

# Family Assessments: From Errors to Excellence

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## Agenda

- Knowledge of the Law
- Digital Evidence
- Bias
- Misuse of Theory and Research
- Trauma Informed Assessment
- Psychological Testing
- Story Telling

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## Intro

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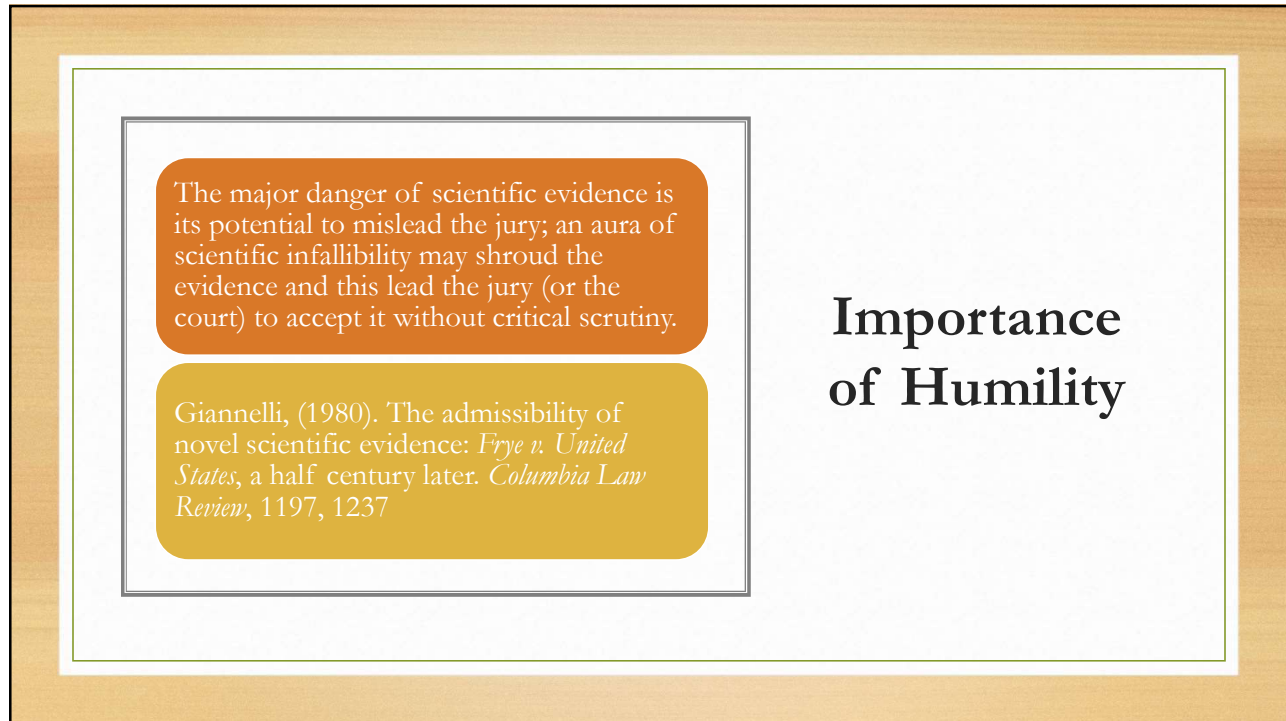
## Importance of Humility

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scientific evidence 'may . . . assume a posture of mystic infallibility in the eyes of a jury of laymen (or the court).

*United States v. Addison*,  
162 U.S. App. D.C. 199,  
202, 498 F.2d 741, 744  
(1974).

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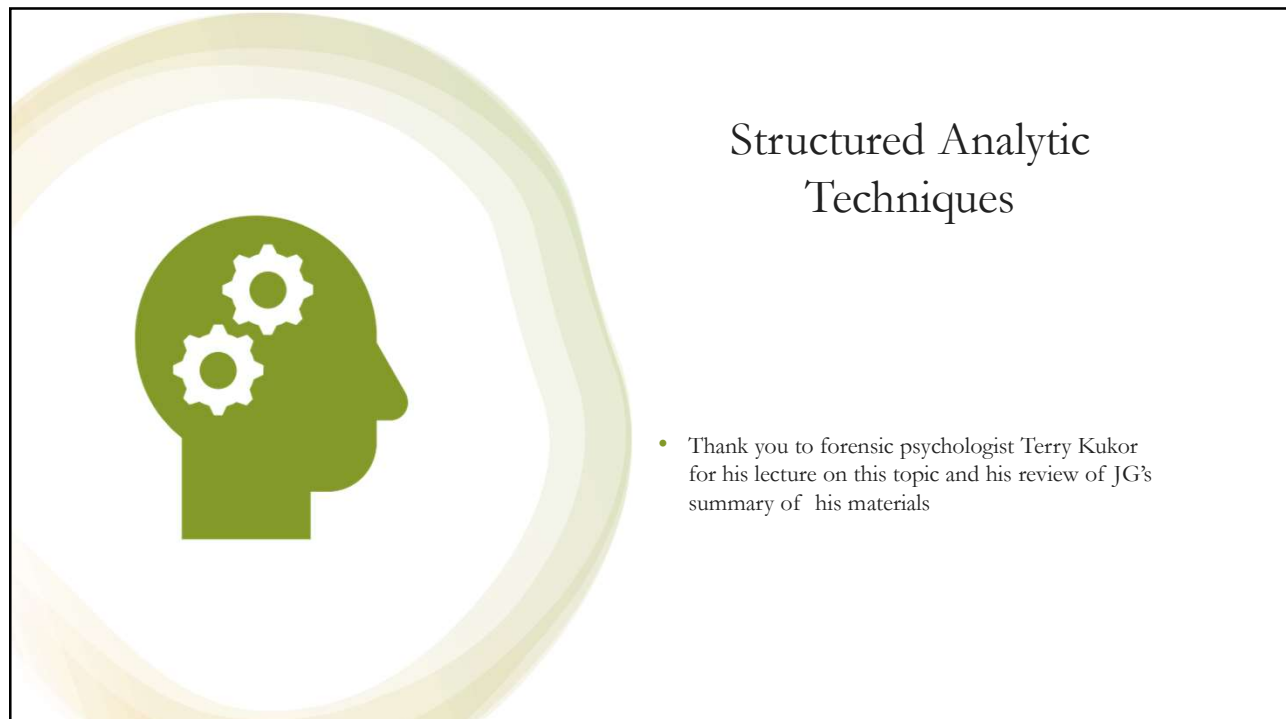


The major danger of scientific evidence is its potential to mislead the jury; an aura of scientific infallibility may shroud the evidence and this lead the jury (or the court) to accept it without critical scrutiny.

Giannelli, (1980). The admissibility of novel scientific evidence: *Frye v. United States*, a half century later. *Columbia Law Review*, 1197, 1237

## Importance of Humility

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## Structured Analytic Techniques

- Thank you to forensic psychologist Terry Kukor for his lecture on this topic and his review of JG's summary of his materials

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## Cluster Brainstorming

- Designed to identify relevant variables, driving forces, a full range of hypotheses, and available evidence or sources of information.
- Applied to a child custody assessment, the evaluator identifies relevant variables by developing specific questions to guide the evaluation.
- Based on identification of specific questions, relevant evidence-based or evidence-informed variable can be identified.
- Each of the questions can be translated into a range of hypotheses. Pherson & Heuer (2021), p. 36.



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### Key Assumptions Checklist

Explicitly list and question the important working assumptions underlying their analysis.

Identify factors that might contribute to confirmatory bias, pointing the more naïve analyst down a preconceive road for which there is little external support.

Key assumption check is an attempt to identify and question key assumptions that if proven incorrect, would undermine the analysis.

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## Key Assumptions Checklist



Applied to a child custody assessment, the key assumptions check list is a reminder to make explicit the ideas, beliefs, and research basis that affects how you approach the evaluation process.



We all have implicit assumptions about how the world works. We all are influenced by our personal and professional backgrounds.

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## Key Assumptions Checklist

The key assumptions checklist is a procedure aimed at making explicit many of the implicit ideas that frame our understanding of a case and affect where we look to gather data, the ways in which we approach analyzing data, etc.

Making our implicit ideas and world models explicit and open to examination by self and by others is a critical step in identifying subtle biases that might affect our approach to the evaluation process.

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## Key Assumptions Checklist

- For example, if the specific evaluation includes parents from a different cultural background, the evaluator might reflect on assumptions made about people the different culture and the attributions the evaluator might have developed about the culture, about the people from the culture, about the parenting practices of people from the culture, etc.
- 
- Be aware of how bias factors such as the Fundamental Attribution Error might influence the attributions an evaluator might bring to the initial stages of an evaluation of someone from a different culture.
- 
- Make explicit the theory of parenting that guides your thinking.

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## Key Assumptions Checklist



Most evaluators do not describe the implicit model of good parenting that often guides their thinking about relevant factors to assess.



Applying the key assumption check, you could write out the model or models of good v. bad parenting that guide your thinking.



Once you have made explicit the good v. bad parenting ideas that guide your thinking, think through the factors you associate with good v. bad parenting and reflect upon the weight you assign to each of those factors.

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## Key Assumptions Checklist



Next, talk to a colleague about your model and the factors associated with your model.



Open yourself up to critical feedback about the usefulness of your implicit model.



Consider integrating information from your colleague into your thinking.



Look at the peer-reviewed literature with particular emphasis on the evidence-basis for each of the factors as supporting your notions of good v. bad parenting.



Finally, consider where to find reliable procedures to measure each of those factors

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## Analysis of competing hypotheses

requires articulating all plausible hypotheses, not just the hypotheses that appear most likely to be supported.

Applied to child custody assessment, analysis of competing hypotheses should occur periodically throughout the assessment process.

Analysis of competing hypotheses occurring throughout the assessment process is tantamount to having someone constantly looking over your shoulder, challenging your assumptions and data.

This is where applying efforts to refute favorite hypotheses is most useful.

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### *Premortem analysis and structured self-critique*

Requires restating the question or problem from other perspectives and continually questioning the sources of uncertainty, diagnostic evidence, critical assumptions, information gaps, and potential for deception.

Applied to child custody assessment, the evaluator must step outside of him/herself to challenge assumptions.

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### **Analysis of competing hypotheses**

**Consider**

Consider how the Fundamental Attribution Error might affect the current data gathering and tentative hypotheses.

**Lay out**

Lay out an argument from one parent against the other parent against each child's perspective.

**Consult**

Consult with colleagues, especially colleagues who are known to challenge you precisely because they often see things differently.

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## What if? Analysis



asks the analyst to consider unexpected events and through a hindsight analysis, how it could have come about, and its potential consequences.



*What if* analysis creates an awareness of possible early signs of significant change and raises possible signals that the analyst's conclusions are wrong.

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## What if? Analysis

Applied to child custody assessment, considering a *what if* analysis might be applied to challenging evolving opinions about each parent's parenting abilities, each child's psychological and emotional abilities, and the fit between each child and each parent.

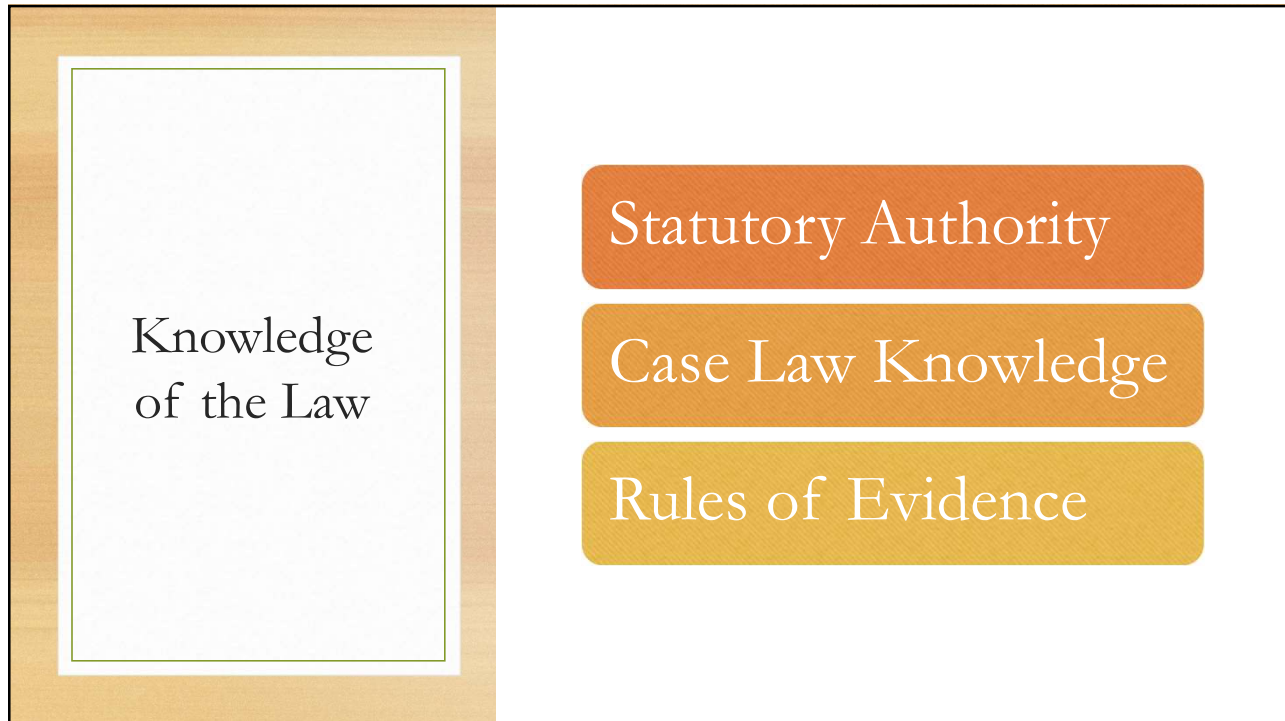


The assumptions made about how one parent might effectively meet the developmental needs of a child can be challenged by thinking through how, if you are incorrect in your tentative conclusion, what would be the likely consequences for the parent, the child, and the family system.



