

INSPECTOR GENERAL INSTITUTE

TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION FOR INSPECTION
AND OVERSIGHT PROFESSIONALS

Things Are Not Always as They Seem - Recognizing and Overcoming Cognitive Bias

STEPHEN B. STREET, LOUISIANA INSPECTOR GENERAL



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- “It is better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak and remove all doubt.”

Abraham Lincoln



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You only have credibility once ...



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Things aren't always as they seem ...



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Things aren't always as they seem ...



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You have to look beneath the surface...

- Let's start with an anecdote ...



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BIAS v. OBJECTIVITY

- **BIAS DEFINED:** “prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair.”
- **OBJECTIVITY DEFINED:** “the quality or character of being objective : lack of favoritism toward one side or another : freedom from bias.”
- **FAIRNESS DEFINED:** “impartial and just treatment or behavior without favoritism or discrimination.”



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BIAS v. OBJECTIVITY

- Bias in favor of police officers? Against?
- How about Bias in favor of DOC staff? Against inmates?
- Conscious? Sub-conscious?



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BIAS v. OBJECTIVITY

- Jail/Deputy Rape
- Brass Knuckles
- A Career Prosecutor's Eyes are Opened



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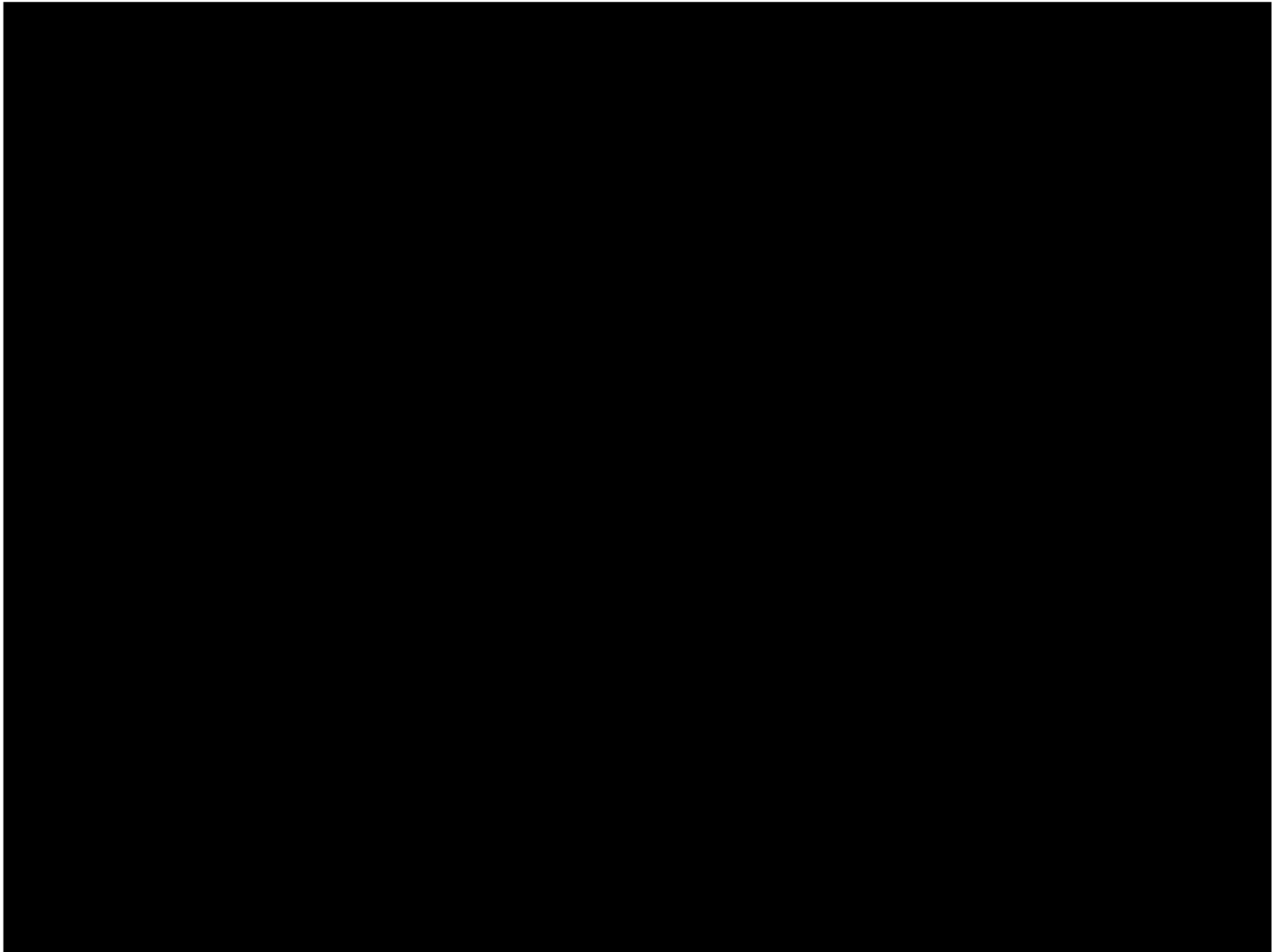


