



Research on Service Learning

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Please Write Down

- 1. One question that you have for us**
- 2. One question that you have for others in the room**
- 3. One or two pieces of information about conducting research that you know you don't know**
- 4. One issue about conducting research that bugs you**
- 5. One compelling question you would like to have answered**

I am most interested in conducting assessments and research during the next 12 months on (*check all that apply*):

= Individuals

= Service Learning Course

= Service Programs

= Departments

= My campus

= Communities



Definition

Service learning is a course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students

- a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs, and**
- b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of personal values and civic responsibility.**

“[Service learning research] is neither precise nor robust enough to guide decision making about practice. Our success at implementation has outstripped our knowledge of what works best. For a field that engenders as much passion in practitioners and that we believe transforms students by engaging their hearts as well as their minds, there is remarkably little evidence of strong impact and even less evidence about the kinds of practices that lead to the effects we desire” (Eyler, 2002, p. 5).

What Do We Know?

For the most part, we know that service learning (variously **defined**) is **associated** with many outcomes that are based on

- the **testimony** of **students**,
- come from **small sample** studies (e.g., single SL class),
- do not control for **self-selection**,
- occasionally have appropriate **comparisons**
- do not have **multiple** indicators or methods,
- have serious limitations on **generalizability**,
- and, are based on a **single experience** and measured at the **end of the semester**.



Types of Assessment

(Bringle & Hatcher, MJCSL, 2000)

- **Reflection:** Activities producing information oriented toward the self-assessment of persons who are engaged in an experience
- **Process Evaluation or Monitoring:** Activities producing information about how a class, course, or program was implemented
- **Outcome Evaluation:** Activities producing information about what outcomes occurred as a result of a class, course, or program



Types of Assessment

(continued)

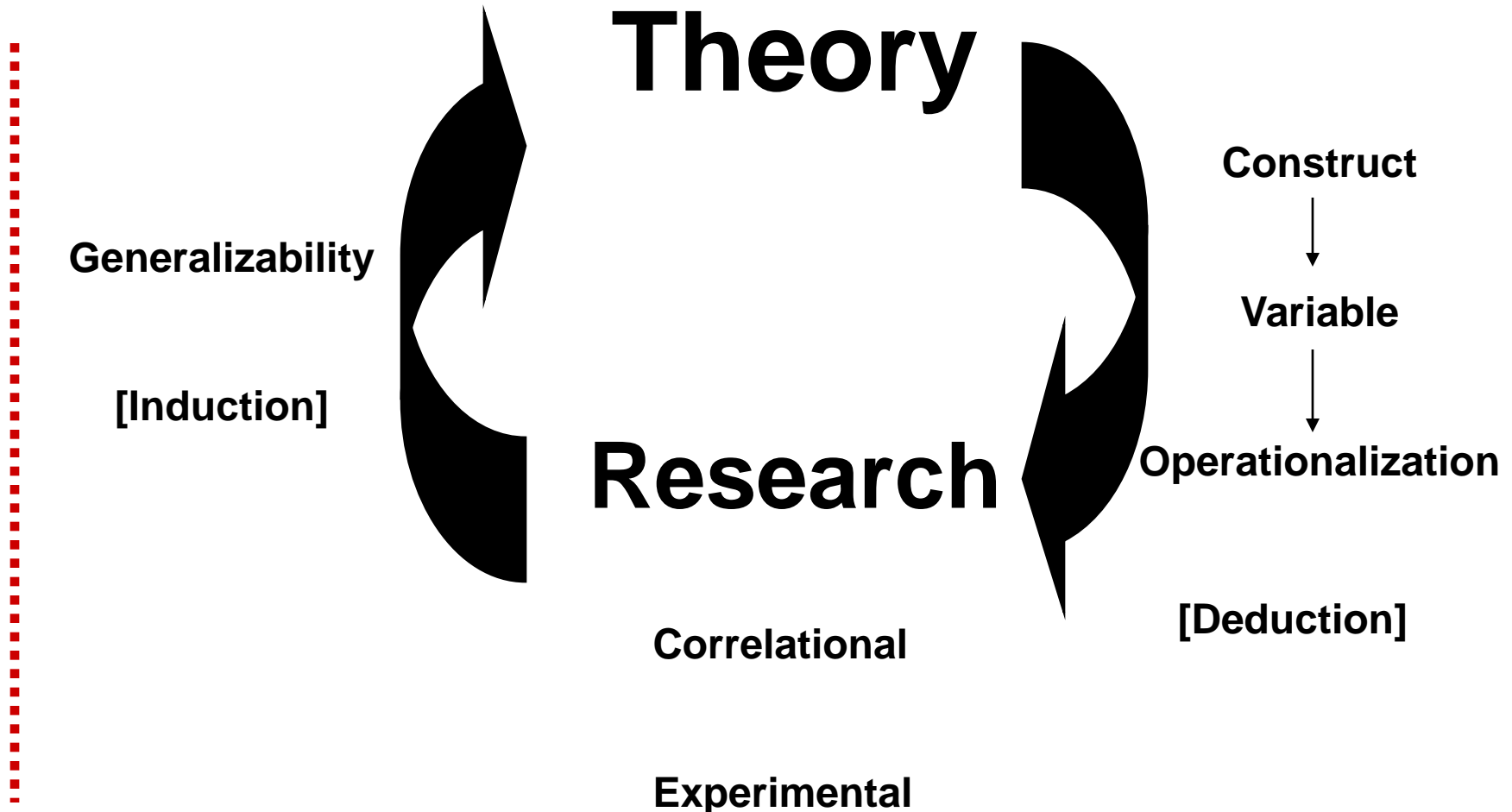
- **Correlational:** Activities producing information about what relationship exists between aspects of a class, course, or program
- **Experimental and Theory-testing Research:** Activities producing information about why a specific outcome occurred



