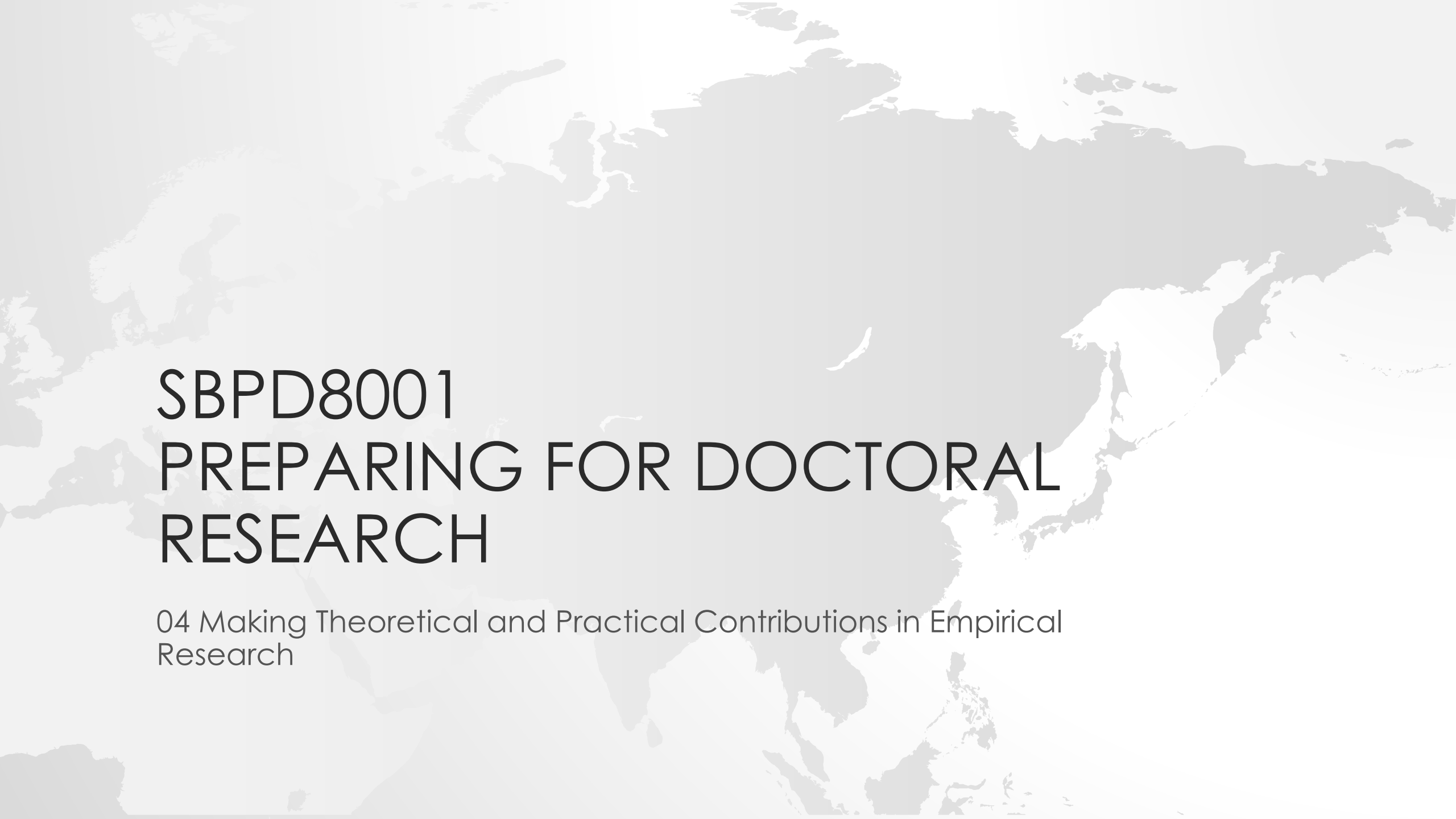


A faint, light gray world map is visible in the background, centered on the Pacific Ocean. The map shows the outlines of continents and major landmasses.

SBPD8001 PREPARING FOR DOCTORAL RESEARCH

04 Making Theoretical and Practical Contributions in Empirical
Research

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

- Explain the problem in a way that grabs the reader's attention and concern.
- State clearly why your research is important; do not simply state the research questions, or refer to a scarcity of knowledge.
- Discuss the problem in its real-world context and point to possible beneficiaries of the research.
- Explain how your research will actually contribute to resolving the problem in some way.
- Discuss both the specific and the generalisable contribution of the research. Explain how it will contribute not only to resolving a specific problem, but will shed light on other problems like it.
- Establish that your contribution has not already been made by discussing the shortfalls of existing research in the area.

