



Illinois Chapter Association of Inspectors General

Advancing Professionalism, Accountability & Integrity

Newsletter

Message from Kathryn Richards [Illinois AIG Chapter Board President](#)

Inspector General for the Chicago
Housing Authority

Greetings Illinois AIG Chapter Members!

I am pleased to introduce you to the inaugural issue of the official newsletter of the Illinois Chapter of the Association of Inspectors General. I and the rest of the Illinois Chapter Board, along with our incredible Communications Committee, hope this newsletter will provide you with useful news regarding the IG community here in Illinois – job postings, agency publications, training announcements, and other original content of interest to those of us in the business of government oversight.

We look forward to building an even stronger community of IG professionals here in Illinois through greater communication. And, we still need volunteers! If you are interested in becoming more involved in the Illinois Chapter, joining the Training or Communications Committee, providing written content, or featuring your agency's work please reach out to krichards@thecha.org. We look forward to hearing from you.



[Cook County Woman Pleads Guilty to Defrauding Chicago Housing Authority \(CHA\)](#)

An investigation conducted by the CHA OIG resulted in the recent guilty plea of a Housing Choice Voucher recipient, who admitted to defrauding CHA out of \$188k in rental assistance for a home she resided in and owned.

[Read here](#)

[PPP Loan Fraud](#)

Investigations by the CHA and Cook County OIGs resulted in recommendations for termination of multiple employees for PPP Loan Fraud.

[Read here](#)



[Semi-Annual Summary Activity Reports](#)

The Illinois Tollway, Office of the Inspector General's semi-annual Summary Activity Reports and Redacted Investigative Summary Reports.

[Read here](#)



[Inspector General Witzburg to Nominate Tobar Richardson To Serve as Deputy Inspector General for Public Safety](#)

[Read here](#)

[Consecutive Days Worked by Chicago Police Department \(CPD\) Members, April – May 2022](#)

OIG's Public Safety section conducted an inquiry into CPD's scheduling practices, including the cancellation of sworn CPD members' regular days off and the number of consecutive days on which CPD members are scheduled to work. Based on OIG's review of CPD's data, many CPD members were scheduled to work 11 or more consecutive days between April and May 2022. Although some members did not actually work as many consecutive days as they were scheduled to work, some members did actually work 11 or more consecutive days during that timeframe.

[Read here](#)

[Audit of the Department of Buildings' Permit Inspections Process](#)

OIG conducted an audit of the Department of Buildings' (DOB) inspection process for construction work subject to permit requirements. OIG concluded that DOB does not have a process in place to determine which permits require inspections or which inspections remain outstanding.

[Read here](#)

[Audit of the Department of Family and Support Services' \(DFSS\) Strategic Contracting](#)

OIG conducted an audit of the Department of DFSS' Strategic Contracting process for selecting delegate agencies. OIG found DFSS developed RFPs, tools for evaluating RFP applications, and contracts that largely align with its Commitment to Outcomes, but it could strengthen its process by ensuring the inclusion of key elements that match the Commitment to Outcomes.

[Read here](#)

Fairness and Consistency in the Disciplinary Process for CPD Members

OIG conducted a review and audit of all sustained findings, disciplinary recommendations, and decisions made by CPD, the Civilian Office of Police Accountability, and the Police Board, and any subsequent arbitration decisions, for the purpose of assessing trends and determining whether discipline is consistently and fairly applied, and whether final disciplinary decisions are being carried out. OIG found that existing BIA, COPA, and Police Board policies do not provide clear and actionable guidance to agency personnel sufficient to ensure procedural consistency and fairness in the determination of discipline across misconduct investigations.

[Read here](#)

OIG Advisory Concerning the City of Chicago's Data Quality

City of Chicago's operations increasingly rely on collecting and utilizing high-quality data. The inconsistent quality of the City's data hinders it from effectively allocating resources, measuring performance, and achieving objectives. To support the chief data officer's (CDO) role in improving decision-making and management through data analysis; OIG encourages the CDO to work with departments to develop a proactive culture of data quality management, to engage with departments and provide direction regarding the development of their data quality plans, and work with departments to provide public information on the quality of their data and its limitations to users.

