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Judicial Use of Social Science Research*

John Monahan and Laurens Walker

American courts use social science research in three distinct ways: to make law, to determine facts, and to provide context. In this article, we review and critique the approaches that courts have traditionally taken to dealing with each form of social research. We also summarize and integrate a body of work offering a different perspective that treats law-making research as social authority, fact-finding research as social fact, and context-providing research as social framework. We end by proposing a coherent sequence of steps that courts should take when confronted with an empirical question about human behavior.

Since the first glimmerings of legal realism early in this century, American courts have been remarkably open to using social science research when that research could help resolve empirical issues that arise in litigation. Increasingly in recent decades, courts have sought out research data on their own when the parties have failed to provide them. Social scientists, for their part, are investigating questions of judicial interest at an accelerating pace. In this article,¹ we examine the various

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uses that courts have found for social science research. For each use, we review the current state of law and describe the trends that appear to be developing.

Social science research was first urged upon an American court in 1908 by Louis Brandeis in *Muller v. Oregon*, a landmark case dealing with the constitutionality of social welfare legislation limiting the work day of any female employed in a factory or laundry to ten hours. Brandeis assembled a substantial body of medical and social science research tending to show the debilitating effect on women and girls of working long hours, and presented this material to the United States Supreme Court in a brief defending Oregon’s limits on the number of hours females could be employed. In the opinion in *Muller* upholding the legislation, after referring to the social science materials in a lengthy footnote, the Court stated that although they “may not be, technically speaking, authorities,” the studies would nonetheless receive “judicial cognizance.”

Although the use of what came to be known as “Brandeis briefs” became common in the years after *Muller*, legal commentators were hard pressed to explain an apparent anomaly: How was it that Brandeis could present research to an *appellate* court in a written *brief*, when “facts” were supposed to be introduced at the *trial* level by the oral *testimony* of witnesses? This conundrum persisted until Kenneth Culp Davis, in a seminal article published in 1942, distinguished two types of “fact.” The first type, *legislative fact*, referred to facts that were used by courts to help decide broad questions of law or policy, as Brandeis had used research to help decide the constitutionality of social welfare legislation. The second type, *adjudicative fact*, referred to facts that were used to decide questions of interest only to the specific parties to a lawsuit, such as whether a particular traffic light was red or green.

Davis’s distinction soon became widely accepted and now forms the traditional scheme used by courts and commentators to describe the judicial uses of social science. As the following sections make clear, Davis’s concepts have been severely criticized in recent years and may well have outlived their usefulness as tools for managing the introduction of empirical information in contemporary American law.

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3 Id. at 420.

4 Id. at 421.

5 Davis, *An Approach to Problems of Evidence in the Administrative Process*, 55 Harvard L. Rev. 364 (1942) [hereafter cited as Davis, An Approach to Problems of Evidence]. Davis’s concepts were originally advanced in the context of administrative law, but they were rapidly generalized to other areas of the law.

6 The concept of legislative fact “has been widely accepted in the federal appellate courts.” Broz v. Schweiker, 677 F.2d 1351, 1357 (11th Cir. 1892). The U.S. Supreme Court has invoked the term on numerous occasions, e.g., Concerned Citizens v. Pine Creek Conservancy Dist., 429 U.S. 651 (1977); Lockhart v. McCree, 476 U.S. 162 (1986).
SOCIAL SCIENCE USED TO MAKE LAW

Traditional Approaches

Professor Davis defined legislative facts as follows:

When an agency [or court] wrestles with a question of law or policy, it is acting legislatively, [and] the facts which inform its legislative judgment may conveniently be designated legislative facts.\(^7\)

Legislative facts, in other words, are facts that courts use when they make law (or "legislate"), rather than simply apply settled doctrine to resolve a dispute between particular parties to a case. Whereas the determination of adjudicative facts affects only the litigants before the court, the determination of legislative facts influences the content of legal doctrine itself and, therefore, affects many parties in addition to those who brought the case. It was Professor Davis’s position that "the rules of evidence for finding facts which form the basis for creation of law and determination of policy should differ from the rules for finding facts which concern only the parties to a particular case."\(^8\) In this manner Davis justified the Supreme Court’s practice in Muller of disregarding the rules of evidence by accepting "facts" on appeal and in a brief. The rules of evidence did not apply to Brandeis’ social science materials: They were "legislative" facts.