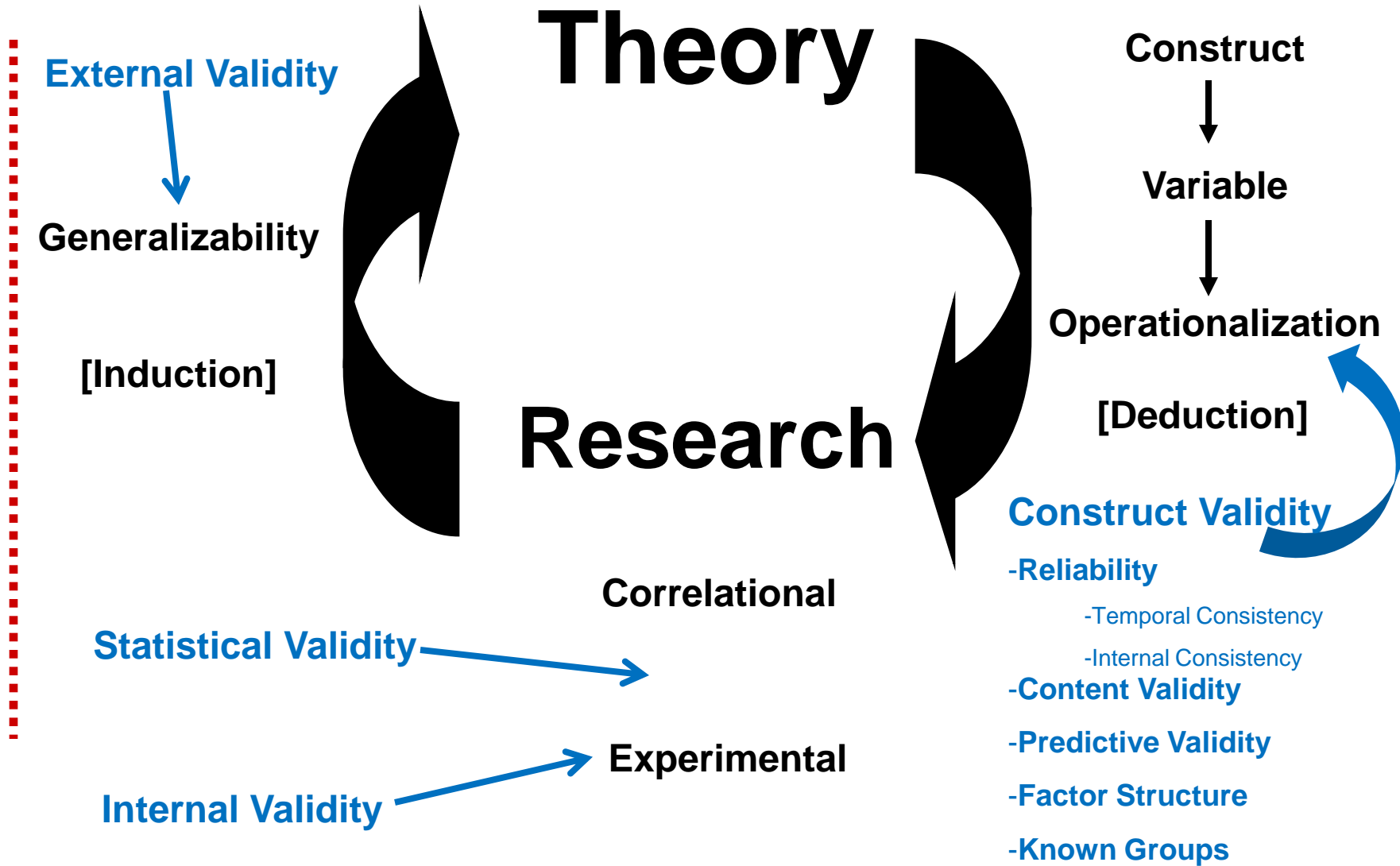
Convincing SL Research

- **Guided by theory**
- **Clear constructs**
- **Control for differences among groups**
- **Multiple indicators**
- **Multiple methods**
- **Converging results across different methods**
- **Confidence in conclusions**
- **Implications for teaching and learning In general**

Rigor in Quantitative Research



Rigor in Quantitative Research



Qualitative Research

- ***Phenomenology*** –how individuals experience a phenomenon
- ***Ethnography*** –describing the culture (attitudes, values, norms, language) of a group of people
- ***Case study research*** – a detailed account of one or more cases