[Read here](#)



SAVE THE DATE

AIG Illinois Chapter - 2022 Fall Training

[Register Here](#)

September 16, 2022 - 8:30 AM to 12:30 PM



JOB POSTING

**Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County
Office of the Inspector General**

Inspector General Investigator

**City Colleges of Chicago
Office of Inspector General**

Supervising Investigator

**Chicago Board of Education
Office of Inspector General**

Performance Analyst

Operations Administrator

Investigator, Sexual Allegations Unit

Investigations Specialist, Sexual Allegations Unit

**City of Chicago
Office of Inspector General**

Information Analyst

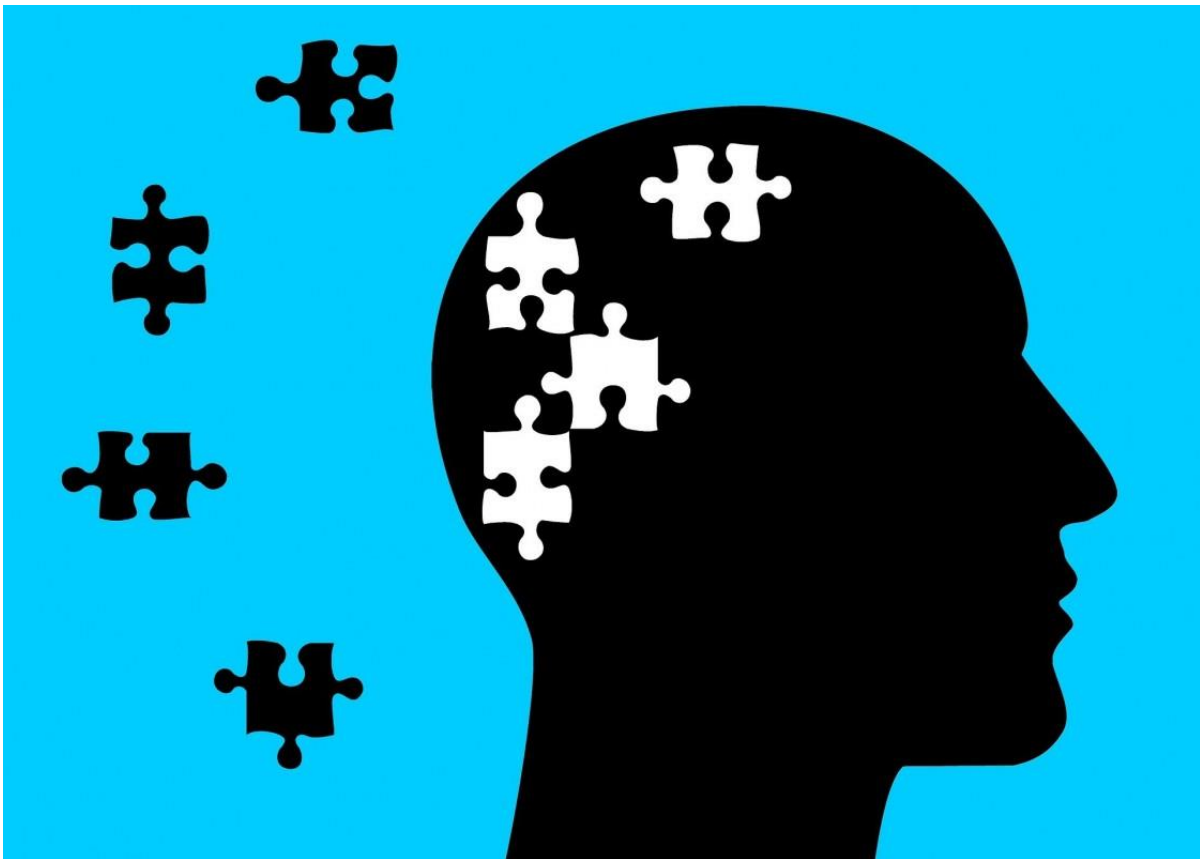
Investigative Analyst

Forensic Data Analyst

Executive Administrative Assistant II

Director of Communications & Outreach

Deputy Inspector General - Investigations



***New Paper Examines the Importance of Testing
a Witness' Memory Only Once***



By Nick Infusino, Assistant Inspector General, Chicago Board of Education – OIG

Few types of evidence carry as much weight as an eyewitness's positive identification of a suspect. Traditionally, such identifications could be the deciding factor for an indictment or conviction. Since the advent

of forensic DNA analysis, however, the fallibility of eyewitnesses has come into stark relief. According to the [Innocence Project](#), nearly 70% of all DNA-based exonerations in the United States have involved eyewitness misidentification in some way. Similarly, according to the National Registry of Exonerations, witness misidentifications are a contributing factor in [about 26%](#) of all exonerations, DNA-based or otherwise.

