



Teaching Methodological Reasoning to MPA Students

Alex Heckman

Chair, Department of Public Administration

Chair, Public Administration Programs

Franklin University

TPAC 2015

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Learning Objectives

1. Interpret and assess study components
2. Causal argument assessment
3. Decision making
4. Descriptive analysis
5. Visual presentation



Image Source:

www.mapmytalent.in/world-of-work

Desai, A. (2008). Quantitative methods, economics and OR models. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 27(3), 640-669.

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Methodological Reasoning

1. Summarize and Analyze
2. Identify and Assess Theory
3. Identify and Assess Research Design
4. Assess Data Quality
5. Identify and Assess Key Measures
6. Assess Analytical Methods
7. Holistic Assessment

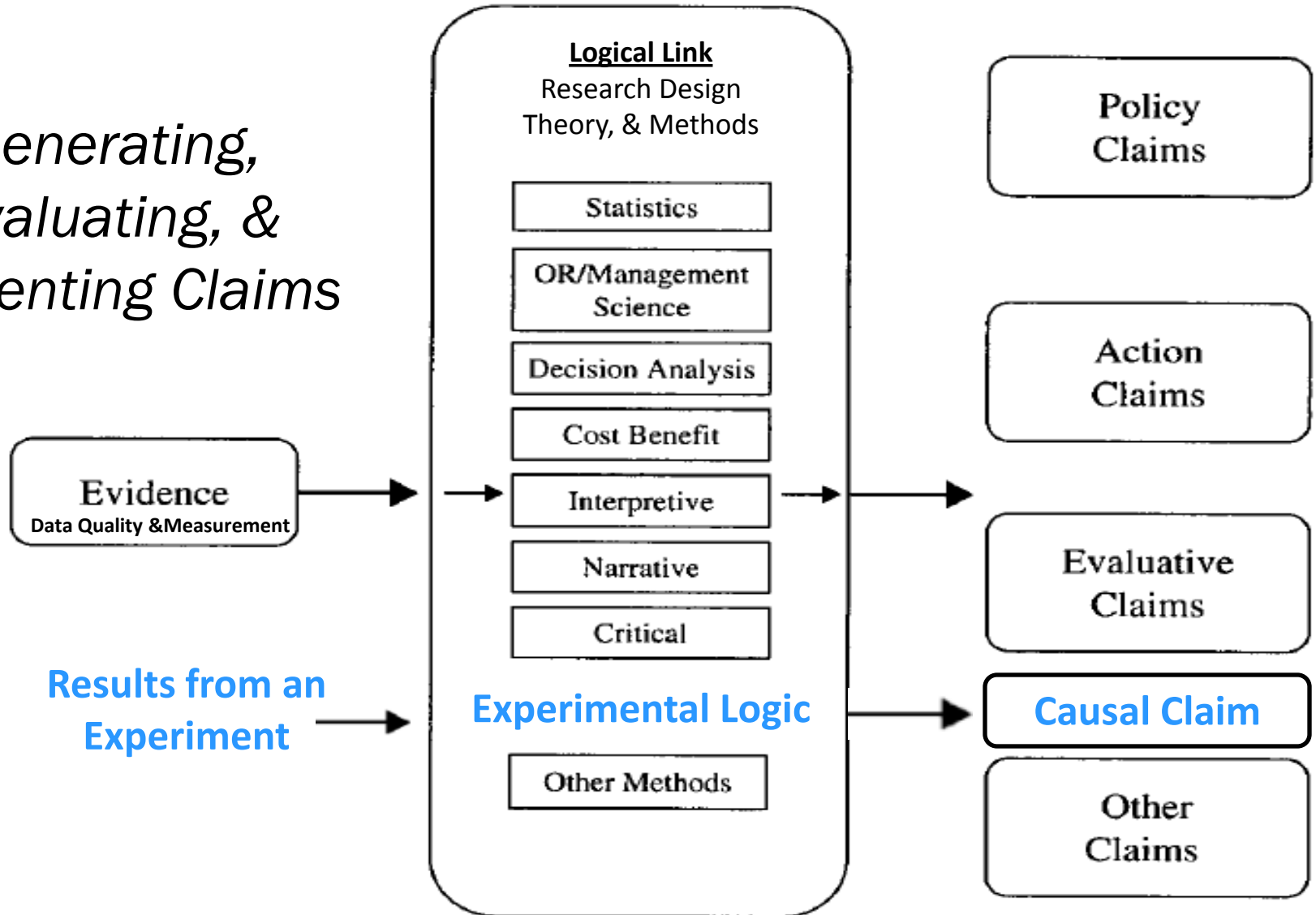
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Evaluating Arguments

*Generating,
Evaluating, &
Presenting Claims*



Establishing Causation

1. Temporal Precedence
2. Consistent-Patterned Relationship
3. Explanation of causal mechanism and elimination of plausible alternative explanations

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Summarize the Study

1. Who conducted the study and why was it conducted?
2. What questions does it address or answer?
3. What main conclusions or claims does it make?
4. Who is the audience for this study and what do the authors think should be done with the results?

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Identify and Evaluate the Theory

1. What is the theory
2. What are key assumptions
3. Is the theory credible

Key Concepts: Assumption and
Causal Mechanism

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Assess the Research Design

1. What is the research design
2. Compare to experimental design
3. Strengths and Weaknesses

Key Concepts: Equivalence and
Internal Validity

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Assess Data Quality

- How was data collected, why, what quality control was used, etc.
- Key Point: Fancy statistical techniques **CANNOT** make up for bad quality data

“The Government are very keen on amassing statistics – they collect them, they add them, raise them to the nth power, take the cube root and prepare wonderful diagrams. But what you must never forget is that every one of those figures comes in the first instance from the chowty dar (village watchman), who just puts down what he damn pleases”

- Stamp, J. (1929). *Some economic factors in in modern life*. London: P. S. King & Son, 258-259.

Assessing Measurement

1. What are main concepts and how are they measured
2. How well do the measures capture the key concepts?
3. What is the level and unit of measurement

Key Point:

Fancy statistical techniques CANNOT make up for poor measurement of key concepts

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Assess Data Analysis Methods

- Is the technique appropriate
- What is the purpose of the technique
 - Patterned relationships
 - Account for alternative explanations (NOT Fully)
- Are the results substantively significant

Key Point:

Statistical analyses DO NOT prove causation

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Overall Assessment of Study

- Internal Validity
- Generalizability
- Practical Usefulness

Key Concepts: Representativeness and
External Validity

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