James S. Jackson: Inaugural Distinguished Diversity Scholar Career Award

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External Validity: A Survey-Experiment Approach

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Campbell and Stanley (1966) have suggested that experimental results be evaluated from the perspectives of internal and external validity. The internal validity perspective asks how many rival hypotheses for the results of an experiment can be rejected. While Campbell and Stanley discuss more general threats, such as maturation and statistical regression, which the "true" experimental designs control for, Wiggins (1968) extends this notion to include plausible theoretical alternatives as well. For example, if we attribute the increase in the emission of a desired response by a subject to the automatic effects of a reinforcer, can we discount not only the possible (however implausible) effects of maturation, but can we also rule out the plausible alternative that the reinforcer communicated information about the correctness of the responses to the subject? External validity, on the other hand, concerns the generalizability of results. Would we observe the same relationship between behavior and the delivery of a reinforcer if we used subjects from another population, if we examined different levels and types of reinforcers, and tried to affect the emission rate of other kinds of behaviors?

The concepts of internal and external validity can be used to appraise research results produced by any method. If we examine two frequently used methods of research in social psychology, we observe a trade-off. The experimental method rates higher in internal validi-
“...race is sufficiently a threat to external validity that investigators must include it in research designs...”

Survey Research Methods


• Mays VM & Jackson JS (1991) AIDS survey methodology and black Americans. *Social Science and Medicine 33*, 47-54

T. A. LaVeist, C. Diala, M. Torres, and J. S. Jackson

Abstract

To test the specificity of the National Death Index (NDI), information was submitted on 157 randomly selected respondents from the National Panel Survey of Black Americans (NPSBA) who were known to be living as of 1992. Information also was submitted for 153 known deceased respondents from the panel survey to test the sensitivity of the NDI. The NDI was very sensitive; however, specificity was somewhat less impressive. Although we found the NDI/NPSBA match to be highly accurate, there was a nontrivial number of false positives.

Full text

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Age Cohort, Ancestry, and Immigrant Generation Influences in Family Relations and Psychological Well-Being among Black Caribbean Family Members

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“...intrafamilial relations may serve to overcome barriers of geographical distance in providing comparable levels of contact, solidarity, and well-being for both U.S.-born and immigrant Black Caribbean family members of different generations...”

THE PROGRAM FOR RESEARCH ON
Black Americans
Life Satisfaction among Black Urban Elderly

James S. Jackson, John D. Bacon, John Peterson

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Abstract

Previous research in white aged populations often has been derived from disengagement, activity, or personality theories. The relevance, however, of any of these conceptual frameworks to black aged is problematic because of their development in white samples and the lack of empirical data documenting their applicability to non-whites. The lack of systematic empirical research on black aged, and particularly, on the determinants of life satisfaction, provided the major impetus for the present study. Interview schedules were individually administered to 102 non-institutionalized retired men and women residing in a large urban area. A multiple regression analysis revealed a number of factors related to life satisfaction. The results are supportive of previous studies in white samples but are sufficiently distinct to raise questions regarding the applicability of these prior findings to black aged.