In response to these troubling statistics, psychologists and criminal justice researchers have worked to [develop best practices for lineups](#). These include ensuring lineup administrators are blind to the suspect, informing witnesses that the perpetrator may or may not be in the lineup, having witnesses indicate their degree of confidence at the time of the identification, and other now widely-accepted practices. A [new study](#) by University of California San Diego psychology professor John Wixted and colleagues, however, highlights a potentially greater cause of witness misidentification than any one lineup procedure: conducting repeated identifications with the same witness and suspect.

Recognition Memory Is Highly Malleable

Contrary to current skepticism, Wixted and his coauthors first note that research shows witness identifications made with *high confidence* in *initial* identification tests are generally accurate. Problems arise, however, when a witness's memory is tested again in subsequent identifications, including in-court testimony. This is because the very act of administering a lineup—even using best practices—can “contaminate” an eyewitness's memory and cement an otherwise erroneous identification by making an innocent suspect's face seem more familiar.

This contamination issue, the authors explain, stems from the distinction between *recall* and *recognition* memory. When our memories are tested by recall, we are asked to describe the details of an event or person from the past, as we might do when describing a criminal's face in order to generate a composite sketch. In contrast, when our memories are tested by recognition, as they are in a lineup, we are asked to recognize one or more faces presently before us as someone we saw in the past. While the former type of memory can still be altered—through leading questions, for example—the latter is much more malleable and prone to error.

To illustrate this point, the authors describe a [2013 study](#) in which soldiers underwent mock prisoner-of-war training, including a 30-minute “physically confrontational” interrogation. After the interrogation, researchers asked the soldiers questions about their interrogator. Some soldiers were also shown a photo of a “foil”—an individual who was *not* their interrogator—while others were not shown anything. Soldiers who were not shown anything identified the foil as the interrogator 15% of the time, but those who were shown the photo remembered the foil as the interrogator 84% of the time.

How Repeated Identifications Lead to Error

Why do repeated identifications increase the risk of misidentification? Wixted and his colleagues review current psychological research and outline five interrelated concepts that explain how memory recognition can be tainted by successive recognition tests. These are: (1) encoding specificity, (2) similarity-based matching, (3) elaborative processing, (4) signal detection theory, and (5) the source-monitoring framework.

First, they explain, what we specifically remember is triggered by a retrieval cue—a question or other stimulus that cues our brains to distinguish the relevant memory from all others they have stored. Retrieval cues not only call up the specific memory, but they also reinstate the context in which that memory was encoded—for example, the details of the crime committed by the perpetrator. This is *encoding specificity*.

Next, when we receive a retrieval cue to identify the perpetrator during a lineup, we engage in *similarity-based matching*—we compare the perpetrator's face in our mind to the faces we see in the lineup and look for which one generates the strongest memory signal. *Signal detection theory* posits that this memory signal is not a binary “yes” or “no,” but a continuum of certainty. In other words, when we see the faces in the lineup, our memory signal will indicate whether a face is more or less similar to the face in our memory. Most of the time, the face closest to what's in our memory will generate the strongest memory signal, but as the authors note, this is not always the case. Sometimes, the *wrong* face will generate a stronger memory signal. Such errors, although rare, are also inevitable, and it is this inevitability that helps begin to explain how repeated identification tests lead to misidentifications.

When we're shown a lineup, we aren't shown a random assortment of people. Rather, the lineup will consist of faces with the specific distinguishing features of the perpetrator (e.g., hair color and style, weight, shape and size of facial features). When we are shown a lineup, then, we engage in *elaborative processing* by comparing and distinguishing all of these similar faces in order to determine which one best matches our memory. During this process, we create incidental memories of each face, whether or not we identify any one of them as the perpetrator.

These incidental memories can then influence and alter the memory signal during subsequent identifications. This is because memory is defined both by its strength as well as the context that accompanied the memory when it was encoded, otherwise known as *source attribution*. A memory of a perpetrator's face will be encoded in the context of the weather, time of day, strong smells or loud noises, and other details of the crime itself, while the context of an incidental memory of a face seen in a lineup will be encoded in the context of the lineup. The problem, however, is that these different contexts can and do blend together.

The authors illustrate this problem as follows. During an initial lineup a witness will be shown the suspect along with several "fillers"—non-suspects with similar facial features. The witness may recognize and identify the suspect as the person they remember as committing the crime. During a second lineup, the witness will be shown the same suspect from the first lineup alongside a new set of fillers.