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

- A theory is "an ordered set of assertions about a **generic behaviour or structure** assumed to hold throughout a significant **range of specific instances**" (Sutherland 1975 as cited in Weick 1989, 517).
- It is a set of interrelated constructs, definitions, and propositions that present a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables, with the purpose of explaining and predicting the phenomena.
 - Constructs are concepts adapted for a research purpose
 - Through research, researchers can **develop, modify, or evaluate** theories.
- In a broad sense, any idea about how things relate to each other can be considered as a theory.

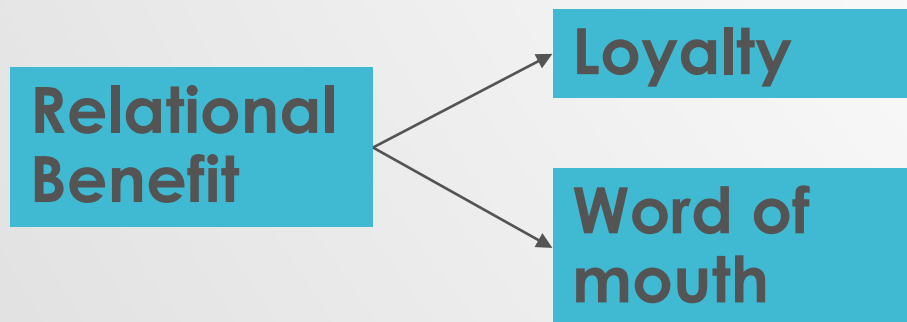
THE FOUR ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF A THEORY*

- Theories should explain **why** things happen, rather than just describe (**what**) or predict (**how**).
- What: Which constructs should be considered as part of the explanation of the phenomena?
- How: How are constructs related?
- Why: What are the underlying psychological, economic, or social dynamics that justify the selection of constructs and the proposed causal relationships?
- Who, where and when: These questions specify the boundary of the theory. They are contextual factors that affect the behaviour.

* Dublin, 1978; Whetten, 1989

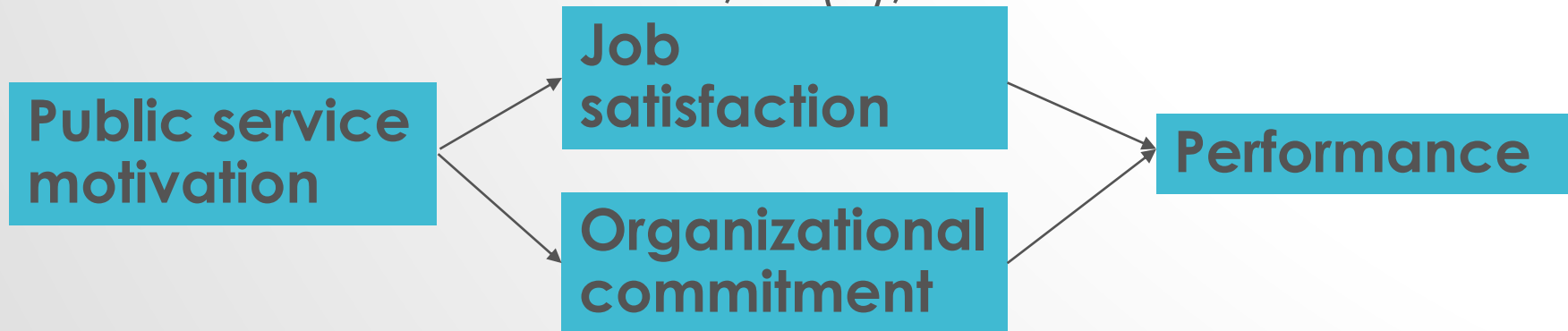
COMMON TYPES OF THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

- What: Introducing a new construct and explaining how it relates to important constructs.
- Example: Gwinner, K. P., Gremler, D. D., & Bitner, M. J. (1998). Relational benefits in services industries: the customer's perspective. *Journal of the academy of marketing science*, 26(2), 101-114.
- The benefits that customer loyalty can bring to firms are well understood but the kind of benefits that customers truly value are unknown.



