



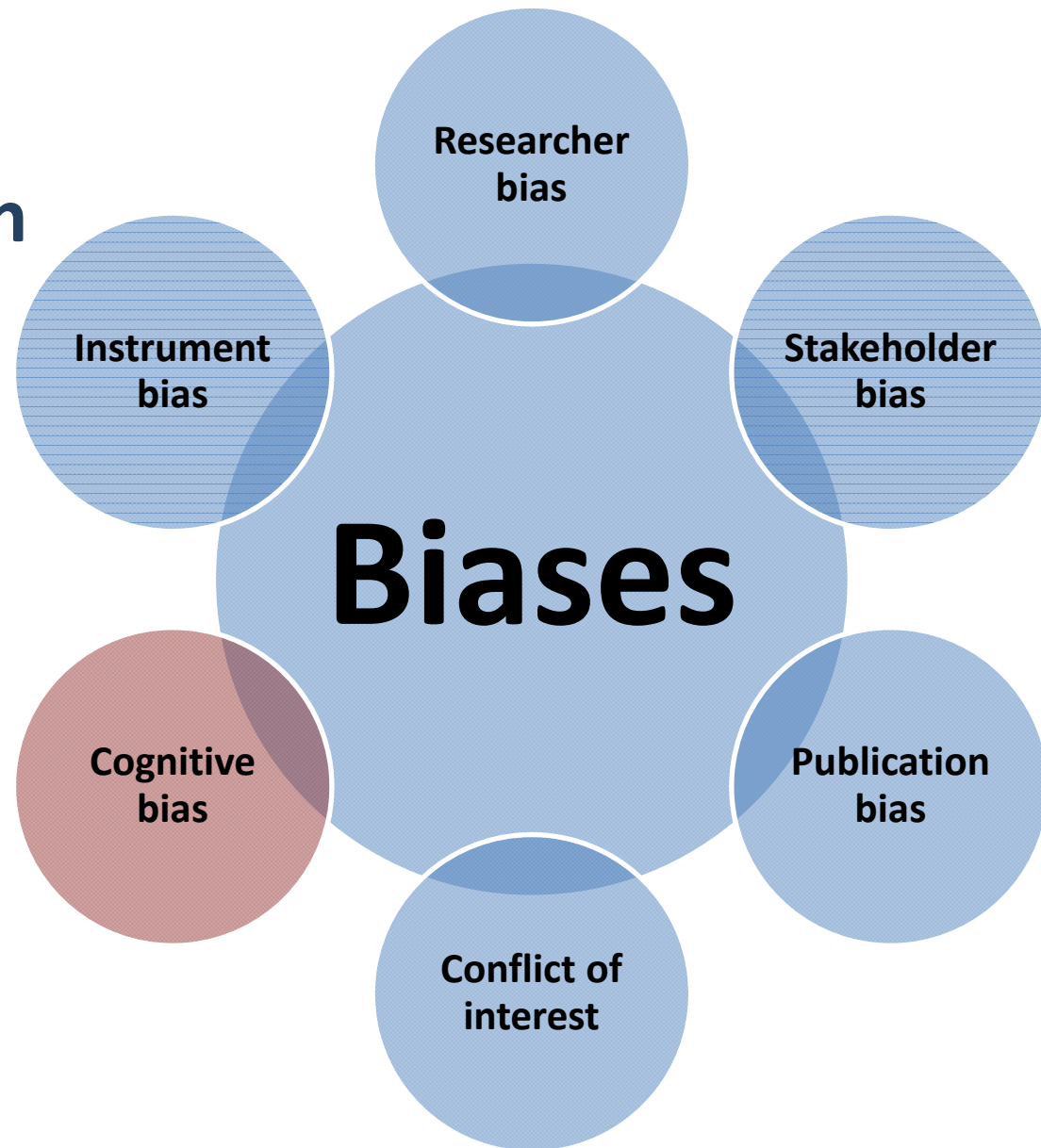
Beyond bias: using new insights to improve evaluation practice

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September, 2016

What I will talk about

- What are cognitive biases
- What we know about how evaluators make decisions
- Strategies to address bias

Bias in evaluation



Cognitive Bias

“those habits of thought
that often lead to
erroneous findings and
incorrect conclusions”

House, 2015

**Would you take this
gamble?**

You are offered a gamble
on the toss of a coin.

If the coin shows tails, **you
lose \$100.**

If the coin shows heads,
you win \$150.

**Would you choose
radiation treatment or
surgery?**

Surgery provides better survival rates after 5 years, but is riskier.

The one-month survival rate is 90%.

Would you choose radiation treatment or surgery?

Surgery provides better survival rates after 5 years, but is riskier.

There is 10% mortality in the first month.

**What age would you
guess?**

**Did Mahatma Gandhi die
before or after the age of
9?**

What age do you think he
was when he died?

