The Psychology of False Confessions

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Typology of False Confession

\( \text{Voluntary False Confession} \)
\( \text{Coerced-Compliant False Confession} \)
\( \text{Coerced-Internalized False Confession} \)

(Kassin & Wrightsman, 1985)

Confessions & the Criminal Justice System

\( \text{Most potent form of evidence (Kassin & Neumann, 1997)} \)

\( \text{False confessions played a role in 25% of wrongful convictions} \)
Factors Associated with False Confessions*

- Interrogation Techniques
- Investigative Bias
- Vulnerabilities of the Suspect

*For a complete review, please refer to Meissner & Russano (2003)

Interrogation Techniques

- Reid Technique
  - advocates the use psychologically based techniques

- Technique Types
  - minimization
  - maximization

Kassin & Kiechel (1996)

- False confession paradigm
- Alt Key experiment
  - false evidence
  - vulnerability

- 69% overall confession rate
- 100% confession rate with false evidence & high vulnerability
Russano, Meissner, Narchet, & Kassin (2005)

- Examined true and false confessions
- The offer of leniency lead to higher confession rates
- The use of minimization led to higher confession rates
- Confession rates highest when the offer of leniency & minimization were used

Investigative Bias

Kassin, Goldstein, & Satitsky (2003)
- examine the influence of investigative bias
- when armed with a guilt bias
  - more guilt presumptive questions
  - used more interrogative techniques
  - exerted more pressure

Suspect Vulnerabilities

- **Age**
  - younger suspects are more likely to confess than older suspects
    - Redlich & Goodman (2005)

- **Mental Capacity of a Suspect**
  - IQ is 20 points lower than average among false confessors
    - Gudjonsson (1990)

- **Altered Mental State**
  - suspects who consumed an illegal drug were more likely to falsely confess than those who had not consumed an illegal drug
    - Pease, Gudjonsson, Clare, & Rafter, 1998
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