

# What is Psychology Discovering about Heroes?

Brian R. Riches

Doctoral Student

Claremont Graduate University



Claremont Graduate University

Hero Round Table 2022





10.6%



(Papadatou-Pastou et al., 2020)



**10.6%**  
**Heroes may be  
more common!**



# Two examples of heroism

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“I jumped in front of car to keep it from hitting a child that wasn't very visible.”

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“I stood up against unfair and unethical practices in my workplace. It involved standing up to my direct supervisor and going to their manager so I was worried.”

# Do these sound like something you could experience?

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“I stood up against unfair and unethical practices in my workplace. It involved standing up to my direct supervisor and going to their manager so I was worried.”



# Limitations of Previous Methods

(Franco et al., 2016; Heiner, 2018; Schmid Callina et al., 2017; Walker, 2017)

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Exemplar  
Studies

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# Limitations of Previous Methods

Exemplar  
Studies

+

Retrospective  
Analysis

(Franco et al., 2016; Heiner, 2018; Schmid Callina et al., 2017; Walker, 2017)

# Limitations of Previous Methods

Exemplar  
Studies

+

Retrospective  
Analysis

Proxy Measures  
of Heroism

# Limitations of Previous Methods



Scientific measurement tools  
must be reliable & **valid**



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## STATE SCALE



0

Helpless/  
Depressed



2

Sad/  
Doubtful



4

Unhappy



6

Satisfied



8

Joyful



10

Exuberant

# Defining Heroism

(Franco et al., 2011; Schmid Callina et al., 2017)

# Defining Heroism

## Risk

Undertaken voluntarily  
with recognition of  
possible costs

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## Benefit

To non-relative others

# Example Heroism Questions

- 1) Risk your physical safety to benefit others
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)

# Example Heroism Questions

- 1) Risk your physical safety to benefit others
- 2) Risk your job to reveal the unethical behavior of a supervisor
- 3)
- 4)

# Example Heroism Questions

- 1) Risk your physical safety to benefit others
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- 3) Risk social consequences to help a stranger
- 4)



# Example Heroism Questions

- 1) Risk your physical safety to benefit others
- 2) Risk your job to reveal the unethical behavior of a supervisor
- 3) Risk social consequences to help a stranger
- 4) Return into a burning building to save a stranger

# Face Validity



Heroism Experts

# Face Validity

How closely does this question fit your definition of heroism?



Heroism Experts



# Content Validity

## Risk

Undertaken voluntarily  
with recognition of  
possible costs

## Benefit

To non-relative others

# Content Validity

## Preview Question

Risk physical injury to pull a stranger out of a burning car.

Not at all

Extremely

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How **risky** would this action be **to you**?



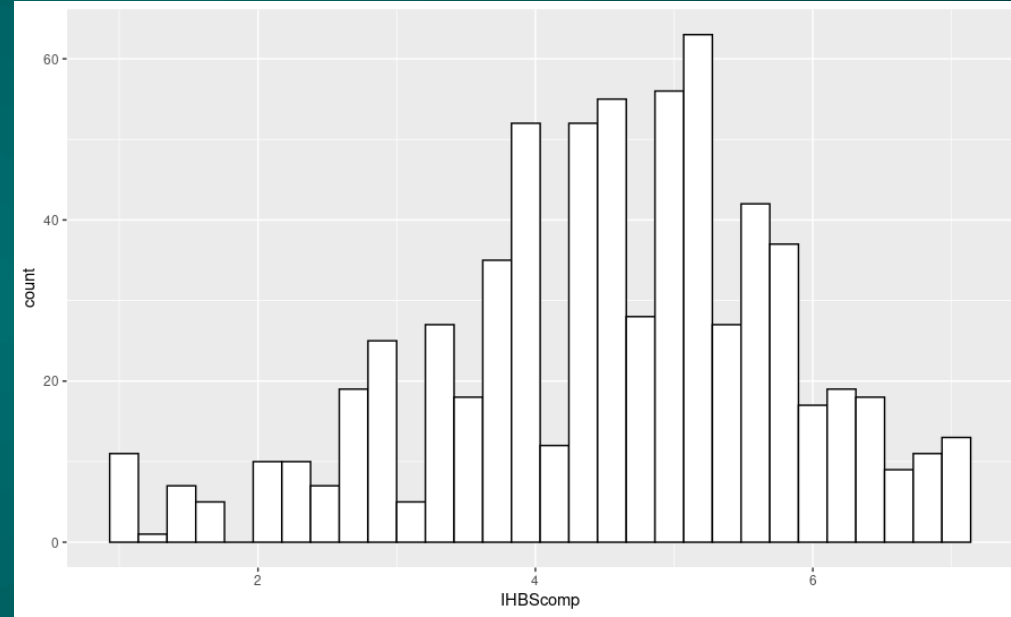
How **beneficial** would this action be **to others**?



