




Home > Vol 10, No 1 (2002) > Metcalfe

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## A Critique of Generalizability in Interpretive Research

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### Abstract

This paper is about generalizability in interpretive systems research. The authors are concerned that, in its search for appropriate inquiry methods, the discipline of Information Systems (IS) does not slip into the errors of other social disciplines and become a dismal science. Many systems thinkers have repeatedly argued that the purpose of IS research needs to be to produce what Argyris calls actionable knowledge and Ulrich, critique heuristics. That is, rules of thumb which managers can use to solve design problems, not too vague and not too detailed. This is a different concept from generalizability, which aligns with the scientific notion of seeking universal objective laws. The paper uses the argumentative inquiry in its reflexive capacity to critique knowledge claims on a chapter by Baskerville and Lee that discusses generalizability to bring out the differences between this cornerstone of universal truths and the more systems thinking concepts of actionable knowledge or critical heuristics.


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