Alcohol and Confessions

Alcohol intoxication alters cognitive skills mediated by frontal and temporal brain regions.
Magrys, S. A. and Olmstead, M. C..
Brain and Cognition, Vol 85, Mar, 2014. pp. 271-276.
Abstract:

Alcohol intoxication affects frontal and temporal brain areas and may functionally impair cognitive processes mediated by these regions. This study examined this hypothesis by testing the effects of alcohol on sustained attention, impulsivity, and verbal memory. Sober and placebo control groups were used to distinguish pharmacological from expectancy effects of alcohol. One hundred nine university students were assigned to an alcohol (low, medium, or high dose), placebo or sober group. Moderate and high doses of alcohol impaired all cognitive measures. A gender effect was revealed in that alcohol impaired sustained attention in males, but not females. Both sustained attention and verbal memory exhibited a U-shaped pattern, in that the medium-dose alcohol group showed the greatest impairment. This study adds to knowledge about the effects of alcohol intoxication on frontally- and temporally-mediated cognitive function. These findings have specific relevance for heavy-drinking undergraduate populations, particularly in light of the fact that repeated alcohol administration produces persistent changes in brain neurocircuitry.

Alcohol and drug intoxication during police interrogation and the reasons why suspects confess to the police.
Sigurdsson, Jon F. and Gudjonsson, Gisli H.
Addiction, Vol 89(8), Aug, 1994. pp. 985-997.
Abstract:

Examined effects of alcohol or drug intoxication, and withdrawal symptoms on the mental state of 344 criminal suspects (aged 17–64 yrs) and the nature of their confession. The confession rate was 92%, with serious traffic violators having the highest confession rate (95%) and sex offenders the lowest (83%). 'Perception of proof,' 'internal need to confess,' and 'external pressure' were the main reasons why suspects confessed. However, Ss were identified who had experienced a typical 'prisoner's dilemma' phenomenon during the police interview because of a co-defendant. Alcohol and drug intoxication were commonly reported both at the time of the offense and at the police interview. Intoxication and withdrawal symptoms were consistently reported as making Ss confused at the police interview.

Intoxicated witnesses and suspects: An archival analysis of their involvement in criminal case processing.
Palmer, Francesca T., et.al.
Law and Human Behavior, Vol 37(1), Feb, 2013. pp. 54-59.
Abstract:

Research about intoxicated witnesses and criminal suspects is surprisingly limited, considering the police believe that they are quite ubiquitous. In the present study, we assessed the involvement of intoxicated witnesses and suspects in the investigation of rape, robbery, and assault crimes by analyzing cases that were referred by the police to a prosecutor's office. Results indicated that intoxicated witnesses and suspects played an appreciable role in criminal investigations: Intoxicated witnesses were just as likely as sober ones to provide a description of the culprit and to take an identification test, suggesting criminal investigators treat intoxicated and sober witnesses similarly. Moreover, intoxicated suspects typically admitted to the police that they had consumed alcohol and/or drugs, and they were usually arrested on the same day as the crime. This

archival analysis highlights the many ways in which alcohol impacts testimony during criminal investigations and underscores the need for additional research to investigate best practices for obtaining testimony from intoxicated witnesses and suspects.

Juror perceptions of intoxicated suspects' interrogation-related behaviors.
Mindthoff, Amelial, et.al.
Criminal Justice and Behavior, Vol 47(2), Feb, 2020. pp. 222-246.
Abstract:

Alcohol-intoxicated suspects' confessions are admissible in U.S. courts; however, it is unknown how jurors evaluate such confessions. Study 1 assessed potential jurors' perceptions of intoxication in interrogative contexts. Many respondents were unaware that questioning intoxicated suspects and presenting subsequent confessions in court are legal, and respondents generally reported they would rely less on intoxicated than sober confessions. In Study 2, potential jurors read a case about a defendant who had confessed or not while sober or intoxicated. Participants who read about an intoxicated defendant perceived the interrogation as more inappropriate and the defendant as more cognitively impaired than did participants who read about a sober defendant, and as a result, they were less likely to convict. Furthermore, intoxicated confessions influenced conviction decisions to a lesser extent than did sober confessions. Findings suggest that investigators might consider abstaining from interrogating intoxicated suspects or else risk jurors finding confessions unconvincing in court.