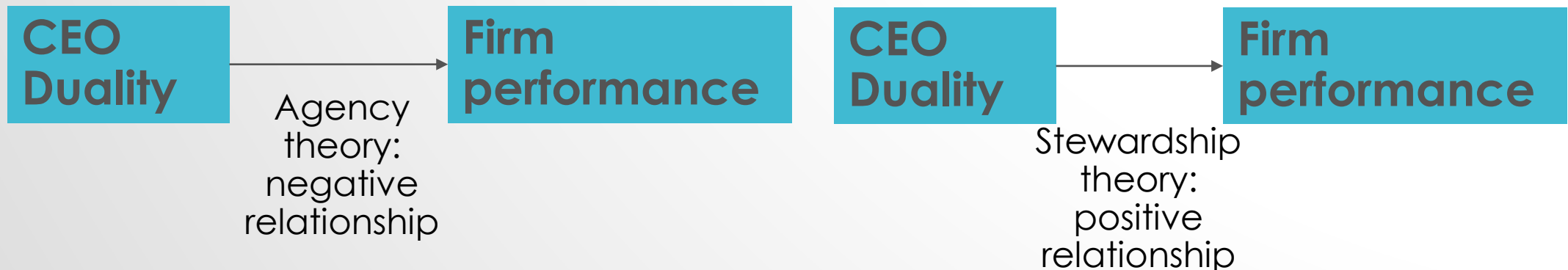
COMMON TYPES OF THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

- How and why: Identifying factors that mediate key relationships.
- Example: Vandenabeele, W. (2009). The mediating effect of job satisfaction and organizational commitment on self-reported performance: more robust evidence of the PSM—performance relationship. *International review of administrative sciences*, 75(1), 11-34.



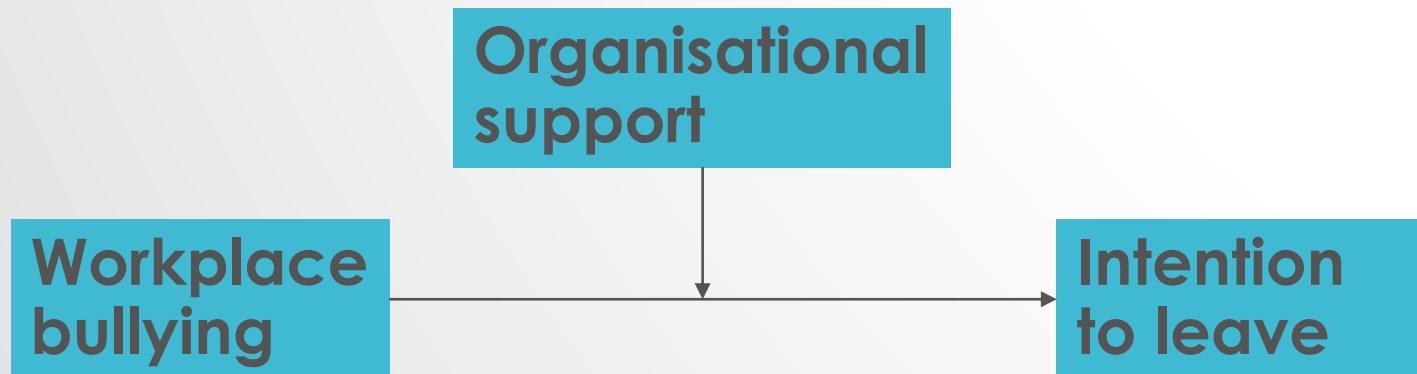
COMMON TYPES OF THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

- Why: Developing the logic that reconciles predictions from competing theories.
- Example: Desai, A. Kroll, M. & Wright, P. (2003). CEO duality, board monitoring, and acquisition performance: A test of competing theories. *Journal of Business Strategies*, 20(2), pp. 137-156.
 - CEO duality: CEO is also chairman of the board.
 - Competing theories: Agency theory versus stewardship theory.



COMMON TYPES OF THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

- Who, where and when: Identifying factors that moderate key relationships.
- Example: Djurkovic, N., McCormack, D., & Casimir, G. (2008). Workplace bullying and intention to leave: the moderating effect of perceived organisational support. Human Resource Management Journal, 18(4), 405-422.



