; yet they indicated a low level of verbal aggressiveness on the survey. They also
reiterated this in the interview by talking about how they build a relationship with the suspect and treat them fairly even though a horrible crime has been committed. Many also stated that they do not like to use harsh language and that the suspect should be treated with respect. The low measure of verbal aggression on the survey aligns with the high level of success in their interrogations.

In sum, interrogations may be less harsh than they are often portrayed in the media. Interrogators use the building of rapport in an interrogation to put the suspect more at ease. It does take cognitive complexity to achieve interrogation goals, but a low measure of verbal aggressiveness is necessary. Society often has a negative perception of law enforcement because they view them as having unfair power and using cruel methods during interrogations. But it was found from my study that officers work to treat the suspect with respect, even if they are only doing it to obtain a confession. Perhaps people should treat the police with the same amount of respect and avoid derogatory terms towards the police since they may be far from accurate.

Limitations and Future Research

Despite this study’s contributions to the literature on suspect interrogation and its relationship to communication, a number of limitations related to this study should be noted. The first limitation of the study was the sample size of the questionnaire. Although it can be considered a strength that over 80% of the sample reported having conducted over 50 interrogations, only twenty-two completed this portion of the study. As a result, the likely power of the results can be questioned since it is possible that not enough responses were present to establish relationships among variables and/or the participants in the questionnaire may not be entirely representative of the type of person who conducts interrogations. The qualitative method yielded a total of ten participants. This can be considered appropriate only if saturation is
reached. Considering that there was a real redundancy with the responses, it is arguable that saturation was reached. Yet, if more were interviewed, there would be an even stronger understanding of the interrogation process. In both cases, increasing the sample size would have improved the overall findings and results of the study.

Since both the surveys and interviews were self-reported, the participants may have provided socially acceptable responses. Knowing that an outsider was recording their techniques, and the fact that perceptions of police officers are not always positive, the officers may have provided a more positive valence of their experiences within both methods. When the participants were asked what techniques they avoided or preferred not to use in an interrogation, many pointed to the use of hostile interrogating methods. Many participants may also have not wanted to indicate high levels of verbal aggression on the surveys because they are aware of negative police stereotypes. Interrogations have come under scrutiny in the past for using unethical methods of questioning so they may have wanted to avoid this negative stereotype.

Another limitation of the study is related to one of the instruments. In particular, the Role Category Questionnaire (RCQ) may not have been the best measure of cognitive complexity—not because it is not reliable, but because of the channel used. Online questionnaires are effective for most Likert-type scales, however, it was very difficult to administer the RCQ online because many participants may not have used the full time allowance and rushed through just to complete the survey. To fully realize the benefits of the RCQ, all participants should be given the same amount of time per section before proceeding. Because of these limitations, future research may want to administer the RCQ in person. Another way to reduce social desirability is to take a more naturalistic approach. Rather than asking interrogators what they “use”, the researcher should witness an actual interrogation (or view interrogation tapes) to better understand how the
interrogator knows when to use a certain tactic. By observing an interrogation in a naturalistic setting, a realistic view of what officers are using could be gathered and analyzed. Further research can also be done to determine why the surveys suggested a direct relationship between cognitive complexity and verbal aggression.

In conclusion, this research study elevated the understanding of suspect interrogation processes and how it relates to the area of communication. There are certain tactics that seem to work very well, such as theme development, but it is up to the person conducting the interrogation to know which tactic or strategy to use. This study also provided a look at verbal aggressiveness and cognitive complexity and their relationship to a successful interrogation.
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Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. What is your official title?

2. How long have you been serving in this capacity?

3. How long (if different) have you been questioning/interrogating suspects?

4. What can you tell me about/can you explain how you were trained to interrogate suspects?
   a. What methods were used to teach you interrogation techniques? (manuals, case studies, practice examples, etc.)
   b. What was the most challenging thing to learn when you first began?
   c. Do you still find that challenging? Why or why not?

5. In what ways, if any, do interrogation techniques differ from an interview? In other words, how would you explain to a “lay” person the significant differences or perhaps any similarities between these two events?

