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**The Self-Perceived Successful Hostage and Crisis Negotiator Profile: A Qualitative  
Assessment of Negotiator Competencies**

Amy Rose Grubb, Sarah J. Brown and Peter Hall,

Coventry University

Erica Bowen,

University of Worcester

Author Note

Amy Rose Grubb, School of Psychological, Social and Behavioural Sciences, Coventry University, Priory Street, Coventry, CV1 5FB; Sarah J. Brown, Centre for Advances in Behavioural Science, Coventry University, Priory Street, Coventry, CV1 5FB, Telephone: 07974 98 4673, Email: [sarah.brown@coventry.ac.uk](mailto:sarah.brown@coventry.ac.uk); Peter Hall, School of Psychological, Social and Behavioural Sciences, Coventry University, Priory Street, Coventry, CV1 5FB, Telephone: 02477 65 7688, Email: [peter.hall@coventry.ac.uk](mailto:peter.hall@coventry.ac.uk); Erica Bowen, Centre for Violence Prevention, Institute of Health and Society, University of Worcester, Henwick Grove, Worcester, WR2 6AJ, Telephone: 01905 54 2611, Email: [e.bowen@worc.ac.uk](mailto:e.bowen@worc.ac.uk).

Amy Rose Grubb is now at the Institute of Health and Society, University of Worcester.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Amy Rose Grubb, Psychology Unit, Institute of Health and Society, University of Worcester, Henwick Grove, Worcester, WR2 6AJ. Telephone: 01905 54 2954. Email: [a.grubb@worc.ac.uk](mailto:a.grubb@worc.ac.uk).

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### **Abstract**

Hostage and crisis negotiators serve a vital function within modern-day policing and can play a role in whether individuals live or die. As such, it is important for us to understand which police officers are more suited to this complex and challenging role, to ensure that the most effective negotiators are selected and trained. The current paper outlines the findings from interviews conducted with 15 negotiators from nine English police forces. Using a grounded theoretical approach, a conceptual model of the successful negotiator profile was developed comprising three primary and 19 secondary categories. The three primary categories consisted of: 'Negotiator entry requirements', 'Negotiator attributes', and 'Negotiator skills' which taken together, can be used to depict a profile of the successful hostage and crisis negotiator. The profile is discussed with reference to the potential implications for current hostage and crisis negotiator/police officer selection and training practices.

*Keywords:* hostage and crisis negotiation, hostage and crisis negotiator, hostage and crisis negotiator profile, hostage and crisis negotiator competencies, hostage and crisis negotiator selection

## Introduction

### Hostage and Crisis Negotiator Characteristics/Competencies

Different methodological approaches have been taken to address the question of “what makes someone an effective hostage and crisis negotiator (HCN)<sup>1</sup>”. The extant research within this domain is synthesised within Table 1 and depicts the varying approaches and research findings in relation to HCN characteristics/competencies. Some researchers, for example, have adopted a psychological testing approach that attempts to identify specific personality/psychological characteristics using pre-established personality/psychological measures (i.e. Allen, Fraser, & Inwald, 1991; Gelbart, 1979; Gettys & Elam, 1988; Grubb, Brown, & Hall, 2015; Vakili, Gonzalez, Allen, & Westwell, 1998 cited in Logan, 2001; Young, 2016). In contrast, others have adopted a practice-based, clinically-orientated, anecdotal evidence approach, whereby the characteristics of effective HCNs have been identified based on working directly with HCN teams and observing their members (i.e. Davis, 1987; Fuselier, 1981; McMains & Mullins, 2010; Slatkin, 2010). Furthermore, other researchers have adopted an approach that assesses the perceived characteristics of successful HCNs by using a self-report/survey approach (i.e. Birge & Birge, 1994; 2011 cited in Strentz, 2012; Gettys, 1983 as cited in Reese & Horn; Regini, 2002; San Jose State University Administration of Justice Bureau, 1995; 2004 as cited in Strentz, 2012). Most recently, Johnson, Thompson, Hall and Meyer (2017) identified a set of skills, behaviours and qualities that were believed to enhance negotiation success via a self-report survey conducted with 188 negotiators (75% of whom were from the United States of America (USA)). The most frequently reported skills consisted

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<sup>1</sup> The following abbreviations are used throughout this paper: HCN(s): hostage and crisis negotiator(s); HCNn: hostage and crisis negotiation; and HNC: hostage negotiator coordinator. In addition to this, the term “subject” is utilised to refer to either a “hostage-taker” or “individual-in-crisis”, depending on the context of the hostage or crisis situation being referred to.

of effective listening/communication skills, remaining calm, thinking on one's feet while maintaining flexibility and expressing empathy.

The aforementioned studies provide an insight into the characteristics and competencies that are likely to play a role in effective negotiation and have been conducted to identify a profile that can be used to guide HCN selection for law enforcement agencies. However, with the exception of one published study by Grubb et al. (2015), one unpublished study by Kennett (2003) that was embargoed making it unavailable for public/civilian consumption (R.J. Kennett, personal communication, November 16, 2016), and Johnson et al.'s (2017) study which included some HCNs from outside of the USA ( $n = 47$ ), all of these studies have been conducted in the USA. There is a dearth of British empirical research on this topic, and therefore, there is no culturally appropriate evidence base that can be used to inform the selection of trainee HCNs. The current study, therefore attempts to fill this gap, by identifying the characteristics and competencies of effective HCNs, as perceived by operationally active HCNs in England.

[Insert Table 1 Here]

### **Selection of Hostage and Crisis Negotiators**

Whilst selection processes vary slightly between police departments within the USA, several established protocols/procedures for selecting HCNs exist. The National Council of Negotiation Associations (NCNA) and FBI Crisis Negotiation Unit (CNU) recommended guidelines and policies (established in 2001) state that consideration should be given to identifying officers who display the following characteristics and competencies: they are volunteering for the role; have a high level of self-control; have a good ability to remain calm under stress; demonstrate excellent interpersonal communication skills; have a calm and confident demeanour; are a good listener and interviewer; and work well in a team concept

(NCNA & FBI CNU, n.d.). In addition to these guidelines, there is also a well-established selection model for trainee HCNs in the USA, as described by McMains and Mullins (2014), which directs law enforcement agencies to follow a sequence of steps when selecting new HCNs. These steps include: 1) Advertisement of a HCN team vacancy that informs officers of the role requirements; 2) Officers should apply via an interest sheet/application which includes biographical/work data, details why they are interested in the position and provides evidence of their communication ability; 3) Officers should be subjected to a structured interview with the team leader, whereby they are rated/graded on the following aspects: the candidate's willingness to work unusual hours, be on call, views on teamwork and communication ability (amongst others); 4) Candidates should take part in a structured HCN team interview, whereby the team members have a chance to assess the candidate in relation to aspects such as: communication skills, adaptability, ability to think on one's feet, temperament, ability to cope with a variety of situations, team working skills/ability, ability to deal with stress and team fit (amongst others); 5) Use of a telephone role play scenario whereby the candidate is scored by team members on their performance in responding to a scripted/standardised crisis intervention situation (such as a barricaded suicidal subject). Optional additional steps include incorporation of a physical fitness/agility test (used by some departments) (Hogewood, 2005) and utilisation of psychological testing/evaluation, as a means of assessing candidates' abilities to deal with stress, anger management, stability of personality, ability to solve problems creatively, ability to take orders and not be in charge, and frustration intolerance (McMains & Mullins, 2014).

