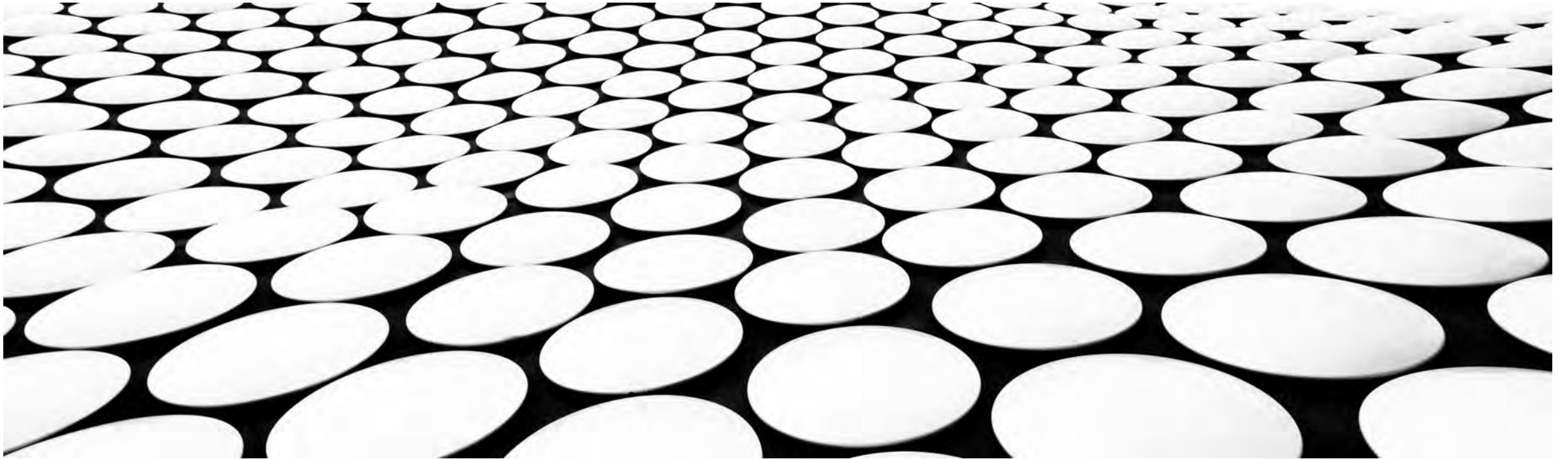

BIAS IN CUSTODY EVALUATIONS

ADRIAN QUINN, PSY.D

TIMOTHY E. RING, EDD.





TYPES OF BIAS

- Confirmatory
- Premature Closure of Evidence
- Anchoring
- Optimism Bias
- Disaster Neglect
- Saliency

Reference

Drozd, L, Oleson, N, & Saini, M. Parenting Plan and Child Custody Evaluations. Professional Resource Press, Sarasota FL. (2013)



CONFIRMATORY BIAS

- Refers to the evaluator seeking out evidence that confirms a previously held opinion. This could be an opinion, or a prior theoretical position. It is an opinion that is not examined in the light of specific facts, but instead a prior opinion that guides the search for evidence to support it.



PREMATURE CLOSURE OF EVIDENCE

- Acceptance of the first plausible explanation for phenomena observed and stops the process without considering other, alternative explanations



ANCHORING

- Considered one of the most powerful forms of bias. The “anchor” serves as a suggestion that then selectively evokes compatible evidence. As in the case of “domestic violence” or “alienation” presented as anchors against which the data is compared and evidence is selected.



OPTIMISM BIAS

Wishful thinking that things will turn out all right. Evidence of risk or deficiency are discounted or ignored in favor of recommendations that the parties will change, accept feedback, become better people and better parents.



DISASTER NEGLECT

- Evaluator fails to consider the worst-case scenario. Ignores behavior that may escalate in the future.



SALIENCY

- An evaluator's judgement maybe influenced by the likelihood of immediate reminders of the event. This could include recent events or past personal experiences of the evaluator



CRITICAL THINKING

- Save CT for things that matter (decision fatigue).
- Do it in the morning
- Step back. If thinking becomes automatic it is not critical.
- Turn off intuition, it is likely going to be biased. Consider alternatives by playing “devil’s advocate.”
- Leave emotions at the door

Christopher Dwyer, Ph.D. (Psychology Today, Nov. 2017)