6. What different interrogation techniques are used in standard questioning?
   a. How do you know which interrogation method to use?
   b. What signs do you look for in the suspect to know which method is best?
   c. What instances are there when it is not a good idea to use a certain interrogation method/tactic?
   d. Is there a particular tactic that you do not like to use/are not comfortable using – but you know is effective?

7. How does theme development in an interrogation evolve?

8. How do you deal with resistance in an interrogation?

9. What kinds of personality traits do you think a successful interrogator should possess?

10. What advice would you provide to someone who was interested in this line of work (suspect interrogation specifically)? What should they know?

11. How do the perceived characteristics of the suspect affect the way that you interrogate them? How do the perceived characteristics of the situation affect the way that you interrogate them?
Appendix B

Informed Consent Form
Kansas State University

With assistance from a professor, I am conducting a research study at Kansas State University to better understand suspect interrogation from a law enforcement perspective. Specifically, I will examine different strategies used during the interrogation process, key personality constructs that are integral to successful interrogation, and particular outcomes of those strategies. My goal is to understand which strategies are employed in which situations or with which individuals in order to achieve desired outcomes. This survey will serve a mechanism to understand key personality traits and how they relate to the effectiveness of suspect interrogation. This online survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Proceeding to the next page as well as your completed survey will be considered as your consent to participate.

Your online responses are completely anonymous. It is possible the results of this research will appear in publication. However, the identity of the respondents and individual survey responses will remain unknown to the researchers as the questionnaires will be administered and submitted confidentially online. If the results of this research are published or presented at scientific meetings, your identity will not be disclosed. Individual responses will not be identified and we will only use aggregate results in the final report.

Terms of Participation: I understand this project is research, and that my participation is completely voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

I verify that I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described.

Please keep this page for your records. If you have any questions now or later, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher (listed below). In addition, if you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or if you have complaints, concerns, or questions about the research, please contact: Rick Scheidt, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224 or Jerry Jaax, Associate Vice Provost for Research Compliance and University Veterinarian, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224. You may also contact the Office of Compliance and Support at comply@ksu.edu.

Thank you for your participation.

Jessica Heuback
**Cognitive complexity scale using Role Category Questionnaire (RCQ)**

For this survey, the person will take 5-10 minutes and list attributes, mannerisms, and reactions of two people: one they like and one they dislike. Physical characteristics will not be taken into account for this survey. A RCQ is a free-response survey designed to measure the cognitive complexity of a person’s interpersonal perception.


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**Verbal Aggressiveness Scale**

Verbal Aggressiveness Scale

Instructions: This survey is concerned with how we try to get people to comply with our wishes. Indicate how often each statement is true for you personally when you try to influence other persons. Use the following scale:

1=almost never true
2=rarely true
3=occasionally true
4=often true
5=almost always true

1. I am extremely careful to avoid attacking individuals’ intelligence when I attack their ideas.
2. When individuals are very stubborn, I use insults to soften their stubbornness.
3. I try very hard to avoid having other people feel bad about themselves when I try to influence them.
4. When other do things I regard as stupid, I try to be extremely gentle with them.
5. When people behave in ways that are in very poor taste, I insult them in order to shock them into proper behavior.
6. When people criticize my shortcomings, I take it in good humor and do not try to get back at them.
7. When individuals insult me, I get a lot of pleasure out of really telling them off.
8. When I attack a person's ideas, I try not to damage their self concepts.
9. I refuse to participate in arguments when they involve personal attacks.
10. When I am not able to refute others’ positions, I try to make them feel defensive in order to weaken their positions.

Communication Competence Scale

Rate on a scale from 1-5 (5=strongly agree; 1=strongly disagree)

1. My interrogation techniques always yield success.
2. During an interrogation, I am always able to recognize when I should try a new tactic.
3. I am not very successful at achieving interrogation goals.
4. I am able to get a suspect to cooperate with me during an interrogation.
5. I am effective at dealing with resistance during an interrogation. (REMOVED)
6. The suspects I interrogate do not disclose the information I am seeking