Judicial acceptance of social science research as a form of legislative fact became commonplace throughout the law after Brown v. Board of Education.\(^9\) In that case, the United States Supreme Court cited the published research of numerous social scientists to support its empirical assertion that the segregation of public schools instills in a black child "a sense of inferiority [that] affects the motivation of a child to learn."\(^10\) In the decades since Brown, research has frequently been invoked by courts to demonstrate the validity of empirical assumptions made in the process of modifying existing law or creating new law.\(^11\) In United States v. Leon,\(^12\) for example, the Supreme Court considered the question of whether the Fourth Amendment exclusionary rule should be modified to admit evidence that the police seized while they were relying in good faith on a search warrant that later proved to be defective. The Court held that whether the rule

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\(^7\) Davis, An Approach to Problems of Evidence, supra note 5 at 402.

\(^8\) Id. at 364.


\(^10\) Id. at 494.


should be modified to allow such evidence "must be resolved by weighing the costs and benefits" to creating an exception to the rule when the police act in good faith. In the process of weighing these costs and benefits, the Court reviewed six social science studies concerning the effects of the exclusionary rule on the disposition of felony arrests and concluded that the benefits of creating an exception, in terms of increasing the number of guilty criminals brought to justice, outweighed any costs involved.

The Federal Rules of Evidence do not address Davis's concept of legislative fact. Rather, the Advisory Committee that wrote the Rules stated that it could construct "no rule" to address how courts should deal with legislative facts. It appears from the Committee's commentary to the Rules that legislative facts can (a) be presented by the parties in briefs on appeal; (b) be presented by the parties at trial by the testimony of expert witnesses; (c) be found by the court through sua sponte library research; or (d) be obtained by an appellate court remanding a case back to the trial court "for the taking of evidence."sponte

Professor Davis has elaborated his views on legislative fact since his 1942 article. He has stated that "at least sometimes the law should require the relevant [legislative] facts to be developed and should require them to be available to opposing persons for a pre-decision response." Most recently, he has acknowledged that the manner in which the Supreme Court deals with legislative facts "is quite various. It has no system. It tries one method after another, almost always with unsatisfactory results." In response, he proposed that Congress create a formal "research service" of social scientists to assist the Court.

Contemporary Approaches

Criticism of the concept of legislative fact has focused on three topics: How should social science research used to create or modify law be obtained? Once obtained, how should it be evaluated? And once evaluated, how should a court's conclusions about research be established so as to affect subsequent courts that address the same empirical issue?

On the first issue, the acknowledgement of the Advisory Committee to the Federal Rules of Evidence that there was "no rule" that addressed legislative facts has been taken by many to illustrate the "total failure" of the notion of legislative fact to provide guidance to courts regarding how to obtain social science research for the purpose of creating or modifying law.

After social science research has been obtained by some unspecified procedure, the court must evaluate it. Social science research varies enormously in

13 Id. at 906.
14 Advisory Committee Note to Federal Rule of Evidence 201(a).
15 Id.
17 Davis, Judicial, Legislative, and Administrative Lawmaking: A Proposed Research Service for the Supreme Court, 71 Minn. L. Rev. 1 (1986).
18 Social Authority, supra note 1, at 485-488.
quality, and the risk of basing a legal rule on flawed research is significant. Yet neither Davis nor the Federal Rules that rely on his concept address this issue at all.

Likewise, if one court draws conclusions from social science research about an empirical assumption underlying a legal rule, the concept of legislative fact gives no guidance to the next judge who confronts the same empirical question. The options for an appellate court, for example, range from deferring to the trial court's evaluation of the research under a "clearly erroneous" standard of review to performing a "de novo" evaluation of the studies. The Supreme Court has recently indicated that this issue, too, is unresolved.

