

## Evaluating Validity is Harmful

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### VALIDITY STUDIES LEAD RESEARCHERS TO ...

#### DESIGN EXPEDIENT TESTS

- To make validity studies feasible, researchers may design tests that are quick, easy, and cheap.
- So the test can do well in those studies, they may constrain their test to fit within the bounds of standard validity studies (e.g., multiple items for each proposed factor, each item a pure measure of its factor).
- These test-design constraints may limit the ability of the researcher to design the best measure possible, as they may:
  - Omit important parts of phenomena
  - Distort phenomena to fit validity studies
  - Abandon phenomena that do not fit validity studies

#### SELECT EXPEDIENT TESTS

- Time-consuming, difficult, and/or expensive tests would be hard or impossible to use in validity studies.
- Thus, most published validity studies discuss only quick, easy, cheap tests.
- When researchers select tests based upon published validity studies:
  - They select quick, easy, cheap tests, even when better tests are available and would be feasible for the current project.

# Evaluating test validity undermines real validity

### VALIDITY STUDIES LEAD RESEARCHERS TO ...

#### STIFLE INNOVATION

- During test construction, researchers continuously improve the test.
- During validity studies, the test must be standardized (e.g., same items for everyone). All improvements stop.
- Once validity studies are published, others usually use the published test as is, because changing the test would invalidate the validity studies.
- When studying similar phenomena in new contexts (e.g., new cultures), researchers usually make as few changes as they can.

#### AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH

Many sciences make progress without validity studies, e.g.

- Astrophysics
- Neuroscience
- Geology

Researchers may design and use better tests if they:

- Spend more time studying the phenomena before designing tests.
- Think of every validity study as formative, rather than summative, and continuously try to improve the tests.

In place of test validity studies, researchers could:

- Relentlessly pursue the phenomena of interest.
- Relentlessly pursue high-quality data collection in the service of learning about the phenomena of interest.
- Innovate data collection procedures whenever warranted.