In a similar vein, the Canadian Police College<sup>2</sup> (2016) stipulates the following selection criteria for trainee crisis negotiators: officers should be strong team players; have at least five

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<sup>2</sup> There are likely to be other international police/law enforcement policies that govern the selection of HCNs, however, this information is not always publically available due to the security concerns within the policing arena.

years of operational police experience; possess above-average interviewing, communication and listening skills; and be able to perform under high levels of stress for long periods of time. When selecting candidates who are suitable to attend this training course, the Ontario Provincial Police (2006), for example, assess candidates based on behavioural competencies alone, including: commitment to organisational learning; communicating effectively; flexibility; impact and influence; learning from experience; problem solving; self-control; and team work.

In the United Kingdom (UK), a similar policy/set of guidance is lacking. Kennett's (2003) work identified the limitations associated with the multi-faceted approach adopted by UK police forces when selecting HCNs, which are yet to be addressed. Whilst ostensibly, UK forces follow a similar approach to that described above (see Grubb, 2016 for a full description), current mandate dictates that individual territorial forces utilise their own selection procedures which vary in accordance with force HR policies and hostage negotiator coordinator (HNC) force/regional lead directives. An exemplar force recruitment method requires candidates to apply utilising a paper-based application form by demonstrating evidence to support the following Policing Professional Framework (PPF) qualities: 1) Decision making; 2) Leadership – Leading People; 3) Professionalism; 4) Public service; and 5) Working with others (Anonymised at request of force, 2016). Without access to each of the 43 individual UK force policies, it is impossible to state whether all forces assess against the same criteria at the initial application stage, or whether all forces utilise the same selection model in terms of the interview/assessment process. As such, it is prudent to suggest that there is a lack of consistency and parity in relation to the way that new HCNs are selected within the UK. The aim of the current study, therefore, was to provide an exploratory insight into the competencies possessed by HCNs in one area of the UK (i.e. England). These findings can then be used to develop a social psychological and demographic profile of a successful HCN

which can be used to inform a selection model in England, which is in line with a research evidence base.

## Method

### Design

The research utilised a qualitative design, whereby interview data were analysed utilising a constructivist grounded theory approach (as directed by Charmaz, 2006).

### Participants

Interviewees consisted of 15 HCNs from nine territorial police forces in England that had taken part in an earlier phase of the research (please see Grubb et al., 2015). Purposive sampling was used to recruit the HCN sample to identify participants that were most relevant for the progress of data collection and development of theory (Morse, 2007). A form of maximum variation sampling was utilised (Patton, 1990) with the intention of catching a wide variety of perspectives and identifying information-rich cases based on a range of HCN experience. Interviewees varied in terms of: *type of force (i.e. metropolitan/rural)*, *gender*, *current role*, *current rank* and *length of experience as a HCN*. The interviewees (10 male/5 female) were aged between 41-54 and had a range of 24-195 months' experience as HCNs<sup>3</sup>.

### Measures

**Demographic questionnaire.** Participants completed a brief demographic questionnaire prior to the interview, which contained 15 questions relating to personal characteristics and occupational history within the police force, including: *age*, *gender*,

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<sup>3</sup> Each interviewee is depicted by an alphanumerical code which represents their interview letter, gender, force number and length of service in months as a HCN (i.e. A:M:1:156 refers to Interview A; Male HCN; Force Number 1; and 156 Months of Service as a HCN).



*ethnicity, force, rank, current position/role, length of service as a police officer, HNC training/qualification levels, length of service as a HCN and number of incidents dealt with as a HCN.*

**Semi-structured interview schedule.** A semi-structured interview schedule was devised by the researchers and addressed the following areas: 1) The recruitment and selection process for HCNs, 2) The training and continuing professional development of HCNs, 3) The operational experiences of HCNs, 4) The process of decision-making throughout the HCNn process, 5) The strategies, styles and techniques used by HCNs to resolve incidents, 6) The skills required and utilised during the HCNn procedure, and 7) The support structures and coping strategies utilised by HCNs following involvement in hostage/crisis situations. From the point of view of the current paper, the interview schedule focused on the skills required and utilised during the HCNn procedure/considered to be important for the HCN role. Exemplar questions include: *“What skills do you think you use whilst dealing with crisis situations?”*; *“What skills do you think are important to be an effective negotiator?”*; *“What do you think makes a person a good negotiator?”*; *“What skill or attribute do you think is the most important for a negotiator?”* and *“What would you look for in others if you were selecting people to do this role?”*.

## **Procedure**

Ethical approval was sought and gained from the Coventry University ethics committee and Regional or Force Lead HNCs provided permission for HCNs to take part. Interviews were carried out at each HCN's place of work and all interviewees were fully debriefed at the end of the interview. The interviews lasted between 45-130 minutes; with a mean interview length of 87 minutes resulting in a corpus of data that comprised of 1,301 audio minutes (i.e. 21.7 hours) of data. The interviews were orthographically (i.e. verbatim) transcribed and were emailed to each interviewee prior to the commencement of data analysis to allow time for

correction/redaction. Specific redactions were made within three of the transcripts to remove confidential/sensitive information and to protect the identity of the interviewee.

### **Analysis**

The interview data were coded in line with a grounded theory constructivist framework. Open coding was completed on the entire set of transcripts in chronological order, using highlighters and production of handwritten comments within the margins of the transcripts. Using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), the identified concepts were then further refined into broad level tentative categories that could be used to provide meaning to the data. Memoing (Flick, 2009; Lempert, 2007) and clustering (Charmaz, 2006; Rico, 1983) techniques were utilised in tandem with the open coding process to identify similar concepts that could be grouped together to form categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Three hundred and twenty concepts<sup>4</sup> were initially identified and these concepts were then subjected to focused coding whereby more directed, selective and conceptual categories were generated (Glaser, 1978).

Focused coding was then performed whereby the 32 initial broad categories/concepts (see Table 2) that related to the current model being discussed were further refined into primary and secondary categories. Refinement of the categories was achieved by identifying the most significant and/or frequently occurring concepts and selection of the categories that made the most analytic sense to categorising and synopsising the data (Charmaz, 2006). The focused coding process was deemed to be complete once the cross-comparative process performed across the interview transcripts demonstrated saturation of data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and

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<sup>4</sup> These 320 concepts were eventually categorised into five micro-models: 1) The nature and characteristics of hostage and crisis negotiation model; 2) The hostage and crisis negotiator journey model; 3) The hostage and crisis negotiator experience model; 4) The D.I.A.M.O.N.D. model of hostage and crisis negotiation; and 5) The self-perceived successful hostage and crisis negotiator model. The current paper addresses the findings relating to the fifth micro-model listed above. Please refer to Grubb (2016) for findings relating to the other micro-models.

no further concepts or categories were identified. At this stage, a form of framework analysis was used to cross-reference and validate the emerging themes and to identify those characteristics/competencies that demonstrated the highest concordance rates within the sample (see Table 2). This method was utilised to enhance the reliability and credibility of the categories identified.

[Insert Table 2 Here]

Axial coding was then utilised as a means of refining the categories specifically into three primary and 19 secondary subordinate categories and identifying how these categories relate to one another in a hierarchical sense. Axial coding was utilised to elaborate each category and conceptual maps/diagrams were used to help integrate categories and sub-categories and to produce substantive theory (as suggested by Clarke, 2003; 2005) in relation to the successful HCN profile. The combination of open, focused and axial coding eventually resulted in the generation of a theory that can be used to depict the successful HCN profile, as perceived by HCNs in England (see Figure 1 for conceptual map).

[Insert Figure 1 Here]

## **Results**

The data analysis revealed 3 primary categories: ‘Negotiator entry requirements’, ‘Negotiator attributes’ and ‘Negotiator skills’; and 19 secondary categories that are discussed sequentially below.