It is difficult, therefore, to gainsay the conclusion of a leading text on evidence that "a viable formulation of rules . . . with regard to legislative facts has not proven feasible." Improvements in the manner that courts use social science information to create rules of law may be possible only by abandoning the notion of legislative fact entirely and developing a new concept that fundamentally alters the ways in which courts view social science materials. Social authority has been proposed as one alternative to legislative fact as an organizing principle for courts' use of social science to create or modify a rule of law. Under this rubric, courts would treat social science research relevant to creating or modifying a rule of law as a source of authority rather than a source of facts. More specifically, courts would treat social science research much as they treat legal precedent under the common law.

In outline, the argument for this theory is that although there is a clear conceptual analogy between social science research and fact (both are "positive" in the sense that they concern the way the world is, with no necessary implications for the way the world ought to be), there is an equally clear conceptual analogy between social science research and law (both are "general" in that they produce principles applicable beyond particular instances). It is, therefore, plausible to classify social science research either as fact or as law. The criterion for classification—whether to give priority to the fact analogy or to the law analogy—should depend on the quality of the judicial procedures that flow from it.

A number of coherent procedures for obtaining, evaluating, and establishing social science research flow from conceiving of it as social authority rather than as legislative fact. Making the heuristic presumption that courts should treat social science data the same way they treat legal precedent produces two corollary ideas about how a court should obtain empirical research: The parties should present empirical research to the court in written briefs, and judges may find social science research by searching for it themselves. This is the way that courts obtain the law. Oral testimony of expert witnesses and remanding cases to the trial court to obtain evidence would be disallowed. Likewise, under this view, the way that

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23 Social Authority, supra note 1.
courts should evaluate empirical data can be found in the way they evaluate legal precedent. Courts should evaluate scientific research studies along four dimensions analogous to those used to evaluate case precedent. Courts should place confidence in social science research to the extent that the research (a) has survived the critical review of the scientific community, (b) has used valid research methods, (c) is generalizable to the legal question at issue, and (d) is supported by a body of other research. Finally, because legal rules make clear that appellate courts are not bound by trial courts’ conclusions about law, appellate courts should also not be bound by trial courts’ conclusions about empirical research: De novo review is the appropriate standard.

SOCIAL SCIENCE USED TO DETERMINE FACTS

Traditional Approaches

Professor Davis defined adjudicative facts as follows:

When an agency [or court] finds facts concerning immediate parties—what the parties did, what the circumstances were, what the background conditions were—the agency [or court] is performing an adjudicative function, and the facts may conveniently be called adjudicative facts.

Adjudicative facts, in other words, are facts that apply only to the particular parties before the court. They are used to determine (or "adjudicate") what happened in a specific case, and not for some larger purpose, such as to argue that the law should be changed. What Davis called an adjudicative fact has been

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24 Id. at 498:

At least four indices of precedential persuasiveness can easily be abstracted from the jurisprudential literature: (1) cases decided by courts higher in the appellate structure have more weight than lower court decisions; (2) better reasoned cases have more weight than poorly reasoned cases; (3) cases involving facts closely analogous to those in the case at issue have more weight than cases involving easily distinguished facts; and (4) cases followed by other courts have more weight than isolated cases.

25 For a discussion of how these dimensions can be made operational by courts, see Social Authority, supra note 1, at 498–508. As to the degree that appellate court findings of "social authority" should "bind" lower courts, see Id. at 514–516. What trial or appellate courts should do when confronted with an empirical question underlying a rule of law for which no research, or only inadequate research, is available is discussed in Empirical Questions, supra note 1. In cases decided under the common law, courts should rely on those assumptions that seem most plausible. In cases decided under the Fourteenth Amendment "rationality" standard for reviewing state action, courts normally will accept as plausible the empirical assumptions made by the legislature in enacting a statute; it is the challenger’s responsibility to convince the court to reject those assumptions as implausible. In cases decided under the standard of "strict scrutiny," courts normally will reject as invalid the empirical assumptions made by the legislature; it is the state’s responsibility to convince the court to accept those assumptions as valid.

