

ESA Mentoring Panel: Publishing Experimental Economics Papers

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- A. JPE
- B. Introducing the Typhon of publishing experimental papers
- C. Slaying Typhon



Typhon

The Father of all Monsters



What is Typhon to Experimentalists?

EXTERNAL VALIDITY

Uber Gender Pay Gap Paper

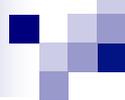
- One referee argues:

A second main concern is related to the generalizability of the results and their relevance for more traditional contexts. I think the paper falls short of providing a convincing explanation of what can be extrapolated to more traditional labour market settings and, additionally, to contexts in which alternative work arrangements are prevalent.

More than 9 of 10 experimental studies that I handle at the JPE receive this comment in some form

External Validity

- If we really want to stop all empiricism in top journals we should maintain our absent-minded complaining about this issue.
 - Experimenters are especially susceptible because they have identification figured out (with naturally-occurring data, identification tends to be the show down)
 - The truth is that if you really want, EVERY empirical study can be rejected based on this complaint (time, situation, and/or space will do you in every time)



What to do?

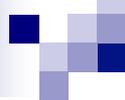
Tackling it Head-On

- A satirical take:

List, John A. (2020) “Non est Disputandum de Generalizability? A Glimpse into The External Validity Trial”

Author Onus Probandi

- Much like we have features that give confidence of internal validity in our work, we need the same with EV
- Economic approach to EV provides 4 reporting areas that give insight into when preferences, beliefs, or individual constraints might vary importantly across populations of people, settings, situations, and time
- Our papers should report on these 4 areas just as we do with IV



What to do?

Tackling it Head-On

- EV Litmus Test: can you confidently say that it is difficult/impossible to find a better setting than the one studied in your paper to test convincingly the relevance of your conjectures?
- Many critics view unique settings as a negative distraction. This is the exact opposite way to think of the issue: if the unique setting itself allows you to do the relevant test at hand and no other setting can, then you have found the **perfect** domain for your study.

All Papers Are Not Created Equally

- **WAVE1:** The basic building blocks of knowledge begin with exploratory work investigating causality, or efficacy, focusing primarily on producing first tests of theory or establishing initial causality. In such cases, external validity serves as an 'extra credit' component when the counterfactual is provided with data.
- **WAVE2:** Building on the foundational features from WAVE1, WAVE2 studies, while maintaining the fidelity of internal validity, continue to replicate while digging into external validity, starting with relaxing homogeneity of population and situations.
- **WAVE3:** Should be viewed as the final research completed before policy implementation or a deep understanding of the magnitude of the treatment effect, the underpinnings for why the intervention works, and a description of important boundary conditions.

