

utility and whether findings can be implemented.

In the academic world, I do not subscribe to the idea that a dissertation is any document that three people will sign, done only as a practice exercise to meet formalistic requirements. The typical input should not be required and the potential larger output should not be denied on the basis of considerations so lightly taken. Originality and significance, however, are matters of degree. This does not have to mean that the possibility of such a finding was never contemplated by humankind and that the implications call for a reappraisal of human direction on this planet. Lesser degrees of originality and significance consistent with research done up to that point on that question might be quite acceptable. Conclusiveness is also relative in the kinds of research with which we are most concerned. Otherwise, enthusiasm for the whole development of inference and probability applied to research is hard to explain.

In most research, conclusions are findings up to that point for the population examined, given the way the question was put and the methods used. Tightly constructed experiments with small populations are likely to be more conclusive in one sense than studies of larger populations (even with careful attention to sampling) but where the variables are less well identified and less controllable. Difficulties in generalizing, however, might arise in both instances for different reasons.

Additionally, it has been observed that as fields such as those with which we are most concerned approach any maturity, they abandon search and claims related to universality, instead seeking generalization in the form of explaining and predicting patterns and variations. This may be just one more instance, even in the area of research, where events are ahead of the more widely publicized and available materials intended to explain and predict them.