26 Davis, An Approach to Problems of Evidence, supra note 5, at 402.
referred to by other commentators as a "case fact" and by one court as "a plain, garden-variety fact."

One of the most frequent uses of social science research as adjudicative or case-specific facts involves trademarks. The Lanham Trademark Act of 1946, as amended by the Trademark Law Revision Act of 1988, states that the Patent and Trademark Office will refuse to register a new trademark if it so resembles a trademark already registered to another person "as to be likely . . . to cause confusion." A person who sells a product that is likely to cause confusion with an already trademarked product is liable for trademark infringement. Social science research in the form of surveys of consumers or potential consumers to ascertain the degree of confusion between products has been admitted in American courts at least since 1940. Initially, such evidence was often successfully challenged as contravening the prohibition against hearsay, since the respondents to the surveys were not present in court to testify. In Zippo Manufacturing Co. v. Rogers Imports, however, the hearsay objection was definitively laid to rest: "The weight of case authority, the consensus of legal writers, and reasoned policy considerations all indicate that the hearsay rule should not bar the admission of properly conducted public surveys."

A wide variety of methodologies are now routinely used by both plaintiffs and defendants in trademark cases to determine the presence of consumer confusion. In Processed Plastic v. Warner Communications, for example, Warner owned The Dukes of Hazzard television series and had agreed that several toy companies could produce replicas of a car that figured prominently in the series. The Processed Plastic Company, which had no agreement with Warner, began to sell a toy car that Warner claimed looked like the car in the television series. To demonstrate this fact, Warner introduced in court a social science survey of random groups of children questioned at shopping malls in which 82% of the children shown a Processed Plastic car identified it as the "Dukes of Hazzard car." The trial court decided, and an appellate court agreed, that these data showed that Processed Plastic had likely infringed Warner's trademark rights by creating consumer confusion. Indeed, the use of survey research in consumer confusion trademark cases like Processed Plastic has become so routine that "the failure of a trademark owner to run a survey may now give rise to an adverse inference." The party with the burden of proving an adjudicative fact such as

33 Id. at 682.
34 See Social Science in Law, supra note 1, at 91-108.
35 675 F.2d 852 (7th Cir. 1982).
consumer confusion will be severely disadvantaged by a failure to provide the fact-finder with the best possible evidence.\textsuperscript{37}

The key to understanding how courts deal with social science research used to determine an adjudicative or case-specific fact is that, unlike legislative facts, adjudicative facts are susceptible to proof by the usual rules of evidence. Under the Federal Rules of Evidence and similar state codes, the admissibility of social science evidence of a case-specific fact turns on the issue of "relevance." According to Rule 401:

"Relevant evidence" means evidence having any tendency to make the existence of any fact that is of consequence to the determination of the action more probable or less probable than it would be without the evidence.

There are two components to this definition.\textsuperscript{38} First, to be relevant, evidence must bear on a fact that is "of consequence." This means that even flawlessly executed research is inadmissible if the substantive law governing the case does not put in issue the fact that the research seeks to demonstrate. Second, evidence must make that fact "more probable or less probable" than it would otherwise be. This means that even if social science research directly addresses a fact of central concern to the substantive law, it will not be admitted unless the research data provide insight into the likelihood that the fact exists. The first of these components of relevance is often called materiality and the second probative value.

