



Australian National University

Bridging the Know-Do Gap

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Australian National University

Researcher perspective...


1. Worked with NGOs and policy makers
2. Interested in bridging the know-do gap
 - As part of a broader interest in more effective responses to complex problems

(My interest is in methodology)

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What I'll cover...



1. Benefits and ingredients of collaboration
2. What to look for in a research collaborator
3. The value of theory
4. Some ideas for thinking about complexity
5. Some resources

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Benefits of know-do collaboration...

Giving an issue profile and legitimacy

- incl. forming a more powerful 'advocacy' voice

Building a stronger knowledge base

- Incl. figuring out what works and what is cost-effective

Providing new research, policy and practice ideas

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Necessary ingredients...

Know your stuff

Humility

Integrity

Reflectiveness

Ability to deal with uncertainty

Openness to change

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Types of relationships...

Indirect

Researcher(s) on staff

Researchers come in to do projects

Researchers come in to do evaluations

Consultancy

On-going collaboration

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What to look for in a research collaborator...

Think about what you want to achieve:

- issue profile and legitimacy
- stronger knowledge base / evaluation
- new ideas ...

Ingredients for a good match...

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What researchers are good at...

Quantifying a problem
 Gathering rich stories
 Examination of cause and effect
 Examining change over time (expensive)
 Explanatory theory
 Evaluation
 Comparative analysis
 Cost-benefit analysis

Depends on their disciplinary skills

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What researchers are not (yet) so good at...

Providing good theory and methods for dealing with complexity, including how to

- understand systems
- synthesise different knowledges
- deal with values conflict
- deal with unknowns
- understand context
- bridge the know-do gap (incl action research)

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What motivates researchers...

Innate motivations

Curiosity
 Passion for topic
 Commitment to excellence
 Advancing their academic discipline or field
 Making a difference
 Ambition

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Reward system

Funding, esp category 1 grants
 Publications, esp in high impact journals
 PhD completions
 (Impact)
 (Teaching excellence)

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The difference between...

Researchers

Focus on
 • what don't know
 • loose ends (things that don't fit)
 Knowledge-driven
 Looking for new studies

Consultants

Focus on
 • what is known
 • providing a neat package
 Client-driven

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What to look for in a research collaborator...

Can they provide what you want to achieve:

- issue profile and legitimacy
- stronger knowledge base / evaluation
- new ideas ...?

What are they good at?

What is motivating them and what can you provide?

Would a consultant be better?

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Students... 1. PhDs

- 3 years
- variable quality and levels of supervisor engagement
- need results
- diverse motivations
 - springboard for further career
- may not finish

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Students... 2. Honours and masters

- 1-2 years
- variable quality and levels of supervisor engagement
- can take more risks
- diverse motivations
 - springboard for further career

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Students... 3. Undergraduate Projects

- limited time (days/weeks)
- variable quality and levels of supervisor engagement
- can take most risks
- want a good mark

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Collaboration is about difference... 1

Harness 'good' differences – reasons for the collaboration



Manage 'bad' differences – get in the way of the collaboration



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Collaboration is about difference... 2

Harnessing 'good' differences:

- What are the mutual advantages?
- How can you get the most out of what each of you brings to the table?

Managing 'bad' differences:

- What motivations may get in the way?
- What characteristics may get in the way?

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The value of theory... An example

- How political science theory can help us better understand government policy making
- Complex (one theory cant do it all)

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John Godfrey Saxe 1869



Laws [policy], like sausages, cease to inspire respect in proportion as we know how they are made

Three useful theories

Technical-rational policy cycle



Response to interest group pressure

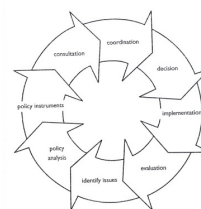


Entrepreneurship & windows of opportunity



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Technical – rational policy cycle... 1

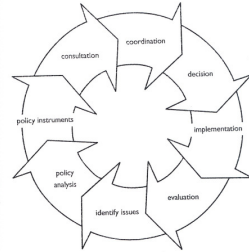


1. Issue comes onto agenda
2. Examine existing policy, identify options
3. Identify possible ways of intervening
4. Consult affected parties
5. Coordinate between relevant departments
6. Make a decision
7. Implement the decision
8. Evaluate the decision