### **Negotiator Entry Requirements**

HCNn is a voluntary position that is performed in addition to a police officer’s day-to-day role. To qualify operationally, officers must apply, be selected, and successfully complete

the regional or national HCN training course<sup>5</sup>. The data revealed several core eligibility/entry requirements that needed to be met for an officer to be selected for one of these training courses and these consisted of: a requirement for HCNs to operate “at rank”; a requirement for HCNs to demonstrate a substantial and significant commitment to the role; and for officers to be “in it for the right reasons”.

**Minimum rank requirement.** Historically, police officers had to be of at least, inspector rank or above to apply for the HCN role. However, the findings suggest that this requirement has been relaxed within most rural forces, with officers being able to apply for the role once they reached the rank of sergeant<sup>6</sup>. There was, however, still an enhanced rank requirement within some metropolitan forces (e.g. Force 4 and Force 9), whereby officers had to be of inspector rank (or above). Whilst this criterion was ‘non-negotiable’, this requirement produced mixed feelings from interviewees, with some feeling that it was important to ensure the appropriate/adequate amount of operational policing experience and senior level decision-making ability; and others feeling that the requirement was too stringent and “precludes some really good potential negotiators” (J:F:6:110).

The only thing that I disagree with is... I know a lot of people who are at constable level, who have a lot of good qualities to do that work... It certainly isn't about rank. It's about... an individual's ability. And that can be any rank (O:F:9:36).

The rank requirement was, therefore, not perceived by all interviewees as being necessary (or sufficient in isolation) for officers to perform the HCN role successfully; an assessment that is

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<sup>5</sup> The regional course is a one-week intensive course that tends to focus mainly on crisis negotiation and is run by a number of police forces across the UK; whereas the national course is a two-week course run by the Metropolitan Police at Hendon Police College (the Metropolitan Police Service's principle training centre).

<sup>6</sup> This requirement has recently been relaxed even further within some forces, with some forces now allowing Police Constables (PCs) to complete the HCN training (L. Provard, personal communication, February 14, 2017).

echoed by McMains and Mullins (2014, p. 88) within their USA selection model, who propose/recommend that “rank should not matter” when selecting HCNs.

**Committed to the role<sup>7</sup>.** Interviewees described a requirement for officers to be substantially and significantly committed to the role to succeed and perform effectively. Due to the nature of crisis incidents and the anti-social hours that tend to go hand-in-hand with the role, HCNs are often required to ‘drop things at a moment’s notice’ and respond to a call. Being able to demonstrate their ability to respond when needed (at any time of day) and their full commitment to the role, despite the potential negative impact on family/social life was deemed to be a vital entry criterion for successful HCNs.

I’d be looking at... people who are level-headed, but who are really enthusiastic, and who are committed to the role. Sometimes, very rarely, we’ll get those people who do find it a bit of a shock to be part of a 24/7 rota when the phone goes at three o’clock in the morning (A:M:1:156).

Senior HCNs, and those involved within the selection process (i.e. HNCs) frequently described a need for applicants to demonstrate a substantial time commitment to the role: “We will expect you to be a negotiator for at least five years...” (A:M:1:156); and an attitude that verified their understanding (and ability) to drop things at a moment’s notice. They felt that these aspects were effectively addressed within the application and selection process, part of which involved a panel interview whereby officers were asked to explain their understanding of, and commitment to, the role. There was also an acknowledgement of the cost implications for forces in terms of ensuring that investment in HCN training provided some form of financial return by a commitment from the officer to remain on the cadre for a certain period of time:

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<sup>7</sup> This competency has also been identified within the USA literature, whereby McMains and Mullins (2001) suggest that negotiators need to be totally committed to the negotiation process.

“...the second part is a... more structured approach to make sure that you can commit to the on-call arrangements and to drop everything at short notice, from the... need to train people and get your value for money really” (I:M:6:84).

**In it for the right reasons.** Interviewees felt that it was very important that officers were applying for the role for the ‘right reasons’. Some described incidents historically where officers had applied as a means of enhancing their CV/chances for promotion without genuinely committing to the role: “...there is always a risk when you recruit people, that they’re doing it as a... sort of CV filler for a couple of years...” (J:F:6:110) and others referred to the difficulties that this type of attitude had caused for cadres in the past:

They have problems in other forces, of people applying for it, because it’s a good tick, it’s a good attribute to have, on the CV... their people, they’ll do it for a year or two, and they’re, no, I’m bored of this now, and they move on, and it causes a problem (F:M:4:111).

Interviewees felt that attempting to filter out individuals who were applying for the role for the ‘wrong reasons’ was an important part of the selection process and specified that the incorporation of questions into the traditional panel interview aspect of the HCN selection process typically used within English forces was a means of achieving this.

### **Negotiator Attributes**

An attribute is defined as “an inherent characteristic” (Attribute, n.d.) and the second primary category relates to a set of attributes that were perceived by interviewees as important for successful HCN performance. These attributes emerged in the context of discussions relating to successful HCN characteristics (i.e. “*what makes someone a good negotiator?*”) and the characteristics that they would look for if they were selecting new HCNs for the cadre. In the context of the current study, attributes tended to be conceptualised by interviewees as

personal characteristics that were either present or not in a HCN, as opposed to skills that were conceptualised as existing on a spectrum and could be trained/enhanced or developed. Ten secondary categories were identified, with six being corroborated by at least a third of interviewees (i.e.  $n = 5$ ). These categories are described below in order of most to least frequently corroborated.

**Empathic.** Most [ $n = 9$ ] interviewees described their role as requiring an ability to empathise with subjects, regardless of their history, background, or the context of the hostage/crisis incident. One interviewee described “having some sympathy or understanding of what they’re going through” (N:F:8:34) as her main tool when negotiating and others consistently referred to the ability to empathise as being a core attribute within the successful HCN profile: “...you have to be able to empathise with somebody. You’ll never fully understand what they’re going through. But how can you move forward if you don’t appreciate... what it is they’re going through?” (O:F:9:36).

Demonstration of empathy has been consistently referred to within the HCNn literature as playing a core role within the negotiation process (i.e. the Behavioral Influence Stairway Model (BISM): Van Hasselt, Romano, & Vecchi, 2008; Vecchi, Van Hasselt, & Romano, 2005; Vecchi, 2007 as cited in Van Hasselt et al., 2008). This suggestion has been further reinforced/corroborated within the Anglo-centric D.I.A.M.O.N.D. model of HCNn (see Grubb, 2016; Grubb, Brown, Hall, & Bowen, 2018) as a core component for establishing rapport with the subject and eventually influencing behavioural change as a result of the developed relationship between the HCN and subject.

Interestingly, there was a suggestion from some HCNs that they perhaps do not need to be truly 100% empathic individuals, as long as they possess the ability to demonstrate empathy when it is needed. One interviewee, for example, alluded to an ability to ‘switch empathy on

and off' as required, or to demonstrate/feign empathy when needed, even though true empathy may not have been experienced at the time. He referred to the concepts of both sympathy<sup>8</sup> and empathy<sup>9</sup> and it may be that HCNs need to be able to display sympathy if they are unable to display true empathy (i.e. to genuinely share the feelings and emotions that the subject is experiencing).

I will be very nice to some people, who are not necessarily... deserving of it... and if that's just being cynical and being a means to an end, then possibly it is... but I'm not going to get anywhere... not achieving any degree of sympathy, or empathy... with the individual (F:M:4:111).

**Non-judgemental attitude/respect for others.** Most interviewees [ $n = 9$ ] felt that it was vital for HCNs to demonstrate respect for others and possess an ability to withhold judgement throughout negotiations: "You've got to be able to build a rapport whether they're a masked murderer or whether they're a... petty shoplifter or whatever" (C:F:2:96). Interviewees described instances whereby they had to deal with individuals who may have committed horrendous crimes in the past or may be particularly "unsympathetic characters" (F:M:4:111), but emphasised the importance of withholding judgment within the HCNn context.

