Writing The Empirical Section For The Social Work Prelim

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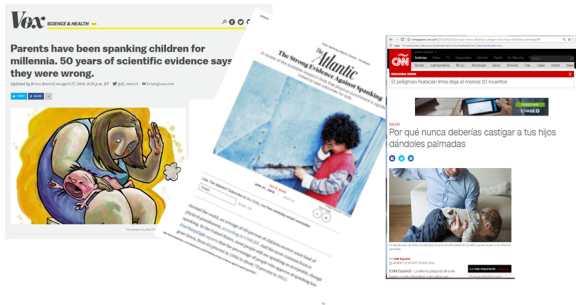
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Role Of Research In Social Work

Social work is a profession dedicated to social justice and the improvement of well-being.

Meta-Analysis of 50 Years of Corporal Punishment Research

Evidence Drives Policy(2)

- Policy Statement by American Academy of Pediatrics (Sege et al. 2019)
- Policy Statement by American Psychological Association (American Psychological Association 2019)

Concerns About The Research Base for Social Programs And Interventions

80,000 HOURS

1) **Education**: Of the 90 interventions evaluated in RCTs commissioned by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) since 2002, approximately 90% were found to have weak or no positive effects.

2) **Employment/training**: In Department of Labor-commissioned RCTs that have reported results since 1992, about 75% of tested interventions were found to have found weak or no positive effects.

3) **Medicine**: Reviews have found that 50-80% of positive results in initial ("phase II") clinical studies are overturned in subsequent, more de¹nitive RCTs ("phase III").

4) **Business**: Of 13,000 RCTs of new products/strategies conducted by Google and Microsoft, 80- 90% have reportedly found no significant effects.

5) The current pace of RCT testing is far too slow to build a meaningful number of proven interventions to address our major social problems. Of the vast diversity of ongoing and newly initiated program activities in federal, state, and local social spending, only a small fraction are ever evaluated in a credible way to see if they work. The federal government, for example, evaluates only 1-2 dozen such efforts each year in RCTs.
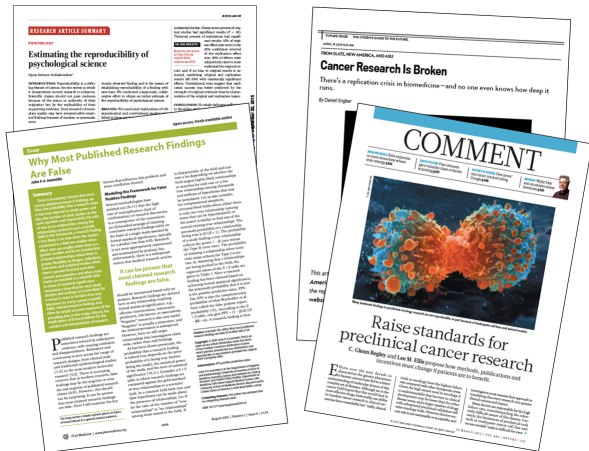
https://80000hours.org/articles/effective-social-program/

Savedoff, Levine, and Birdsall

"No physician would consider prescribing strong medications whose impact and potential side-effects have not been properly evaluated. Yet in social development programs, where huge sums can be spent to modify population behaviors, change economic livelihoods, and potentially alter cultures or family structure, no such standard has been adopted.

While it is widely recognized that withholding programs that are known to be beneficial would be unethical, the implicit corollary— that programs of unknown impact should not be widely replicated without proper evaluation—is frequently dismissed."

— (Savedoff, Levine, and Birdsall 2006)

So... Why Do We Include Research In The Social Work Prelim

A profession that makes claims to address pain, suffering, and injustice needs to be able to back up its claims with strong high quality evidence.

Incorporating Empirical Evidence Within a Social Work Prelim: Writing The Empirical Section of the Social Work Prelim

- Imposter Syndrome
- Drawing The Circle Around Your Question
- Finding The Right Literature
- Writing

Imposter Syndrome

"Academic life is full of learning, excitement, and discovery. However, academics also experience professional challenges at various points in their career, including repeated rejection, impostor syndrome, and burnout. These negative experiences are rarely talked about publicly, creating a sense of loneliness and isolation for people who presume they are the only ones affected by such setbacks. However, nearly everyone has these experiences at one time or another, and thus talking about them should be a normal part of academic life." (Jaremka et al. 2019)

- Surface / Acknowledge the Feeling
- Acknowledge the Feeling / Welcome It!
- Fake It Until You Make It

Drawing The Circle Around Your Question & Finding The Right Literature

- Remember the 80/20 rule: 80% of everything is of relatively low value; only 20% is gold.
- There are many studies that "make conclusions." Only a very limited set of them are methodologically rigorous, and are real contributions to the literature.
- Start your literature search by reading a good review article, e.g. a recent review piece in *Annual Review of Psychology*. What do they cite? What authors do they think are important? Then search in a large database like PsychInfo or ProQuest

Finding The Right Literature (2)

- More recent literature (last 5 years; last 10 years)
- Higher impact journals (Thompson ISI) e.g.
  - *Child Development*
  - *Child Psychology and Psychiatry*
  - *Developmental Psychology*
- Articles from important or longstanding ongoing studies or databases e.g.
  - FFCWS
  - ADD Health
  - ECLS
  - PSID-CDS
- Seminal or Key Articles from any era or journal (the ones that everyone mentions)
  I still think that the key articles in most literatures end up numbering somewhere between 20 and 50 articles.

Writing

- Writing is **Hard**
- Write **Many** Rough Drafts (**Share Them!** With your Advisor, or with other people who will read frequent drafts of your writing.)
- Not All Sources Are **Equally Good**

(author, date) studied (sample) to examine (research question). (author, date) found that _____. (author, date) also found that _____. (author, date) also found that _____. However, one (strength/limitation) of the study was that _____. These authors suggested (policy, program, intervention).

Questions?

References

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