If one has taken parenting classes, can discuss what they have learned from reading professionally sound self-help books, etc. Perhaps we should consider them on an evolving arc rather than as a static position.

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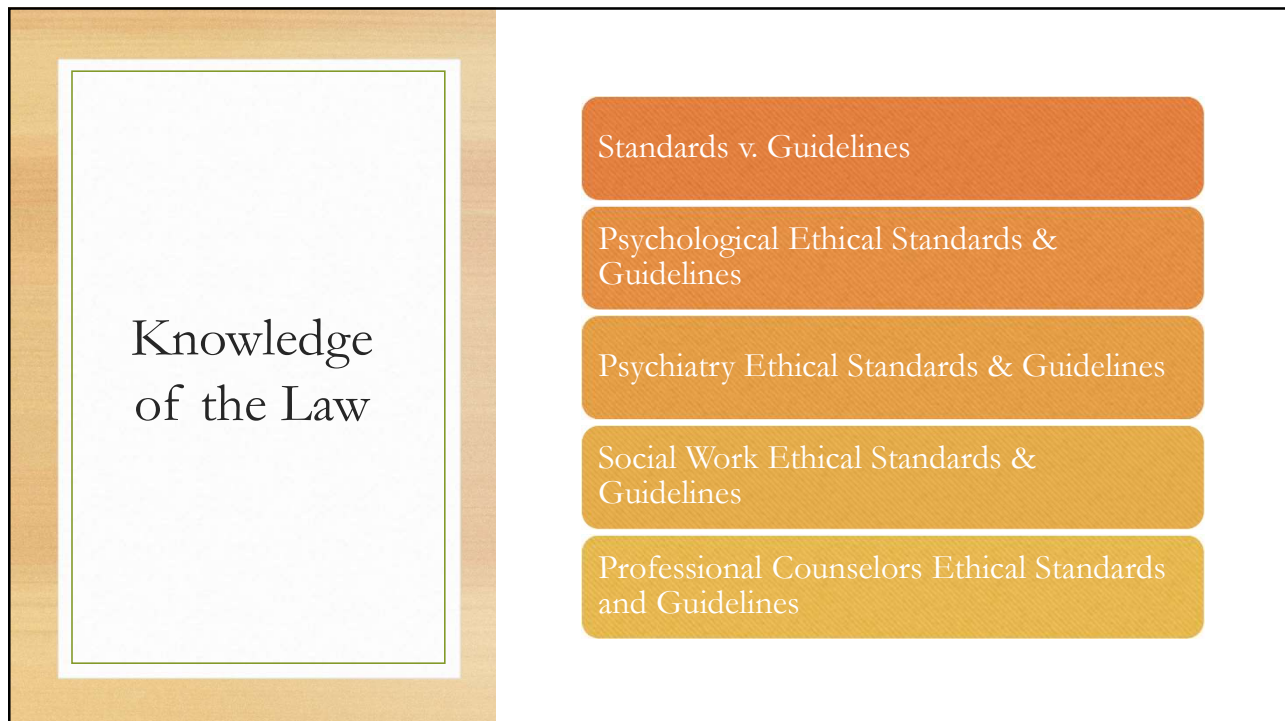


Knowledge of the Law

- Statutory Authority
- Case Law Knowledge
- Rules of Evidence

This slide features a central white box with a gold border containing the text 'Knowledge of the Law'. To the right, three stacked rounded rectangular boxes in shades of orange and gold list the components: 'Statutory Authority', 'Case Law Knowledge', and 'Rules of Evidence'.

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Knowledge of the Law

- Standards v. Guidelines
- Psychological Ethical Standards & Guidelines
- Psychiatry Ethical Standards & Guidelines
- Social Work Ethical Standards & Guidelines
- Professional Counselors Ethical Standards and Guidelines

This slide features a central white box with a gold border containing the text 'Knowledge of the Law'. To the right, five stacked rounded rectangular boxes in shades of orange and gold list the components: 'Standards v. Guidelines', 'Psychological Ethical Standards & Guidelines', 'Psychiatry Ethical Standards & Guidelines', 'Social Work Ethical Standards & Guidelines', and 'Professional Counselors Ethical Standards and Guidelines'.

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Knowing  
Your Role

What is the proper role  
of an expert witness?

Where is the line  
between a neutral  
witness and an advocate?

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Knowledge  
of the  
Professional  
and  
Scientific  
Literature

- What defines “knowledge”?

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Knowledge  
of the  
Professional  
and  
Scientific  
Literature


Historical Truth

Narrative Truth


Threats to Trustworthiness  
of Expert Testimony

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Inadequate  
Analysis of  
Statutory  
and Factors  
Drawn from  
Peer-  
Reviewed  
Literature




Are there statutory factors that need to be addressed?



Are there case law factors that need to be addressed?



Are the peer-reviewed literature identifying specific factors that need to be addressed?



Are there peer-reviewed survey data addressing professional consensus?

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## Failure to Take a Systematic Approach



Consistency with established statutory authority?



Consistency with established professional practice guidelines?




If deviation, is there evidence that the deviation represents a better mousetrap?

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## Digital Evidence



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Don't believe your lying eyes (& ears)...

In the digital age, things are often NOT what they appear

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## Definitions

- Electronic Stored Information (ESI)
- Social Networking Sites (SNS)
- Spoliation
- MAC dates: modification time
- Hashing: Dewey decibel
- Spoofing: imitating

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## What is ESI?

Electronically Stored Information is data that is created, altered, communicated and stored in digital form



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## What is ESI?

- ❖ Data that is stored digitally – Photos, audio, documents (DOC, PDF, XLS), etc
- ❖ Technical Digital Processes by which it is formed
- ❖ It can be altered using different tools / editors



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## Definitions

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- Authenticating: to demonstrate or verify the authenticity; to establish as true or accurate or unaltered.
  - The need for ESI to be “hashed” vs. a forensic examination of the data that leads to an opinion.
  - Discussion of how to gather, corroborate, and appropriately consider and weight data from SNS/electronic communication

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## Native Format

### What is it & why is it important?

- ❖ Native format: The format in which an item of ESI was originally created and saved
- ❖ Requesting data in “digital form” is **NOT** the same as native format!
- ❖ CRITICAL to evaluate the relevant metadata or conduct forensics
- ❖ Access to the device has other critical evidence – including evidence of potential metadata manipulation!

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## Native Format

Every digital file has a native format:

- ❖ Digital Video Files (AVI, MPEG, MOV)
- ❖ Digital Audio (WAV, MP3, AIFF)
- ❖ Digital Photos (JPG, GIF)
- ❖ Documents (DOC, DOCX, WPD, PDF)
- ❖ Spreadsheets (XLS, XLSX, CSV)
- ❖ QuickBooks File (QBW, QBB)
- ❖ Outlook Data File(s) (PST, OST)

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## Metadata

“Data about Data”

- ❖ Additional information created by OS about an item of ESI
- ❖ Most common: (“MAC”) Modified, Accessed and Created dates
- ❖ Also: Author; Machine Name; Version(s); Document History, etc.
- ❖ Metadata can be informative – **BUT it is not as reliable for authentication as is commonly believed.**

**It can be altered / manipulated in ways that are undetectable by examination of the item itself!**

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## Extended Metadata

Much more important than “Windows File Properties”

sample bankstatement Properties

General Security Details Previous Versions

Property	Value
<b>File</b>	
Name	sample bankstatement.pdf
Type	Microsoft Edge PDF Document
Folder path	C:\Users\Himanshi\Desktop
Size	135 KB
Date created	18-01-2021 06:07
Date modified	18-01-2021 06:07
Attributes	A
Owner	LAPTOP-ESR4LSPQ\Himanshi
Computer	LAPTOP-ESR4LSPQ (this PC)

Remove Properties and Personal Information

OK Cancel Apply


```

"fdcd1d18903fe4bd99523dc7ebf20b40c": {
  "metadata": {
    "title": "sample_bank_statements.pdf",
    "doc_id": "fdcd1d18903fe4bd99523dc7ebf20b40c",
    "type": "bank_statement",
    "user_doc_id": null,
    "doc_meta_data": "",
    "folder_name": "",
    "created_at_iso": "2020-12-23T09:09:15+00:00",
    "modified_at_iso": "2021-01-19T12:34:15+00:00",
    "status": "reviewing"
  },
  "data": {
    "Basic Information": {
      "Account Name": "Mary Jane Smith",
      "Account Number": "123456",
      "Bank Name": "Main and Elm 100 Main Street Metropolis, AA 01234",
      "Opening Balance": 5234.09,
      "Closing Balance": "dhsaj",
      "Fraud": "uD"
    },
    "Error": {
      "Error Message": "dhsjdoss"
    },
    "Transactions": [
      {
        "Description": "",
        "Date": "",
        "Debit": ""
      }
    ]
  }
}

```

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## EXIF Data from a JPG File



```

ExifTool Version Number      : 12.44
File Name                    : 58325_NGHGroup_CMYK_Round (Large).jpg
Directory                    : C:/Users/Brian/Pictures/Saved Pictures
File Size                     : 22 MB
File Modification Date/Time   : 2022:08:03 11:31:00-04:00
File Access Date/Time        : 2022:08:11 22:05:50-04:00
File Creation Date/Time      : 2022:08:03 11:30:00-04:00
File Permissions              : -rw-rw-rw-
File Type                     : JPEG
File Type Extension          : jpeg
MIME Type                     : image/jpeg
Exif Byte Order               : Big-endian (Motorola, MM)
Orientation                   : Horizontal (normal)
X Resolution                  : 300
Y Resolution                  : 300
Resolution Unit                : inches
Software                      : Adobe Photoshop CC 2019 (Macintosh)
Modify Date                   : 2019:05:17 14:23:08
Color Space                   : Uncalibrated
Exif Image Width              : 9382
Exif Image Height             : 9800
Compression                   : JPEG (old-style)
Thumbnail Offset              : 322
Thumbnail Length              : 7406
Current IPTC Digest           : 8244cb2fe2c92de4879dedee7063772
Application Record Version    : 0
Object Name                   : 58325_NGHGroup_BC_RGB_2
IPTC Digest                   : 8244cb2fe2c92de4879dedee7063772
Displayed Units X              : inches
Displayed Units Y              : inches
Print Style                   : Centered
Print Position                 : 0 0
Print Scale                   : 1
Global Angle                  : 90
Global Altitude                : 30
URL List                       :
Slices Group Name             : 58325_NGHGroup_RGB_Round
Num Slices                    : 1
Pixel Aspect Ratio            : 1
Photoshop Thumbnail           : (Binary data 7406 bytes, use -b option to extract)
Has Real Merged Data          : Yes
Writer Name                   : Adobe Photoshop
Reader Name                   : Adobe Photoshop CC 2019
Photoshop Quality              : 12
Photoshop Format               : Standard
Progressive Scans              : 3 Scans

```

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## Fabricated & Manipulated ESI

Spreadsheets, word documents, photos, audio recordings, etc. can be altered and manipulated



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## Fabricated & Manipulated ESI

Spreadsheets, word documents, photos, audio recordings, etc. can be altered and manipulated

### **Manipulated Metadata**

- ❖ Date and Timestamps (Modified, Accessed, Created, Printed, etc.)
- ❖ Document Authors
- ❖ GPS Location in EXIF Data

### **Physical Alterations**

- ❖ Signatures
- ❖ Court Stamps

**Manipulation leaves extrinsic evidence, but you must have access to the device that created the ESI (or a forensic image of that device) to find that evidence!**

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## The Most Important Thing To Know About Metadata

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- ❖ Without the native file, relevant metadata is not available
- ❖ Even with an item in its native format: without access to the device that created the item(s), critical evidence is unavailable

**Including evidence of potential metadata manipulation!**

- ❖ In practice – this is one of many great responses to the question:  
***“Why does your expert need access to my client’s device(s)?”***

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## Is it real?

