

Interrogation Techniques:

A Study of the Reid and PEACE Models in Eliciting True and False Confessions



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ABSTRACT

Police interrogations are a vital tool in determining the guilt or innocence of an individual in criminal justice proceedings. Though crucial, past real-world interrogations have led to innocent individuals confessing to a crime they did not commit (i.e., providing a false confession). The purpose of this current study is to use an experimental design to test the Reid (coercive) and PEACE (non-coercive) models of interrogation in terms of their ability to produce true and false confessions. Participants were invited to take part in a memory skill task with a confederate, during which the two were told to work on tasks both together and separately. In the guilt condition the confederate asked for help when working independently (i.e., asked the participant to cheat), whereas in the innocent condition a request was not made. Every participant was later accused of cheating and one of the models of interrogation is used to try and elicit a confession. Results found equal amounts of true confessions, regardless of the interrogation model used. In contrast, false confessions were greater when the more coercive Reid model was used. The impact of this study is that it will lend support to call for police interrogators to use non-coercive methods.

BACKGROUND

Reid Model

This interrogation model uses nine steps to elicit a confession.

- . Direct and immediate confrontation
- . Justification of the act to minimize seriousness
- . Prohibiting the suspect from denying guilt
- . Overcoming any objections made by the suspect
- . Techniques of re-engagement if suspect distances themselves
- . Sympathize with passive suspects
- . Alternative questions to allow the suspect to admit guilt in a way that looks more favourable
- . Urge suspect to provide more detail surrounding the offense
- . Obtain a written statement of confession (Dunk, 2017)

PEACE Model

- . **Preparation and planning**
 - Reviewing case, planning interview, preparing questions
- . **Engage and explain**
 - Help the interviewee understand what will happen and set a positive atmosphere
- . **Account**
 - Get the fully detailed and uninterrupted account of the interviewee
- . **Closure**
 - Summarize the interview and allow for added information
- . **Evaluation**
 - Self-evaluation and incorporation of gathered information (Dunk, 2017)

METHODOLOGY

Materials: Consent and re-consent forms, debriefing forms, demographic forms and multiple skill tasks, incident report forms, scripts.

The study consists of university students being assigned to one of four conditions, these differ by whether the participant is asked for help and which technique is used to elicit a confession.

Reid Innocent: The confederate does not ask for any assistance during the task. The innocent participant is accused of cheating and the Reid model is used to attempt to elicit a confession.

Reid Guilty: The participant provides help when asked by the confederate during the task. The guilty participant is interrogated using the Reid model .

PEACE Innocent: The confederate does not ask for any assistance. The innocent participant is accused and interrogated using the PEACE model.

PEACE Guilty: The participant provides help when asked. Guilty participant is accused and the PEACE model is used.