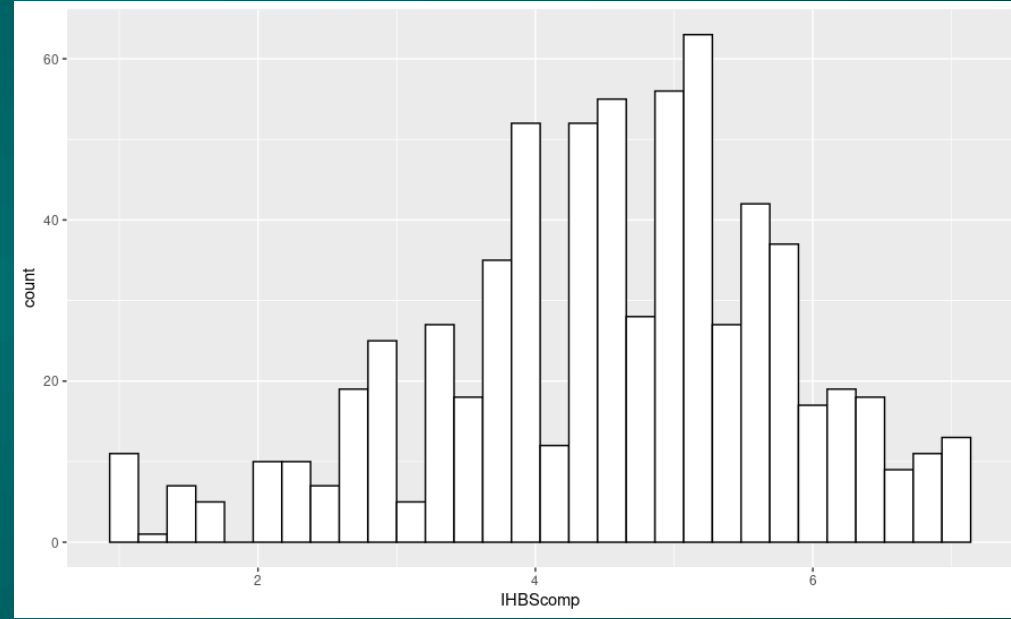
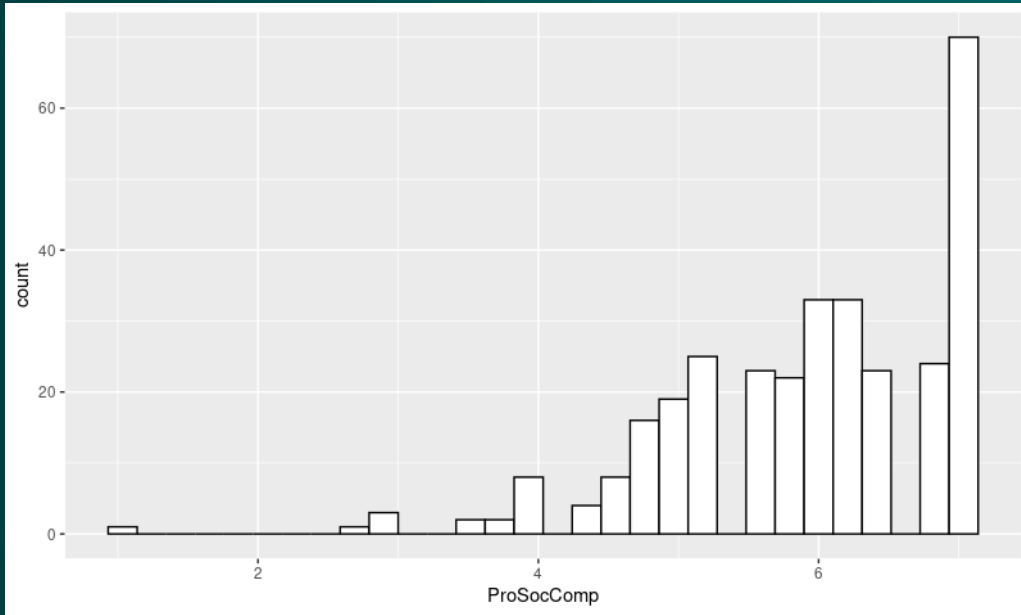
How **realistic** do you think this scenario is?