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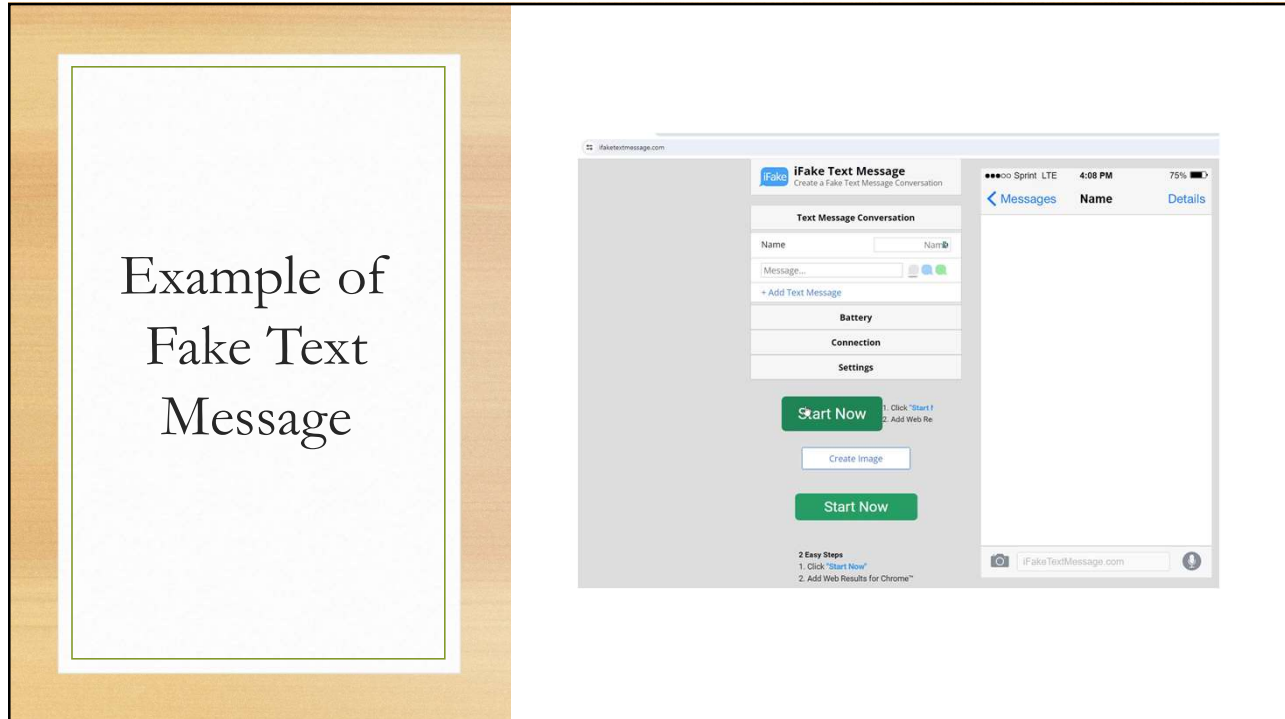
Did you know:

All of this can be fabricated?

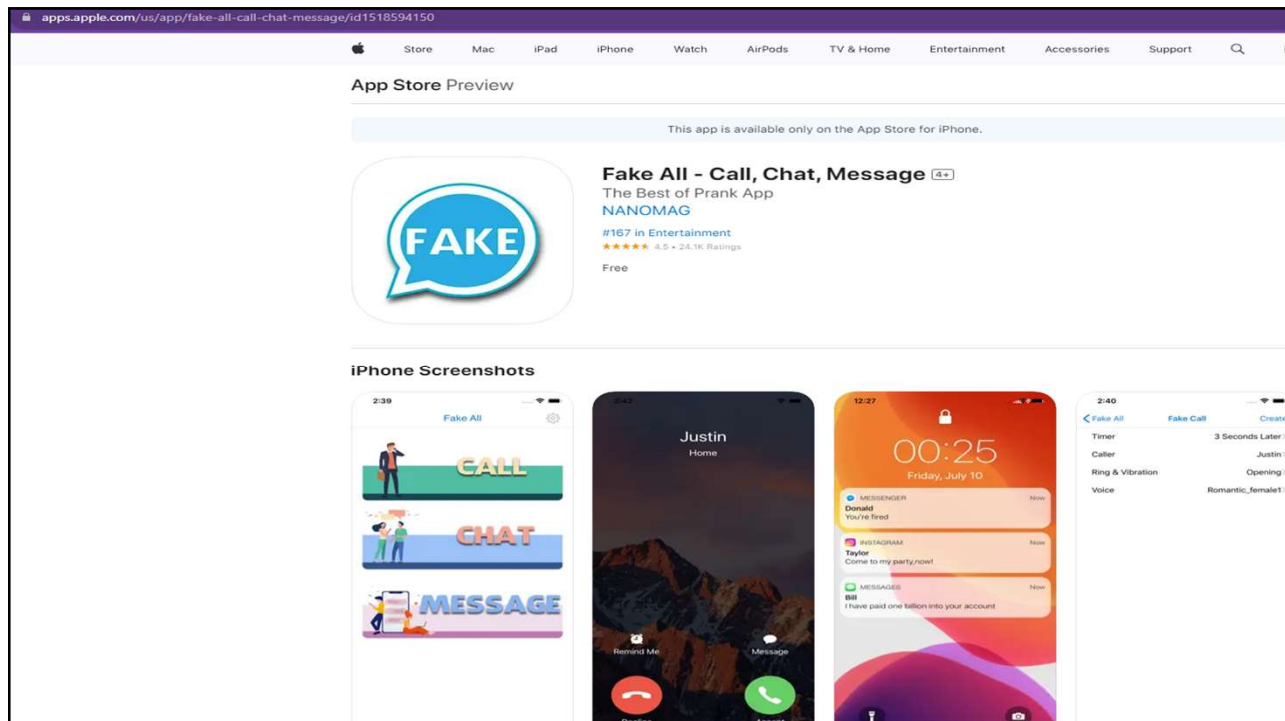
- Edit emails
- Fake Tweet generators
- Fake Facebook post generator
- Fake text generator
  - In fact, iOS 16 includes the ability to edit and unsend iOS messages.
- Or just changing the name of a contact...

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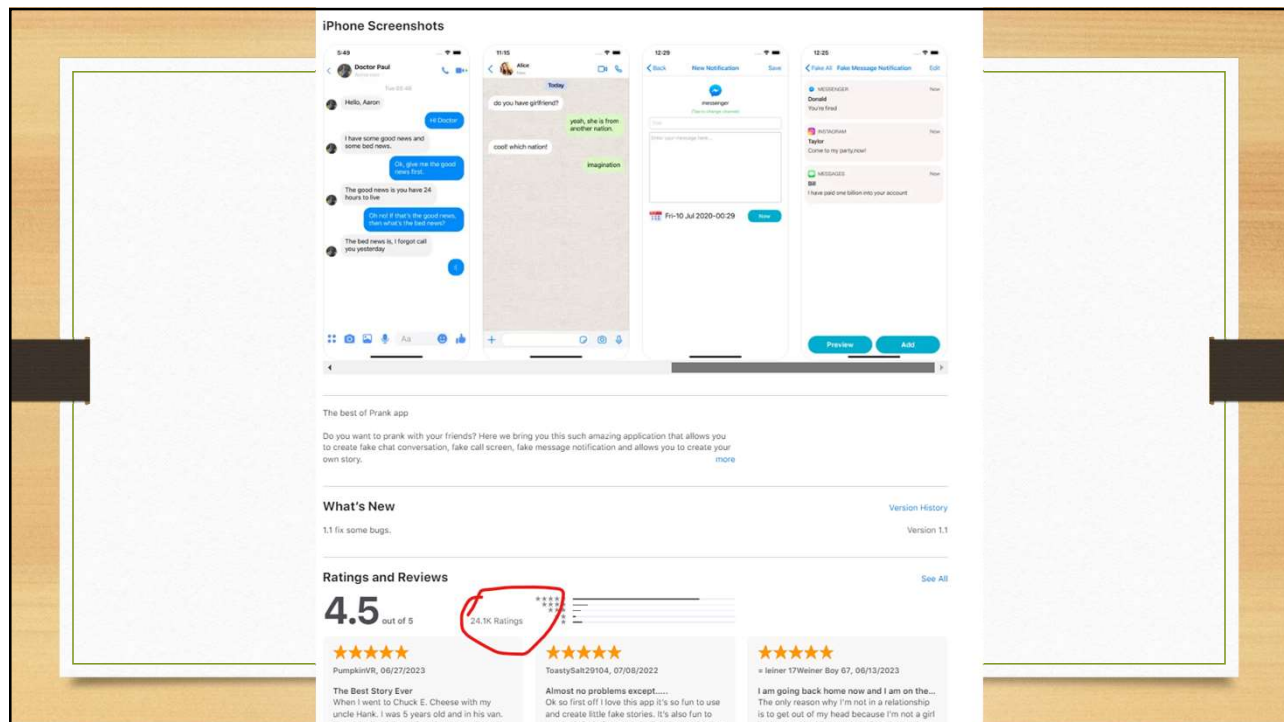
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## Practice Tips:

- ❖ Retain and Confer with Computer Forensic Expert(s) BEFORE filing ESI motions / serving demands
- ❖ Counsel clients EARLY (and often) regarding the serious risks of improper (potentially unlawful) 'self-help' collection of ESI
- ❖ Ensure clients understand the implications of an expert discovering contraband data on devices / in accounts
- ❖ Confirm that ALL ESI collected and preserved, or produced in discovery, is HASHED, and all Hash Values are recorded
- ❖ Send your own client and the Opposing Party a "Litigation Hold – Data Preservation" letter as soon as the case starts

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## Practice Tips for evaluators

### How to elicit information

- When I ask the other parent about these text messages, what are they going to say?
- Ask to receive the data from both sides. Use the adversarial process to bounce data between both parents.
- Bouncing it back
  - What do you...
  - What does your ex...
  - What will your ex say about you...



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## Hearsay

- Interviews, by their nature, are out of court statements.
- They might be hearsay, and thus inadmissible in court.
- If they are inadmissible, then the report may be subject to attack – evidence issues in a forensic report is a different session.
- A party offering an out of court statement needs to demonstrate: either, it is not hearsay, or, it meets an exception
  - Not hearsay: any statements by the party adverse to the party offering the evidence
  - Not hearsay: not offered for the truth, i.e., only offered to prove someone said something, regardless of whether it is true or not
  - Exception to hearsay: present sense impression
  - Other exclusions and exceptions
- Watch for hearsay within hearsay!

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## Bias

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## Failure to Account for and/or Control For Bias

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- Implicit bias factors
- Explicit bias factors
- Bias factors affecting interviews
- Bias factors affecting observations
- Bias factors affecting psychological tests

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## Expert opinions and bias

- The first fallacy is the misbelief that expressing bias in decision-making is an ethical issue rather than an understanding that all people hold biases and sometimes those biases interfere with decision-making. Often biases in decision-making are unintentional and reflect implicit biases that are embedded in our cognitive architecture and very difficult to identify, if not impossible to identify, through self-reflection.

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## Bias in decision-making and opinion formation are the result of competency

- A second fallacy that observation bias in decision-making and expert opinion formation is the result of the competency and ability of the expert. Observation bias reflects implicit biases that are often beyond the awareness of the expert. Observation bias is not the result of incompetence or intentional distortion of the data. It is most often the result of the implicit biases brought to bear by an expert.

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## **Experts are impartial and immune from bias**

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- A third bias is that experts, especially court appointed experts, are impartial and immune from biases in all aspects of their assessment functions. Some of the commonly used processes such as representative heuristics open the door on bias influence.

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## **Science-developed tools thwart introduction of bias**

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- A fourth bias is that the reliance on technology, psychological tests, and other data-gathering methods developed through the use of technology will thwart the introduction of bias. We raise concerns about the potential biases embedded in many of the tools that psychologists have relied upon for decades.

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## Blind spot bias

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- Experts are able to acknowledge how bias might affect the work of others but does not acknowledge that th same biases may affect their work.

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## Bias can be controlled through self-reflection

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- The sixth bias involves the illusion of control that the expert is able to identify and control bias through the exercise of willpower, self-reflection, and the desire to control bias

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## Importance of recognizing the six fallacies

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- These six fallacies have direct impact on the ways in which we collect our data, interpret our data, and develop expert opinions. The fallacies do not address where the source of bias comes from. The second area of examination in understanding how bias affects expert's professional behavior identification by seeking the sources from which biases arise.

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## Eight possible sources of bias

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- Dror proposes that there are at least eight possible sources of bias in each of the fallacy areas.

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## Data as source of bias

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- One source of potential bias is the data obtained by the evaluator. Bias can creep into each and every area of data collection. Such areas of potential sources of bias include, but are not limited to, choosing who to interview, what questions to ask, what responses to record, and what tests to choose to administer.

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## Misuse of Theory and Research

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- Threats to reliability
- Social framework evidence v. diagnostic evidence
- Professional practice guidance regarding use of social science research

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## Insufficient Investigation of Relevant Variables

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- What defines sufficient investigative data gathering?
- Does size matter?

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## Insufficient Analysis of Key Variables

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- Operational definition of concepts
- Peer-reviewed literature supporting concepts
- Application of peer-reviewed literature to current findings
- Limitations of such application

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## Misuse of Available Forensic Models

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- Framework for methodology
- Support in peer-reviewed literature?

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## Diagnosis

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## Diagnosis

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- a DIAGNOSIS describes a pattern of thoughts, feelings and/or behavior within an individual
  - Applying the diagnostic model to relationship questions is invalid and misleading.

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## What does the research tell us?

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- There's a different way to discuss psychological problems that is far less stigmatizing and better supported by data
- There is no clear distinction between "normal" and "abnormal" psychological functioning.
- Psychological problems do not reflect rare and terrifying "illnesses" of the mind
  - They are problematic ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving that lie on continuous dimensions from minor to severe.
- Psychological problems are ordinary aspects of the human experience.

Ben Lahey's Dimensions of Psychological Problems, 2021

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## What does the research tell us?

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- Anxiety vs. Depression?
  - HiTOP

Ben Lahey's Dimensions of Psychological Problems, 2021

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## What does the research tell us?

