Presenting IR and Assessment Research to Educated Non-specialists

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Introduction

- What is an educated non-specialist?
  - An expert in his/her field, but not necessarily in the field of IR/Assessment
  - Advanced knowledge about some research method

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Introduction

- Similarities with Teaching
  - May need to “learn” at least some information.
  - Content must be accessible.
- Differences with Teaching
  - Audience stake in the content.
  - Audience may have power and influence over the content.
  - Audience may be very knowledgeable about statistics, methods, and subject matter.

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Connecting with your Audience

Ask Yourself: What expectations does my audience have for details related to…

1. Methodological Decisions
2. Analytical Treatments
3. Broader Context of Concepts and Findings

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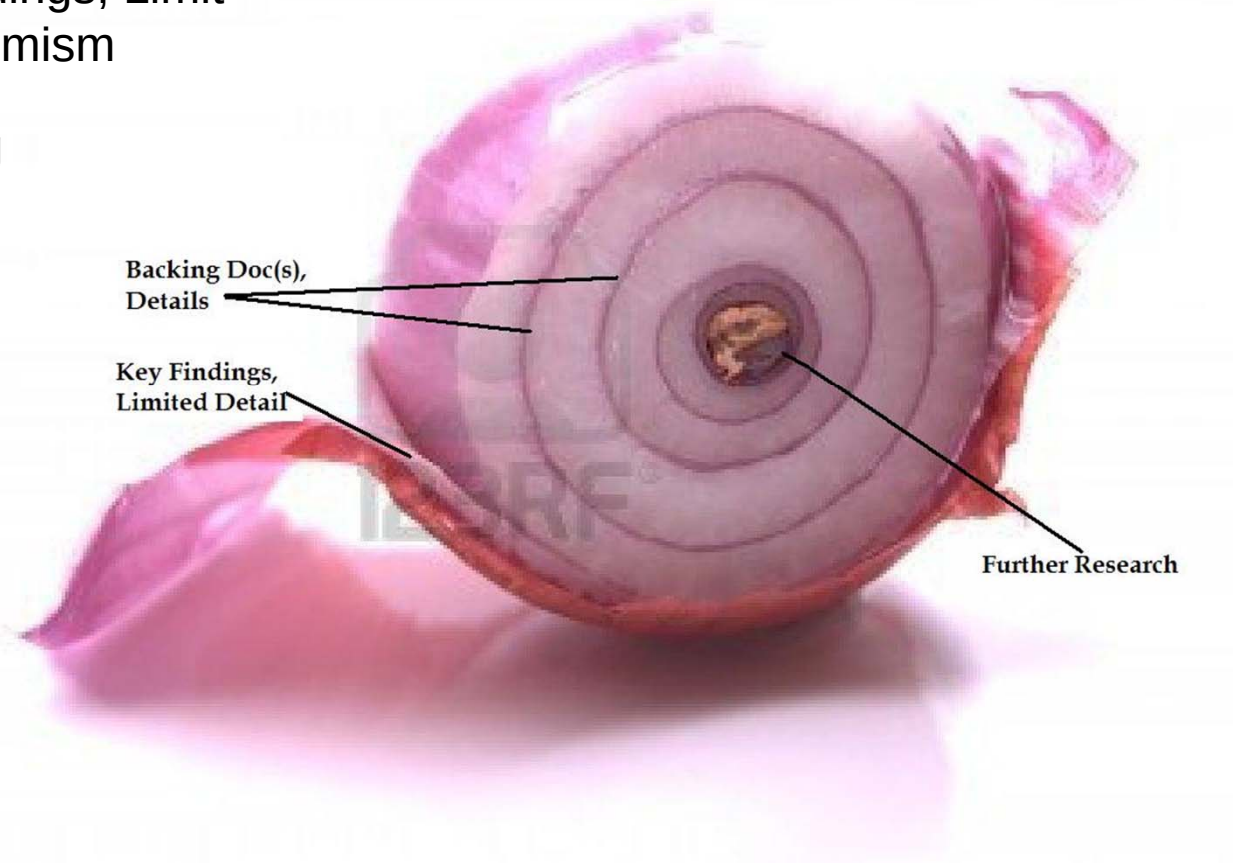
A Common Metaphor: Peeling an Onion

Outer Layer: Key Findings, Limit Detail, Jargon, Euphemism

Inner Layers: Backing Documents, Detailed Reports

Core: Post Hoc Research; Digging Deeper



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Methodological Decisions

- What **a priori knowledge/beliefs** does your audience have about the subject matter, generally?
- Do your **operational definitions** fit with the way your audience understands the concept?
- What sort of **response rate** does your audience anticipate?
- What does it know about **sample size** conventions in research?
- On what variables is **representativeness** most likely to be an issue?
- What indications can you provide that your data is **valid**?

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Statistical Analysis

- How **familiar** is your audience with the statistical procedures you're using?
- How much **justification** is needed for statistical decisions you've made?
- Statistical Significance vs. Effect Size

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Broader Context of Concepts and Findings

- Misinterpretation: Labels plentiful and correct; charts to scale; findings clearly tied to the facts that support them?
- Are sources recognizable? Respected?
- Controversy:
  - What stake does your audience have in different findings?
  - What sensitive issues (if any) are involved?
  - Rumor: What misinformation does your audience have?

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Audience Attitude Towards Presentation

- “YOU ARE REDUCING OUR COMPLEX WORK IN TEACHING TO NUMBERS!!”
- We know data and we know it better than you
- **Pre existing beliefs: “My experience is universal”**

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Presenters: Context and Concepts

- Reducing Uncertainty
- Information rather than Data
- Stress usefulness to their specific level of interest *not technical limitations*

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Converting Technical to Practical

- Parsimony
- Anticipation
- Clarification
- Organization

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Parsimony

- Minimize details in the foreground.
- Emphasize:
  - Limited justification of research (purpose).
  - Basic methodological steps.
  - Charts and graphs.
  - Summary (abstract-level) conclusions.
- Save the details for audience questioning and post-hoc follow up.

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Anticipation

- What do you know already about your audience?
- How controversial is the subject matter?
- Flexibility Without Surrender
- Let the audience determine how much of the inner layers you share.

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Clarify

- Avoid jargon, euphemisms, slang.
- Short phrases that make only one point.
- Visuals with clear labels and consistent scales.
- Test presentation on colleagues (esp outside of dept): how do they interpret?
- Show how audience can learn more.

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Organization

- Begin with justification of research import.
- Proof To Claim: introduce findings, building to the conclusion.
  - Best with controversial research.
  - Audience can follow the reasoning process that led to those conclusions.
- Finish with instructions for further inquiry.

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