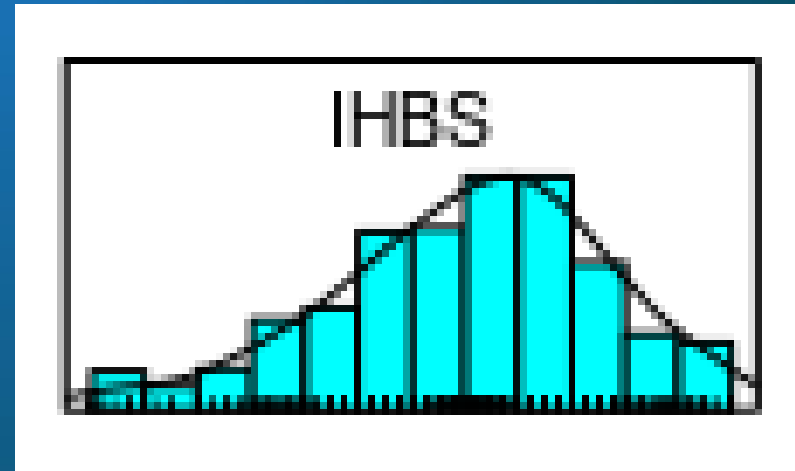
# Content Validity



# Content Validity

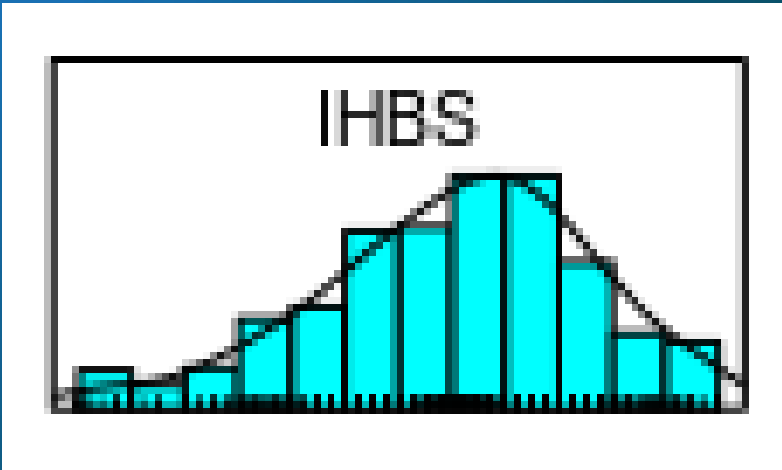
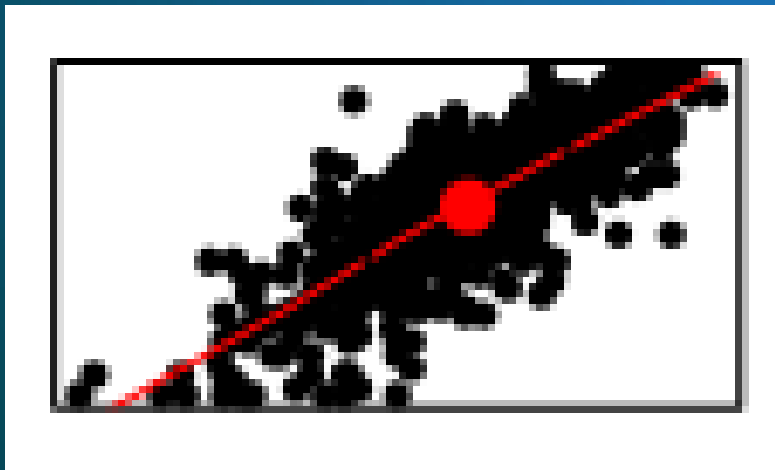