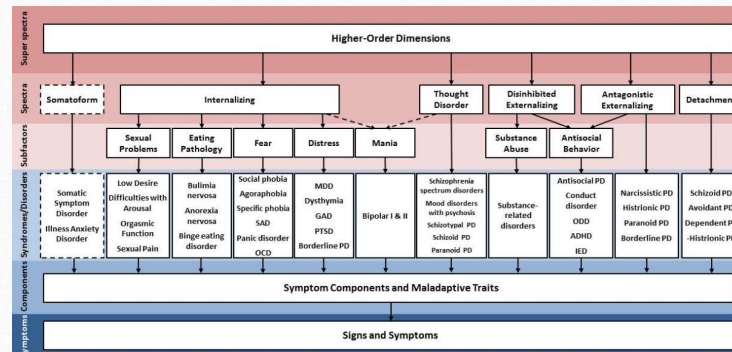
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- Personality Disorders?
  - HiTOP

Ben Lahey's Dimensions of Psychological Problems, 2021

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# HiTOP



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## From Binary to Dimensions

- Dimensional approaches are not based on the terrifying assumption that people are “mentally ill.”
- Binary diagnoses may discourage help for persons with problems that are just below a threshold.
- Dimensional ratings of psychological problems are far more reliable than categorical dimensions.
- Dimensional ratings of psychological problems are more valid than categorical diagnoses.
- Dimensional approaches do not require differential diagnosis.

Ben Lahey's Dimensions of Psychological Problems, 2021-

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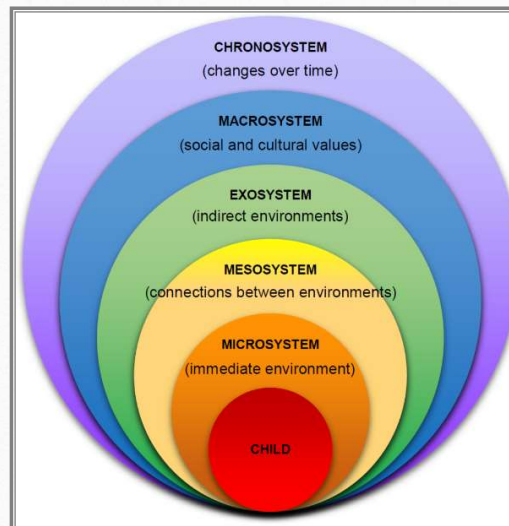
## Urie Bronfenbrenner, 1977

- “It can be said that much of contemporary developmental psychology is the science of the strange behaviour of children in strange situations with strange adults for the briefest possible periods of time.”

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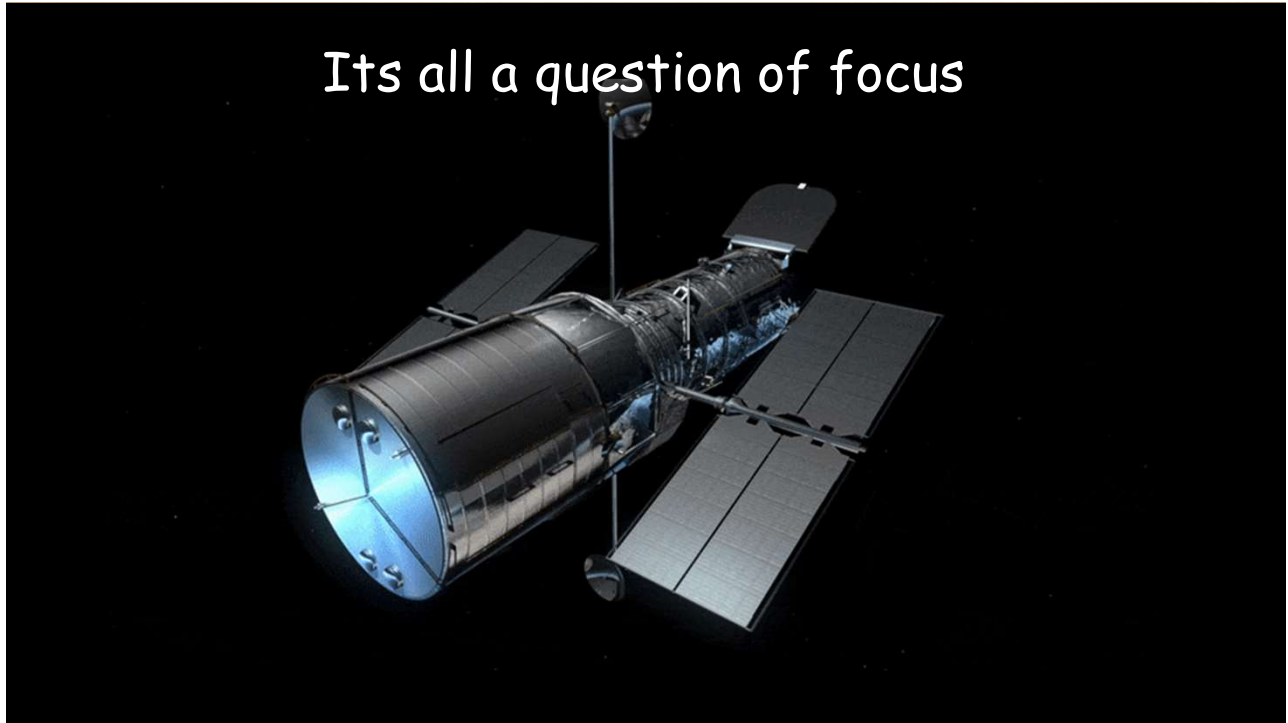
### Process – Person – Context- Time

- **The Process:** The interactions between an individual and her environment.
- **The Person:** The student and his biological characteristics (including age, gender, appearance, intelligence, skills, perseverance, etc)
- **Context and Time:** Bronfenbrenner created five “systems” to categorize influences on development. These are:
  1. **Microsystem:** The microsystem is the innermost layer of Bronfenbrenner’s model. This context is closest to an individual and encompasses interpersonal relationships and direct interactions with immediate surroundings. For example, family members and a child’s school are considered part of the microsystem.
  2. **Mesosystem:** The mesosystem includes interactions between various aspects of the microsystem. A relationship between a child’s family and the child’s school can be considered part of the mesosystem, because these two direct influences (parts of the microsystem) may interact.
  3. **Exosystem:** The exosystem does not directly affect individuals; rather, the exosystem encompasses aspects of structures within the microsystem. For example, financial difficulties within the family of origin, parental job loss, and so forth may affect a child, but do not involve the child directly.
  4. **Macrosystem:** The macrosystem is the outermost layer of Bronfenbrenner’s model. Bronfenbrenner suggested that individuals constantly interact with these systems. He also stated that both individuals and their environments constantly affect one another.

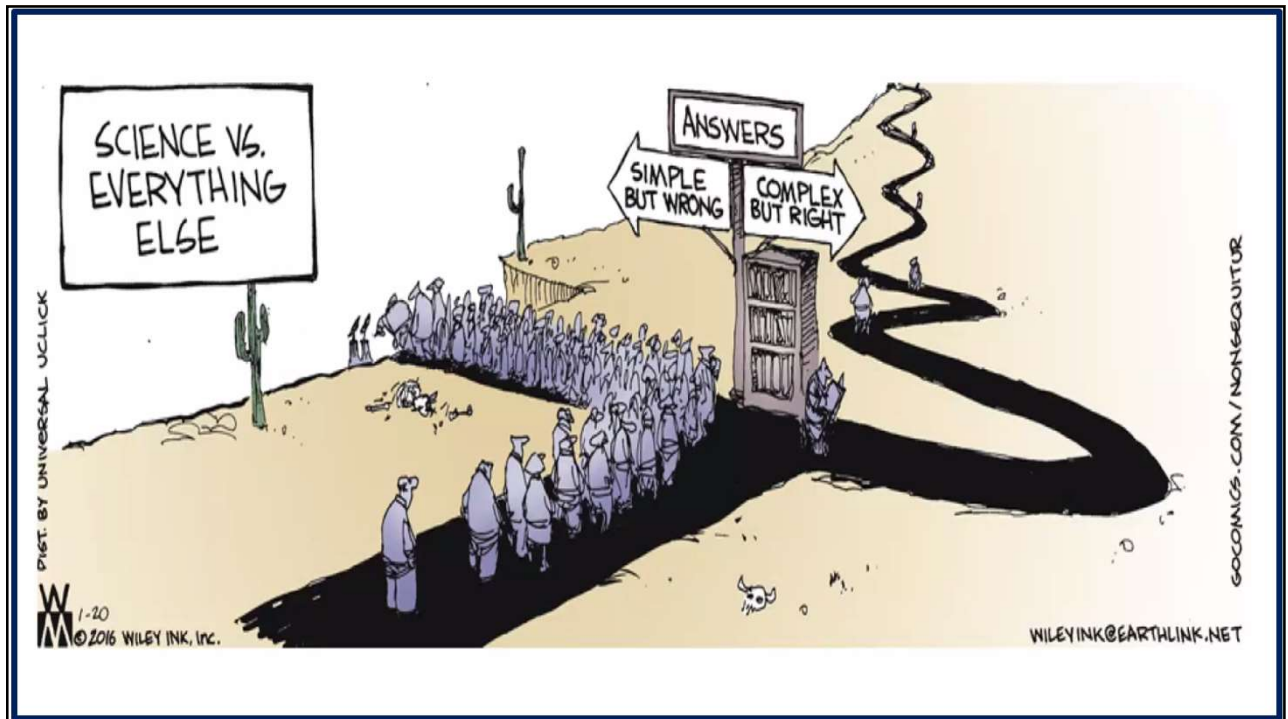


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Its all a question of focus



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## What is a Dynamic?

- A DYNAMIC is a pattern of thoughts, feelings and/or behavior that occurs between people, that is, in a relationship.



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## Diagnoses are discouraged

- DIAGNOSES are explicitly discouraged in forensic family evaluations (e.g., child custody evaluation)
  - “Evaluators recognize that the use of diagnostic labels can divert attention from the focus of the evaluation (namely, the functional abilities of the litigants whose disputes are before the court) and that such labels are often more prejudicial than probative. For these reasons, evaluators shall give careful consideration to the inclusion of diagnostic labels in their reports. In evaluating a litigant, where significant deficiencies are noted, **evaluators shall specify the manner in which the noted deficiencies bear upon the issues before the court.**” – AFCC Model Standards



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## Ecological Model

- Family Law is about FIT
- FIT is a function of a system, not an individual.
- Systems repeat fractally from the microscopic to the super-cosmic.



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## Ecological Model

- An ecological perspective examines the full spectrum of relationship pressures and practical variables that mutually contribute to a unique child's specific circumstance.

Garber, B.D. (2019). Sherlock Holmes and the case of resist/refuse dynamics: Confirmatory bias and abductive inference in family law. *Family Court Review*, 58 (2), 386-402.

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## Ecological Model

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- How have the members of this system adapted to both its internal relationship pressures and its external relationship pressures?
- Dynamics within the system are compounded by dynamics associated with allied and superordinate systems.

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## Trauma-Informed Assessment

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## Trauma-Informed Assessment

- Specialty Guideline 10.04
  - In order to maximize the validity of assessment results, forensic practitioners strive to conduct evaluations in settings that provide adequate comfort, safety and privacy.

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### ACES AND COMPLEX TRAUMAS

**"Victims" and "perpetrators" historically viewed as dichotomous in legal contexts but sometimes two sides of the same coin.**

**Common thread is exposure to maltreatment and ACES**

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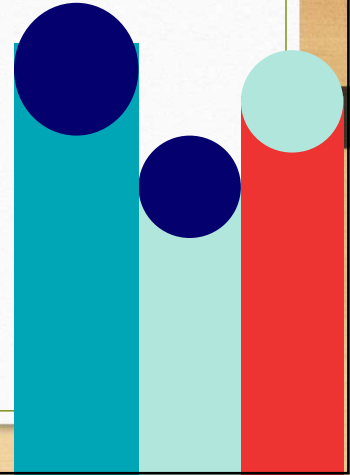
## RELEVANCE COMPLEX TRAUMA

A history of trauma and adversity can have the potential to impact:

- Examinee's presentation and capacity to engage in the interview
- Responses on psychological testing
- Behaviors with counsel and in court

A lack of adequate training and awareness on the impact of trauma can be highly problematic and result in:

- Re-traumatization during the assessment
- Inaccurate diagnoses
- Ineffective recommendations
- Can impact the court's understanding and legal outcomes.



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## BEYOND A BUZZWORD: TI-FMHA

(Goldenson et al., 2022; Goldenson, in press)



1. Evaluators (should) develop familiarity with general literature related to the biopsychosocial impact of trauma, including, but not limited to the ways in which trauma can shape brain development, psychological functioning, and social functioning;
2. Evaluators (should) develop familiarity related to trauma as it applies to forensic populations and psycho-legal issues;
3. Evaluators (should) utilize this trauma-related knowledge towards the aim of adopting a stance and procedures that promote optimal evaluatee engagement in the assessment, reduce the likelihood of re-traumatization, and lead to more accurate results and opinions

82

## TRAUMA INFORMED + CULTURALLY INFORMED/SAFE



- More exposure in marginalized groups and among certain cultures
- Trauma might seem "normal"
- Cultural variations in terms of acceptability of emotions/talking about emotions (some things taboo)
- Symptom expression can vary across cultures
- Trauma can be exacerbated by acculturative stress among refugees/immigrants

83

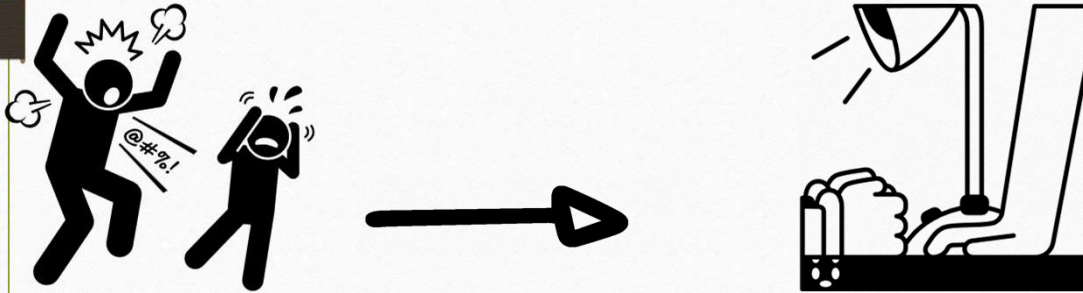


- Nonverbal trauma symptoms can be misconstrued by mental health evaluators and legal personnel who are not comprehensively trained in trauma and its sequelae.
- Trauma-affected evaluatees can have difficulty identifying and articulating their experiences due to avoidance, shame, belief systems about the trustworthiness of others, dissociation or altered states of arousal.
- Attunement not only to what is said but also non-verbal behaviour is essential in order to pace in the interview and garner quality data.

