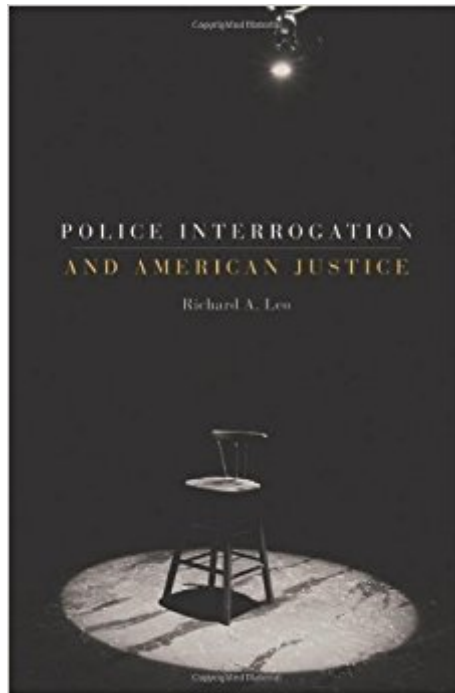


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Police Interrogation And American Justice



Synopsis

"Read him his rights." We all recognize this line from cop dramas. But what happens afterward? In this book, Richard Leo sheds light on a little-known corner of our criminal justice system--the police interrogation. Incriminating statements are necessary to solve crimes, but suspects almost never have reason to provide them. Therefore, as Leo shows, crime units have developed sophisticated interrogation methods that rely on persuasion, manipulation, and deception to move a subject from denial to admission, serving to shore up the case against him. Ostensibly aimed at uncovering truth, the structure of interrogation requires that officers act as an arm of the prosecution. Skillful and fair interrogation allows authorities to capture criminals and deter future crime. But Leo draws on extensive research to argue that confessions are inherently suspect and that coercive interrogation has led to false confession and wrongful conviction. He looks at police evidence in the court, the nature and disappearance of the brutal "third degree," the reforms of the mid-twentieth century, and how police can persuade suspects to waive their Miranda rights. An important study of the criminal justice system, *Police Interrogation and American Justice* raises unsettling questions. How should police be permitted to interrogate when society needs both crime control and due process? How can order be maintained yet justice served?

Book Information

Paperback: 384 pages

Publisher: Harvard University Press (September 30, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0674035313

ISBN-13: 978-0674035317

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 0.9 x 9.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (13 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #957,637 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #407 in [Books > Engineering & Transportation > Engineering > Civil & Environmental > Fire Science](#) #605 in [Books > Law > Business > Reference](#) #834 in [Books > Law > Criminal Law > Criminal Procedure](#)

Customer Reviews

Richard Leo brilliantly analyzes the function of police interrogations within the larger adversarial system of U.S. criminal justice. Whereas interrogations are presented as a neutral tool for truth-seeking, Leo shows how in reality police function as an unmonitored and unchecked arm of

the prosecution, targeting both guilty and innocent suspects alike in a ruthless and fraudulent game of psychological manipulation in which they hold all the cards. Leo uses a historical lens to show how today's psychologically coercive techniques evolved from the widespread "third-degree" practices outlawed in the 1930s. Whereas the third-degree was visibly vicious and lawless, modern interrogators hide behind a façade of science and professionalism that allows them to wield enormous unchecked power and influence over criminal justice outcomes. Popular belief in the "myth of the psychological interrogation" - that only the guilty confess and that confession statements are reliable - prevents judges and jurors from understanding is that the extreme and sophisticated psychological coercion tactics wielded in some interrogations, especially in serious or high-profile cases, can make almost anyone feel helpless enough to falsely confess, Leo argues. He explains how the final product is jointly scripted by the police and the hapless suspect into such a compelling narrative that a fair trial is rendered impossible. One of the book's many strengths is its focus on topics that are rarely studied in much depth, such as this topic of how the postadmission narrative is constructed. Another rarely highlighted topic is the corrupting effect of systematic police deception in reports and court testimony about what goes on in the interrogation room.

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