Selective Attention



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IG's are in the "Evidence Business"



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What does it mean to be in the “Evidence Business?”

- Evaluate credibility of witnesses
- Check it out
- Turtle on fence post
- Plot hatched in hell ...
- Tainted ...



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Credibility

- What are the person's motives? Do they have a reason to tell you less than the whole truth? Do they have motive to burn someone? Every legitimate whistleblower that I have dealt with was a "disgruntled employee". That's why they come forward. It doesn't mean they are not telling the truth. Again, test what they are saying against known evidence. Does it add up?
- NO ONE HAS THE RIGHT TO BE BELIEVED
- They have the right to be treated with respect, listened to, taken seriously, and have their claims objectively investigated in light of all the evidence



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What does it mean to be in the “Evidence Business?”

- Evidence business requires WORK...don't let biases keep you from doing the work
- It doesn't matter what you believe happened, it only matters what you can prove happened, and that can only be done with competent admissible evidence gathered from professional, thoughtful, careful investigation.
- If we allow bias to enter the equation, it can creep into every decision made from an investigative standpoint. It is human nature to place less weight on (or completely ignore) facts that don't support the bias.



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What does it mean to be in the “Evidence Business?”

- How many times has confirmation bias led to tragic mistakes?
Richard Jewell, Duke Lacrosse, UVA Gang Rape
- We have a duty to the TRUTH, whatever it is. Despite what some may say, TRUTH is not relative and it is not in the eye of the beholder. There is no D or R behind the truth. It simply is...
- The EVIDENCE business is done behind the scenes by quiet professionals; remember that just because you don't read about something in the paper doesn't mean it isn't happening.



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Evidence Business

- If we allow bias to enter the equation, it creeps into every decision you make from an investigative standpoint. It's human nature to place less weight on facts that don't support your bias.
- Target = Scumbag?
- Our business is filled with disappointment. But what business are we in at the end of the day? **EVIDENCE**
It's our commodity, our stock in trade.



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- “If you strike the king, you must kill him.”
 - “If you come at the King, you best not miss.”
 - By far, the most criticism I have received as IG has been after concluding that the evidence did not support criminal charges against high profile public officials;



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You know what we call opinion in the absence of evidence? We call it Prejudice.



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Strategies for overcoming bias:

- Recognize we all have biases – some conscious and others unconscious
- Seek information that can falsify your beliefs
- Ask questions that lead to concrete answers
- Avoid conveying your beliefs and intentions when asking questions to your teammate or to consumers
- Being aware of gaps in information
- Distinguishing between observation & inference; fact and conjecture.
- Remember correlation is NOT causation



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QUESTIONS?



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Thank You!

Stephen B. Street, Jr.

Louisiana State Inspector General

602 North Fifth Street Suite 621

Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Telephone: 225-342-4262

Cell: 225-978-9348

Facsimile: 225-342-6761

E-mail: stephen.street@la.gov



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