




Research methods 06

External Validity

Caryn Block
ORLJ 5040
Teachers College
Columbia University



**“You can’t generalize from a simple 5 minute
task performed by college sophomores
in a lab to the real world.”**

How do we judge the ‘goodness’ or ‘value’ of a laboratory experiment?

● Internal Validity

- Alternative explanations (extraneous variables) are ruled out
- We can make the statement: IV causes DV

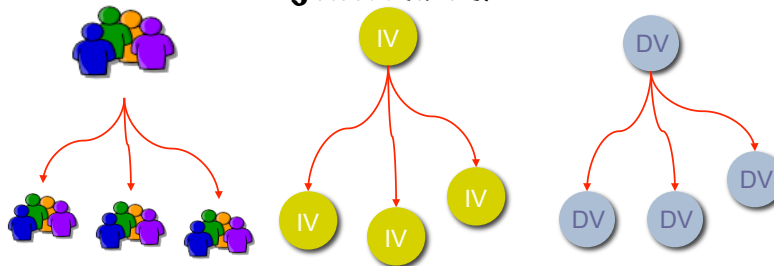
● External Validity

- The findings are generalizable to other settings, samples, and variables

External validity a la Campbell

External validity

Can the results of our experiment be generalized?

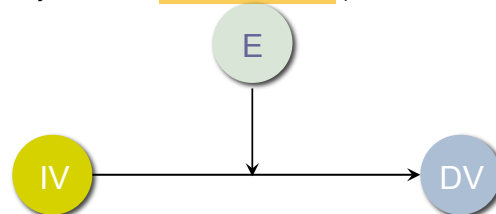


External validity a la Campbell

- Interaction of IV with elements of the experimental situation itself
- Think of experimental situation as a set of moderators we don't like
- **Threats to external validity:** The IV causes the DV...

...only when...

...the experimental sample is tested (no 'real' people).
...subjects are primed by pretest (no 'real' conditions).
...subjects are in lab environment (no 'real' world).



Other perspectives on generalizability

"You can't generalize from a simple 5 minute task performed by college sophomores in a lab to the real world."

- **Group 1**
Mook
- **Group 2**
Sears; Sue
- **Group 3**
Baumeister; Highhouse
- **Group 4**
Cheung et al.; Anderson et al.;

Other perspectives on **generalizability**

You can't generalize from a simple 5 minute task performed by college sophomores in a lab to the real world.\

- **Small group discussion**
 - Address the above statement from the perspectives offered by the readings
 - What are the criteria for external validity offered by the readings?
- **Small group presentation**
 - Headline: Readings perspective on external validity
 - Major points made by each of the articles
 - Supporting evidence for these points
- **Large group discussion**
 - How do we address generalizability in laboratory research?

How do we judge the '**goodness**' or '**value**' of an area of research or theory?

- Multiple methods of operationalizing IVs and DVs
- Research in a variety of settings
- Research with a variety of people
- It's an empirical question!