

Chapter 3: The Psychology of Police Investigations

Learning objectives for chapter 3

- Describe Reid model of interrogation
- Outline 3 potential problems with Reid model of interrogation.
- Differentiate the three major types of false confessions
- Explain why the police use criminal profiling and outline potential problems in its use.
- Explain what geographic profiling is and how it can be used in a police investigation

Police interrogations: A process whereby the police interview a suspect for the purpose of gathering evidence and obtaining a confession. People who confess to a crime are more likely to be prosecuted and convicted than those who do not. The goal is to obtain a confession of guilt from the suspect.

Reid model: (3) Stages: Gather evidence from witnesses/ victims. Non-Accusatorial interview to assess evidence of deception. Accuse suspect to secure a suspect. Then a nine-step model of interrogation used frequently in North America to extract confessions from suspects.

- 1) Suspect is immediately confronted with his or her guilt. If the police lack evidence at this point in the investigation they may imply that such evidence already exists.
- 2) Psychological themes are developed to rationalize or excuse the suspect's actions. Ex; A murderer may be told that the interrogators understand why he committed the crime and that it was justified "the victim was a known drug dealer he had it coming".
- 3) The interrogator interrupts any statements of denial by the suspect to ensure the suspect does not get the upper hand in the interrogation.
- 4) The interrogator overcomes the suspect's objections to the charges.
- 5) The interrogator must ensure that he has the suspect's attention and that the suspect does not tune out, techniques include psychically moving closer to the suspect.
- 6) The interrogator exhibits sympathy and understanding. Suspect is urged to come clean by appealing the suspect's sense of decency.
- 7) Suspect is offered explanations for the crime which makes self incrimination easier to achieve, may also suggest crime committed was an accident. Ex "Its okay it was just an argument gone bad".
- 8) Once the suspect accepts responsibility by means of agreeing with one of the alternative explanations, the interrogator develops this admission into a full confession for the crime.

9) Interrogator gets suspect to write and sign full confession.

Interrogation techniques used in Reid model (2)

Minimization techniques: Soft sell tactics used by police interrogators that are designed to lull the suspect into a false sense of security. The use of sympathy, excuses and justification.

Maximization techniques: Scare tactics used by police interrogators that are designed to intimidate a suspect believed to be guilty. Police may exaggerate the seriousness of the offence and by making fake claims about evidence the police supposedly have.

Three potential problems with the Reid model

Detecting Deception: The decision to commence a full-blown police interrogation relies on the accurate assessment of whether the suspect is being deceptive when he or she claims to be innocent. In Canada individuals have the right to remain silent and the right to legal counsel, only when a suspect waives these rights can their statements be used as evidence against them. This proposes a problem with the Reid model **because if the suspect does not wish to speak then it is his right to and thus the Reid model may be ineffective in this instance.**

Investigator Bias: When police begin their interrogation they already believe the suspect to be guilty. When people form a belief about something before they enter a situation, they often unknowingly seek out and interpret information in that situation in a way that verifies their initial belief. **Investigative biases can lead to coercive interrogations that cause suspects to appear more guilty even when the suspect had committed no crime.**

Interrogation practices and the courts: "Involuntary confessions and confessions provided when a persons mind is unstable are more likely to be unreliable". Confessions resulting from overt forms of coercion will not be admitted in north american courts. A confession is typically excluded if it was elicited by brute force; prolonged isolation; deprivation of food or sleep threats of harm or punishment; promises of immunity or leniency or baring exceptional circumstances without notifying the suspect of his or her constitutional rights. Example of this is R.V Hoilett.

R.v Hoilett: Hoillet was arrested for sexual assault in Toronto while under the influence of alcohol and crack cocaine. Officers later came into his cell to remove his clothes in order for them to be forensically examined, he was left naked with just a metal bed to sit on. Hoilett made an incriminating statement to the police and the trial judge ruled that the statement was made voluntarily and knowingly, therefore it was admissible in court. During the appeal the court pointed out that his decision to speak was influenced by how cold he was and that he needed a tissue and that officers suggested these things could be made available to him after the interrogation. As a result of their findings the ontario court of appeal reversed the decision of the trial judge , ruling that the statement of the accused was involuntary and ordered that a new trial be held.

The Mr. Big Technique

Unlike the Reid model this technique is used to secure a confession BUT takes place outside of an interrogation room. This procedure generally involves undercover police officers posing as members of a criminal organization who attempt to lure the suspect into a gang. The suspect is made to commit some minor crimes for which he is “rewarded”, once committed to the organization the suspect is interviewed for a higher level job which will require him to deal with the boss but before doing so he must confess to a serious (the one under investigation). The suspect is given several reasons as to why he must confess; as a form of insurance for the criminal gang so they have something on the suspect if he ever turns against them; also so that Mr. Big can draw on his purported influence and connections to make the evidence or problem disappear. The Technique has been proven to be affective with a 75% success rate and 95% conviction rate. Is this technique a form of entrapment? The answer is no because the use of the Mr. Big technique is meant to elicit a confession regarding an event that occurred before the operation started. The definition of entrapment is when a person is induced to commit an illegal act he otherwise would have not committed.