**What age would you
guess?**

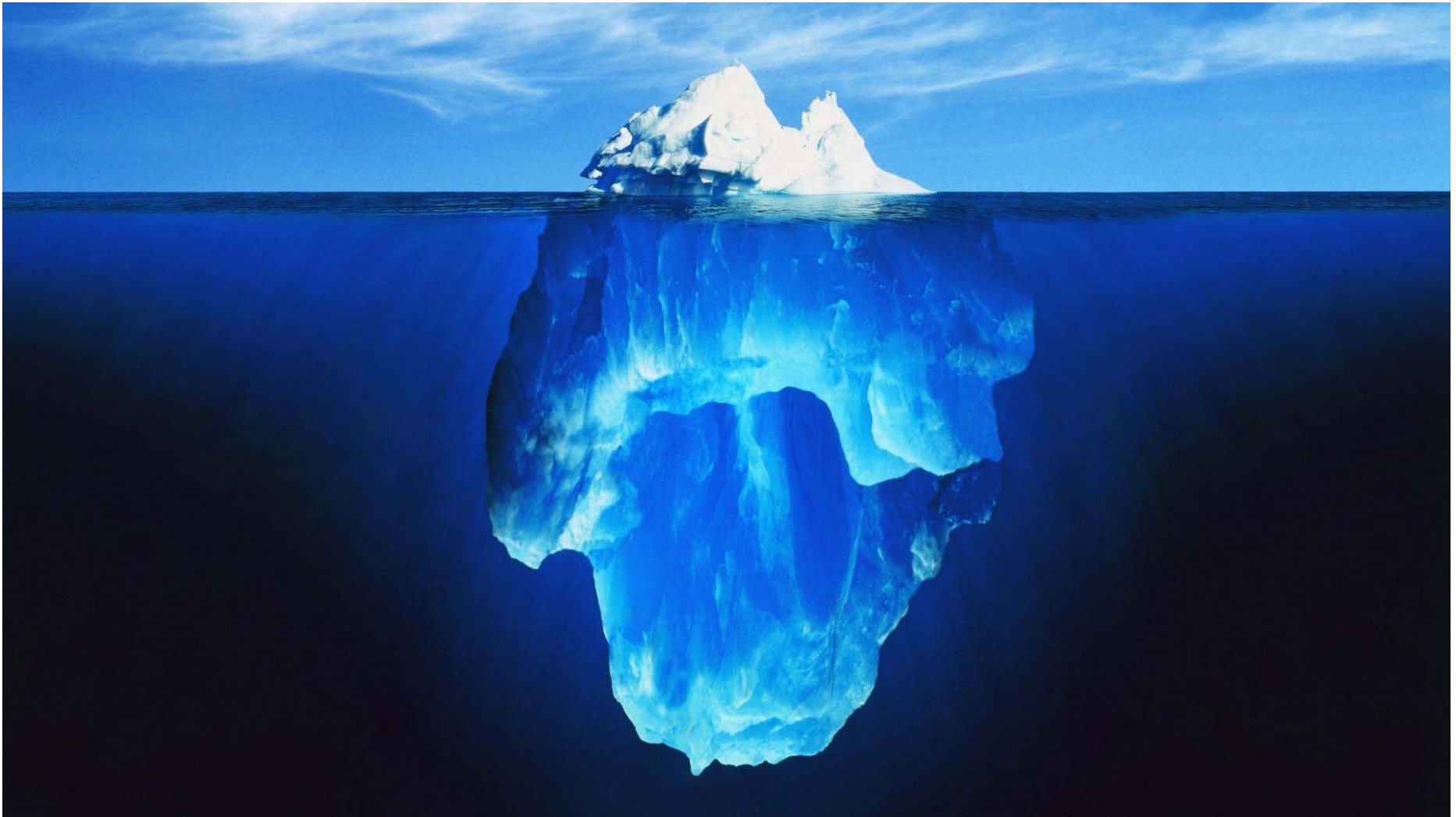
**Did Mahatma Gandhi die
before or after the age of
140?**

What age do you think he
was when he died?

Other common biases

- Overconfidence
- Coherence
- Optimism
- Availability
- Representativeness
- Confirmation bias
- Jumping to conclusions
- Halo effect
- Substitution effect

How conscious are we?



How do evaluators make decisions?



Research suggests evaluators...

- Vary in their decision-making processes
- Are influenced by their attitudes and beliefs
- Choose familiar methods
- Changes decision-making with experience
- Write reports without showing evaluative reasoning

Strategies to address bias

- Conduct a pre-mortem
- Take the outside view
- Consult widely
- Mentoring
- Make decisions explicit

Reflexivity

“The term reflexivity has entered the evaluation lexicon as a way of emphasizing the importance of deep introspection, political consciousness, cultural awareness, and ownership of one’s perspective. Reflexivity calls on us to think about how we think and inquire into our thinking patterns...”

(Patton, 2014)

Mindful evaluation practice

1. Set the intention
2. Bring full attention
3. Become aware
4. Practice or cultivate self-reflexivity
5. Practice deep listening
6. Stay curious and open
7. Suspend judgment

Puente and Bender (2015)

Conclusion

- Awareness of biases
- The role of reflexivity
- Evaluation competence
- Australian research



Thanks!

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