84

## SURVIVAL CIRCUITS IN FORENSIC CONTEXTS

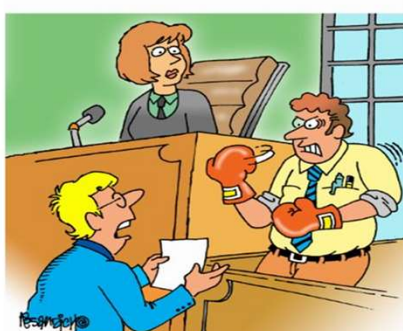
(Goldenson et al., 2022)



85

## COMMON AND PROBLEMATIC MISINTERPRETATIONS:

Hyperarousal = "Antisocial"



**"Your honor, please have it be noted that Mr. Jones is a hostile witness."**

86

COMMON AND PROBLEMATIC MISINTERPRETATIONS:  
Hypoarousal and/or Emotional Numbing= Callousness



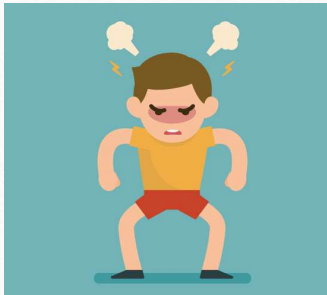
87

COMMON AND PROBLEMATIC MISINTERPRETATION:  
Poor Narrative Memory = Poor Credibility  
(Brewin, 2018)



88

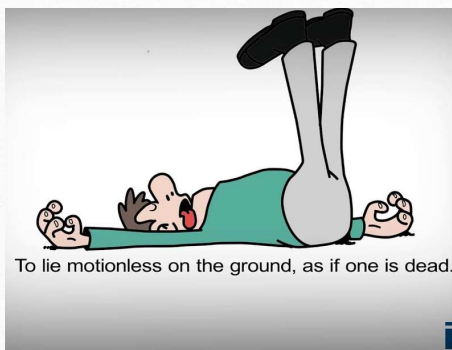
## CUES FOR DETECTING HYPERAROUSAL



COGNITION	PHYSIOLOGY AND AFFECT	PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOURS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Rigid thinking</li> <li>-Poorer reality testing (beliefs about threat in present moment)</li> <li>- Disorganized thinking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Rapid heartbeat</li> <li>- Irritability</li> <li>- Fight/Flight or Freeze</li> <li>- Sensory memories related to a traumatic event</li> <li>-Emotionally reactive, vigilant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Changes in eye contact (intense gaze or averted)</li> <li>- Rapid and or clipped speech</li> <li>-Psychomotor agitation (foot tapping, hand-ringing)</li> <li>- Relational mis-attunement/trouble connecting</li> </ul>

89

## CUES FOR DETECTING HYPOAROUSAL



COGNITION	PHYSIOLOGY AND AFFECT	PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOURS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Reduced orientation to past, present or future.</li> <li>-Lack of initiative</li> <li>-Lack of spontaneous thought</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Numb</li> <li>- Flat</li> <li>- Sleepy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Slowed movement/ immobilized,</li> <li>- Paucity of/slowed speech</li> <li>-Poor eye contact /spacey</li> <li>- Relationally disconnected</li> <li>-Constricted/passive</li> </ul>

90

## CUES FOR DETECTING DISSOCIATION



Dissociation can occur in a hyper or hypoaroused state.

Evaluator can stay attuned to prolonged blank staring, losing track of the conversation or needing questions to be re-stated (Brand et al., 2017)

91

## AND IF CUES CONFUSE, ASK...



How do you feel about coming in today?



How does today compare to an average day in terms of your (thoughts/mood/sleep/sensations in your body)

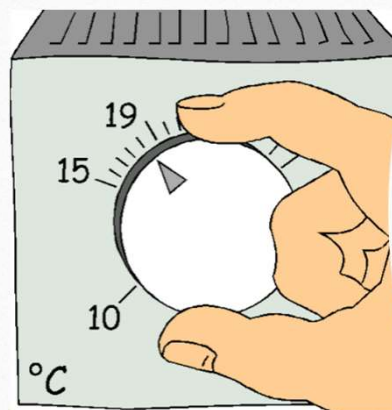


It seems like I lost you for a second there, what was your experience in these last few moments? (e.g. what were you thinking? What were you feeling? What was going on inside you?)

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## MANAGING EXAMINEE DISTRESS: PACING

Goldenson et al, 2022; 2023



93

## 5 Guiding Principles (Harris & Fallot, 2001; SAMHSA, 2014)

### Safety

Facilitating environments that are experienced as physically and emotionally safe

### Trust

Engaging in a transparent fashion

### Collaboration

Using feedback and getting an individuals weigh in/expressed preferences

### Choice

Providing people choice to the extent this is possible

### Empowerment

Helping give voice to provide some degree of power and control

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## Psychological Testing

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95

## Misuse of Psychological Testing

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- Test results = hypotheses or inferences
- Misunderstanding of Normative studies vs. Comparative studies
- MMPI vs. MCMI vs PAI vs Rorschach
- Rating Scales

96



## Story Telling



97

## Story Telling and Development of a Compelling Narrative



WHAT IS A THEORY OF  
A CASE?



SIMILARITIES TO  
HYPOTHESIS  
DEVELOPMENT




WHAT ARE THEMES OF  
A CASE?



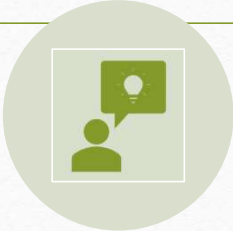
HOW DO YOU  
DETERMINE THE  
VERACITY OF A THEME?

98

## Story Telling and Development of a Compelling Narrative



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO DEVELOP A COMPELLING NARRATIVE?





A POWERFUL THEORY OF A CASE WITH CLEARLY DEFINED THEMES SHOULD LEAD TO A COMPELLING NARRATIVE.

99

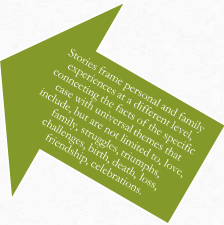
## Stories help us connect judges to the parents' circumstances

Stories connect the reader emotionally with the experiences of each family member and with the experiences of the family.





Consumers of stories found in child custody reports — judges, attorneys, professionals, and parents — often disagree communitally with the family and its struggle to learn how to create healthy post-separation family units.



Stories frame personal and family experiences at a different level, connecting the facts of the specific case with universal themes that include, but are not limited to, love, family, struggles, triumphs, challenges, birth, death, loss, friendship, celebrations.

100

## Steps toward the development of a compelling story



Step One: Understand how to build a compelling story.



Step Two: Apply the elements of storytelling to data collection, data integration, and, ultimately, developing a compelling narrative embodied in the expert opinions proffered to the court.

101

## Importance of Specific Questions

- Well-crafted questions identified early in the evaluation process allows for efficient, targeted questioning of parents, children, and collaterals.
- 
- Well-crafted questions also provide the evaluator with a roadmap toward building a compelling story. Each question defines a road to follow during interviewing.
- The evaluator's task is to link each answer to a specific question and then to weave the answers to each question into a coherent story.

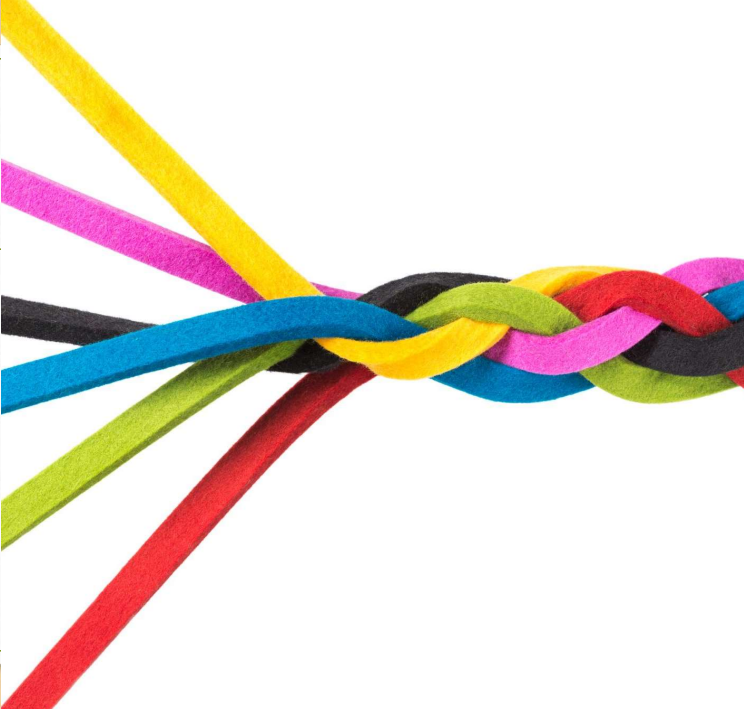


102

## Applied Psychobabble

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- Stories are not a combination of pairwise relationships among sentences.
- Strings of sentences appear to combine into psychological wholes.
- Long live the concept of a Gestalt




103

## Substance and Style

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*How* a parent tells a story during a forensic interview often reveals nothing about who s/he is as a parent or anything about the nature and quality of the parent-child relationship




Be wary of the Fundamental Attribution Error!!!


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## Gathering Reliable Data

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One component of ensuring that evaluators accurately understand the parent, child, or collateral informant's statements is to repeat out loud that which is being discussed.



Interviewing in such a manner might slow down the pace of the interview, providing immediately feedback to the person being interviewed helps to correct misunderstandings as they might occur .

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## Idiosyncratic manner

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Repeating the interviewee's statements aloud is more likely to provide the evaluator an opportunity to obtain feedback about the intended meaning of the communicating



Provides opportunities to reframe the communication into a sentence structure that reflects both the evaluator and the interviewee's meaning structure.



Repeating sentences aloud provides a methodology to create meaningful sentence structures that the evaluator and the interviewee can agree upon and, as a result, increases the likelihood that subsequent sentence strings will create a more coherent story

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## Importance of Story Telling



Our interest in storytelling stems from the importance of narrative in our work as evaluators and attorneys.



A good story – defined as a story that is compelling, consistent, and believable – is the core of a good evaluation.



A good story is also the core of a good presentation of evidence



A good story results in an increased likelihood that the judge will find the story as more probative than other stories presented at trial.

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## Hypothesis Development



Evaluators might consider engaging in continually developing summary structures that change as more and more information is brought to their attention.

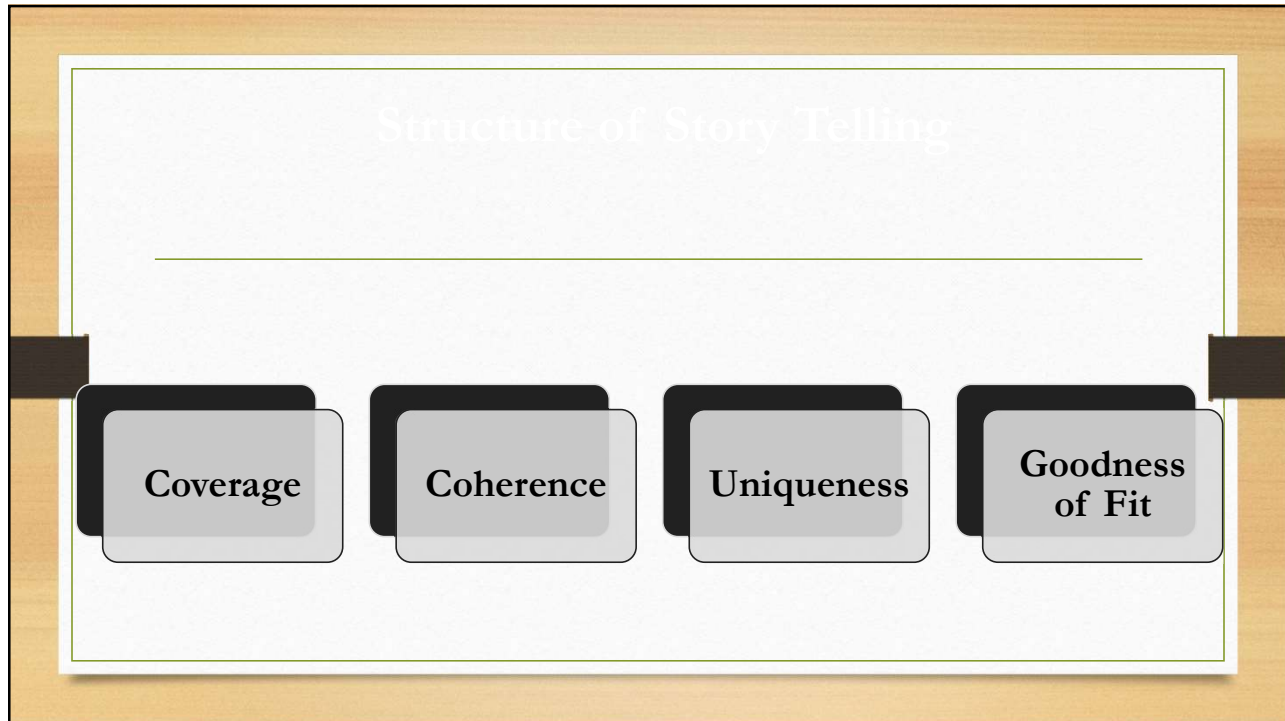


This initial narrative development will help manage the extensive amount of information being presented.



