

# Psychology of law

Science



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Even though psychological region is the primary cause of police-induced false confessions, individuals differ in their ability to withstand interrogation pressure and thus in their susceptibility to making false confessions. All other things being equal, those who are highly suggestible or compliant are more likely to confess falsely. Interrogative suggestibility tends to be heightened by sleep deprivation, fatigue, and drug or alcohol withdrawal. Individuals who are highly compliant tend to be conflict avoidance, acquiescent, and eager to please others, especially authority figures.

With these coercive tactics, the police play on these weaknesses and prey on the individuals. This is a problem even if the individual is in fact guilty but is much more of a problem when the individual is innocent and gives a false confession. Authorities, researchers and the media have focused a growing awareness of incidences of coerced false confessions, as well as the associated personal and legal implications involved. The Innocence Project, a non-profit legal clinic that assists those wrongfully convicted of crimes, claims that 8% of wrongful convictions are due to forced confessions prompted by police.

Consequently, measures have been taken to try and reduce their frequency. There are many aspects in which coercive tactics are problematic but for the sake of this essay I will focus solely on its leading to false confessions. In the past two decades, hundreds of convicted prisoners have been exonerated by DNA and non-DNA evidence, revealing that police-induced false confessions are a leading cause of wrongful conviction of the innocent. Although the prevalence rate is unknown, recent analyses reveal that 20 to 25% of prisoners exonerated by DNA had confessed to police.

In the Central Park Jogger case, for example, all five Juveniles falsely confessed after lengthy unrecorded Interrogations In which they were yelled at, lied to, threatened, and promised Immunity In exchange for their admissions to participating in the assault and rape. In 15 to 20 percent of the DNA cases, police-induced false confessions were the primary cause of the wrongful conviction. Once detectives misclassifying an innocent person as a guilty suspect, they often subject him to an customarily interrogation.

Getting a confession becomes particularly

I OFF profile cases in which there is great pressure on police detectives to solve the crime, there is no other source of potential evidence to be discovered, and typically there is no credible evidence against an innocent but misclassified suspect. It is perhaps not surprising that most documented false confessions occur in homicides and high- profile cases. In these cases the police have the capability of being very coercive, which in turn can cause false confessions. Once the interrogation commences, the primary cause of police-induced false confession is psychologically coercive police ethos.

Psychological coercion can be defined in two ways: police use of interrogation techniques that are regarded as inherently coercive in psychology and law, or police use of interrogation techniques that, cumulatively, cause a suspect to perceive that he has no choice but to comply with the interrogators' demands. Usually these amount to the same thing. Psychologically coercive interrogation techniques include some examples, such as deprivations (of food, sleep, water, or access to bathroom facilities), incommunicado interrogation, and induction of extreme exhaustion and fatigue.

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In the modern era, however, these techniques are rare in domestic police interrogations. Instead, when today's police interrogators employ psychologically coercive techniques, they usually consist of (implicit or express) promises of leniency and threats of harsher treatment. As Offset and Leo have written, " the modern equivalent to the rubber hose is the indirect threat communicated through pragmatic implication". Threats and promises can take a variety of forms, and they are usually repeated, developed, and elaborated over the course of the interrogation.

Most documented false confessions in recent decades have been directly caused by or have involved promises or threats. Another form of psychological coercion, causing a suspect to perceive that he has no choice but to comply with the wishes of the interrogator, is not specific to any one technique but may be the cumulative result of the interrogation methods as a whole. If one understands the psychological structure and logic of contemporary interrogation, it is not difficult to see how it can produce this effect.

The custodial environment and hysterical confinement are intended to isolate and disembowel the suspect. Interrogation is designed to be stressful and unpleasant, and it is more stressful and unpleasant the more intense it becomes and the longer it lasts. Interrogation techniques are meant to cause the suspect to perceive that his guilt has been established beyond any conceivable doubt, that no one will believe his claims of innocence, and that by continuing to deny the detectives' accusations he will only make his situation (and the ultimate outcome of the case against him) much worse.

The suspect may perceive that he has no choice but to comply with the detectives' wishes, because he is fatigued, worn down, or simply sees no other way to escape an intolerably stressful experience. Some suspects come to believe that the only way they will be able to leave is if they do what the detectives say. Others comply because they are led to believe that it is the only way to avoid a feared outcome (e. G. , homosexual rape in prison). When a suspect perceives that he has no choice but to comply, his resultant compliance and confession are, by definition, involuntary and the product of coercion.