# Convergent Validity



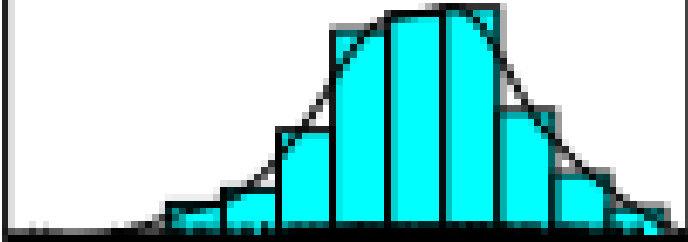


# Convergent Validity

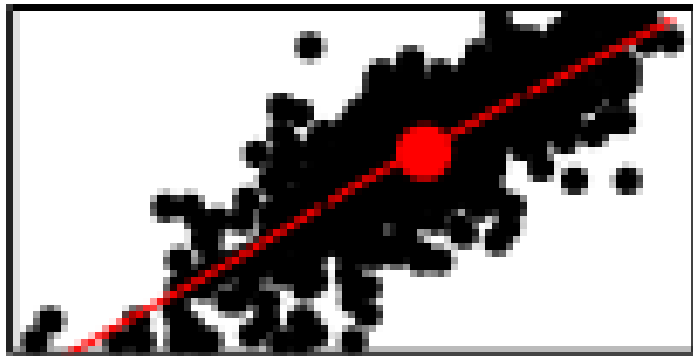


# Convergent Validity

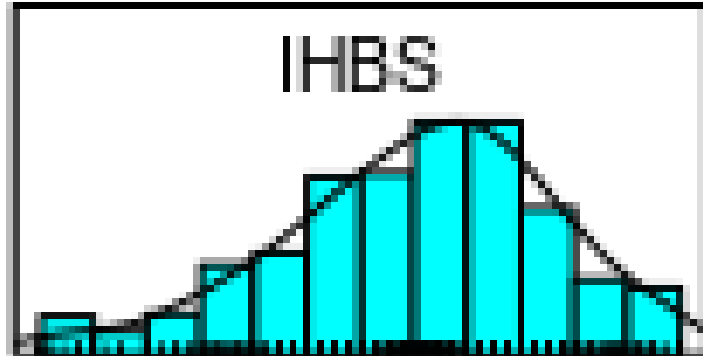
MoralCourage



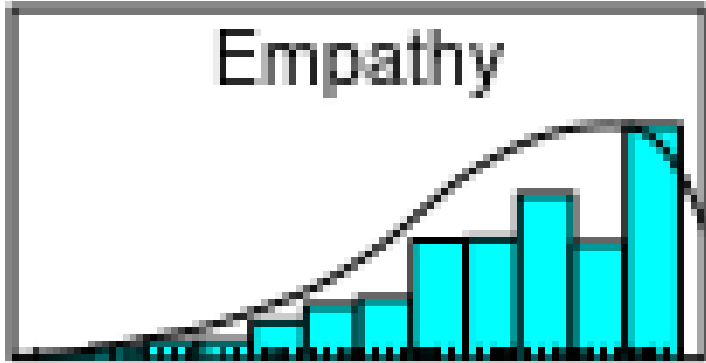
0.79



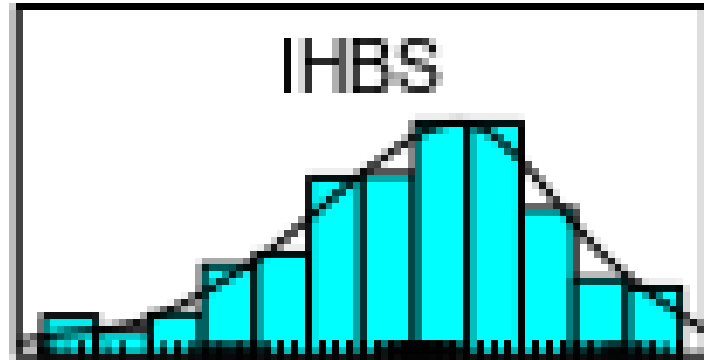
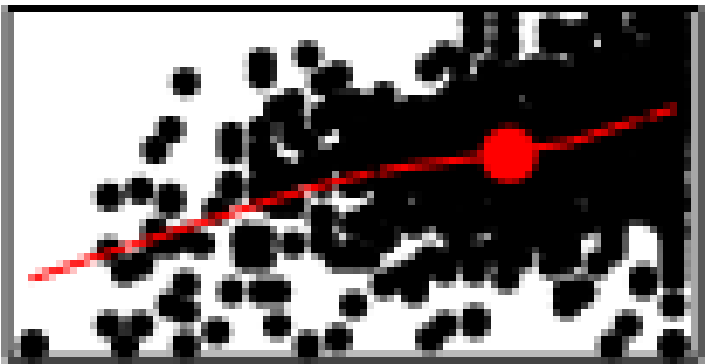
IHBS



# Convergent Validity



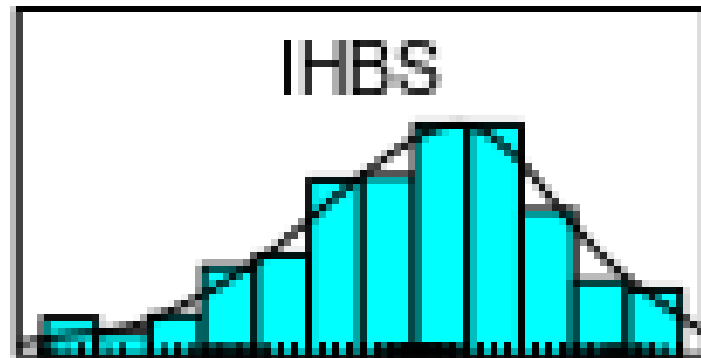
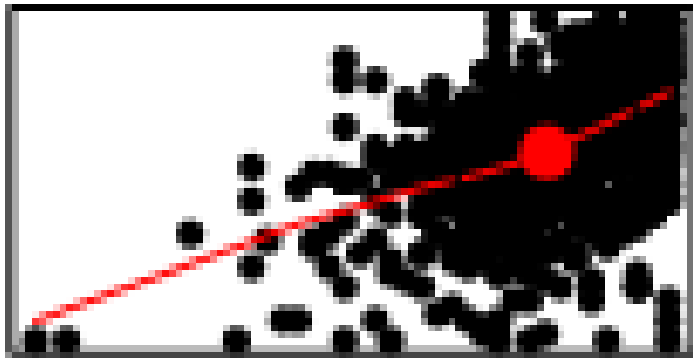
0.40



# Convergent Validity



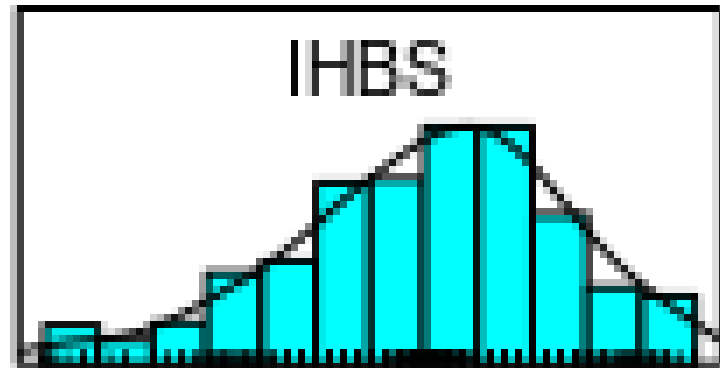
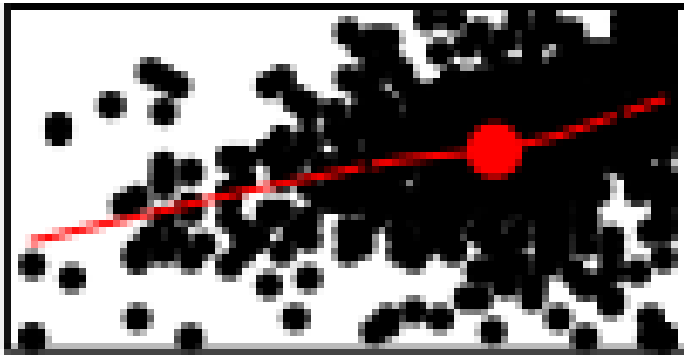
0.46