Note that under Rule 401 it is not necessary for social science evidence to be determinative of a fact at issue in a case, or even to make the existence of a fact, such as consumer confusion, "more likely than not," for the evidence to be admitted. As long as the research has "any" tendency to be probative of the existence of material fact, the evidence is relevant and therefore presumptively admissible (that is, admissible unless some other rule, such as Rule 403, excluding evidence on the grounds of prejudice, confusion, or waste of time, is violated). While a particular piece of research may be admissible because it has at least some tendency to demonstrate a fact, the study may be sufficiently flawed that it should not be given much weight by the fact-finder. "The proper approach is to view such evidence with some understanding of the difficulty of devising and running a survey and to use any technical defects only to lessen the evidentiary weight, and not to reject the results out-of-hand."\textsuperscript{39}

Obtaining social science research that bears on an adjudicative fact, therefore, is governed by the normal rules of evidence. Evaluating the research for the purpose of admissibility is limited to determining whether it is material, whether it has any probative value, and whether its admission violates any other evidentiary rule. The ultimate weight to be placed on the evidence is a matter for the fact-finder. As with any other adjudicative or case-specific fact, the standard of review an appellate court will apply to a trial court's decisions regarding social science evidence is "clear error."

\textsuperscript{37} See Empirical Questions, supra note 1.

\textsuperscript{38} Social Fact, supra note 1, at 882–885.

\textsuperscript{39} J. McCarthy, Trademarks and Unfair Competition (2d ed. 1984).
Contemporary Approaches

The law regarding social science research used to determine adjudicative facts (or what have been called "social facts" to distinguish empirical research from historical case-specific facts such as who-hit-whom) is much more settled than that governing research used to determine legislative facts or social authority. Such evidence is now routinely admitted not only in trademark cases, but also in obscenity litigation, Title VII employment discrimination suits, and many other areas. Recently, social science research has come to play a decisive role in adjudicating damages in mass tort cases.

What controversy exists in this area derives from the tendency of some lower courts to treat United States Supreme Court decisions involving social science evidence as establishing bright-line "legal principles" that are rigidly bound to follow. This has occurred primarily in the context of statistical procedures used in Title VII litigation. Several cases, for example, have interpreted Supreme Court decisions as precedents mandating the use of "standard deviation analysis" to establish a prima facie case of employment discrimination.

One view of determining what is precedential about court decisions on social science evidence used to ascertain adjudicative facts requires that a fundamental distinction be made between the methodology of the research offered in evidence and the application of that methodology in a particular case. Methodology refers to the broad research design employed to generate the data and the analytic procedures used to interpret them. Application refers to the concrete way that a particular study was carried out. Under this view, precedent attaches only to the generic methodology of studies approved of that methodology—such as the use of a particular statistical test—in a given case. If a court finds that the methodology of a research study to be offered in evidence has been established by precedent, then, in jury trials, it would follow that the results of the court's characterization of that precedent should be communicated as the law is communicated: by jury instruction. Such instructions would prepare the jury for the testimony of the expert witness who would offer in evidence the application of that methodology in a specific research study.

40 Social Facts, supra note 1.
46 Moultrie v. Martin, 690 F.2d 1078, 1082 (4th Cir. 1982).
48 Social Facts, supra note 1, at 885–887.
SOCIAL SCIENCE USED TO PROVIDE CONTEXT

Traditional Approaches

Most of the judicial uses of social science fall into one of the two categories originally described by Davis. In recent years, however, courts have begun to confront uses of social science research that do not conform to the established classification. There are increasing indications that a new, third use of social science in law is emerging. Examples can be found in cases concerning eyewitness identification and sexual victimization.49

In State v. Chapple,50 the only evidence that the defendant had committed murder was the word of two eyewitnesses. At trial, the expert testimony of a research psychologist was offered by the defendant to counter the testimony of the eyewitnesses. In a proffer of the evidence, the psychologist described published studies on factors such as the speed with which memory decays over time, the effects of stress on eyewitness accuracy, and the relationship between the confidence of a witness and the accuracy of identification. The trial court held the research not a “proper subject” for expert testimony and excluded the expert. However, the Arizona Supreme Court reversed and remanded the case for a new trial, stating that “there were a number of substantive issues of ultimate fact on which the expert’s testimony would have been of significant assistance.”51