I think certainly not being judgemental is one, because you deal with some people that... if they jump, some people would say, thank goodness, but you're there to do a job... I've never found that difficult, actually, I said about the one sex offender, I mean,

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<sup>8</sup> Sympathy is defined as "the feeling that you care about or are sorry about someone else's troubles, grief, misfortune, etc." (Sympathy n.d.).

<sup>9</sup> Empathy is defined as "the feeling that you understand and share another person's experiences and emotions" (Empathy n.d.).



he was guilty, and he actually did want to commit suicide for that, to save face for what he did, but you don't treat him differently. Any police officer would say to treat people the same, but I think in reality, that's not always the case. I think negotiating is such a difficult area of business that you need to actually do what you say, and not be judgemental... (L:M:7:54).

One interviewee appositely described this process as "separating the person from what they've done" when negotiating with people who may have "done things that you find really repugnant" (K:M:2:111).

**Flexible**<sup>10</sup>. Most interviewees [ $n = 9$ ] referred to the need for HNCs to be flexible and to be able to manage both work and personal commitments whilst on call: "...somebody that's flexible as well. It's a huge demand on you, negotiating, and it impacts on your personal life, quite a bit, when you're on call" (L:M:7:54). Flexibility in this sense tended to refer to HCNs being able to drop things at a moment's notice and respond to deployment calls as and when they occur: "...flexible... in terms of being able to turn out all sorts of times and day" (G:M:4:123). However, flexibility was also referred to in terms of working with and supporting other team members: "...what we're looking for very much is flexibility, support, help within that team" (E:M:3:114); and in the sense of being able to adapt to different roles within the negotiator cell, if required:

Unfortunately my number one is... not keen on blood... So whilst he's stood there starting his negotiations, he went, can you just take over for a bit? And I didn't know... And he went off... And then I just stood here and just cracked on with it (N:F:8:34).

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<sup>10</sup> Flexibility has also been identified as a core competency for HCNs within the USA literature, whereby Fuselier (1981) and Vecchi et al. (2005) both identified that HCNs need to be flexible and cope with uncertainty in stressful situations. Versatility is also referred to by Gelbart (1979) in a similar vein.

**Operational policing experience/credibility.** Some interviewees [ $n = 7$ ] felt that officers needed to have a substantial amount of operational policing experience and *ergo* police credibility: “I think it’s important to have someone who has experienced these sorts of scenarios... they’ve experienced getting involved in the siege situation. They can understand how it works...” (A:M:1:156). Operational experience was deemed particularly necessary for HCNs to be able to control their emotions when deploying to hostage/crisis incidents: “if you get really excited by the whole thing, that’s difficult... and so what you need is that operational experience around just crisis incidents” (E:M:3:114). This requirement is also echoed by the Canadian Police College who specify that trainee crisis negotiators must have at least five years of operational police experience (Canadian Police College, 2016). One interviewee also felt that it was important to possess the appropriate level of legal/legislative/procedural knowledge (as gleaned from operational policing experience) to advise subjects appropriately throughout the negotiation process: “...you’ve got to be legally sound to... you know, not advise, but to make those promises. And procedure. You’ve got to know all about... the force procedures about the subject matter that you are talking about” (O:F:9:36).

**Patient<sup>11</sup>.** Interviewees described a requirement for HCNs to be patient: “I think the people who tend to do it... they’re prepared to listen, they’re prepared to take the long game, patience” (F:M:4:111) and many [ $n = 7$ ] referred to incidents throughout the transcripts that required them to demonstrate patience and/or perseverance: “As is often the way, he didn’t want to engage first of all but, being persistent... persevering with him, I eventually got it so he was talking to me” (D:M:3:63). They described incidents whereby they would have to attempt to engage with subjects who were classed as missing persons (MISPERs) or individuals who were at risk of self-harm/suicide and would perhaps have to continually try to contact the

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<sup>11</sup> This competency was also identified by Slatkin (2010) as being a desirable characteristic for HCNs; whereas persistence was identified in a similar manner by Allen et al. (1991).

subject via telephone/in person as the subject may not be ready to engage in dialogue for some time: “I’ve spent two hours talking to a loft hatch, and eventually the loft hatch is opened and that’s the first noise you would have” (I:M:6:84). This could involve subjects consistently hanging up the phone, verbally abusing the HCN or simply refusing to engage in dialogue; all scenarios requiring patience.

**Resilient.** Just under half of the sample [ $n = 7$ ] felt that resilience was a key attribute: “...you have to be resilient...” (G:M:4:123); and this is a finding that is equally corroborated by earlier research (i.e. Milner, 2002 as cited in Ireland, Fisher & Vecchi, 2011). Interviewees described this attribute in terms of being able to cope emotionally and physically with the demanding nature of the role: “I think the only other thing would probably be some resilience where... they’ve got to be prepared to slog it out... sometimes... in bad weather in... dodgy places” (K:M:2:111). In addition to this, resilience was also exemplified by reference to the need to have a “thick skin” (G:M:4:123) to deal with the verbal abuse that often goes hand-in-hand with such highly pressurised and emotive incidents: “...other people can be so rude and horrendous to you, and tell you that you look like a bag of shit, and that you’re fat... and you just stand there, and you just take it all...” (O:F:9:36).

**Caring/compassionate.** A third of interviewees [ $n = 5$ ] felt that it was important to be caring/compassionate and to demonstrate attributes that were indicative of a desire to help people: “You’ve got to be there because you want to be there, because you genuinely want to help that person” (H:F:5:50); “I think... it’s somebody who... are caring, compassionate...” (O:F:9:36). This is a finding that has previously been reported within the literature (i.e. Gettys, 1983 as cited in Reese & Horn, 1988; Milner, 2002 as cited in Ireland et al., 2011); however, it is worth noting, that a couple of interviewees (C:F:2:96; F:M:4:111) felt that whilst a caring and compassionate nature was important, they also felt that this needed to be balanced with psychological stability. They felt that some of their colleagues would be excellent in terms of

the supporting nature of the role but would struggle to “leave it behind” once the incident had been resolved: “...I want to help people, but I can’t help everybody. I will do my best, but I think there are some people that are... in danger of either burnout or psychological problems themselves because it went wrong” (C:F:2:96).

**Mentally agile**<sup>12</sup>. A third of interviewees [ $n = 5$ ] felt that it was important for HCNs to be able to “think on their feet” (K:M:2:111) and “be mentally agile...” (E:M:3:114). Such an attribute was deemed important for HCNs to be able to adapt their style/strategy of negotiation to the subject/context to successfully resolve the situation, along with being able to engage in, follow and plan the next part of the dialogue with the subject.

...but it’s also to multi-task because although you’re still talking to them and listening to what they’re saying you’ve also got to plan what you’re going to say next... so you’ve just got to stay with it as well so it can be mentally quite tiring (N:F:8:24).

Mental agility was highlighted as being a particularly vital attribute when dealing with/responding to kidnap and extortion situations where time is particularly crucial and the response needs to be immediate, efficient, and appropriate due to the high-risk stakes involved in ‘red centre’ incidents<sup>13</sup>: “...you’re trying to deal with a huge amount of information. You’re trying to process it very, very quickly and pass on the most pertinent points really, really quickly and do that in an environment where you potentially can’t speak...” (E:M:3:114).

**Genuine/trustworthy**. Some interviewees [ $n = 4$ ] felt that it was important for HCNs to be credible, trustworthy and to portray themselves as genuine individuals who are there to help subjects in crisis/conflict: “I think it’s important to just be yourself” (O:F:9:36); “You’ve

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<sup>12</sup> Mental agility has been identified as an important competency for HCNs within previous research (Davis, 1987; Fuselier, 1981; Gettys 1983, as cited in Reese & Horn, 1988; Logan, 2004 as cited in McMains & Mullins, 2014).

