MOCK JURORS’ JUDGMENTS ABOUT RECANTED CONFESSIONS

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STATE OF MISSOURI V. REYNOLDS (1981)
FALSE CONFESSIONS

• Wrongful convictions: The Innocence Project (www.innocenceproject.org)

• Jurors are often unable to distinguish between true and false confessions (Kassin, Meissner, & Norwick, 2005)

• Modern police interrogation tactics may elicit false confessions (Inbau et al., 2001)

• Corroboration inflation: tendency for confessions to produce an illusion of support for other evidence (Kassin, 2008)
RECANTED CONFESSIONS

• **Recanted confession:** when an individual confesses to a crime, then revokes the confession at a later time

• False confessors were four times more likely than true confessors to receive a prison sentence (Redlich, Kulish, & Steadman, 2011)

• Believability of a recanted confession depends on the reason provided for it (Henkel, 2008)
QUESTIONS FOR THIS RESEARCH

• How do mock jurors judge a case when the defendant confesses to the crime and later recants that confession?
  • Do those judgments vary as a function of the severity of the crime?
• Recanter judged more harshly? Recanter judged less harshly?
  • When the crime is more severe, mock jurors would be less likely to believe the recant.
METHOD

• 240 participants from Wofford College
• Variations in criminal case
  • Sexual assault vs. burglary
  • No confession vs. confession vs. confession + recant
• 2 (crime severity) x 3 (confession evidence) between-groups factorial design
• Participants read case summary then completed questionnaire
GUILT

Defendant Confession Type

Confession
Confession + Recant
No Confession

Perceived Guilt
Procedural Appropriateness

Defendant Confession Type

Confession
Confession + Recant
No Confession

APPROPRIATENESS
SENTENCING

![Bar chart showing the harshness of sentences for different defendant confession types: Confession, Confession + Recant, No Confession.](chart.png)
HONESTY

Confession Confession + Recant No Confession

Confession Type

Honesty

Confession Confession + Recant No Confession

Confession Type
COERCION

Sexual Assault

Burglary

Crime Type

Coercion of Confession

Confession + Recant

Confession
DISCUSSION

• Sympathy shown on many measures except for final punishment
• Crime severity influenced perceived coerciveness of confession
• Implications of honesty
• Audio/Visual possibilities
THANK YOU!

QUESTIONS?