- ***Grounded theory*** –generating and developing a theory from information
- ***Historical research*** –descriptions of events

Trustworthiness of Qualitative Research (Guba)

- **Credibility: By E and S**
- **Transferability: Clear description that establishes relevance to others**
- **Dependability: Of context, of findings, of methodology**
- **Confirmability: Eliminating rival explanations, triangulation, lessons learned**

Use of Mixed Methods

Mixed methods are not necessarily better, but they can help when they:

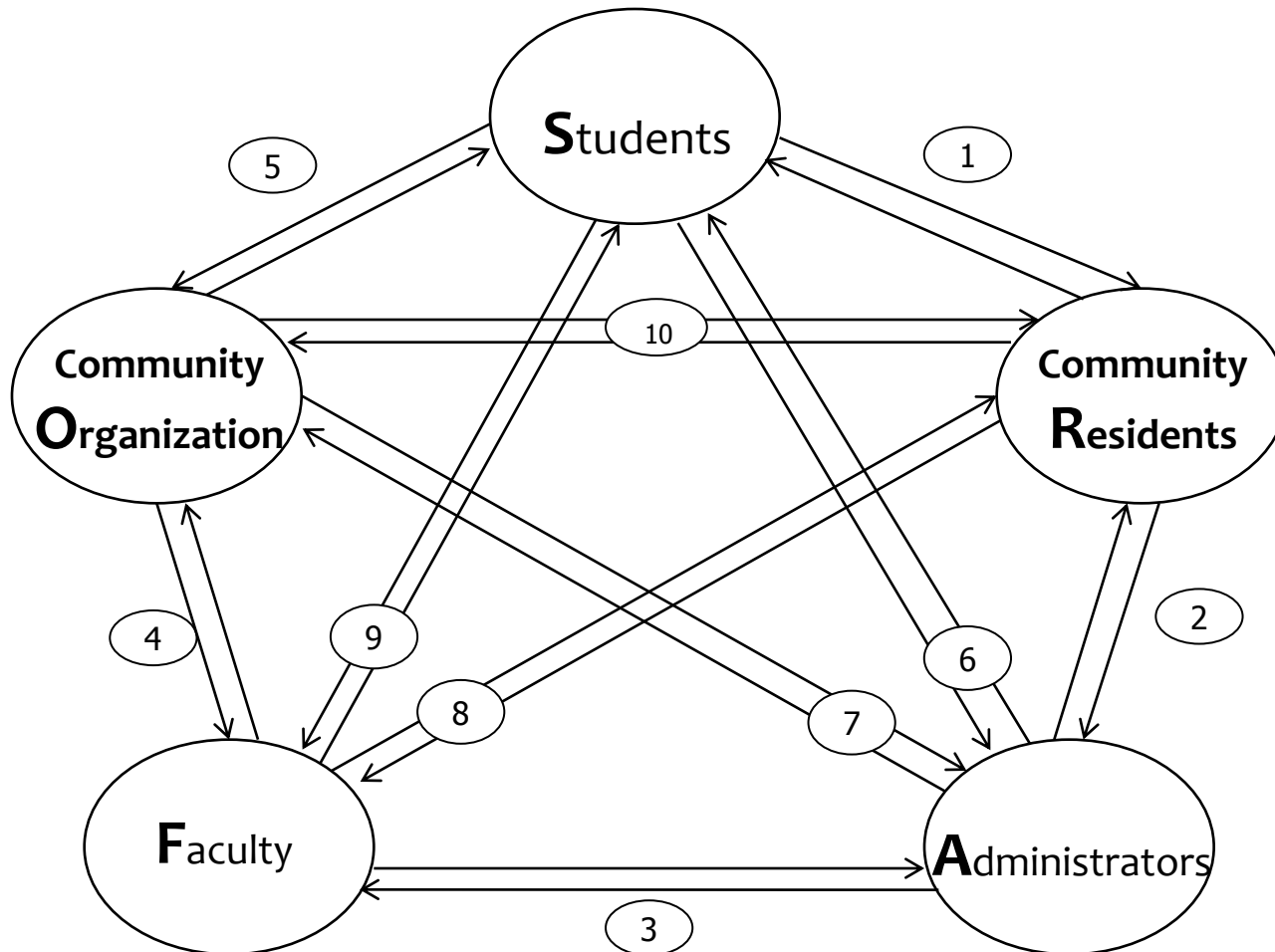
- Are selected based upon theory and constructs**
- Provide complementary types of information**
- Produce converging results**
- Are all based on multiple indicators**