FINDINGS

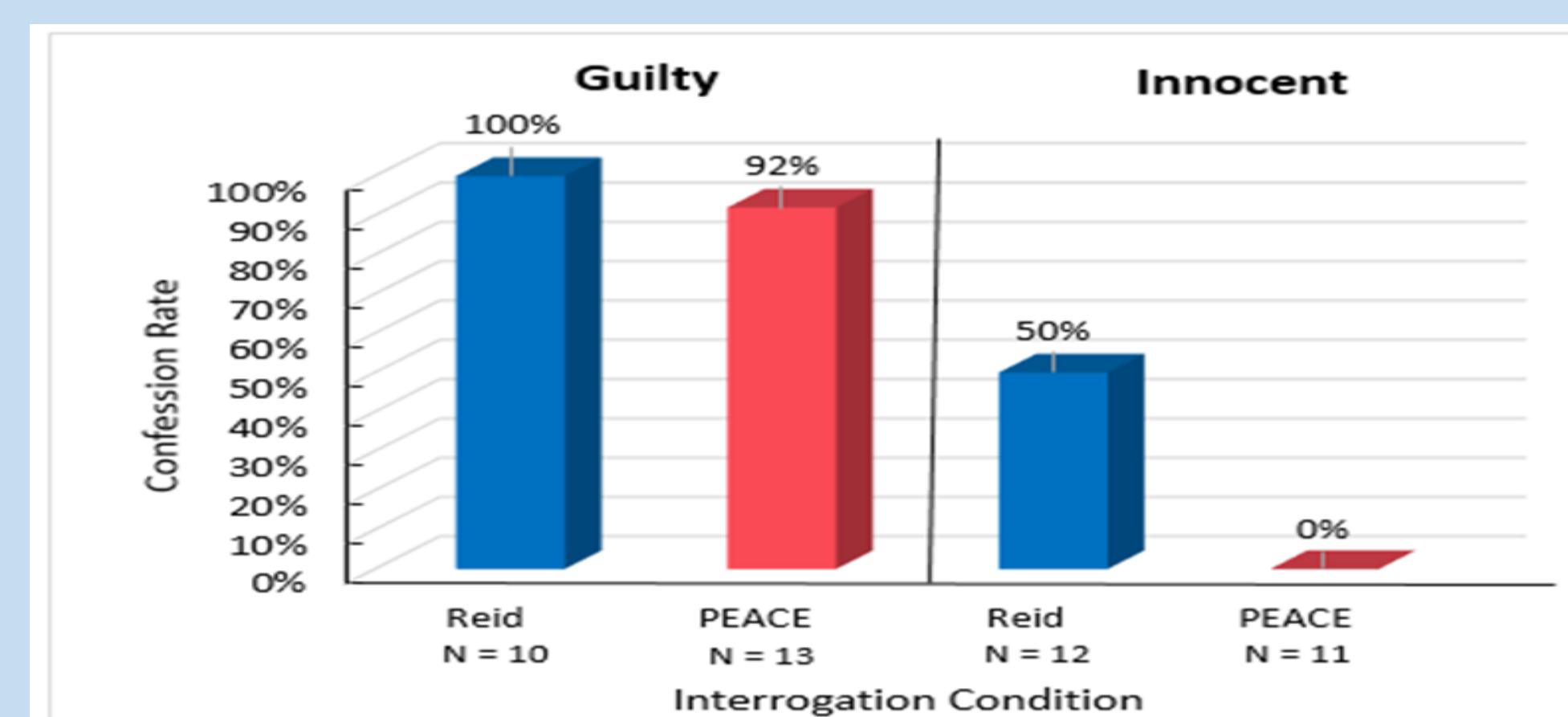


Table 1. Percentage of confessions in each condition (Dunk, 2017).

The current study is a continuation of the same study run throughout the previous year to continue increasing participant pool. The results have yet to be analyzed but are expected to match earlier findings discussed below.

- . Across the four conditions, guilty participants showed similar rates of confession regardless of which model was used in the interrogation stage.
- . Innocent participants confessed to cheating 0% of the time when in the PEACE interrogation condition
- . Innocent participants confessed to cheating 50% of the time when in the Reid condition

DISCUSSION

Discussion

- . The goal of this study is to determine if one of the interrogation models results in higher amounts of false confessions than the other.
- . Both models of interrogation are very effective in eliciting truthful confessions from guilty individuals.
- . Alternatively, the Reid model resulted in a false confession rate of 50% compared to 0% with the PEACE model.
- . These results do in fact suggest that the Reid model may be responsible for the rising number of false confessions in police interrogations .
- . Participants who falsely confessed usually did so in the later steps of the Reid model (after multiple prompts). This suggests that the model most likely wears the individual down to the point where they confess to an act they did not do.

Future implications

- . Results of this study suggest that the current Reid model will continue to be a problem in producing false confessions within police interrogations.
- . Introducing a model such as PEACE to the system would most likely negate the negative impacts of the Reid model while still eliciting high numbers of true confessions.

* Discussion is based on earlier results of this study and conclusions based on the new data matching the old data once analyzed

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