<sup>13</sup> “Red centre” is the term used internally within UK police forces to describe a kidnap and extortion/ransom situation.

got to be... somebody they can trust...” (C:F:2:96). The element of building trust with the subject is one that has been clearly identified as a vital component within the successful HCNn process (i.e. within the BISM; Van Hasselt et al., 2008; Vecchi et al., 2005; Vecchi, 2007 as cited in Van Hasselt et al., 2008) and has equally been corroborated within the Anglo-centric D.I.A.M.O.N.D. model of HCNn (Grubb, 2016; Grubb et al., 2018). The ability to form a trusting relationship with the subject is perceived as a vital component within the de-escalation and resolution of hostage/crisis situations and the current findings further validate the importance of HCNs being able to foster trust on the part of the subject. Within HCNn, trust is conceptualised as a weapon that can be used to influence the subject’s behaviour in a positive manner, and interviewees felt that they needed to be perceived as someone genuine in order to instil trust within the subject: “...just being genuine... you’ve... got to be true to yourself, and true to them, really... And try and say, you know, this is how I can help you” (H:F:5:50).

**Intuitive<sup>14</sup>.** Although the concept of intuition tends to be a controversial one within the policing arena, some interviewees [ $n = 4$ ] felt that it was important for HCNs to be intuitive or to be able to rely on their intuition to some extent. Whilst intuition *per se* has not previously been identified, studies have identified the need for HCNs to be ‘insightful’ (i.e. Allen et al., 1991; Gelbart, 1979) which refers to “having or showing a clear understanding of something” (Insightful, n.d.). One interviewee referred to the importance of intuition being used to identify hooks<sup>15</sup> that can be focused on and used to de-escalate the crisis situation: “...you’ve got to be intuitive to pick up on those hooks and levers” (C:F:2:96). Whereas another described how instinct or intuition was important to identify the “common thread” between the HCN and

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<sup>14</sup> Being intuitive is defined as “having the ability to know or understand things without proof of evidence” (Intuition, n.d.).

<sup>15</sup> “Hooks” are described by Slatkin (2009) as important themes or potentially fruitful areas to pursue further with the subject.

subject which could be used to “hook and bond with the person” to a point where influencing their behaviour in a positive manner becomes possible (B:M:2:195).

### **Negotiator Skills**

The third primary category related to the skills that HCNs need to possess to be effective within their role. Five secondary categories were identified: ‘Listening’, ‘Communication’, ‘Team-Working’, ‘Problem-Solving’ and ‘Honesty’. These are discussed sequentially below, in order of the most to least frequently corroborated skills.

**Listening**<sup>16</sup> was the most frequently identified skill [ $n = 14$ ]: “They must be a... particularly a good listener, not so much a talker” (E:M:3:114). Listening skills have been identified by previous research as an important competency for HCNs (Fuselier, 1981; Gettys, 1983 as cited in Reese & Horn, 1988; Johnson et al., 2017; San Jose State Administration Bureau, 1995; 2004 as cited in Strentz, 2012). To listen is defined as “to hear something with thoughtful attention” (Listen n.d.), which aptly describes the technique required within the HCNn process. Individuals who are in crisis or conflict need to be able to explain the difficulties/emotions that they may be experiencing and “to be heard” by somebody: “...the common theme... is definitely enhanced listening... Listening with a real intent to try and understand and empathise with them; what is it that’s brought them to this place on this day?” (B:M:2:195). As such, HCNs often form the role of *confidant* and the findings indicate that “becoming the confidant” is very much part of the HCNn process. Several terms were utilised throughout the transcripts to refer to listening skills, including “enhanced listening” (B:M:2:195), “effective listening” (A:M:1:156) and “active listening” (F:M:4:111) but the common theme relates to the ability of HCNs to listen to the subject and to demonstrate to the

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<sup>16</sup> Listening (with an emphasis on active listening) is also an aspect that has been identified within the USA literature as playing a core role within the HNC selection process (Fuselier, 1981; Vecchi et al., 2005).

subject that they hear and understand what is being said to them (i.e. active listening): “I think the primary one is active listening, you’ve got to listen to what you’ve been told... So I try to really focus on what I’ve been told and feed off that... (L:M:7:54). In addition to being the most frequently identified skill, most interviewees also described listening as the key/core/most important skill required by HCNs.

**Communication**<sup>17</sup> was the second most frequently identified skill [ $n = 12$ ]: “Well, communication is... the trump card to any of it really” (O:F:9:36); “It’s definitely got to be communication, that’s got to be the main bit because that’s what you are doing all the time” (N:F:8:34). Communication is defined as “the imparting or exchanging of information by speaking, writing or using some other medium” (Communication n.d.) and this process synthesises the dialogue that is exchanged with the subject during the negotiation process. Whilst the concept of HCNn might appear to be a complex and mysterious entity, HCNs are simply communicators engaging with individuals-in-crisis/conflict to try and establish why they are in the situation and work collaboratively with them to resolve the incident and minimise injury/loss of life: “...what we are is we are very good communicators... Enhanced communicators, probably...” (B:M:2:195). Communication skills were also identified by several interviewees involved in the selection of new recruits as one of the skill sets that are assessed within the selection process, thereby further validating the importance of this skill within the HCN repertoire: “...what we’re looking for is someone who’s got... some natural ability to communicate” (D:M:3:63).

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<sup>17</sup> The need for HCNs to possess good communication skills has been identified within previous research (Gelbart, 1979; Gettys, 1983 as cited in Reese & Horn, 1988; Gettys & Elam, 1988; Logan, 2004 as cited in McMains & Mullins, 2014; Milner, 2002 as cited in Ireland et al., 2011).

**Team-Working**<sup>18</sup> was identified by the majority of interviewees [ $n = 9$ ]: “And teamwork is crucial... Because this thing don’t work... on that individual basis... There’s no such thing as a lone wolf, you know, absolutely it is the team” (G:M:4:123). Hostage/crisis incidents have extremely pressurised parameters and involve high-risk situational variables and, as such, can involve HCNs dealing with highly emotive and risky situations. The nature of HCNn, therefore, necessitates teamwork, with HCNs operating on a primary (i.e. communicator) and secondary (i.e. support) HCN basis: “But we’re also looking for someone who has a team fit. I think we do work very closely and very well as a negotiators team. We’re looking for someone who’s going to fit in to that team...” (D:M:3:63). In this context, “team fit” is conceptualised as the ability for an individual to fit into and effectively integrate into an already established HCN cadre. Several interviewees also referred to the fact that this skill was considered as part of the selection process: “...part of the selection process is actually around... that team fit... and what we’re looking for very much is flexibility, support, help within that team” (E:M:3:114).

**Problem-Solving.** Almost a third of interviewees [ $n = 4$ ] felt that HCNs needed to possess good problem-solving skills: “Listening... personal communication... Some problem-solving... those I would... highlight as... top [skills]” (G:M:4:123). One interviewee described this skill as an important competency within police work generally: “But police officers, generally, have to relate to people, they have to communicate with people, they have to problem-solve so... the majority of them should have the skills” (K:M:2:111), thereby suggesting an extension/extrapolation of this skill from generic police work into HCNn specifically. Problem-solving is well established within the HCNn literature (Miller, 2005)

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<sup>18</sup> McMains and Mullins (2001) refer to the importance of the candidate “believing in the team” when selecting new HCNs and McMains (1992 as cited in McMains & Mullins, 2014) goes so far as to suggest that the aspect that separates/differentiates HCNs from patrol officers is their ability to work as a team.



and is identified as the fourth crisis intervention stage by Vecchi et al. (2005). It is a strategy that tends to be utilised once emotions have been de-escalated and the subject is thinking more rationally, and according to Vecchi et al. (2005, p. 540), “problem solving is a multistep behavioural process in which the negotiator helps the person in crisis explore alternatives and concrete solutions”.