During the first lineup, the witness formed a strong memory of the suspect's face, but encoded in the context of the *lineup* and *not the crime*, as he or she elaboratively processed each face in the lineup. Because of this new memory, the suspect's face will seem more familiar—or, in other words, generate a stronger memory signal—during the second lineup. But because of the tendency to blend encoding contexts, the witness's brain may misattribute the strength of this memory signal to the crime itself and the true *perpetrator's face*, whether or not the perpetrator is the same person as the *suspect*. In this way, memories created during the initial lineup can help solidify the witness's confidence in what may have been a less-than-certain initial identification.

Current Research and Real-World Cases Show the Effect of Repeated Identifications

After explaining how repeated identifications can contaminate memory, the authors review several research studies measuring this effect. In a typical recognition study, they explain, people are shown a list of words, and then asked to identify those words in a second, longer list that also contains several filler words (analogous to filler faces in a lineup). After this initial exercise, participants are then given a surprise second test and are shown another list that includes both the "original" filler words and a new set of fillers. In studies using this design, participants are usually readily able to identify the original filler words from the first test during the surprise second test, even though they were merely trying to distinguish them from other words and not memorize them during the first test.

In a [2012 study](#) using this same basic design but with a mock crime video and lineups, participants were able to correctly recognize 76% of the filler faces from the initial "planned" lineup during the surprise test and misidentified just 19% of the new filler faces in the surprise test as having been seen during the planned lineup. In another study, [from 1977](#), participants were shown five "criminals" in person, and then presented with a mugshot array 90 minutes later that included the five criminals and ten filler faces. A week later, the participants were shown an actual lineup that included the criminals, fillers from the mugshot array, and new fillers not previously seen, and asked to identify the original five criminals. The participants' mistaken identification rate of never-before-seen lineup members was 8%, but rose to 20% if the lineup members had been shown to participants in the mugshot array. The authors reason that the strong memory signals associated with the misidentified mugshot fillers were misattributed to the original, in-person viewing of the five criminals, and not the mugshot array itself.

The authors go on to discuss [several more recent studies](#) that reached similar results using videos of mock crimes and lineups rather than mugshot arrays as well as several real-world examples of criminal convictions/exonerations in which an eyewitness's misidentification may have been due to "contamination" from repeated lineups. They also discuss a [2011 analysis](#) of the cases cited in the Innocence Project's 70% statistic for DNA-based exonerations in which researchers examined trial records from 161 of the 375 exonerations included in the statistic. The analysis found that in 57% of those cases, witnesses who (mis)identified the suspect at trial with high confidence recalled making the same identification initially with low confidence, identifying a filler, another suspect, or no suspect at all, or reported that they did not actually see

the culprit's face during the crime. Nevertheless, they confidently identified the suspect in court, leading to conviction.

“Presenting the face of a suspect on an eyewitness identification test contaminates the witness’s memory for that individual,” Wixted and his colleagues conclude. “Such contamination is difficult to avoid, and if it occurs, there is no way to undo it (i.e., there is no way to decontaminate memory). If the witness’s memory for that individual suspect is tested again, the suspect’s face will generate a stronger memory signal than it otherwise would.”

Test a Witness’s Memory Only Once

Despite the complexity of the repeated identifications problem, Wixted and his colleagues’ proposed solution is simple: test a witness’s memory only once, using current best-practice lineup procedures. In particular, the authors emphasize the importance of having a witness assess his or her confidence in their identification during the lineup, and note that current research shows exactly how confidence is assessed—a verbal assessment, a 100-point scale, a letter grade—matters less than making sure it is assessed in some way. Faster, more confidence initial identifications, they write, are more likely to be accurate, while slower, less-confident identifications are much less reliable.

Eyewitness lineups and suspect identifications are, of course, less common in the Inspector General community than they are in police work. Nevertheless, Wixted’s paper is an illuminating reminder that witnesses’ memories are malleable and error-prone, particularly when asked to recognize whether information put before them matches their memory of something in the past. Even outside the context of an actual lineup, Wixted’s work suggests that extra care should be taken to avoid repetitive witness interviews whenever possible and to try to effectively test a witness’s memory once, when it is still fresh. Repeated interviews on the same topic, the paper suggests, could very well shape and change the witness’s very memory of that topic.

Do you have an interesting case study, investigative technique, research study, or IG topic you’d like to write about? Contact njinfusino@cpsoig.org or krichards@thecha.org to write a future Association of Inspectors General Illinois Chapter newsletter article.



<http://inspectorsgeneral.org/illinois/>