Empirical Basis: Jurors tended to develop “explanatory models” of what had happened to produce the testimony presented at trial.

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109




## Coverage

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- Coverage refers to the ways in which story accounts for the evidence presented to the evaluator.
- 
- The greater the coverage of the story is likely to result in the story being accepted as a more trustworthy explanation of the accumulated data.
- 
- A story that leaves much of the evidence unexplained or unaccounted for is likely to be judged as a less correct explanation of the events under scrutiny.
- 
- Less coverage will likely affect the overall confidence in the story as an accurate reflection of the events.

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## Coherence



A story's coherence affects the confidence one has in the trustworthiness of the story as an accurate reflection of the events under scrutiny.




Coherence is composed of three components: consistency, plausibility, and completeness.

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## Coherence: Consistency

- A story is consistent when it does not contain internal contradictions.



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## Coherence: Plausibility

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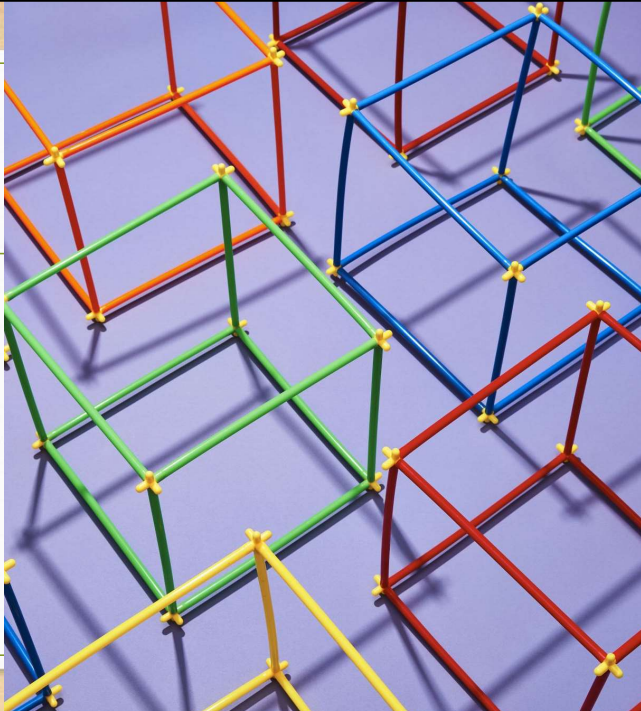
- A story is plausible to the extent that it corresponds to the evaluator's knowledge about what happens in the real world and does not contradict that knowledge.

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## Coherence: Completeness

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- A story is complete when the expected story has all of its parts.
- Missing information or lack of plausible inferences about one or more major components of the story structure will decrease confidence in the explanation.




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# Uniqueness

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THE THIRD COMPONENT IS UNIQUENESS.



IF MORE THAN ONE STORY IS JUDGED COHERENT, THEN THE STORIES WILL LACK UNIQUENESS.




IF THERE IS MORE THAN ONE COHERENT EXPLANATION OF THE INFORMATION, BELIEF IN ANY ONE OF THEM OVER THE OTHER WILL BE LESSENERD.

115

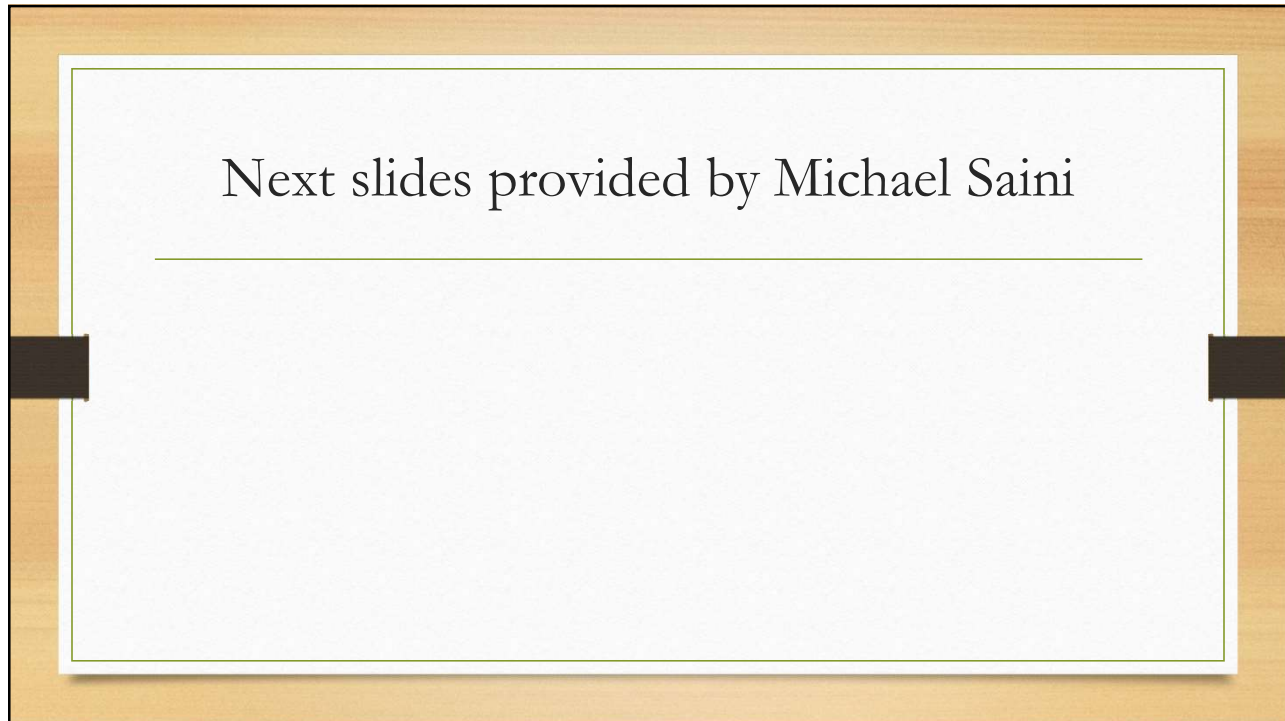
## Goodness-of-Fit

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- Goodness-of-fit refers to the degree to which a story best fits the narrative being presented to the evaluator
- Goodness-of-fit applies to the degree to which answers to the specific questions are relevant and supported



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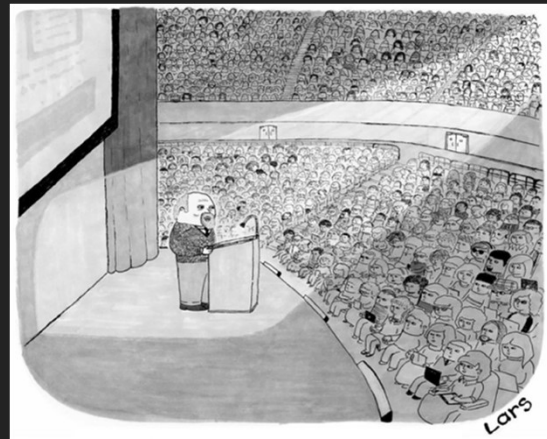
## Overlapping Concepts and Terms

"Parental Alienation Syndrome" (Burrill, 2006; Gardner, 1985)	"Toxic Parent" (Cartwright, 1993);	"Unjustified Restrictive Gatekeeper" (Austin, 2011)
the "Alienated Child" (Kelly & Johnston, 2001)	"Threatened Mother Syndrome" (Klass & Klass, 2005);	"Resist, Refusal Dynamics" (Friedlander & Walters, 2010)
"Pathological Alignments" and "Visitation Refusal" (Johnston, 1993; Johnston & Campbell, 1988; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980)	"Pathological Alienation" (Warshak, 2003);	"Strained Parent-Child Relationship" (Fidler, Bala & Saini, 2012)
"Parental Alienation" (Baker, 2005; Darnall, 1998; Garrity & Baris, 1994)	"Visitation Interference" and "Divorce-Related Malicious Mother Syndrome" (Turkat, 1999);	"Parent-Child Contact Problems" (AFCC / NCFCJ, 2022)

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# Depolarizing PCCP



*"None of this research would have been possible without all the bitter professional vendettas that kept me going . . ."*

119

## What is Polarization?

A social, psychological, political and legal phenomenon.

The division into distinct opposing factions.

Inflexible viewpoints and entrenched in rigid positions.

A strong sense of identity and cohesion within the in-group.

Reduced willingness to compromise or find common ground.



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## Biased Perceptions that Lead to Polarization

- People may be unaware of how these unwanted processes shape their views.
- Biased inference processes mediate perceptions of polarization.
- Others are misinformed when someone expresses a view we do not share.



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## Echo Chamber = Attitude Polarization

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People are often motivated to reject counter-attitudinal information (Kunda, 1990).

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Selective exposure may render people's attitudes more extreme and cohesive (Stroud, 2010).



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## Family Law is Ripe for Polarization

- Knowledge of family law may be based on:
  - “War Stories”
  - Outlier Cases
  - Tragedies / Failings of the System
  - Websites / Support Groups
  - Social Media / Media Campaigns
  - Friends / Colleagues
  - Family Members
  - Personal Histories



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123

## Polarized Issues in Family Law

- Is divorce harmful to children?
- What impacts adjustment: High conflict or quality of parenting?
- Relocation: To go or not to go?
- Shared parenting or sole custody?
- Overnights or not overnights for infants and toddlers?
- Parental Alienation or Intimate Partner Violence?
- Children’s voice vs. choice?



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Cognitive biases seek information confirming pre-existing beliefs and views.



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## Cognitive Biases in Family Law

Confirmation Bias	Anchoring Bias	Fundamental Attribution Error	Escalation of Commitment
<p>People tend to search for, interpret, and remember information in a way that confirms their preconceptions.</p>	<p>Tendency to rely too heavily on the first piece of information encountered</p>	<p>This bias involves attributing others' actions to their character and our actions to external factors.</p>	<p>This bias occurs when people continue investing in a decision, even when it's wrong.</p>
<p>"See, you forgot to send a snack with our child to school again. This is just like you, always neglectful and irresponsible."</p>	<p>"The first time you were late for the exchange, I knew you would always be irresponsible with our time."</p>	<p>"He's only doing well in school because his teachers are lenient this year, not because you've been helping with his homework."</p>	<p>"Despite the costs and the toll it's taking on the kids, I can't stop fighting for full custody now; I've already invested too much in this legal battle to give up."</p>
			

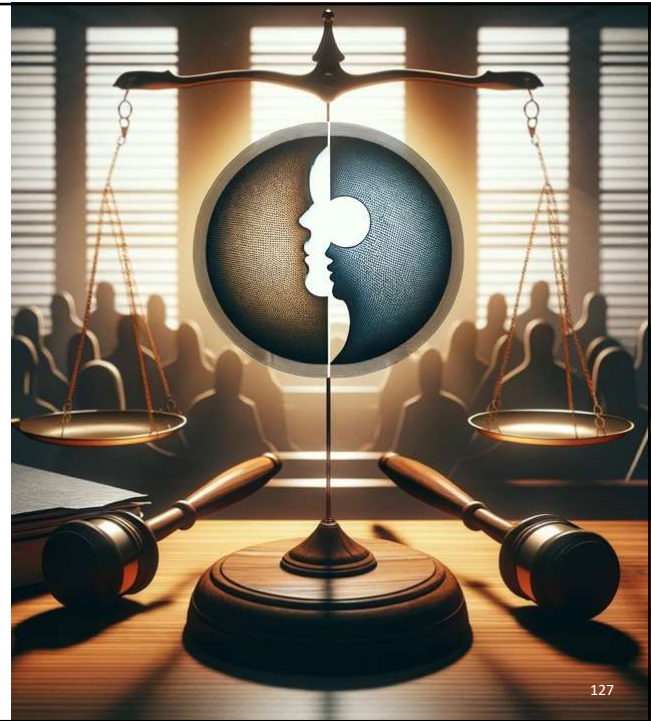
26

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## False Polarization Effect

Humans are genetically prone to overestimate the distinctiveness of rival groups, a phenomenon known in social psychology as “false polarization.” (Robinson, Keltner, Ward, & Ross, 1995).

People tend to naturally assume that different groups hold more distinctive issue positions and have less in common than is the case. (Chambers, Baron, & Inman, 2006).

