

Violations of Gricean Maxims In Police Interrogations

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PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Gricean maxims are the intuitive principles speaker's use for effective communication. Violating these principles can lead to confusion and ineffective exchanges. When police interrogators violate these maxims, the suspect has no choice but to adjust their response to match the interrogator's questions. Interrogation tactics may be the cause of these violations, as they could control the power dynamic in the conversation. These violations could also aid to explain why suspects are led to give false confessions.

Previous research performed on the nature of police interrogations have resulted in the following findings:

- Two interrogation methods are used most: the Reid technique and the PEACE method.
- The Reid technique results in more false confessions and is believed to be more manipulative in nature than the PEACE method.
- Conversational tools like presupposition-bearing questions, deception, and ambiguity are known to be used by police in the interrogation room.
- Police interrogators always have the social power during the interrogation.

BACKGROUND

Gricean maxims of conversations were proposed by Grice (1978) and describe a speaker's intuitive principles used in every conversation.

- The maxims consist of the following four principles: quality, quantity, relation, and manner., as shown in figure 1.

<p>Quality</p> <p>Be truthful. Do not give false or unsupported information</p>	<p>Quantity</p> <p>Say enough information but not too much</p>
<p>Relation</p> <p>Stay relevant to the topic & pertinent to the discussion</p>	<p>Manner</p> <p>Be clear, brief & orderly. Avoid obscurity and ambiguity</p>

Figure 1. Diagram giving a brief explanation of Gricean maxims
Source: Bododobird (2021) *Grice's Maxim*. [digital image]. Norwich, United Kingdom. Retrieved from <https://www.redbubble.com/people/Bododobird/shop>

The PEACE model is an investigative technique that involves five stages that maintain objective fact-seeking.

- It consists of the following five steps:
 - Participation and Planning
 - Engage and Explain
 - Account
 - Closure
 - Evaluate
- This model is believed to be investigative in nature.
- Conversation should flow naturally in this model.
- Investigators following this technique usually maximize outcomes of interrogation with hostile suspects, specifically.

BACKGROUND CONT.

The Reid technique of interrogation consists of three components: factual analysis, interviewing, and interrogation.

- Within the three components, there are nine steps that a police officer should follow, with the end goal being to obtain a verbal or written confession from a suspect.
- The nine-step technique consists of six main ideas:
 - confronting the suspect on their assumed guilt,
 - psychologically justify the means of the crime,
 - minimize the amount of time that a suspect denies guilt,
 - force the suspect to acknowledge guilt,
 - reinforce sincerity that the police are there to aid the suspect,
 - lead the suspect to confess.
- This technique is often criticized for being coercive because the interview is operated on the presumption of guilt

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Which Gricean maxims are being violated?
- Which interrogation technique results in more violations?
- In what manner are maxims being violated by interrogators?
- In what way do these violations impact the social power between the police and the suspect?

METHODS

- Five interrogations following the Reid technique, and five following the PEACE method, were selected from the public video-sharing platform YouTube.
- The interrogation videos were divided into five-minute segments, and a segment from the beginning, middle, and end were transcribed for each video.
- Through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), violations of Gricean maxims were identified and analyzed in the conversation and surrounding contexts.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

- The Reid technique seemingly results in a greater amount of violations of Gricean maxims than the PEACE method. The Reid technique had 98 violations total, while the PEACE method had 21, as shown in figure 2.
- The maxim of manner seems to be violated more often than the other maxims in both interrogation techniques, followed by the maxim of relation, then the maxim of quality, then the maxim of quantity.
- Asking presupposition-bearing questions and creating false implications seem to be the typical mechanisms for violating the maxim of manner.
- Creating distractions seems to be the most used mechanism for violating the maxim of relation.
- Understatements and overstatements were used most frequently as violations of the maxim of quality.
- Giving half-truths was the most common way that interrogators violated the maxim of quantity.
- Interrogators controlled the conversation by repeating certain questions until a specific answer was given.
- A suspect's silence was responded to with an assumption of guilt.