**Honesty** was perceived by some interviewees [ $n = 4$ ] as an important skill for HCNs to possess: “...decisions are... based upon the principles of being totally open and honest... certainly not lying to them, at all. Absolutely not... Being totally honest with the individual” (A:M:1:156). This extended not only to being honest with subjects about what would happen to them once they had surrendered themselves or the crisis incident had been resolved but also about themselves: “I think you’ve got to be very fair, very honest, not only to them, but about yourself as well” (C:F:2:96). One interviewee (A:M:1:156) described honesty as being one of the core skills that he would be looking for in a candidate when selecting officers to complete the HCN training. Whereas others referred to the use/role of honesty as a tactic/strategy within the HCN repertoire: “...prepared to say sorry, honesty with them... there are times when I’ve said I got that wrong; you told me not to mention family... I clearly got that wrong, I’m sorry” (I:M:6:84).

## Discussion

### Implications and Recommendations

This model identifies the competencies that are important for officers to be effective/successful HCNs and provides a basis for the selection criteria utilised by police forces within England. Most of the competencies are ostensibly assessed via the current selection processes, although the exact competency assessment/interview questions may differ across forces. However, there are a number of other competencies, mostly in relation to HCN

attributes, that could potentially be assessed more formally as part of the selection process. In the main, this applies to constructs that are considered to be “softer skills”, such as the ability to actively listen and the ability to empathise with others; these are skills that could be measured by psychometric tests such as the Active Empathic Listening Scale (Drollinger, Comer, & Warrington, 2006), for example. Similarly, psychometric tests are available to measure physical and emotional resilience and could be utilised to assess the extent to which candidates possess the ability to cope with adversity/emotional stress/recover from traumatic incidents (i.e. The Resilience Test; St. Jean, Tidman, & Jerabek, 2001; The Resilience Quotient; Russell & Russell, 2009). The latter of these, could also be used to assess the attribute of “flexibility” (i.e. a specific facet of resilience) suggested as necessary for HCNs to succeed in their role.

It is also worth noting that whilst HCN attributes were typically conceptualised by interviewees as being either present or not, some of the attributes could potentially be enhanced through training and, therefore, should not necessarily be viewed on a purely dichotomous (i.e. present/absent) scale. It may be, for example, that an HCN who is not naturally empathic, could be trained to demonstrate empathy more effectively, or an HCN who is not naturally resilient, could enhance their level of resilience via a bespoke form of training. As such, in addition to providing a selection tool, the profile could also be used to identify training or development needs of applicants/existing HCNs, with skills being conceptualised broadly as more “trainable” competencies than attributes.

More generally, the profile outlined in the model could be utilised as a crib sheet to develop/inform questions used in the application process/interview to select candidates to complete the regional/national HCN training course. Scenario-based/situational judgement questions, for example, could be developed as a means of identifying candidates who possess higher levels of the necessary/identified skills/attributes. Alternatively, the model could simply be used to validate/provide credibility to existing selection methods. Please refer to Table 3

for details of an exemplar assessment information sheet that could be used to inform current selection processes. The rubric provides suggestions in relation to how each individual criterion could be assessed (i.e. via the use of a written application form, psychometric test, assessed role play or within a structured interview setting) and provides details of a scoring method that could be used to assess and compare each candidate objectively. The implementation of a standardised assessment rubric would help to provide parity in relation to selection methods utilised by different forces and help to further standardise and professionalise the discipline of HCNn.

A similar form of standardisation has been in place for police officers in the UK since 2003, which consists of a national assessment centre designed by the College of Policing (and its precursor organisations). The approach, referred to as police SEARCH Recruit Assessment Centre (RAC) is a “half-day assessment centre which includes a competency-based structured interview, a numerical ability test, a verbal ability test and four non-police interactive exercises” (Clemence, Rix, & Mann, 2016, p. 11). Candidates are also required to demonstrate competence in written communication, however, this is assessed differentially across territorial forces. A competency-based questionnaire (CBQ) is also used as an optional sifting tool by police forces wanting to exclude candidates prior to the assessment centre. A recent review conducted by the College of Policing suggests that a new national process will be implemented in due course, which is informed by research evidence that predicts performance within police roles (Clemence, Rix, & Mann, 2016). Components of the new selection process, which proposes the use of situational judgment testing and personality testing to sift candidates once tools have been trialled and evaluated, could be extrapolated to HCN selection processes. Personality testing to screen out undesirable characteristics (such as a lack of personal integrity) has been successfully implemented in the USA (Clemence, Rix, & Mann, 2016) and may

provide a useful tool for HCN selection, where qualities such as sincerity, honesty and being genuine/trustworthy are equally recognised (see Table 1).

Whilst the aim of this study was to identify successful HCN competencies, many of the skills and attributes that have been identified have relevance to policing, more generally, and could be used to inform both the selection and training of new/existing police officers. Effective communication, problem solving, resilience, team-working, openness to change, and professionalism, for example, have been identified as competencies relevant to the role of police constable (College of Policing, 2015; NPIA, 2010) demonstrating a clear overlap with the skills/attributes identified as being important for HCN success.

[Insert Table 3 Here]

### **Limitations, Future Directions and Conclusion**

Whilst steps were taken to enhance the credibility of the findings using some of Shenton's (2004) suggestions in relation to conducting qualitative research<sup>19</sup>, the findings are still limited, to some extent, by the qualitative methodology adopted. The categories described above have been identified based on interviews with a relatively small sample of HCNs, and the model would benefit from further validation utilising a quantitative methodology to confirm/corroborate the competencies that have been identified. Similarly, it must be borne in mind that these competencies are merely those that are "perceived" to be important, as opposed

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<sup>19</sup> Methods employed included: 1) The development of an early familiarity with the culture of the organisation (i.e. police service) and specific discipline being investigated; 2) Respondent validation and member checks which included providing all interviewees with an opportunity to firstly validate/comment on the interview transcript and secondly with an opportunity to confirm whether the final categories and models created adequately reflected the phenomenon being investigated; 3) Peer scrutiny of the research project from colleagues and presentation of findings at conferences which enabled the researcher to refine methods and strengthen arguments in relation to comments made and conclusions drawn.

to the “actual” competencies that are quantitatively linked to success within the role of HCN. Further research, would, therefore, benefit from attempting to statistically (i.e. using predictive validity testing) identify the competencies that are positively correlated with successful HCNn. Validated psychometrics, could for example, be used to assess whether those HCNs that are rated as more successful (using a combination of metrics, such as supervisor rating, number of incidents successfully resolved and time taken to resolve incident) possess higher levels of resilience, empathy, listening skills etc.

This model outlines a profile of the self-perceived effective HCN based on interviews conducted with 15 English HCNs. The findings suggest that police officers need to meet several entry requirements, possess certain attributes/characteristics and demonstrate specific skills to perform successfully within the HCN role. The profile depicts an officer who has reached a certain level of seniority from operational policing experience; is genuinely committed to the role; is empathic, non-judgemental, flexible, and resilient; and has effective listening, communication and problem-solving skills. These findings can firstly be used to inform new (or validate existing) selection processes for HCNs in England and present an opportunity for territorial police forces to adopt a standardised HCN selection procedure. In addition to this, the findings have relevance to wider police selection/training processes, whereby many of the skills/attributes identified are equally relevant to police constable selection and identifying potential training needs of existing officers. Whilst the current paper reports on one of the first academic attempts to identify the successful English HCN profile, further research to validate this profile within a HCN performance context is warranted to strengthen and triangulate the claims made within this paper and continue to enhance the concept of evidence-based HCNn within policing.