Bridgman, P., Davis, G., 2004. The Australian Policy Handbook, 3rd ed. Allen and Unwin, Sydney

Technical – rational policy cycle... 2

Too simple by itself, but elements occur in much policy making
Useful for timing of intervention



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Response to interest group pressure... 1

*“public policy is the outcome of the pressures of society's many and diverse interest groups” **

Interest groups often combine into Advocacy Coalitions

*Fenna A. Australian public policy, 2nd edn. Frenchs Forest: Pearson Longman, 2004.

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Response to interest group pressure... 2



Sabatier, P. A., 1988. An advocacy coalition framework of policy change and the role of policy-orientated learning therein. *Policy Sciences* 21 (2/3), 129-168; Sabatier, P. A., 1999. The need for better theories. In: Sabatier, P. A. (Ed.), *Theories of the policy process*. Westview, Boulder, Colorado, USA, 3-17; Sabatier, P. A., Jenkins-Smith, H. C., 1993. *Policy change and learning: An advocacy coalition approach*. Westview, Boulder, Colorado, USA.

Policy change occurs when:

- Perturbation upsets balance between existing advocacy coalitions
- New advocacy coalition gains power
- Existing powerful advocacy coalition changes beliefs

Response to interest group pressure... 3

Policy change occurs when:	Use research findings to:
Perturbation upsets balance between existing advocacy coalitions	Strengthen an existing advocacy coalition to tip the balance
New advocacy coalition gains power	Form a new powerful advocacy coalition
Existing powerful advocacy coalition changes beliefs	Change the beliefs of an existing powerful advocacy coalition

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Entrepreneurs and windows of opportunity... 1



Policy making occurs in a 'cauldron' where 'problems', 'politics' and 'policy processes' are swirling around.

Kingdon, J. W., 2003. *Agendas, alternatives, and public policy*, 2nd ed. Longman, New York.

Entrepreneurs and windows of opportunity... 2



Policy change occurs when:

- Unexpected opening
- Right political context
- Action must be feasible and practical



Entrepreneur role in making it happen

Entrepreneurs and windows of opportunity... 3

Policy change occurs when:	Gun control in Australia:
• Unexpected opening	• Port Arthur massacre 1996 and public outrage
• Right political context	• Early in Howard term; willing to wear opposition
• Action must be feasible and practical	• Gun buy-back scheme workable

Entrepreneurs and windows of opportunity... 4

Policy change occurs when:	Research:
• Unexpected opening	• Long-term interest, recognise opening
• Right political context	• Relationships cultivated, so that called; available
• Action must be feasible and practical	• Have workable proposal(s) ready

The value of theory...

If you better understand government policy making, you can better target your efforts

What theory drives your understanding of the issues you work on?

Do you need more than one theory?

Is it time for an update?

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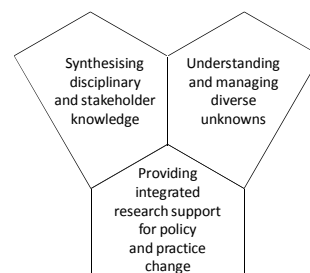
What researchers are not (yet) so good at...

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- **understand systems**
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- understand context
- bridge the know-do gap (incl action research)

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Integration & Implementation Sciences (I2S)



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S Y S T E M S

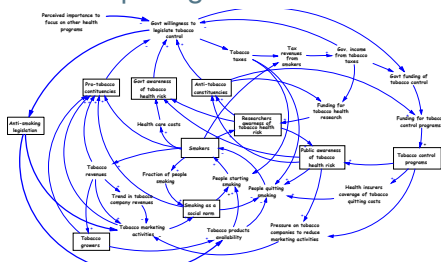
Systems...

