Dan Rees & Mark Anderson

Doing Applied Research Workshop

**1. Starting research project, cut the cord, manage your project.**

- What make a research question viable:

+ interesting/relevant/policy relevant?

+ filling defined gap?

+ data available? Natural experiment exist?

- Hurdle 1:

+ Interesting: Pitch idea broadly (economists, and non-economists)

+ If interesting, is this important?

+ Policy relevant?

- Hurdle 2:

+ Expert in relevant literature: for each project, create a literature-review binder, search from journal in your field, and then going more general, sort by theory and empirical, how well papers published, credibility of type of research design (cross-sectional, panel, IV, DiD).

- Hurdle 3:

+ Not have well-defined Natural experiment exist >> dump the idea?

+ hypothesis of interest, identify a natural experiment vs have a natural experiment and then come up with a question?

- get over those 3, and you are off to the races. If you can’t, get back up, and go back to the drawing board.

- When to cut the cord:

+ null results: interesting? But it should be a precise zero? Policy relevant? (burden of proof can be much higher)

+ cannot identify /pin down mechanisms: results counter to common perceptions, if cannot address mechanisms then can pivot to a non-economists journal.

- Manage your efforts:

+ Allocate efforts:

+ projects at different phases: have one/two projects that are your main focus.

+ few papers under review or at the RR stage

+ when papers are submitted, data collection efforts already under way on other projects.

+ Targeting journal:

+ how high should I aim?

+ first shot is a reach ( do if you think you have a good shot, don’t waste time).

+ When to target non-economics journal

+ estimates are correlations only, no mechanism.

**2. How to give a good presentation.**

- General tips

- Passionate about your research

- Want to be remembered as the expert in X.

- Presenting = 50% entertainment, 50% teaching: ask them questions (what do you think about this/that?), tell them something new?

- Aiming your presentation in the person familiar with your area.

- Telling stories with your data.

- Power of story: stories are easy to remember, number and facts without context are difficult to remember. Your story is scaffolding.

- Slides:

- Limit what you present. Less is more.

- Prime your listeners: describe ID strategy early, preview main results, what comes next (Next, I am going to try to convince you of X…, It’s important that I convince you of X, because…)

- Don’t use slides to prove something, don’t show slides to show statistics every variables.

- Slides are prompts for you.: numbers, phrasing.

- Visual aids for your audience: figures are better than tables, each slide convey one main point, your evidence will tune out if present too much on one slide.

- 3 lines on each slide (one/two sub-points for each)

- Keep language simple: avoid jargon,..

- Keep it clean and easy to read.

- First five minute are the most important

- Talk about yourself with the title slide up: how became interested in this topic? Why did this topic engage you? Create your brand. Begin with the big picture?

- Don’t get bogged down in the previous literature: no need to cire each and every paper on your topics (1min)

- Be clear about your contribution: don’t overreach.

- Be enthusiastic!

- Most audience members are not specialists in this area. A chance to teach them something new.

- Briefly characterize the state of the literature: what do we know and what don’t we know? (show that you are an expert in the field).

- Your data:

- Sell your data, don’t be humble!

- Avoid long table full of descriptive statistics

- Use figure/map: trends and their importance, talk briefly about ID strategy, mean, variables definition.

- Tables:

- Don’t show estimates that you are not going to talk

- Go through your columns one by one

- Mention magnitude, pay attention to the units.

- Pull up figures and add the parameter beta\_hat = XX\*

**3. Present event-study estimates**

- Present equations:

- Lead w TWFE estimates and show results from one of new DD estimators

- Baseline equation is straightforward, easy to understand, but maybe a problem if someone prefer a new DD estimator, easy to refer back.

- Making event-study figures:

- Connected (bow-tie)

- Disconnected:

- Provide important information in the figures

- Present less than 2 sets of estimates in one figure.

- Present robustness checks

**4. Referee report**

- Rejection

- Do not email the editor

- Some journals have a formal appeals process

- Revising the paper (if the same issue is raised by each and every referee)

- Look for easily addressed comments

- R&R

- Resubmit: revise paper, write a letter to the editor, write point-to-point responses to the reviewer comments.