

Research 101 with Dr. Regnerus

Mark Regnerus, Ph.D., professor of Sociology at the University of Texas, about how to do in depth research, a life lesson, that you can apply to debate research now.

He will cover things such as...

- How would a professional/academic analyze "evidence"? What filters are used to evaluate research?
- How does academic publishing work? What are signs of weak credibility internally/externally?
- How often are academic studies, findings, and experts wrong?
- How to think about methodology and methodological flaws (remember the topics are criminal justice and China foreign policy)
- How credible is an "experts say..." argument, really, if you don't know why they say it?

How do we analyze ev:

Confirmation bias

Familiarity with previous ev (what does the research say)

Familiarity with academic journals, incl pay-to-play journals

Read abstract (start and end)

All studies/articles/reports have Limitations:

(Unrealistic expectations about what a study can prove - \$\$\$ and time)

-not an inherent problem ie small sample, findings, ramifications

-Sniff test

-What is possible? Comes with familiarity. I.e. Not experts in every area.

-Be prudent about praising and criticizing studies

How does academic publishing work?

-Articles- peer reviewed

Do Research

Write article. Article-length studies tend to make 1-2 key points

Submit to journal that makes sense

Editor sends your article to 2-3 blind reviewers for evaluation - best thing for science, but it is hardly flawless. (3 major publishers: Springer, Clure,)

Repeat process; can take years (R&R - revise and resubmit)

-Books-more of financial incentive, takes longer to read, some areas maybe more credible

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than articles i.e. political theory vs criminal justice / policy angle vs conclusion that leans in one direction

-Reports-not peer reviewed, executive summary, perspective/bias based

i.e. Retributive vs rehabilitative justice [vs restorative]

New journalism - faster publishing, less rigorous peer review - Hindouism?

Law reviews are NOT peer review. They are "legal positions"

(JD candidate, affiliation/association/titles only weighs so much credibility)

Focus on warrants, not author Creds! Talk about the "science"

How often are academic studies wrong?

By some a lot ~70%, usu failure to replicate

Few utterly made up

Often oversimplification of matter

2005 John PA Ian "Why most published research findings are false?"

"Study power" = increases with sample size

"Bias" =

Ratio of relationship

New fields are prone to error:

Definitions are flexible (measurement errors)

No scientific agreement

Financial interests or prejudice

In chase of statistical evidence

"Perspectival" to be interpreted in light of some methodological limitation is more often the case

Old needs updating i.e. A questions involving using a "VHS"... no longer use today

Retractions are recent

"Meta analysis" = type of "methodology"

Data collection is expensive

Or DOJ studies, health studies

To commiserate research, find \$\$\$ to run study

US research firms are better - go with fed govt studies, W Europe, Scandinavians

Census bureau collects other data besides US surveys,

Researchers like "invasive" surveys

Methodological flaws

Think in terms of limitations:

Few comprehensive studies

Low ceiling to what is knowable

Bias (inevitable) only problematic if endemic

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Ideal studies are often not done because they're too time consuming and expensive (also, ethical issues) i.e. Ideal recidivism or new health drug study

Have reasonable expectations about studies because ideal studies are not realistic

What was done?

Analytical tools

Sample size

Outcomes measured, how long watched

Kind of rehab tx given (Rez specific)

How credible is an expert?

Judges think that citing (creds over warrant) is a cop-out because leaning on creds, not science

Problem: how do judges interpret it? (Skeptical vs impressed)

Need to plant doubt in judges mind:

Can you give examples of sample size?

How long did they track?

Where were they tracked?

Conclusions?

Quote one or two "good" specific studies vs saying "numerous" studies say... or "studies show..."

Sample size, measurement,

Creds are secondary

***Can debaters summarize evidence in paragraph (3-5 sentence) form? Must do minimum citation in round per league rules AND have evidence on-hand, in round. ***

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Drill: Study

16,400 MN prisons

03-07

Visitations sig reduces recidivism?

Family visits and clergy most beneficial vs ex spouses?

Revise visitation policies to reflect study outcome?

Females cause?

Increase a visitor friendly system

Allowance doesn't mean visits would actually happen

More visits doesn't lead to increased

Measurement of study?

DA - coordinating crime due to behavioral changes of people visiting

number of visits - will one visit be equal to 20 visits

Funding for changes/

"Selectivity" - may have already had support system in place

Include "all" types of recidivism?

Gender of prisoners, 50/50?

Family location?

What % of prisoners in MN does study represent?

State, local, federal prisons?

What is the "Cox regression model?"

France and Canada models? Use same model?

Metrics of Public safety benefit?

Don't draw faulty causations by lumping different studies together

How would you present study to judge?

How would you refute the study?

Look for warrant/conclusion of claim. Impact.

If using a study, what list of things would you look up to verify?

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How do you go about researching?

Internet

Google scholar: scholar.google.com

Limit recency ("too old" depends on domain)

i.e. Econ policy = can be older, doesn't change rapidly

Attitudinal = recent, less than a year (some attitudes could be more "stable")

Behavioral= up to 10 years

Look at "Reference" sections of comprehensive studies/articles

Other Careers:

Litigators and other aspects of litigators

Sociologists (difficult to do as Christians)

Data analysis

Statistics

Econometrics

Researcher

Lawyers can't be experts on social science because they are outcome-focused

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