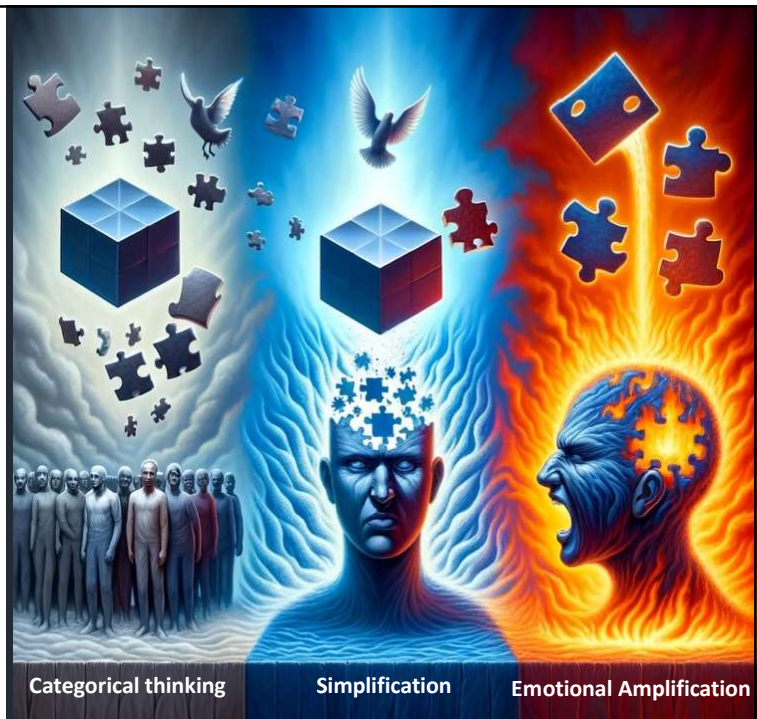


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## Three Cognitive Mechanisms of False Polarization

(Ferbach & Van Boven, 2022)



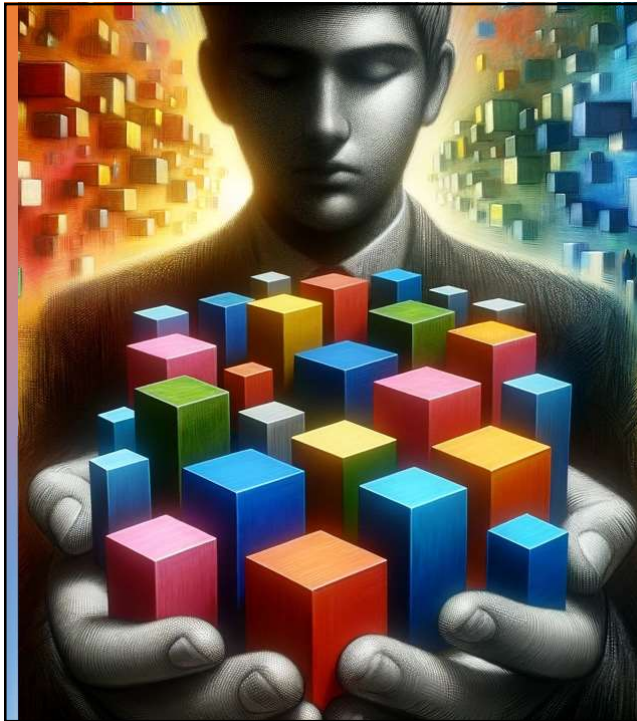
Categorical thinking

Simplification

Emotional Amplification

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## Categorical thinking

- Because categorization is so natural for us, we sometimes overdo it.
- We assume that underlying categories are more coherent than they are.
- Leads to bias in our representation of a category of members.
- We amplify differences across category boundaries.

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## Simplification

- People tend to see the world as much simpler than it is.
- When someone on the “other side” expresses a view that differs from ours, we tend to attribute it to differences in knowledge or values.
- We tend to underappreciate other factors.



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## Emotional Amplification

- Competitive, politicized intergroup conflict invites emotional reactions of anger.
- Anger amplifies categorical thinking and simplification.



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## Three Stages of False Polarization in PCCP

### First stage:

A social scientist presents an extreme view of a particular problem and receives great attention.

### Second stage:

Another social scientist, taking a different perspective, presents evidence for the opposite extreme. This viewpoint also receives great attention.

### Third stage:

Public debates lurch back and forth between these extremes as if there were no middle position worth contemplating.

Adapted by Cherlin's (1999) three stages of extremism in family law

JOURNAL OF SOCIAL WELFARE AND FAMILY LAW  
2020, VOL. 42, NO. 1, 93-105  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09649069.2020.1701941>



### U.S. child custody outcomes in cases involving parental alienation and abuse allegations: what do the data say?

Joan S. Meier

George Washington University Law School, Washington, D.C., USA

#### ABSTRACT

Family court and abuse professionals have long been polarized over the use of parental alienation claims to discredit a mother alleging that the father has been abusive or is unsafe for the children. This paper reports the findings from an empirical study of ten years of U.S. cases involving abuse and alienation claims. The findings confirm that mothers' claims of abuse, especially child physical or sexual abuse, increase their risk of losing custody, and that fathers' cross-claims of alienation virtually double that risk. Alienation's impact is gender-specific: fathers alleging mothers are abusive are not similarly undermined when mothers cross-claim alienation. In non-abuse cases, however, the data suggest that alienation has a more gender-neutral impact. These nuanced findings may help abuse and alienation professionals find some common ground.

#### KEYWORDS

Alienation; child domestic violence; family



Psychology, Public Policy, and Law

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<https://doi.org/10.1037/0893-3200.42.1.93>

### Allegations of Family Violence in Court: How Parental Alienation Affects Judicial Outcomes

Jennifer J. Haman<sup>1</sup> and Demosthenes Loukasov<sup>2</sup>  
<sup>1</sup>Department of Psychology, Colorado State University  
<sup>2</sup>PsychLaw.net, Ann Arbor, Michigan

We tested a set of findings reported by Meier et al. (2019) related to the use of parental alienation as a legal defense in cases in which there are allegations of domestic violence and child abuse. A total of 967 appellate reports in which PA was found or alleged were retrospectively selected from a legal database search. Nonlinear research assistants blind to the study's hypotheses coded the reports for the variables used to test six preformulated hypotheses using a series of logistic and linear regression models. We failed to find any support for the conclusions made by Meier et al. Parents found (vs. alleged) to have alienated their children, regardless of their gender, had greater odds of losing parenting time, losing custody of their children, and losing their case. These findings held even when the accusing parent had been found to have been abusive. Lessons or directions to custody were not found when the alleged alienated parent was found to have been abusive. Results indicate that the majority of courts curiously weigh allegations of all forms of family violence in their determinations about the best interests of children. These findings, along with several others, raise concerns that the methodological, analytical, and statistical problems we detail about Meier's report that make her conclusions untenable. Discussion focuses on the importance of using open science practices for transparent and rigorous empirical testing of hypotheses and the dangers of remaining scientific findings to mislead influential professionals who affect the well-being of millions of families.

Keywords: parental alienation, child abuse, domestic violence, child custody, judicial decision-making

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## The PA Dominant Factor Theory of PCCP

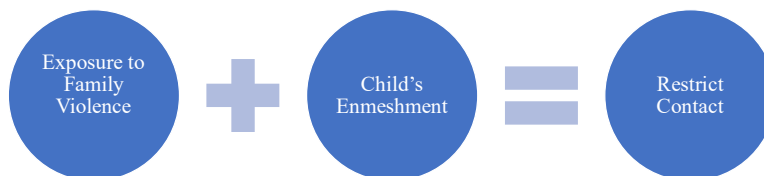


"When PAS is severe, or rapidly approaching the severe level, and the mother is the primary promulgator, then I recommend a change of custody. But this represents only a small percentage of cases." (Gardner, 1999, <http://www.fact.on.ca/Info/pas/misperce.htm>)

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## The IPV Dominant Factor Theory of PCCP



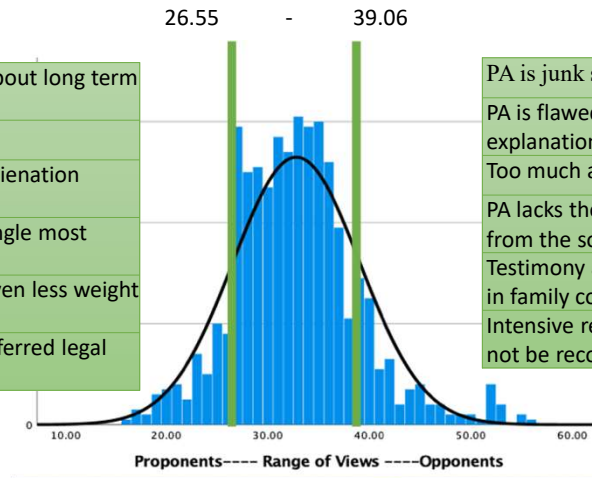
"While the desire to be neutral, objective, and open to all hypotheses is understandable and honorable, the realities of abuse, its routine denial by evaluators and courts as well as abusers, the rampant misuse of the alienation concept, and its historical pedigree as a strategy for denying abuse, make the multivariate approach more of a tool for denial than for truth." (Meier, 2010, 246).

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## False Polarization in PCCP

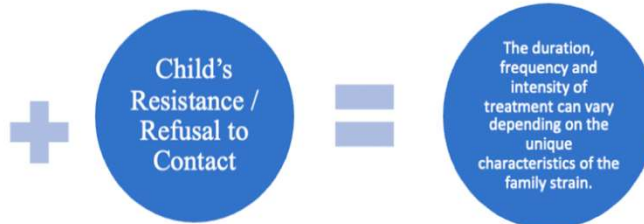
Longitudinal research clear about long term consequences of PA  
 PA is a form of child abuse  
 Generally endorse Parental Alienation Syndrome (PAS)  
 PA as the dominant factor (single most influential) in explaining RRD  
 Children's views should be given less weight in cases of PA  
 Reversal of custody is the preferred legal remedy for PA



PA is junk science and should not be used  
 PA is flawed, confusing and misleading explanation of RRD  
 Too much attention given to PA  
 PA lacks the support of reliable evidence from the social science literature.  
 Testimony about PA should not be admitted in family court  
 Intensive residential interventions should not be recommended

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## Multi-Factor Theory of PCCP



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## The Multiple Hypotheses Approach is Not New

“It is likely that the evaluator will find that the child’s troubles in their relationships and/or their behaviors is the result of a combination of normal developmental variations, poor parenting (possibly including alienation), and/or abuse”

(Drozd & Olesen, 2004, page 71)

### Is It Abuse, Alienation, and/or Estrangement? A Decision Tree

Leslie M. Drozd  
Nancy Williams Olesen

**ABSTRACT.** Allegations of family violence, child abuse, and alienation often occur in the same contested child custody case. Custody evaluators often are poorly trained in forensic assessment of allegations of domestic violence and allegations of alienation. The authors of this article suggest language that is designed to differentiate between cases in which the term *alienation* is appropriate, as in non-abuse cases, and when

Leslie M. Drozd, PhD, earned a doctoral degree in clinical psychology from California School of Professional Psychology in 1986. She is a past President of the Orange County Psychological Association and has received their Orange Psi award for outstanding contributions to the field of psychology.

Nancy Williams Olesen, PhD, graduated with a BA in psychology from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and a PhD in clinical psychology from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. She teaches, researches, and works in private practice, with a particular emphasis on child abuse and neglect, custody and access disputes, and the interface between clinical and forensic psychology.

Address correspondence to: Leslie M. Drozd, PhD, 1001 Dove St., Ste. 140, Newport Beach, CA 92660 (E-mail: ldrozdpd@aol.com).

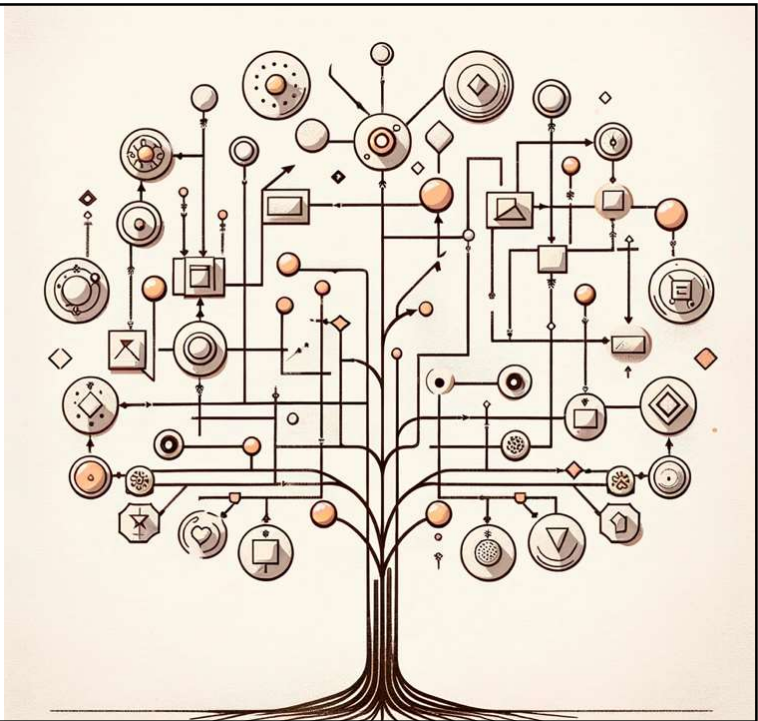
This article began as a presentation at the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts Child Custody Conference, Kiawah, South Carolina, November 2000. Since then, two colleagues, Kathryn Kuehle, PhD, and Jonathan Gould, PhD, have both challenged and supported the authors. Their contributions were invaluable. In addition, the authors are most appreciative of the ideas that the following colleagues have offered to them and the assistance that they have provided over the past four years in the writing of this paper. The authors wish to thank The Honorable William Jones, Toby

