false confessions

by paul kassin

false confessions arise when witnesses falsely finger suspects as the perpetrators of crimes. the errors they make are often subtle and can be diagnosed by analyzing their answers to questions about the scene, their reliability, and their consistency. the key is to recognize that confessions are often based on false information and can be influenced by factors such as the pressure of the investigation and the suspect's desire to avoid criminal consequences.

false confessions are not just a curiosity, but a serious problem that can lead to wrongful convictions. it is vital to understand the mechanisms that underlie these errors in order to prevent them from occurring in the future.