- Everything is connected to everything else
- All systems views are partial
- Models can capture partial systems views
- key features and relationships

Value of one kind of model:
Causal loop diagrams

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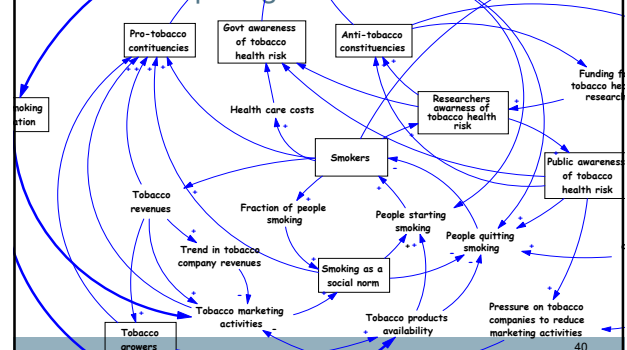
Causal loop diagrams



National Cancer Institute. 2007 *Greater Than the Sum: Systems Thinking in Tobacco Control*. Tobacco Control Monograph No. 18. Bethesda, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, National Cancer Institute. NIH Pub. No. 06-6085, April.
<http://cancercontrol.cancer.gov/tcrb/monographs/18/index.html>

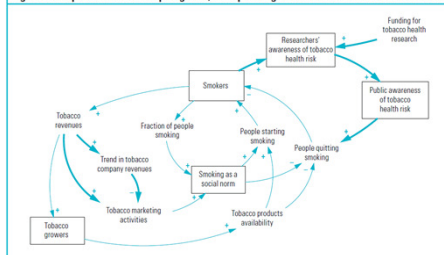
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Causal loop diagrams



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Figure 5.4 Expanded Causal Map Segment, Incorporating Awareness of Tobacco Health Risk



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Causal loop diagrams...

Learning to identify vicious cycles

... and how to break them

Specific skill set – system dynamics
modellers

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Homework... 1

Can you identify any vicious cycles in the problems you work on?

What measures are in place to break them?

Are there other measures you could try?

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Two corollaries to systems thinking...

Boundaries

Framing

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Boundaries...

Everything is connected to everything else

Have to set boundaries around what can tackle

Where we set the boundaries is critical

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Boundary setting

Boundary setting: what's feasible with the available time, money and person power

We tend to be very limited in the approaches we bring to problems and actions

'habit' + feasibility → needs of problem + feasibility

Aim is to target what's most important



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Boundaries...

Where we set the boundaries of view of problem and possible actions is critical to effectiveness

- illicit drugs and mental health

Organisational and personal
(silos are inevitable)

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Homework... 2

What are the boundaries in what your organisation does? (Mission statement)

- Do they mean significant aspects of the problem get ignored?

What are the boundaries in your approach to the problem (skill set)?

- Do they seriously limit your effectiveness?

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Framing... 1

Clear, concise, accurate communication – boundaries are implicit

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Framing... 2

Eg illicit drug users as

- dirty junkies
- cool non-conformists
- sons and daughters who have lost their way



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Heroin trial feasibility research...



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Homework... 3

What is the image of the problem that you and your organisation present to the world?

Is it clear, concise, accurate?

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U N K N O W N S

Unknowns

Blind spot in western thought

Unlimited unknowns and limited research capacity

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Unlimited unknowns

- Constant innovation and change
- On-going research
- Irreducible unknowns
- Limited methods
- Benefits of unknowns



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Different ways of understanding unknowns

Known knowns	Known unknowns (conscious ignorance)
Unknown knowns (tacit knowledge)	Unknown unknowns (meta-ignorance)

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Three strategies for managing unknowns... 1

1. Reduce (Gain more knowledge and/or increase constraints)
2. Banish (Set aside as "out of bounds" and therefore not dealt with)
3. Accept (Construct decisions and actions that take unknowns into account) eg strategic foresighting

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Three strategies for managing unknowns...

1. Reduce (Gain more knowledge and/or increase constraints)
2. Banish (Set aside as "out of bounds" and therefore not dealt with)
3. Accept (Construct decisions and actions that take unknowns into account) eg strategic foresighting
Modelling can help !

