Quantitative Methods for Research

Anderson, J.A. *Communication Research: Issues and Methods,* New York: McGraw-Hill (1987).

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The basic principles of research are important to any study in communication and the cornerstone of much research is methodology. Unfortunately, ominous clouds hang over research in forensics concerning basic methodological approaches. One way of dissipating this cloud is by ascertaining in all forensic research programs that the foundation for studies are sound. The easiest approach is to check the research design against current methodologies. A good textbook to serve this purpose is Anderson's.

Communication Research

The text is thorough in its coverage of the field of communication studies beginning with an explanation of the role of research in communication in the first section. What proves more useful for forensics, and is the focus of this review, is the second section on quantitative research.

Anderson carefully guides the reader through the various terms and techniques for developing new constructs, and the appropriate purpose of the hypotheses within communication research. A quick fifteen page explanation of measurement and its importance to validity and reliability is also provided.

Particular attention for forensic researchers should be paid to Chapter six on sampling. Anderson notes, "We sample... when it is less useful, impractical, or impossible to deal with the whole ..." (p. 145). There are a plethora of forensic programs with a multitude of coaches

and competitors across the country. Attempting to elicit data from all would be an improbable, if not an impossible task. The importance of appropriate measures of sampling this population is of utmost concern if the results of a study are to be extrapolated to the whole forensic community. Anderson does an admirable job of carefully delineating the various sampling types including convenience, judgement, and probability. The reader may run into a little difficulty with the explanation of sampling error dependent on experience with statistics.

A solid understanding of mathematics, however, is not necessary to follow Chapter seven dealing with statistics. Anderson has purposefully avoided long, extended excursions into the mathematical formulas of statistics. What he provides is a solid explanation of the meaning and uses of various statistical methods. A drawback is that the chapter needs to be supplemented by additional information on statistics in order for a complete quantitative study to be initiated.

While the entire textual material for each area may not have to be read due to previous knowledge with quantitative methodologies, it is wise to double-check any study by at least scanning the major headings and the material to be sure the basics are being incorporated and thus insuring a sound research program.