False confessions

False confessions: A confession that is either intentionally fabricated or is not based on actual knowledge of facts that form its content.

Retracted confessions: A Confession that the confessor later declares to be false

Disputed Confessions: Disputed confessions are confessions that are disputed at trial, which does not necessarily mean the confession is false or that it was retracted, a disputed confession may arise because of legal technicalities or because the suspect disputes the confession was ever made.

Voluntary False confession: Occurs when someone voluntarily confesses to a crime he or she did not commit without any elicitation from the police. Can occur from a number of reasons including; 1) morbid desire for notoriety, 2) The person is unable to distinguish fact from fantasy, 3) the need to make up for pathological feelings of guilt by receiving punishment, 4) a desire to protect someone body else from harm.

Coerced-Complaint False Confessions: This occurs when a suspect confesses to a crime, even tho the suspect is fully away that he or she did not commit the crime. These confessions are caused by the use of coercive interrogation tactics on the part of the police (Maximization techniques). A coerced complain confession may be given so the suspect can 1) escape from further interrogation 2) gain a promised benefit, 3) avoid a threatened punishment. **Most common** type of false confession.

Coerced-internalized false confessions: In this instance the individuals recall and confess to a crime they did not commit, usually they are exposed to highly suggestible questions. Several vulnerability traits are associated with this type of false confession including 1) a history of substance abuse or some other interference with brain

functioning. 2) The inability of people to detect discrepancies between what they observed and what they erroneously suggested to them and 3) factors associated with mental state, such as severe anxiety confusion or feelings of guilt. Ex: Case of Paul Ingram, man who confesses to raping his two daughters due to highly suggestive interrogation techniques.

Studying false confessions in the Lab

In a study conducted by *Kassin and Kiechel* they tested whether individuals would confess to a crime they did not commit. Individuals were asked to type in a series of letters read out loud by another participant. Participant vulnerability was manipulated by varying the speed that participants had to write. In the vulnerable group letters were read at 67 letters per minute, and in the not vulnerable group letters were read at a rate of 43 letters per minute. To measure compliance of the allegations the researchers presented the participants with a written confession to see how many people would sign it. To measure which participants **internalized** their confessions the researchers recorded comments made by the co-conspirator who asked them what had happened. If the participants accepted blame, he/or she was recorded as internalizing their confession. To measure the degree to which participants made up details to fit with their confession, known as confabulation researchers read the list of letters and asked them where they thought they had made a mistake.

Compliance: A tendency to go along with demands made by people perceived to be in authority, even though the person may not agree with them.

Internalization: The acceptance of guilt for an act, even if the person did not actually commit the act.

Confabulation: The reporting of events that never occurred.

Criminal profiling: An investigative technique for identifying the major personality and behavioural characteristics of an individual based upon an analysis of the crimes he or she has committed. Most commonly used in cases involving violent serial crimes. Goal of profiling is to prioritize.

Criticisms of offender profiling

Profiles tend to be ambiguous

The practical utility of a profile is questionable

Lack of empirical evidence

Based on the assumptions that traits are consistent.

ViClas: The violent crime linkage analysis system, which was developed by the RCMP to collect and analyze information on serious crimes from across Canada.

Linkage blindness: An inability on the part of the police to link geographically dispersed serial crimes committed by the same offender because of a lack of information sharing among police agencies.

Deductive criminal profiling: Profiling the background characteristics of an unknown offender based on evidence left at the crime scenes by that particular offender.

Inductive Criminal profiling: Profiling the background characteristics of an unknown offender based on what we know about other solved cases.

Organized- Disorganized model: A Profiling model used by the FBI that assumes the crime scenes background of serial offenders can be categorized as organized or disorganized. Organized crime scene behaviours reflect a well planned and controlled crime, while disorganized behaviours reflect an impulsive crime, which is chaotic in nature. Similarly it was thought that an offenders background can be characterized as organized or disorganized.

Organized background characteristics reflect a methodical individual, while disorganized characteristics reflect a disturbed individual, who is usually suffering from some form of psychopathology.

Classic Trait model: A model of personality that assumes the primary determinants of behaviour that are stable internal traits. These traits are assumed to result in the expression of consistent patterns of behaviour over time and across situations. This consistency is thought to persist across an offenders crimes and into the offenders noncriminal lifestyle. More empirical research is needed.

Geographic profiling: An investigative technique that uses crime scene locations to predict the most likely area where the offender resides. The basic assumption is that most serial offenders do not travel far from home to commit their crimes and therefore it should be possible to make a reasonably accurate prediction about where an offender lives. Used largely in serial crimes.

Geographic Profiling system: Computer systems that use mathematical models of offender spatial behaviour to make predictions about where unknown serial offenders are likely to reside.

Heuristics: Simple general rules that can be used to make decisions and solve problems. In some instances, a reliance on heuristics can result in biased decisions. In other cases, heuristics can result in reasonably accurate decisions. Some evidence suggest that individuals trained to used simple heuristics can make profiling predictions as accurate as computerized systems.