

CEP Magazine – July 2019 The politics of investigating

By Gerry Zack

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What's this column a discussion of?

1. The internal conflicts investigators face in doing their jobs,
2. A hit song from the early 1980s, or
3. The impact of today's political climate on our investigations.

If you guessed 3, you're correct.

Unconscious biases, those that we're not aware of as we make decisions, can have a harmful effect on investigative interviews. One of those biases is affinity bias—favorable impressions of people with whom we have things in common. Likewise, people with whom we have little in common tend to make us a bit more uncomfortable, which can affect interviews. The most common effects of affinity bias on interviews pertain to our perceptions of what a person is saying or how they are behaving, how we pay attention to the person, even how we listen to the interviewee.

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