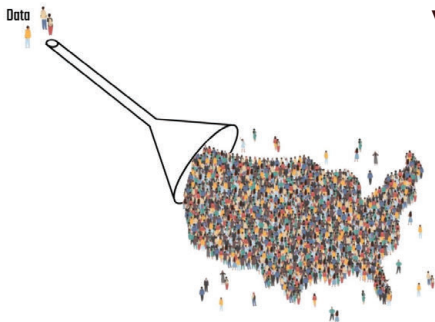


## Overgeneralization

### What is overgeneralization?

Overgeneralization means using narrow data to draw broad conclusions. This is one of the worst and most common ways studies are misinterpreted.

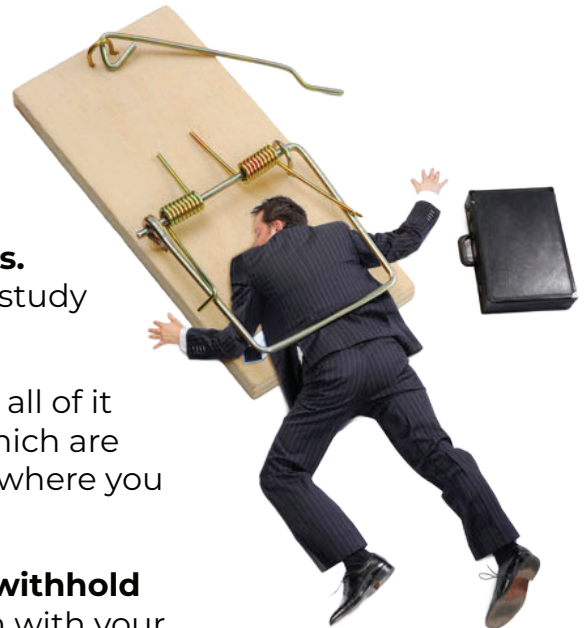


### Why is this important?

Scholars, government agencies, media outlets, and fact checkers often overgeneralize, and the results can be disastrous and even deadly.

### How can you avoid the trap of overgeneralization?

- 1. Don't trust *anyone* to tell you what a study says.** Read it for yourself, while asking: “**Who** does this study apply to,” and “**what** does it directly measure?”
- 2. Don't just read the overview of the study.** Read all of it and don't skim over sections like “Limitations,” which are commonly buried near the end of studies. That's where you often find the *most important* details.
- 3. If you don't have the time to take these steps, withhold judgment** instead of jumping on the bandwagon with your favorite media outlets or commentators.



### REMEMBER:

- Always be aware that a study is *only applicable* to the types of people or phenomena that were studied.
- Look critically at the outcome measures of studies and never fall for the assumption that indirect measures (like antibody levels) translate to direct benefits (like lives saved).