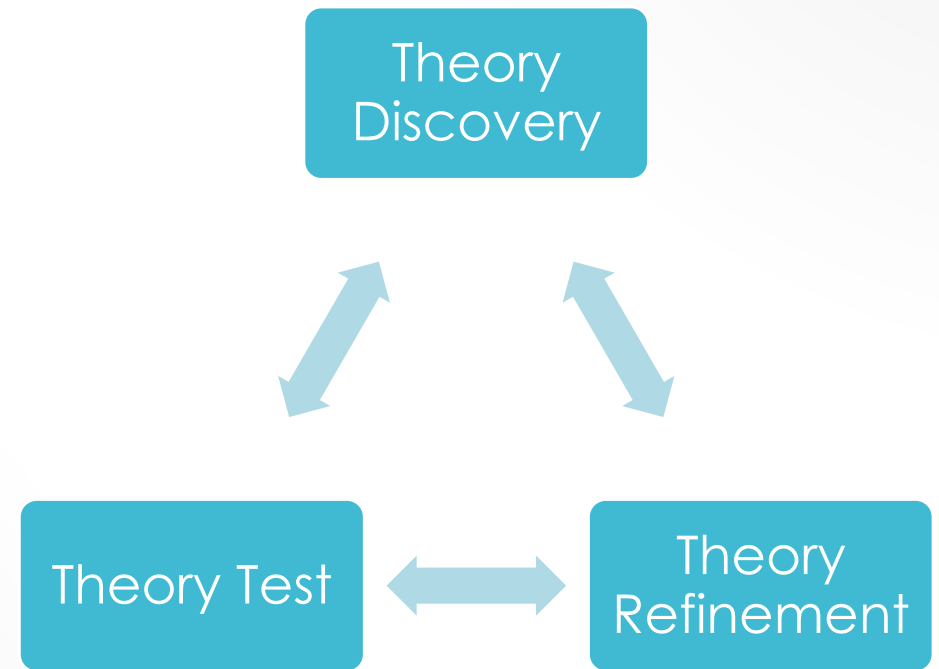
COMMON TYPES OF THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

- Who, where and when: Extending a theory to explain a phenomenon where it has not previously been applied.
- Example: Chatterjee, A., & Hambrick, D. C. (2007). It's all about me: Narcissistic chief executive officers and their effects on company strategy and performance. *Administrative science quarterly*, 52(3), 351-386.
 - This study uses unobtrusive measures of the **narcissism** of chief executive officers (CEOs)—the prominence of the CEO's photograph in annual reports, the CEO's prominence in press releases, the CEO's use of first-person singular pronouns in interviews, and compensation relative to the second-highest-paid firm executive—to examine the effect of CEO narcissism on a firm's strategy and performance.

CASE STUDY RESEARCH AND THEORY DEVELOPMENT

The three main purposes* of case studies are:

- Theory discovery: Describe novel or ignored phenomena;
- Theory refinement: Illustrate how theory applies and under what circumstances;
- Theory refutation: Disconfirm an established theory in a particular situation where it does not apply.



* Keating, P. J. (1995). A framework for classifying and evaluating the theoretical contributions of case research in management accounting. *Journal of management accounting research*, 7, 66-86.

CASE STUDY RESEARCH AND THEORY DEVELOPMENT

- Specify the findings and relate the findings back to the theoretical issue under investigation.
- Reassess the applicability of the theory in light of the case study findings and specify how the study refutes, complements or extends existing theories.
 - Findings from qualitative research are used to illustrate where the theory fails to explain a phenomenon.
- Identify the knowledge gaps and puzzles left unresolved by the study and relate this particular program of research to other theory discovery, theory refinement, or theory refutation studies.

EXAMPLE: WORKPLACE BULLYING

- Workplace bullying has been studied by many researchers
- Another research may not add any new dimension
- Such a case will not be published due to its restricted appeal
- But if a researcher selects a **context** in which bullying of **migrant workers** can be studied, a different meaning of bullying regarding its antecedents, forms and coping strategies may emerge
- The study becomes interesting
- We need to collect data through interviews of migrant workers, employers, social workers, even customers
- Imagine if similar studies can be commissioned in three different countries, how much new knowledge can be developed which can be used by policy makers and consultants?

MAJOR THEORIES USED TO STUDY WORKPLACE BULLYING*

- Social learning theory: This theory suggests that individuals learn behaviour through observation, imitation, and reinforcement. It suggests that individuals may learn to engage in bullying behaviour through observing and imitating the behaviour of others in the workplace.
- Social exchange theory: This theory suggests that individuals engage in social interactions with the expectation of receiving rewards and benefits. It suggests that individuals may engage in bullying behaviour in order to gain power and control over others in the workplace.
- Power theory: This theory suggests that power is a fundamental aspect of social relationships, and that individuals who hold more power are able to exert greater control over others. It suggests that individuals who hold more power in the workplace may be more likely to engage in bullying behaviour.

MAJOR THEORIES USED TO STUDY WORKPLACE BULLYING*

- Organizational culture theory: This theory suggests that the culture of an organization can influence the behaviour of individuals within the organization. It suggests that organizational cultures that tolerate or even encourage aggressive behaviour may increase the likelihood of workplace bullying.
- Social identity theory: This theory suggests that individuals derive their sense of self and identity from their membership in social groups. It suggests that individuals may engage in bullying behaviour as a way of reinforcing their own social identity or in-group status within the workplace.