INTRODUCTION
ALEX WAIS | UC BERKELEY

2016 EAST AFRICA IMPACT EVALUATION WORKSHOP AND EVIDENCE SUMMIT
GOLDEN AGE OF EVIDENCE-BASED RESEARCH

• Impact evaluations gives way to more actionable body of evidence with clear policy implications
• More field work, less theory = greater linkages between researchers and policymakers
PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

• Research can be done to advance human understanding
• Or inform decision makers
• The rise of evidence based policy raises the stakes
HOW DO SOCIAL SCIENTISTS ENSURE RELIABILITY?

• Sectors known to have far reaching consequences are regulated
  • Regulatory bodies to ensure banks, pharmaceutical companies etc. operate ethically

• What is there for academic research?
  • Is peer review enough? Who looks at the design, the data, the analysis code?
DO SOCIAL SCIENTISTS NEED REGULATION?

• Hopefully not
  • Regulatory bodies can be restrictive and punitive
  • Reliability of research can be very subjective and its forceful regulation may have adverse outcomes
• So what can be done instead?
SELF REGULATION: CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT

- Reliability of research should not be taken for granted
- If researchers and others can critically consume research and closely inspect its findings then they can decide for themselves if its reliable
SELF REGULATION: TRANSPARENCY

- In order to closely inspect findings research needs to be done openly
  - Consumers of research need to have access to clear explanations of the research design
  - And have access to code, data etc.