The defendant in State v. Myers52 was found guilty of criminal sexual conduct involving a child. The trial court had allowed the prosecution to introduce a social scientist as an expert witness to describe the behavioral traits “typically” observed in abused children, traits that were also seen in the child complainant. The defense objected to this evidence at trial and appealed. The Minnesota Supreme Court upheld the conviction, however, stating that “background data providing a relevant insight into the puzzling aspects of the child’s conduct and demeanor which the jury could not otherwise bring to its evaluation is helpful and appropriate.”53

In neither of these cases was social science research being used to provide legislative facts. No creation or modification of a rule of law was sought. Rather, in both cases the parties offering the research accepted the applicable legal rules and sought to show that the research would help the jury to decide the specific factual issues being litigated. Yet in neither of these cases was social science research being used to provide adjudicative facts either. The parties to the cases were not involved in the research at all: The experts relied on “off the rack” research studies published before the events that gave rise to the litigation took place.

The way social science was used in Chapple and Myers, however, does

49 See, in general, Social Science in Law, supra note 1, at 279–454. Other examples discussed there include the battered woman and rape trauma syndromes.
51 Id. at 297, 660 P.2d at 1224.
52 359 N.W.2d 604 (Minn. 1984).
53 Id. at 610.
reflect the defining characteristics of both legislative fact and adjudicative fact. In each case, the research used demonstrated the critical component of legislative fact—generality. Just as the research used in Leon focused on the "collective" costs and benefits of changing the exclusionary rule, the research used in Chapple focused on "general factors" affecting all eyewitnesses. Similarly, the research in Myers concerned "general characteristics" that were "typically observed" in groups of abused children. In each case, the research used also possessed the critical component of adjudicative fact—specificity. Just as the research used in Processed Plastic spoke only to whether consumers were confused between two given products, the studies in Chapple were used only to challenge the testimony of eyewitnesses to a particular crime, and the research in Myers was used only to show that the named victim was, in fact, abused.

The research used in these cases and many like them is thus neither wholly legislative nor wholly adjudicative fact but has the essential elements of both of the conventional categories. Therefore, a third category has been proposed, termed social framework, to denote the use of general conclusions from social science research to determine factual issues in a specific case.

Social science research used as a social framework is becoming common in American courts. It is now almost always introduced as if it were simply an adjudicative fact—by expert testimony before a jury or judicial fact-finder, as in Chapple and Myers. Since this use of social science is relatively new, however, the Frye test for novel scientific evidence is often applied to its admissibility:

Just when a scientific principle or discovery crosses the line between the experimental and demonstrable stages is difficult to define. Somewhere in this twilight zone the evidential force of the principle must be recognized, and while courts will go a long way in admitting expert testimony deduced from a well-recognized scientific principle or discovery, the thing from which the deduction is made must be sufficiently established to have gained general acceptance in the particular field in which it belongs.

Courts are divided on the use of the Frye "general acceptability" test for novel scientific evidence and the use of the "relevance approach" of Federal Rule of Evidence 401, which would treat novel scientific evidence in the same way as other evidence, weighing its probative value against its potential to prejudice the jury.

55 135 Ariz. at 292, 660 P.2d at 1219.
56 359 N.W.2d at 608.
57 Social Framework, supra note 1, at 570.

It is not very helpful to debate the question of whether Frye or a relevancy approach to scientific evidence is preferable. The two approaches are essentially the same, despite the frequency with which they are assumed to differ. The question that is more significant is how much success a scientific claim must have before courts will rely on it. The answer to this question should be the same under Frye or a relevance approach.
Contemporary Approaches

Commentators have pointed out that treating social frameworks as adjudicative fact has two significant liabilities. First, it is an inefficient use of court time. The same testimony about the same research studies must be heard in case after case whenever a framework for a given type of factual determination is sought. Second, the current method of introducing frameworks is expensive. The pool of expert witnesses is limited to a small group of basic researchers in each topical area and those researchers must be transported and paid to repeat their testimony in each new case. Access to expert testimony is therefore effectively precluded in a large number of cases in which the introduction of a social framework would seem justified.