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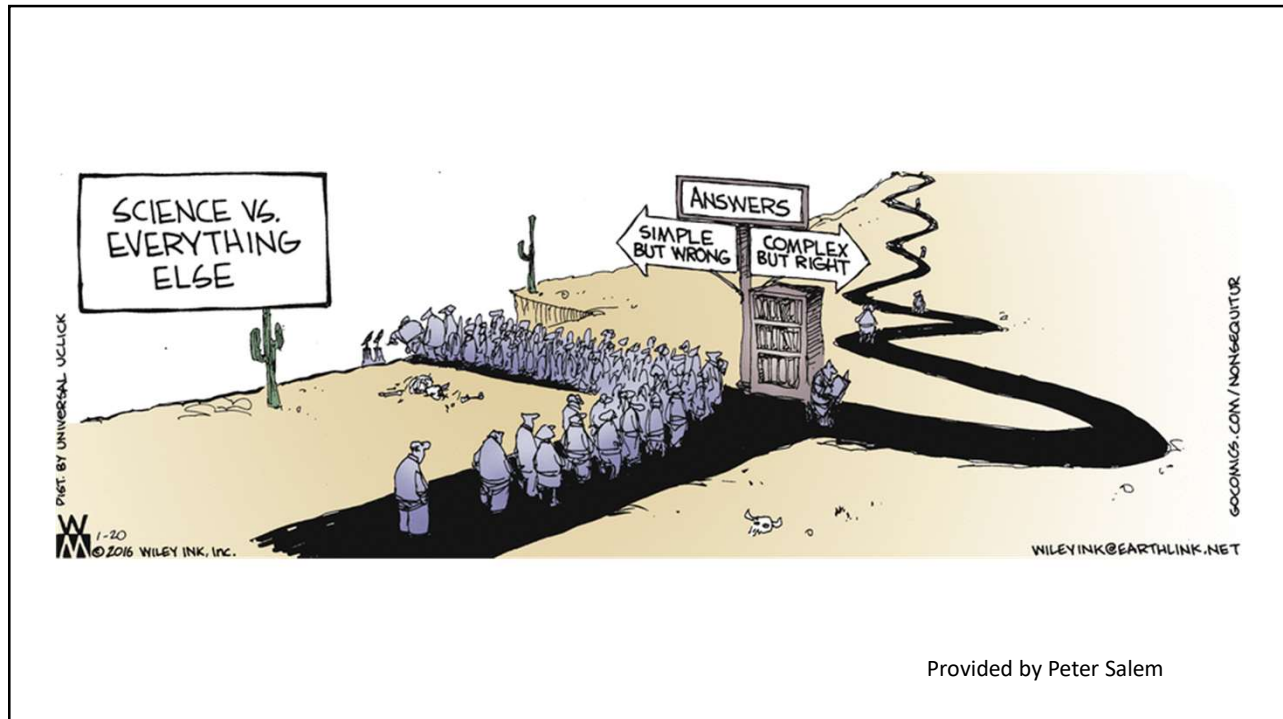
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## Multiple Hypotheses

- Avoid simplified attribution of blame based on a narrow focus on the problem.
- Bring forward every potential explanation of parent-child relationship arrangements and develop every tenable hypothesis respecting their cause and history.
- Control against the premature and unduly selection of one hypothesis until such time that all have been considered.
- Neutralize biases (selection bias, premature closure, etc.)



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## Using a Step-Wise for Multi-Factor Decision Making

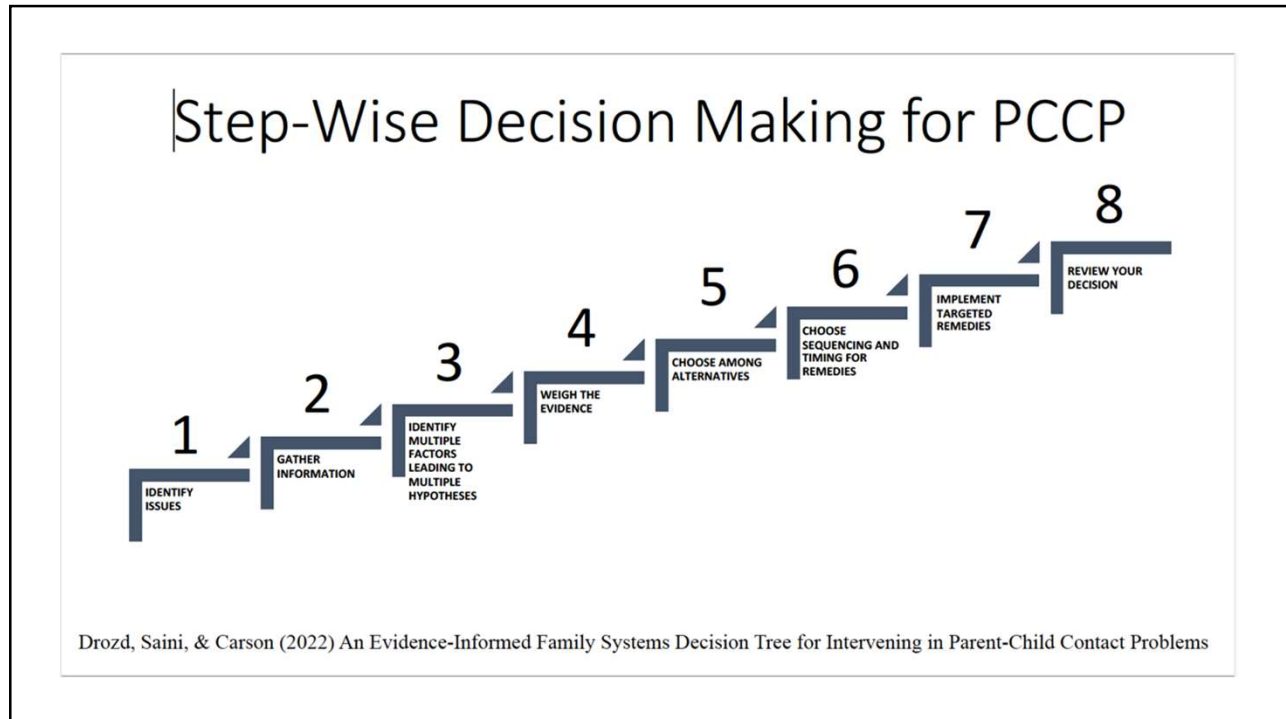
Decision-making is the process of making choices by identifying a decision, gathering information, and assessing alternative resolutions.

Using a step-by-step decision-making process can help you make more deliberate, thoughtful decisions by organizing relevant information and defining alternatives.

Using a step-by-step decision-making process can help you make more deliberate, thoughtful decisions by organizing relevant information and defining alternatives.



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### STEP 1: Identify the Issues

- Most children continue to have a positive relationship with their parents' post-separation and divorce.
- The first step is to identify the extent of PCCP.
- In this first step, it is very important to be clear about the severity, frequency, patterns, behaviors, and attitudes of PCCP without making any inference to the cause.

Severity:	Frequency	Pattern	Behaviours	Emotions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Occasional</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Situational</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cold</li> </ul>
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refusal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fixed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hot</li> </ul>

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## STEP 2: Gather Information

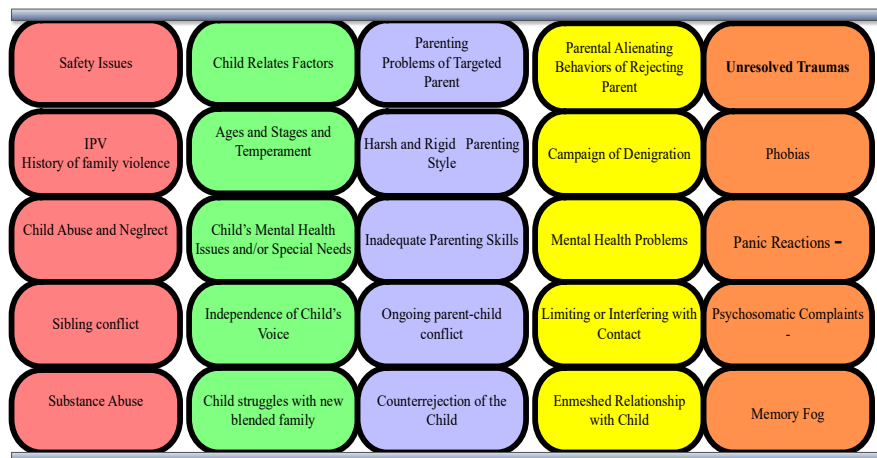
- Collect pertinent information before assessing for the multifactorial influences of PCCP.
- This step involves both internal and external data gathering:
  - Internal: Awareness of your biases regarding PCCP through a process of self-assessment.
  - External: Data from multiple sources to assist in multifactorial process
- Integrate social science literature critically and judiciously.



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## STEP 3: Identify Multifactorial Hypothesis Statements

- Brainstorm potential reasons for the strained parent-child relationship.



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### STEP 4: Weigh The Evidence

Factor	Relevance to this Case	Summary of the Evidence	Quality of the Evidence	Synthesis of Evidence: Inferences
Hy1: Normal Development (Affinity)				
Hy2: Intimate Partner Violence				
Hy3: Child Maltreatment / Neglect				
Hy4: Substance Misuse				
Hy5: Unresolved Trauma				
Hy6: Parental Alienating Behaviors				
Hy7: Coparenting Conflict				
H8: Parenting Deficits				
Hy9: Child's Mental Health / Temperament/ Special Needs				
Hy10: New Partner/Blended Family Conflict				
H11: Sibling Conflict				
H12: Other:				
				<b>Weighted Decision Matrix for PCCP</b>

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### STEP 5: Choose Among Alternatives

Factor	Likelihood of Impact	Considerations for Remedies	Comments
Hy1: Normal Development (Affinity)			
Hy2: Intimate Partner Violence			
Hy3: Child Maltreatment / Neglect			
Hy4: Substance Misuse			
Hy5: Unresolved Trauma			
Hy6: Parental Alienating Behaviours			
Hy7: Coparenting Conflict			
Hy8: Parenting Deficits			
Hy9: Child's Mental Health / Temperament/Special Needs			
Hy10: New Partner/Blended Family Conflict			
Hy11: Sibling Conflict			
Hy12: Other:			
			<b>Weighted Decision Matrix for PCCP (Part B)</b>

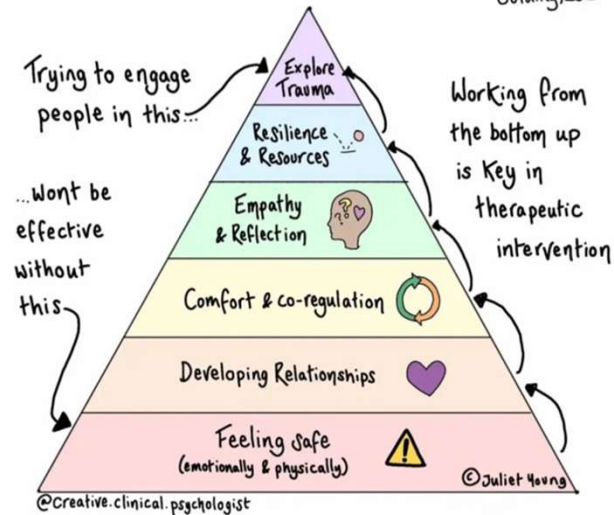
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## STEP 6: Choose The Sequence And Timing Of Remedies

- Need to treat to target, consider timing and dosage and sequence multiple interventions to maximize effects
- The number of recommended sessions varies by condition and treatment type

## Therapeutic Needs Hierarchy

Golding, 2015



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## Step 7: Implement Targeted Remedies

Factor	Remedies
Hy1: Normal Development (Affinity)	Parenting education / Groups for children
Hy2: Intimate Partner Violence	IPV exposure interventions / Protective orders
Hy3: Child Maltreatment / Neglect	Systemic interventions either alone or as part of multimodal programs for recovery
Hy4: Substance Misuse	Addiction counselling (depends on alcohol or illicit drug)
Hy5: Unresolved Trauma	Trauma-informed individual and family work
Hy6: Parental Alienating Behaviors	Multi-Modal Family Intervention (MMFI)
Hy7: Coparenting Conflict	High Conflict Custody and Parenting Program
H8: Parenting Deficits	Behavioral Parent Training
Hy9: Child's Mental Health / Temperament/ Special Needs	individual and group therapy / Co-parenting therapy
Hy10: New Partner/Blended Family Conflict	Evidence-Informed Family Systems Therapy
H11: Sibling Conflict	Sibling-based interventions
H12: Other:	See Evidence-Informed Interventions Greenberg, et al., 2019.

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## STEP 8: Review Your Decision

Re-establishing parent-child contact is but one of the goals.

The therapist should not solely base success on resumed contact.

Re-establishing contact should be considered a step toward improving strained parent-child relationships.



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## Common Goals of Working with PCCP

To change interpersonal dimensions impacting the conflict.



To increase coping strategies and skills.



To strengthen parent competency and the ability to be attuned to the child.



To strengthen parent-child relationships.



To help to buffer the child from the conflict.

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## Limitations of the Stepwise Approach

- Can't apply too rigidly
- Needs reflection about contemplation
- Potential for post facto analysis biases
- Cost to complete the steps
- Misuse the model – used to blame
- Overconfidence in model (weighing)
- Evidence informed tool but critical judgment remains critical

"Making the simple complicated is commonplace; making the complicated simple, awesomely simple, that's creativity."

Charles Mingus



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## Wrapping it up



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