What is “generalizable knowledge”? The vast majority of scholarly work in academia is intended to be shared, published, presented to colleagues, and is intended to have an impact (theoretical or practical) on others within one’s discipline. Activities that are disseminated with the intent to influence behavior, practice, theory, future research designs, etc. are contributing to generalizable knowledge.

In contrast, internal activities specific to CSU, or work conducted for outside entities which cannot be generalized to any other outside entity (e.g., program or community assessments that provide UNIQUE (non-generalizable) data to a specific business or locale) are NOT “research” by the criterion of generalizable knowledge.

Examples of research that contributes to generalizable knowledge and is subject to IRB review:

- Work that is to be presented at regional, national, or international meetings.
- Work that is published in an academic (peer-reviewed) journal.
- Work that is published in a non-peer reviewed format with the intent of sharing data/outcomes/analyses that may influence others behaviors, theory generation, experimental design, etc.

Examples of research that does NOT contribute to generalizable knowledge and is NOT subject to IRB review:

- Work for a private or public entity that generates a report to the same entity which cannot conceivably apply to another like entity (i.e., the data are UNIQUE/SPECIFIC, not generalizable).
- Work for a municipality that generates a report specific to that municipality (and which again cannot be generalized to similar municipalities).
- Work on aspects of quality assurance or quality control for CSU that provide data specific to CSU and are not generalizable.
- Classroom projects in a research methods class or laboratory class where the findings will only be reported to the class and/or instructor. (The instructor is responsible for the ethical conduct of this study.)
- In-house program evaluations (e.g., faculty benefit evaluations, departmental course evaluations)
- Accreditation studies (e.g., APA accreditation of counseling psychology)
- CSU Plan B professional paper, unless the data will be disseminated in publication or public presentation
- Journalistic interviews

If you have any question as to whether your research is generalizable, please contact the IRB Coordinators or Chair.