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Table 1

*Research Conducted to Identify the Personality and Socio-Psychological Characteristics of HCNs*

Research Study	Variables Measured	Measures	Findings	Study Limitations <sup>20</sup>
Allen et al. (1991)	Psychological & personality characteristics	CPI & MMPI	<b>Insightful</b> ; intelligent; rational; clear-thinking; logical; self-controlled; self-confident; decisive; able to make concessions; assertive; determined; <b>persistent</b> ; trustful; tolerant of ambiguity; values success; expresses frustration appropriately; <b>has the ability to empathise</b> and use insight to either help or hurt others.	Lack of comparison/control group Small sample size ( $N = 12$ )
Birge, A. and Birge, R. (1994; 2011 as cited in Strentz, 2012)	Behavioural responses likely to predict effective HCNs	Self-reported operational behavioural responses	Use of non-physical response (i.e. talking/listening) to resolve past incidents involving conflict as opposed to the use of force.	Lack of empirically robust methodology Limitations associated with self-report data
Davis (1987)	Desirable HCN competencies	Practice-based experience	Maturity; intelligence; <b>mental agility</b> ; <b>empathy</b> ; interest in people; cool-headedness.	Anecdotal evidence based on experience
Fuselier (1981)	Desirable HCN competencies	Practice-based experience	Emotional maturity; easily establishes credibility with others; <b>good listening ability</b> /excellent interviewing skills; good verbal ability (i.e. ability to use logical arguments to convince others that his viewpoint is rational & reasonable); ability to communicate with individuals from a range of socio-economic classes; practical intelligence; ability to cope with uncertainty; <b>total commitment to the negotiation approach</b> ; <b>ability to think clearly under stress</b> ; ability to understand need for and assist in tactical assault/intervention where necessary.	Lack of empirically robust methodology (anecdotal evidence)
Gelbart (1979)	Psychological & personality characteristics	CPI (Taylor Manifest Anxiety Scale) & MMPI (Psychopathic Deviate Scale)	Highly adequate social skills; <b>communications ability</b> ; self-assurance; social presence; intelligence; ability to manipulate others; ambitious; active; forceful; <b>insightful</b> ; resourceful; <b>versatile</b> .	Lack of comparison/control group Small sample size ( $N = 44$ )
Gettys (1983 as cited in Reese & Horn, 1988)	Psychological & personality characteristics	Survey of law enforcement agencies	Ability to talk easily with people; <b>ability to listen</b> ; <b>ability to think and perform well in stressful situations</b> ; <b>empathy</b> ; the ability to “step back” and analyse the situation; <b>the ability to respond in a genuine, caring way</b> .	Based on self-reported perceptions of the characteristics of effective HCNs by police administrators

<sup>20</sup> All studies apart from those marked with an asterisk (\*) are subject to the limitation that they are specific to a USA context and cannot necessarily be applied to international law enforcement settings.

Gettys and Elam (1988)	Psychological & personality characteristics	CPI & MMPI	<b>Good verbal skills/verbal fluency</b> ; positive self-image; good reasoning abilities; high sensitivity to others.	Lack of a matched pairs comparison sample. No way of determining whether HCNs in the sample were “effective/successful” or not.
Grubb et al. (2015)*	Psychological & personality characteristics	BFI, CERQ, CST-R, GDMS & EII	Cross-sectional survey comparing HCNs ( $n = 117$ ), police officers ( $n = 118$ ) and control group ( $n = 203$ ). HCNs scored higher on extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness and lower on neuroticism than control group. HCNs scored lower than the control group on use of maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies and maladaptive behavioural/cognitive strategies, and higher on overall coping skills and the use of adaptive coping strategies. HCNs scored lower on dependent and avoidant decision making and higher on all measures of emotional intelligence than the control group. No significant differences between HCNs and police officers were observed.	Lack of matched pairs comparison sample (i.e. control group consisted of students).
Logan (2004 as cited in McMains & Mullins, 2014)	Desirable HCN competencies	Review of psychological evaluations used by police departments	<b>Good communication skill/knowledge</b> ; good at dealing with the general public; verbally fluent; good self-image; good reasoning ability; high sensitivity to others; mature; <b>mentally agile</b> ; intelligent; dependable; reliable; higher base level of arousal; high sense of morality; emphasises cooperation over manipulation; reserved/socially withdrawn; resourceful.	Suggests desirable characteristics based on current aspects that are assessed – these aspects have not been validated by empirical research
McMains and Mullins (2010)	Desirable HCN competencies	Unknown	Ability to remain calm, cool and collected in the most stressful environments (primary HCN); ability to control emotions; ability to control voice; ability to multi-task (secondary HCN).	Lack of empirically robust methodology
Milner (2002 as cited in Ireland et al., 2011)*	Desirable personality characteristics	Unknown	<b>Adaptability</b> ; calmness; <b>caring</b> ; <b>commitment</b> ; detachment; discernment; <b>dynamic thinking</b> ; <b>effective communicator</b> ; humility; professional integrity; <b>resilience</b> ; and self-assuredness.	Based on a sample of crisis negotiators from a secure forensic setting as opposed to police HCNs. Limitations associated with self-report data (i.e. measured <i>perceived</i> as opposed to <i>actual</i> characteristics).
Regini (2002)	Desirable HCN competencies	Self-report/qualitative data identified through discussions with crisis negotiation team members	Adept criminal investigator; non-confrontational; <b>non-judgemental</b> ; exceptional interview & interrogation skills; good self-control; ability to maintain voice control.	Lack of empirically robust methodology  Limitations associated with self-report data
San Jose State University Administration of Justice Bureau (1995;	Desirable HCN competencies	Self-reported perceived characteristics of effective HCNs (using a modified version of	<b>Demographic/occupational variables</b> : Male/female aged 35–50; variety of law enforcement assignments; <b>at least 5 years’ experience as a police officer</b> ; good ability to relate to people; training in suicide prevention; <b>a good listener</b> .	Limitations associated with self-report data (i.e. measured <i>perceived</i> as opposed to <i>actual</i> characteristics)

2004 as cited in Strentz 2012)		the 300-item Adjective Check List)	<i>Specific personality characteristics:</i> Adaptable; alert; calm; capable; clear thinking; mature; <b>patient</b> ; sociable; tactful (90% agreement); clever; confident; conscientious; intelligent; wide interests; logical; <b>persistent</b> ; practical; reasonable; reliable; <b>understanding</b> (75-89% agreement)	
Slatkin (2010)	Desirable HCN competencies	Unknown	<b>Patience</b> ; <b>sincerity</b> ; down-to-earth manner; <b>non-judgemental/tolerant of others</b> ; <b>flexibility</b> ; aplomb; verbal expressiveness.	Lack of empirically robust methodology
Tatar (1982)	Personality & motivation	Unknown	Emotional stability; extraversion; instinctual gratification; liberal orientation.	Exact method of data collection unknown
Vakili et al. (1998 as cited in Logan, 2001)	Psychological & personality characteristics	MMPI-2, CPI-R and PAI	Successful HCNs were found to be reliable, dependable, more reserved/socially withdrawn. They were found to have higher base level of: arousal/awareness, confidence, resourcefulness, efficiency and a dutiful sense of morality. They show above average <b>team working ability</b> and are more likely to emphasise co-operation over manipulation.	Small sample size ( $N = 15$ ; 11 Male/4 Female)
Young (2016)	Psychological & personality characteristics	BFI, CERQ & GDMS	National survey of HCNs ( $n = 514$ ) and patrol officers ( $n = 63$ ). No differences observed between HCNs and patrol officers. <i>Personality traits:</i> HCNs were lower in neuroticism/higher in openness than general population norms. <i>Cognitive emotion regulation strategies:</i> HCNs scored lower on rumination/higher than the general population on: acceptance, positive refocusing, refocus on planning, positive reappraisal, putting into perspective, catastrophising and other blame. <i>Decision making style:</i> No differences were observed between HCNs and the general public.	Comparison sample of patrol officers was much smaller in size and did not consist of a matched pairs sample.
Anonymous (2018)	Desirable HCN competencies	Semi-structured interviews with 15 English HCNs	<i>Entry requirements:</i> Sergeant/Inspector rank; committed to the role; in it for the right reasons. <i>HCN Skills:</i> listening; communication; team-working; honesty; problem-solving. <i>HCN Attributes:</i> empathic; non-judgemental; flexible; operational police experience/credibility; patient; resilient; comparing/compassionate; mentally agile; genuine/trustworthy; intuitive.	Qualitative self-report methodology. Identifies competencies that are self-perceived as important as opposed to empirically linked to HCN performance.