# Convergent Validity



0.31



This is good evidence the  
heroism scale collects valid data

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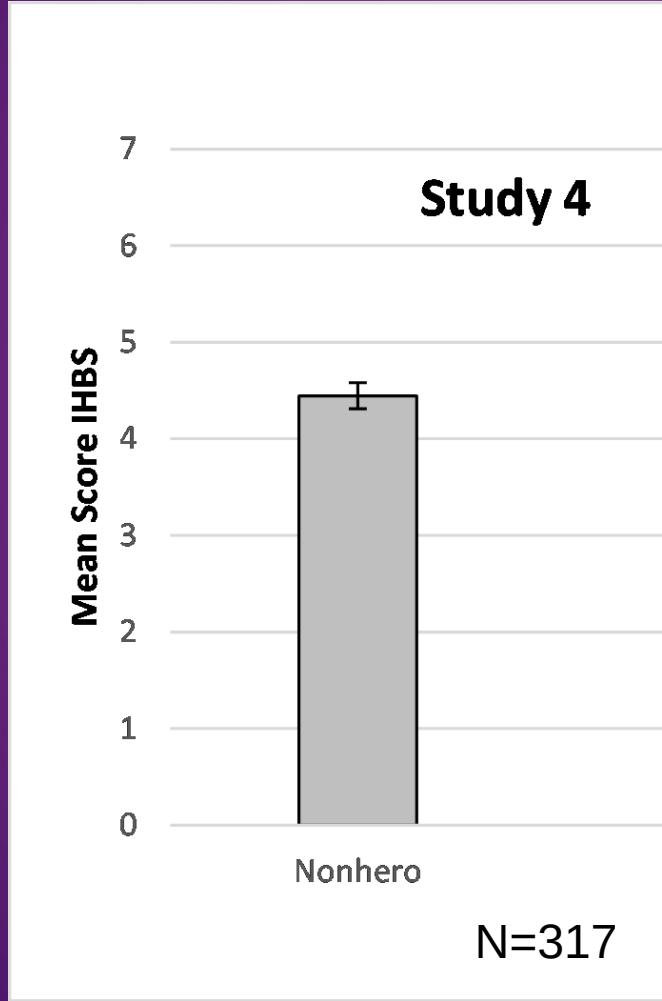
This is good evidence the heroism scale collects valid data