An alternative to treating social frameworks as if they were simple adjudicative facts has been proposed that recognizes the similarity of social frameworks to both adjudicative fact and legislative fact as well. The proposal is for a two-stage set of procedures for the judicial management of this use of social science in court. First, the generality that social frameworks share with research used as legislative fact or social authority suggests analogous procedures for obtaining, evaluating, and establishing social frameworks—obtain the research either in briefs or through the court’s own investigation, evaluate it as legal precedent is evaluated, and have one court’s decision on a social framework affect later courts as one court’s decision on a matter of law affects later courts. Second, the specificity that social frameworks share with research used as adjudicative or social fact suggests similar procedures for communicating the court’s conclusions to the jury: via instruction. The jurors would then be in a position to apply the general social framework to the specific evidence produced at trial.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In outline summary, courts should adhere to the following steps when addressing an empirical question concerning human behavior:

60 Social Frameworks, supra note 1, at 583–584.
63 On the use of jury instructions to convey empirical information, see State v. Long, 721 P.2d 483 (1986).
64 No instructions would be given unless the court concluded that the empirical propositions were supported by valid research. See Empirical Questions, supra note 1.
1. Determine whether the substantive law governing the case raises an empirical issue to which social science research may be pertinent.

2. If so, determine whether the empirical issue bears on an assumption underlying the choice of a legal rule that has general applicability, a factual dispute pertaining only to the parties before the court, or a mixture of the two in which general empirical information provides a context for determining a specific fact.

3. If the empirical issue concerns an assumption underlying the choice of a legal rule of general applicability:
   a. receive social science studies in briefs submitted by the parties or amici.
   b. if the parties or amici do not submit social science studies, request such studies from the parties or amici, or obtain them from the court's own sua sponte investigation of published sources.
   c. evaluate any available research by determining whether the research has survived the critical review of the scientific community, has used valid research methods, is generalizable to the legal issue in question, and is supported by a body of related research.
   d. if no acceptable research is available, candidly state this conclusion in the opinion. In common law cases, rely upon the empirical assumption that appears to be the most plausible. In reviewing state action, rely upon the legally appropriate standard of review in determining where to place responsibility for resolving the empirical issue.

4. If the empirical issue concerns a factual dispute bearing only on the parties before the court:
   a. determine the party with the burden of proving the contested fact.
   b. determine whether the law governing the case makes empirical research an appropriate form of evidence for meeting this burden.
   c. if empirical research does constitute an appropriate form of evidence, allow the admission of direct and rebuttal expert testimony subject to the applicable federal or state rules of evidence.
   d. if the party with the burden of proof does not produce relevant expert testimony, weigh this omission in determining whether the burden has been met.

5. If the empirical issue concerns the provision of a general context within which to determine a fact pertaining only to the parties:
   a. obtain and evaluate social science research as specified in 3a–3c, above.
   b. in cases tried before a jury, communicate the conclusions by means of jury instructions.

The exponential growth of social science research dealing with questions of relevance to the law and the increasing practice of courts in incorporating that research into legal decisions combine to make the development of a coherent scheme for the judicial management of social science information a priority for courts and scholars. There is longstanding agreement that one legitimate use of
social science is to assist in the creation and modification of legal rules of general applicability. *Legislative fact* has been the rubric that has subsumed this use of research for almost 50 years. Given the elasticity and lack of direction inherent in this concept, it is unlikely to hold sway much longer. A second accepted use of social science is to provide adjudicative facts for resolving disputes specific to the parties before a court. The law here is much more settled. Finally, there is a trend rapidly gaining credibility in American courts to use social science in a third way, as a social framework providing a general empirical context within which to determine specific facts at issue in a case. Procedures for the judicial management of this new use of social science must blend existing or proposed procedures for the management of both the law-making and fact-finding uses of research.