*Note.* BFI = Big Five Inventory; CERQ = Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire; CST-R = Coping Skills Test-Revised; GDMS = General Decision Making Questionnaire; EII = Emotional Intelligence Inventory; MMPI = Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory; MMPI-2 = Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory–Version 2; CPI = California Psychological Inventory; CPI-R = California Psychological Inventory–Revised; PAI = Personality Assessment Inventory. Characteristics in bold and italic font represent characteristics/competencies that are corroborated within the current study.

Table 2  
*Code Co-Occurrence Frequency Matrix Depicting Cross-Referenced Self-Perceived Successful HCN Characteristics and Competencies*

Interviewee	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32			
A	X	X	X	X		X			X	X	X		X							X															
B	X	X	X	X		X				X				X	X	X	X	X	X																
C	X		X			X			X	X				X							X	X	X	X											
D		X		X	X	X	X	X		X			X																					X	
E	X			X		X	X			X							X							X											
F			X	X									X	X			X	X					X			X	X	X							
G				X		X	X			X					X	X	X	X						X											
H			X	X		X				X								X		X															
I		X	X	X					X	X	X	X	X				X			X										X	X				
J	X	X	X	X	X	X									X										X					X					
K	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X		X			X	X	X	X						X										
L		X		X							X	X					X				X			X					X		X				
M				X		X			X		X		X											X											X
N		X		X	X	X	X				X	X	X	X			X	X							X										X
O	X	X	X	X		X									X		X	X						X											
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>14</b>	3	<b>12</b>	5	2	4	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	3	<b>7</b>	4	3	4	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	3	4	1	1	1	5	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	3	

*Note.* Bold text represents the ten most highly corroborated/frequently cited competencies.

Table 2 Key. Competencies: A = Knowledge; B = Skills; C = Characteristics/Attributes.

- 1. Operational policing experience (B)**
- 2. Ability to empathise/empathic/empathy/compassion (C)**
- 3. Non-judgemental/respect for others (C)**
- 4. Listening skills (B)**
5. Ability to persuade/manipulate/exert influence over others (B)
- 6. Communication skills (B)**
7. Mental agility (C)
8. Likeable/personable/able to get on with people (C)
9. Honesty (B)
- 10. Team working ability/team fit/team player (B)**
- 11. Ability to work logically and methodically/common sense (B)**
12. Level headed (C)
- 13. Perseverance/patience (C)**
14. Intuition (C)
15. Knowledge of mental disorders/psychology of human behaviour (A)
16. Problem solving ability (B)
- 17. Flexibility (C)**
- 18. Resilience/thick skin (C)**
19. Ability to make decisions/decisive (C)
20. Genuine/trustworthy (C)
21. Interest in people/human psychology (C)
22. Investigation/interrogation skills (B)
23. Ability to build rapport (B)
24. Care about people/supportive/desire to help people/altruistic (C)
25. Emotional intelligence/awareness (C)
26. Ability to blend into the background/be invisible (C)
27. Easy to talk to (C)
28. Ability to think before you speak (C)
29. Open minded (C)
30. Prepared to say sorry/humility (C)
31. Voice control/ability to control voice tone and pitch (B)
32. Ability to stay calm/operate well under pressure (C)



Table 3

*Assessment Criteria Rubric to Inform Selection of Trainee HCNs*

Competency Facet	Specific Competency Being Measured	Method of Assessment	Exemplar Psychometric Measures <sup>21</sup>	Rating Rubric	Score
1. Entry Requirements	a. Sergeant/Inspector Rank <sup>22</sup>	Application Form	N/A	Yes/No	N/A
	b. Committed to the Role	Interview Psychometric Testing	N/A CPI (Responsibility Scale)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 <sup>23</sup> Below/Above Norm Score <sup>24</sup>	/11
	c. In it for the Right Reasons	Interview	N/A	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	/10
2. Negotiator Skills	a. Listening Skills	Role-Play Assessment Psychometric Testing	N/A AELS	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Below/Above Norm Score	/11
	b. Communication Skills	Role-Play Assessment Psychometric Testing	N/A CPI (Sociability Scale)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Below/Above Norm Score	/11
	c. Team-Working Ability	Interview Psychometric Testing	N/A CPI (Sociability Scale)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Below/Above Norm Score	/11
	d. Honesty	Interview Psychometric Testing	N/A CPI (Tolerance Scale)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Below/Above Norm Score	/11
	e. Problem-Solving	Role-Play Assessment Psychometric Testing	N/A EQ-i (Problem Solving Subscale)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Below/Above Norm Score	/11
	3. Negotiator Attributes	a. Empathic	Role-Play Assessment Psychometric Testing	N/A CPI (Empathy Scale); AELS	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Below/Above Norm Score
b. Non-Judgemental		Role-Play Assessment Psychometric Testing	N/A CPI (Tolerance Scale)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Below/Above Norm Score	/11
c. Flexible		Interview Psychometric Testing	N/A CPI (Flexibility Scale); RQ; EQ-i (Flexibility Subscale)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Below/Above Norm Score	/11
d. Operational Police Experience/Credibility		Application Form/Interview	N/A	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	/10
e. Patient		Role-Play Assessment Psychometric Testing	N/A EQ-i (Impulse Control Subscale)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Below/Above Norm Score	/11
f. Resilient		Interview Psychometric Testing	N/A RT; RQ; EQ-i (Stress Tolerance Subscale)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Below/Above Norm Score	/11
g. Caring/Compassionate		Role-Play Assessment Psychometric Testing	N/A NEO-PI-3 (Agreeableness Subscale)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Below/Above Norm Score	/11
h. Mentally Agile		Role-Play Assessment Psychometric Testing	N/A CPI (Intellectual Efficiency Scale)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Below/Above Norm Score	/11
i. Genuine/Trustworthy		Interview Psychometric Testing	N/A CPI (Tolerance Scale)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Below/Above Norm Score	/11
j. Intuitive		Role-Play Assessment Psychometric Testing	N/A CPI (Psychological Mindedness Scale)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Below/Above Norm Score	/11
				Total Score	/185

<sup>21</sup> CPI = California Psychological Inventory (Gough & Bradley, 1996); EQ-i = Emotional Quotient Inventory (Bar-On, 1997); RQ = Resilience Quotient (Russell & Russell, 2009); RT = Resilience Test (St. Jean, Tidman, & Jerabek, 2001); AELS = Active Empathic Listening Scale (Drollinger, Comer, & Warrington, 2006); NEO-PI-3 = NEO Personality Inventory Version 3 (McCrae, Costa, & Martin, 2005).

<sup>22</sup> Amend as necessary in accordance with current individual force policy.

<sup>23</sup> Where a score of 1 = Poor and a score of 10 = Excellent.

<sup>24</sup> Allocate 1 point for a score above the psychometric test norm and 0 points for a score below the psychometric test norm. Score range: Minimum score = 17; Maximum score = 185.