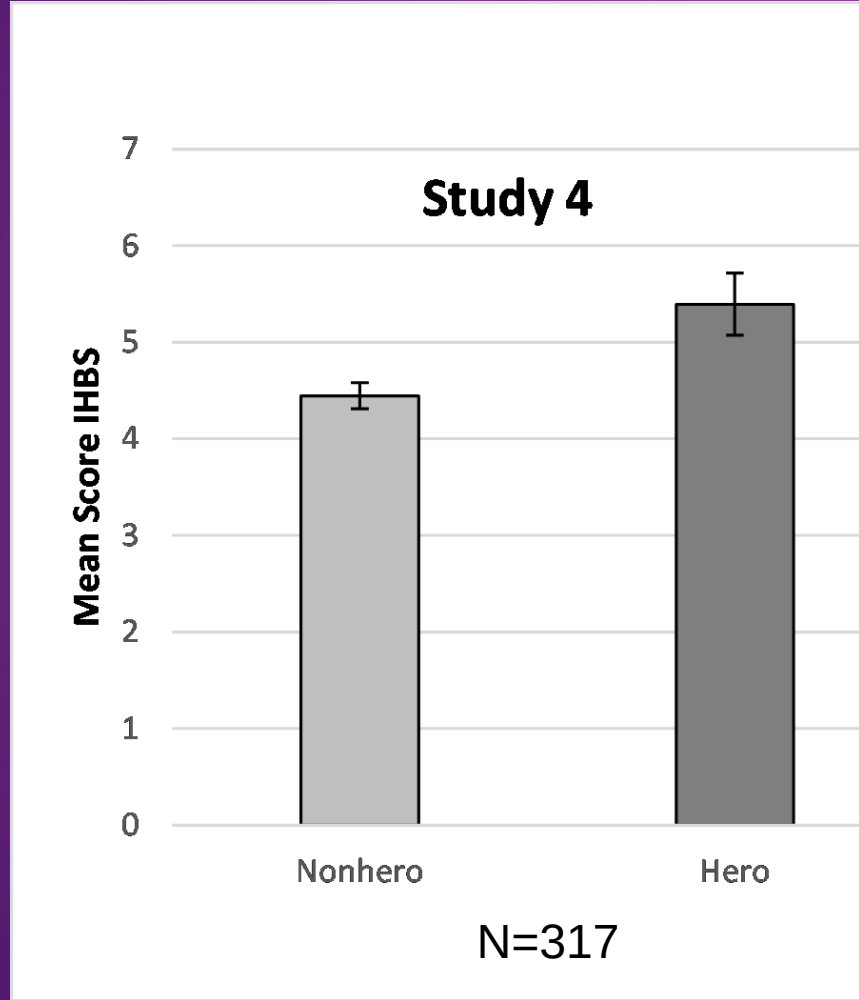


# Construct Validity

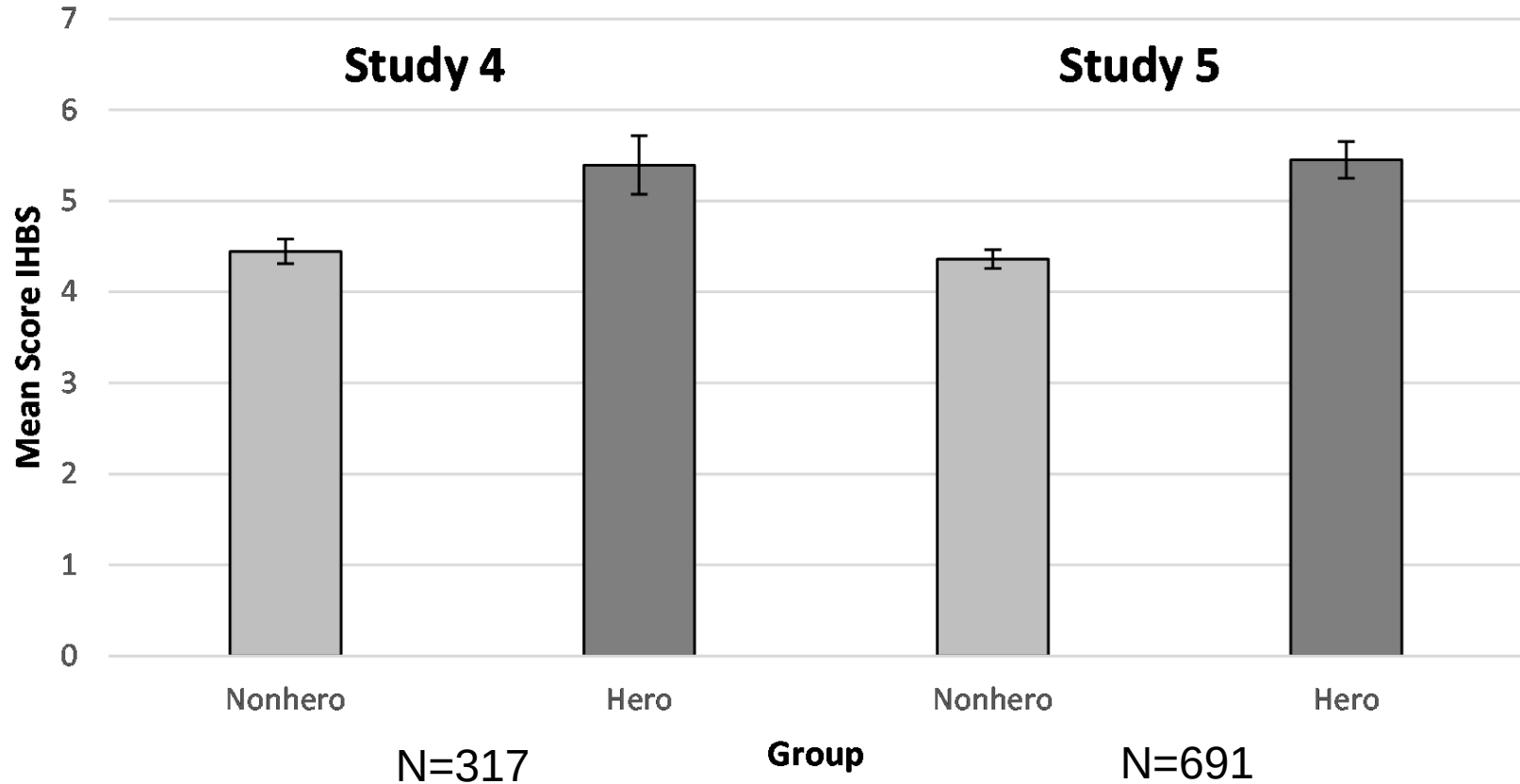
# Construct Validity



# Construct Validity

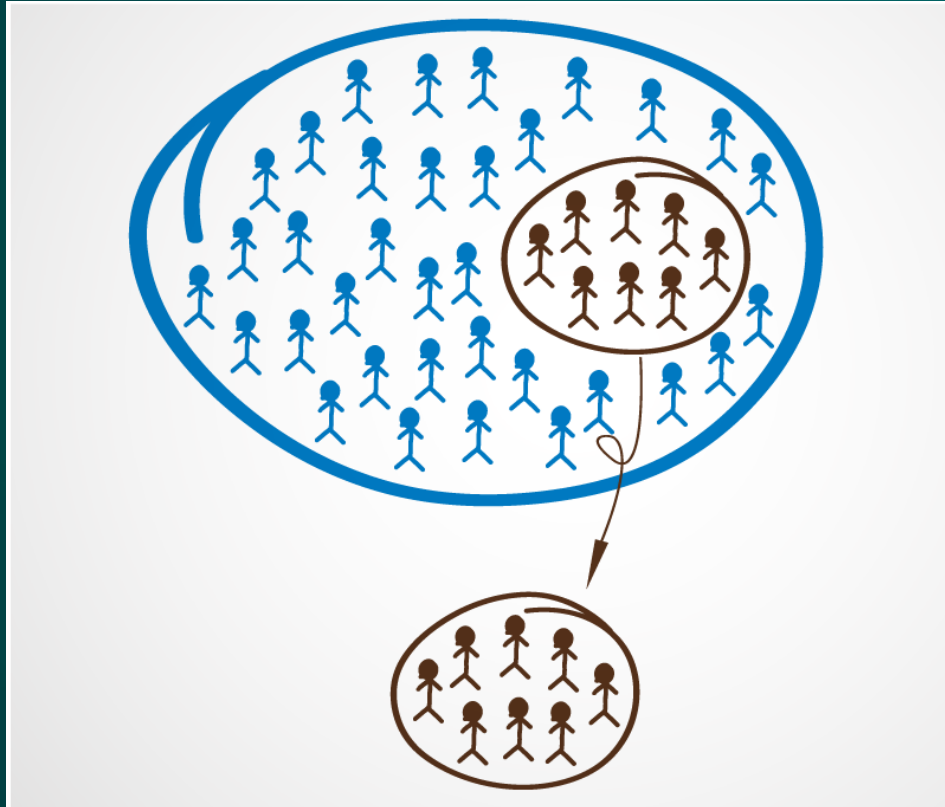


# Construct Validity



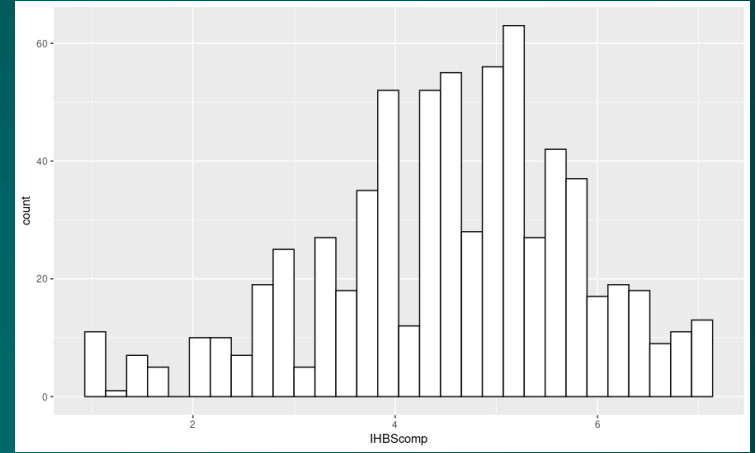
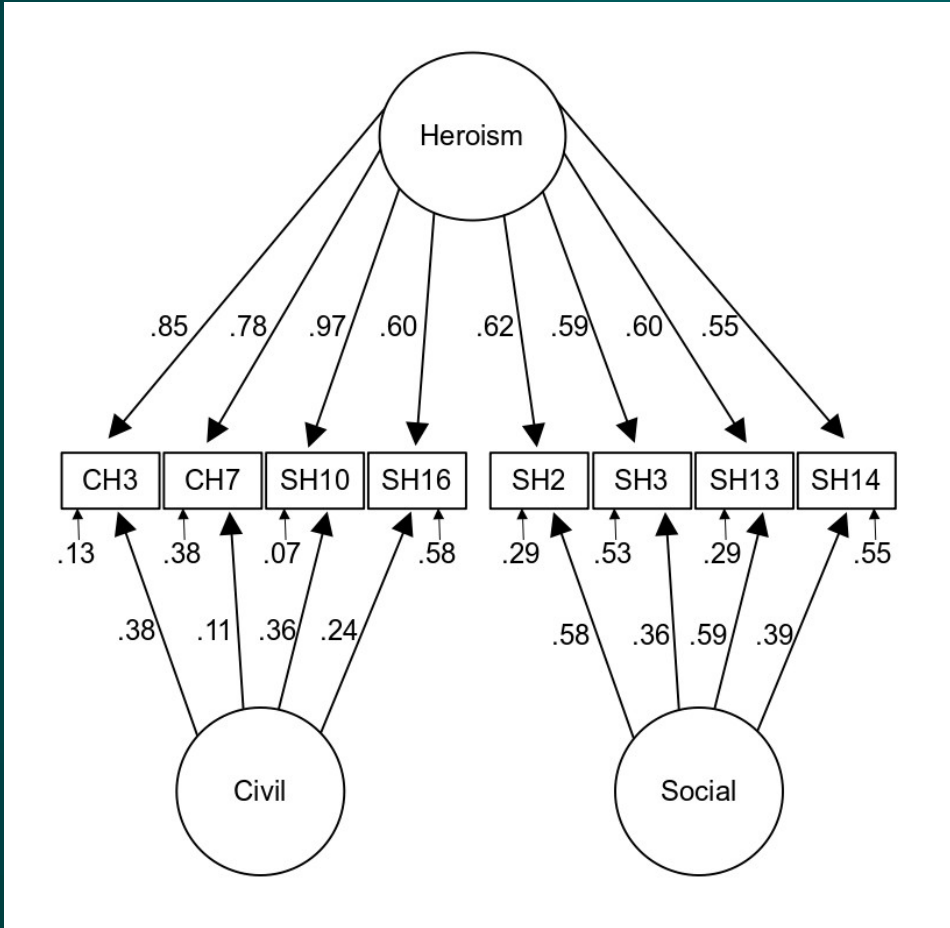
# Implications – Why this matters

# Implications – Why this matters



Identify larger  
samples of heroes  
before they act

# Implications – Why this matters



More easily test theories and relationships

# Implications – Why this matters

Test if heroism training is working as intended





# Implications – Why this matters

More easily  
examine the  
development of  
heroes



An open wooden door with a bright light shining through, symbolizing new discoveries. The door is made of dark wood with vertical panels and a silver handle. The light is very bright, creating a strong glow and casting a shadow on the floor. The background is a dark, solid color.