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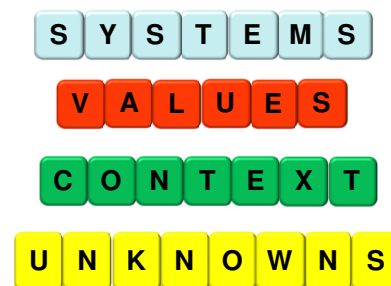
Homework... 4

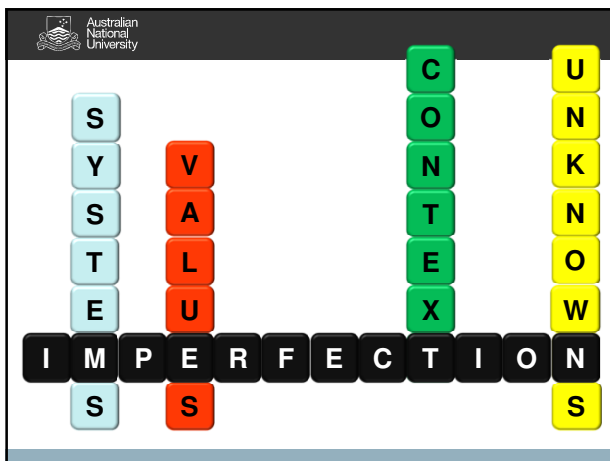
What are some benefits of unknowns?

Would you like to live in a world with no unknowns?

What would it mean for your clients if there were no unknowns?


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Watch out for... 1

- Overconfidence and hubris



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Watch out for... 2


- Overconfidence and hubris
- Nihilism and despair



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Watch out for... 3


- Overconfidence and hubris
- Nihilism and despair
- Hindsight bias



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Watch out for... 4


- Overconfidence and hubris
- Nihilism and despair
- Hindsight bias
- Providing hiding places for corruption and incompetence



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Resources

For more information

Integration and Implementation Sciences:
<http://i2s.anu.edu.au>

Invite you to subscribe to I2S Updates



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Integration & Implementation Sciences

Home » Resources

Resources

Building the discipline of Integration and Implementation Sciences (I2S) and methods, which are relevant to the three I2S domains:

- Synthesis of disciplinary and stakeholder knowledge
- Comprehensive understanding and management of unknowns
- Providing integrated research support for policy and practice change

Cutting across these domains are key elements including:

- systems thinking
- scoping and boundary setting
- framing
- dealing with values
- harnessing and managing differences.

As we become aware of relevant materials, they are included under:

- tools, which are concepts and methods underpinning I2S

A few readings, being written resources that are relevant to the three domains.

SEARCH I2S

GO

I2S

- Home
- What is I2S? »
- Publications »
- Resources »
- Conferences
- Journals
- Key readings
- Professional associations and networks
- Tools »
- Courses »
- Projects »

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Compilation of dialogue methods





Research Integration Using Dialogue Methods by McDonald, Bammer & Deane 2009
Available free on-line at
http://epress.anu.edu.au/dialogue_methods_citation.html

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Insights into knowledge brokering...

Bammer, G., with Michaux, A. and A. Sanson (eds)
2010 *Bridging the 'know-do' gap: Knowledge brokering to improve child wellbeing*. ANU E-Press;
http://epress.anu.edu.au/knowledge_citation.html


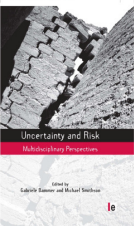





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Different ways of understanding unknowns... 1

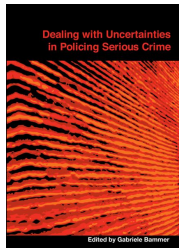
Uncertainty and Risk: Multidisciplinary Perspectives
2008
Bammer & Smithson (eds)



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Different ways of understanding unknowns... 2



Bammer, G. (ed) 2010 *Dealing with uncertainties in policing serious crime*, ANU E-Press;
http://epress.anu.edu.au/dealing_citation.html

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Getting back to bridging the know-do gap

Researchers are not yet good at helping you deal with complexity, but it's coming...

Don't dismiss the value of theory in what researchers can offer

Understand the know-do differences

- what can be harnessed and what must be managed

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