

INTERVIEWER BIAS THE SEVEN MOST INFLUENTIAL BIASES



Bias comes in many forms, perhaps even hundreds. While there may be many to consider, seven particular bias risks are specifically relevant to investigative interviewing. Let's take a quick look at the seven most influential biases in the interview process.

1 CONFIRMATION BIAS

The confirmation bias refers to the tendency to only seek out information that supports one position or idea. This form of bias is easy to fall victim to as an investigator as you may often want to prove your theory as being accurate. Asking questions that support your own narrative or timeline could largely be influenced by this form of bias. "I got him to change up his story and caught him in inconsistencies. I knew he was lying!"

2 OUTCOME BIAS

We might fall victim to this bias when we focus on outcome rather than process. Outcome bias is a cognitive bias that causes individuals to judge a decision based on its outcome rather than how it was made in the moment. If you focus on obtaining the information you want, regardless of how you obtained that information, it reflects this bias. Leaders who ask, "Did you get him to confess?" might put their investigators in a position to focus on the outcome, not the process.

INFLUENTIAL BIASES

- Confirmation Bias
- Outcome Bias
- Prejudice
- Cognitive Bias
- Contextual Bias
- Implicit Bias
- Statistical Bias



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3 PREJUDICE

Prejudice includes any negative attitude toward another person or group formed in advance of any experience with that person or group. Often formed without direct experience, this form of bias could be something as simple as "I would never do what they are doing. They must be a bad person!" The 'us vs. them' mentality. This form of bias is often manifested through discrimination and can be very difficult to change.

4 COGNITIVE BIAS

The cognitive bias is the most common type of bias. It refers to a deviation from standards of judgments whereby you may create inferences, assessments, or perceptions that are unreasonable. Obtaining information from someone who is, 'nice, cooperative and helpful' may influence us cognitively to believe their statements are more accurate and believable because, "She's so nice, I don't think she'd mislead me".

5 CONTEXTUAL BIAS

The tendency for analysis to include irrelevant background information is known as contextual bias. Avoid relying too heavily on an initial piece of information when making judgments, particularly if that piece of information is somewhat irrelevant to the issue under investigation. "Well, he has a criminal past, so he's probably the one..."

6 IMPLICIT BIAS

Implicit bias is a form of bias that occurs automatically and unintentionally and nevertheless affects judgments, decisions, and behaviors. Often shaped by experience and based upon learned experiences, implicit bias may have the greatest impact on the interview, as we all carry some forms of implicit bias. In fact, as you're reading this and realize it was prepared by a huge Steelers fan, what thoughts first come to mind with that knowledge?

7 STATISTICAL BIAS

Easily identified while evaluating data and evidence, statistical bias is anything that leads to a systematic difference between true parameters and the statistics used to estimate those parameters. Think about using exception reporting or audit results and how statistical bias might influence your investigations. Five returns a shift might seem high against the full population, but perhaps not against the working population of the flagship store in New York City.



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