**New  
Scientific  
Discoveries!**

# New discoveries about heroes!

13%

Heroes

# New discoveries about heroes!

13%

Heroes

14%

Heroes

**10.6%**

(Papadatou-Pastou et al., 2020)



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**8%**  
**US Adults**

**8%**  
**US Adults**

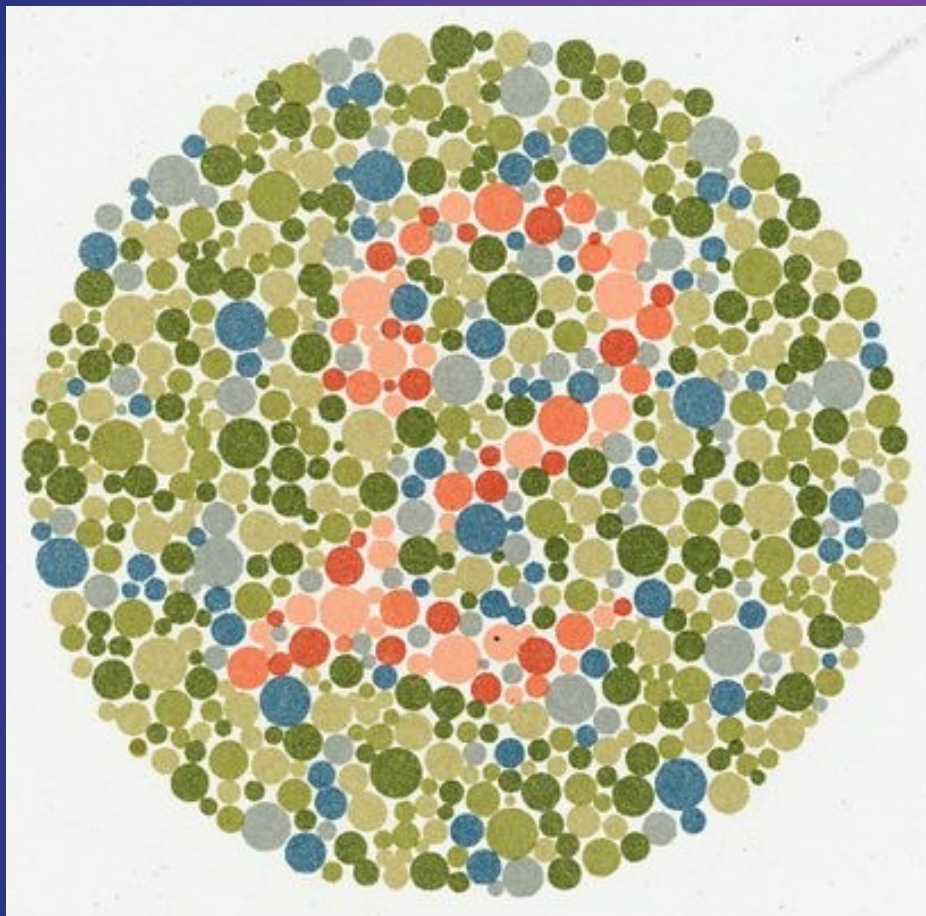


(Motorcycle Industry Council, 2019)



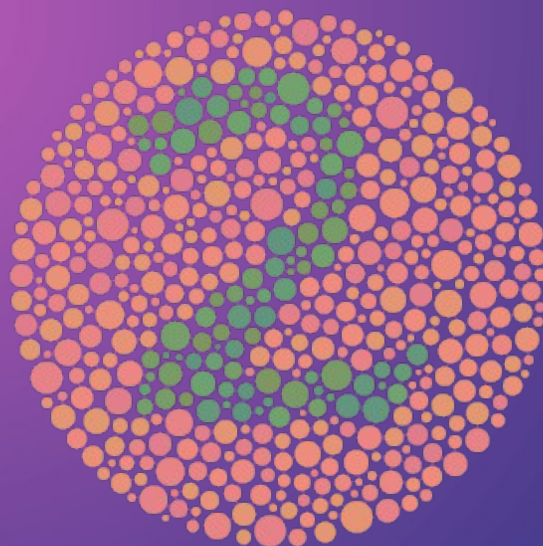
**8%**

**White Males  
Colorblindness**



**8%**

**White Males  
Colorblindness**



# New discoveries about heroes!

13%

Heroes

14%

Heroes

# More examples of heroism

“I spent months speaking out, and working to fix our contaminated water supply in Flint. I was threatened while distributing clean water.”

# More examples of heroism

“I stood up against an organization that was responding inappropriately to sexual harassment, and advocated for better policies and responses even though it meant going up against multiple authority figures and putting myself at risk of losing my job.”

# More examples of heroism

“At my job they tried to force us to work 12 hour days without pay. In a public meeting I called out the department head and submitted my 2 weeks notice. Others followed and the department backed down.”

# More examples of heroism

“I saved someone from a dog attack in a park, I was bit in the process.”







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# Thank You!

[brian.riches@cgu.edu](mailto:brian.riches@cgu.edu)

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