Focus of Analysis

- **Individual**
- **Course**
- **Department**
- **Program or other unit**
- **Institution**
- **Community**
- **Partnerships**

SO FAR





Your Department Chair Asks

I've noticed that your service learning class takes a lot of your time. I wonder if that is really a good use of your time. Why do you think it is worth the extra time?



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What do you think your students get out of service learning?



Your Department Chair Asks

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What do you think your students get out of service learning?

What evidence do you have that they reach those goals?



What outcome from your teaching are you sure occurs for your students?



Service Learning Student Outcomes

Academic

- Learning
- Cognitive processes
- Critical thinking
- Persistence and retention
- Achievement and aspirations
- Integration

Life Skills

- Racial tolerance
- Cultural understanding
- Self-efficacy
- Problem solving
- Career clarification
- Leadership



Service Learning Student Outcomes

Civic and Social Responsibility

- Commitment to community
- Aspirations to volunteer
- Empathy
- Philanthropy
- Civic-minded professional

Personal Development

- Moral development
- Self-concept
- Motives, attitudes, and values
- Personal development



Potential Methods

- Interviews, focus groups
- Questionnaires, surveys
- Content analysis of reflections and other documents
- Secondary analysis of existing data
- Quasi-experiments
- Observations
- Case studies
- Course portfolios
- Exit interviews



***What evidence do you have
that this outcome occurs?***



Sources of Evidence

- **Student**
- **Instructor**
- **Raters (e.g., of products)**
- **Outside observer**
- **Another student**
- **Community org. staff member**
- **Resident/client**


Use of Multiple Indicators

- Multiple indicators are superior (quantitative and qualitative) whether focusing on:
 - Items on a scale
 - Time samples
 - Journal entries
 - Courses or campuses
 - Skills
 - Intentions
- **See Bringle, Phillips, & Hudson, 2004 for a collection of scales**



What aspect of the course do you think produces this outcome?

***Why do you think that this
aspect of the course results
in this outcome?***



***Can you identify any construct
that you think explains why
the course components
produce that outcome?***



McGuire's Heuristics

- 1. Intensive Case Study**
- 2. Paradoxical Incident**
- 3. Metaphors & Analogies**
- 4. Rule of Thumb**
- 5. Conflicting Findings**

Sampler of Theories

- **Functional Theory**--> motives (Stukas, Clary, Snyder, et al.)
- **Attribution Theory**--> lay explanations by helper and recipient (Bringle & Velo)
- **Stereotypes & Attitudes**--> understanding and change (Dunlap)
- **Equity Theory**--> power differentials and intergroup relations (Nadler)

Sampler of Theories

- Cognitive Processes**--> learning and understanding (Eyler; Root; Steinke & Fitch)
- Problem Solving**--> expert vs. novice (Giles & Eyler)
- Written Reflection**--> effects for writer (Pennebaker; Wyr)
- Efficacy**--> community-based skills (Bandura; Reeb et al.)
- Self-Determination Theory**--> mandatory vs. voluntary (Clary; Bringle & Hatcher)

***Do you think that these
components of the course result
in this outcome equally for all
students?***

***If not, then for which students
does it apply and for which does
it not?***

Research Issues

- **Implementation of IV**
 - **Process evaluation**
 - **Manipulation checks**
 - **Quality control**
- **Moderator variables**
 - **Under what conditions?**
 - **For what types of students?**

Research Issues (continued)

- **Mediating variables**
 - Why did the intervention have a particular effect?
- **Dependent variable**
 - Sensitivity
 - Specificity
 - Meaningfulness
 - Match with IV

Some Tough Issues

- **For Whom?**
- **By Whom?**
- **With Whom?**
- **With What Structure?**
- **With What Resources?**