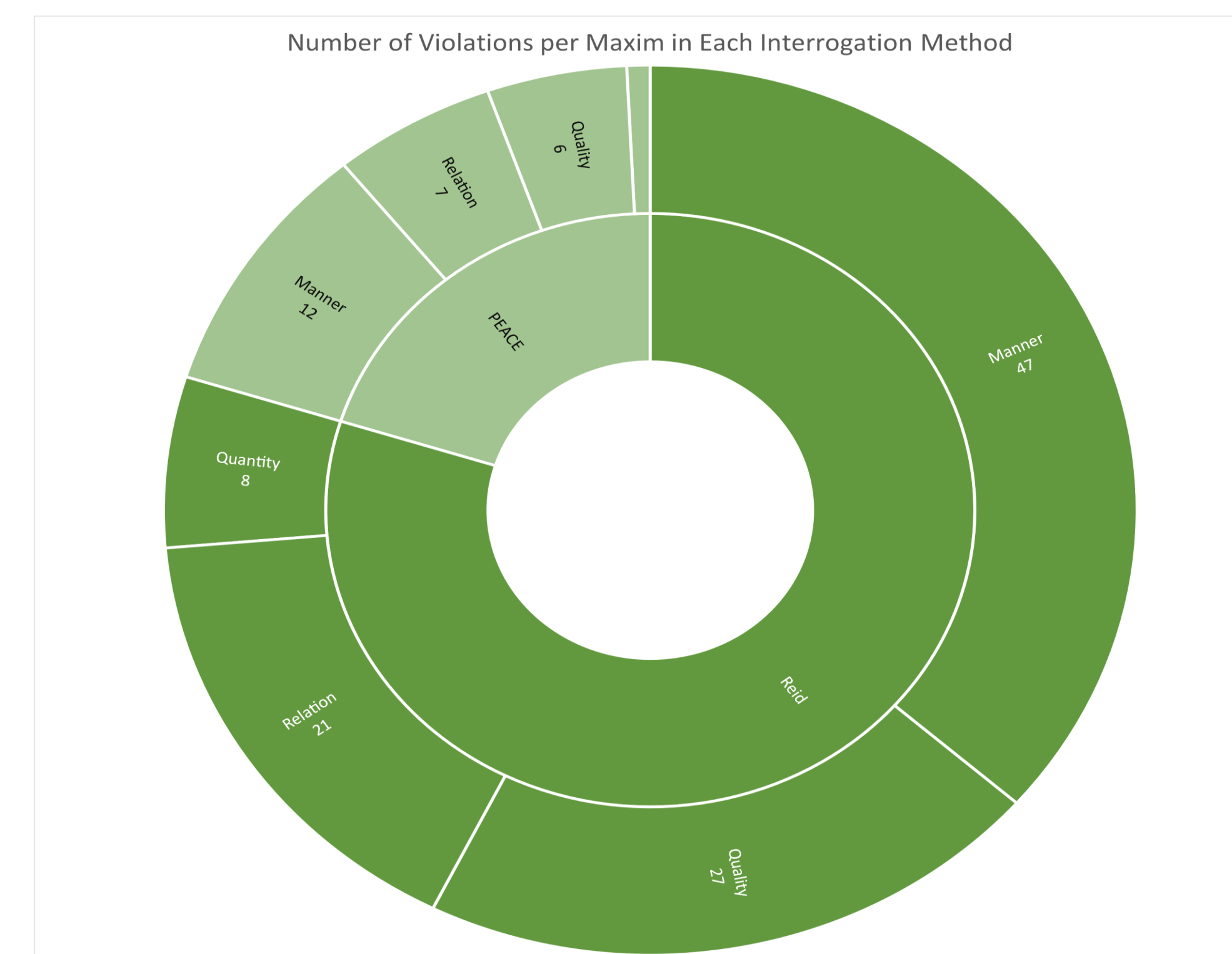


Figure 2. Chart showing the number of violations found in the data for each maxim per interrogation technique

DISCUSSION

Evidence suggests that the Reid technique of interrogation results in a higher number of violations of Gricean maxims. Some of the mechanisms that resulted in a violation, such as asking presupposition-bearing questions and using a distraction, were used intentionally. Suspects had two options: respond to questions that made them appear guilty or stay silent and be treated as if they were guilty by interrogators. This may highlight the subtle coercive strategies that are in play during a police interrogation following the Reid technique. However, the scope of this study is too small to generalize interrogations. Future research is needed to establish a more cogent conclusion generalizing interrogation methods.

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