Editorial Commentary
Getting Published in Peer-Reviewed Journals: Theory, Theorization and Theoretical Contributions

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ABSTRACT

All submissions to peer-reviewed journals need to have some form of theoretical contribution. A theoretical contribution is a significant, original and useful value-addition to a theoretical body. In this editorial the author explains what theories are, how theories are developed, advanced and receive contributions. He defines the concept of 'theory' and distinguish it from the act of 'theorizing'. Then, the author identifies two types of contribution namely theory-building and theory-refining and briefly explain how scholars can make such contributions. The author also identify and discuss some commonly used criteria used to evaluate the significance of theoretical contributions.

KEYWORDS

Theoretical Contribution, Theorization, Theory, Theory-Building, Theory-Refining

1. INTRODUCTION

As Holton and Lowe (2007) aptly say: "the need for theories lies in human behavior or the need to impose order on unordered experiences" (p. 297). Theories are very important in any scientific field and our field (i.e. strategy, entrepreneurship, social development and corporate social responsibility) is not an exception. Theories are "the currency of our scholarly realm" (Corley & Gioia, 2011, p. 12). They "help us organize our thoughts, generate coherent explanations, and improve our predictions. In short, theories help us achieve understanding" (Hambrick, 2007, p. 1346). Hence, "every top-tier management journal requires a "theoretical contribution" before a manuscript will be considered for publication." (Corley & Gioia, 2011, p. 12). In a broad sense, a theoretical contribution is a significant and meaningful value-added to a theoretical body. In 2003 Donald Bergh the then-editor of the Academy of Management Journal in an editorial targeted at researchers highlighted the importance of having a clear theoretical contribution by telling his story of rejections and learnings form mistakes:

When I began submitting manuscripts for publication consideration in journals such as the Academy of Management Journal, I believed that what mattered most to reviewers and editors was a good, solid study. Although I was submitting theory-testing manuscripts, I paid little attention to the thought that my studies should have implications for theory. I suspected that what really made the difference in determining whether a manuscript would be accepted or rejected was the strength and importance of the study it reported. My thoughts about the theory section were that it provided the basis for the predictions and that it was malleable: it could be molded and shaped to fit the contributions and strengths of a strong research method. Looking back, I guess my mantra was. do good studies and then build the theory from the study's unique features (Bergh, 2003, p. 135).

The purpose of this editorial is to clarify what, we at the International Journal of Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Corporate Social Responsibility, expect from our contributors when we ask for theoretical contributions in submissions. I start this editorial with a brief definition of the notion of theory, types of theories and continue with a short discussion on how theoretical contributions can be made.

1.1. What is a Theory?

Definitions of theory abound in the literature. Miller (2007) defines theories as "well-structured explanations or organized systems of accepted knowledge that apply to a circumscribed set of phenomena. They both explain facts and suggest hypotheses." (p. 178). Christensen and Carlile (2009) take a very general approach and argue that, a theory is generally "a body of understanding" (p. 240). But perhaps the most complete and arguably the best description of theory has been offered by Whetten (1989). He uses insights from the works of Dubin (1970, 1978) and describes theories as explanations which have four elements: 1) The what: a comprehensive (complete) and parsimonious list of factors that are involved in the phenomenon explained by the theory. 2) The how: how factors are related to each other. 3) The why: the underlying psychological, economic, or social dynamics that justify the selection of factors and the proposed causal relationships among them. 4) boundary conditions including 'Who,' 'Where,' and 'When.' These are conditions which "place limitations on the propositions generated from a theoretical model. These temporal and contextual factors set the boundaries of generalizability, and as such constitute the range of the theory" (p. 492). Mintzberg (2005) expands this description and argues that theories fall along a continuum from simple categories and typologies to more complex sets of interrelated explanatory statements:

When I think about [theory], however, I see explanation along a continuum, from lists (categories), to typologies (comprehensive lists), to impressions of relationships among factors (not necessarily "variables": that sounds too reified for many of the factors I work with), to causations between and patterns among these relationships, to fully explanatory models (which interweave all the factors in question).

Bacharach (1989) is critical of this view and defines a theory as "a statement of relations among concepts within a set of boundary assumptions and constraints. It is no more than a linguistic device used to organize a complex empirical world" (p.496). Bacharach further argues that:

The primary goal of a theory is to answer the questions of how, when, and why, unlike the goal of description, which is to answer the question of what. In more detailed terms, a theory may be viewed as a system of constructs and variables in which the constructs are related to each other by propositions and the variables are related to each other by hypotheses. The whole system is bounded by the theorist's assumptions (p.498).

Taken together, for the purpose of this editorial and to inform our readers and contributors we define theory as:

A formally structured set of statements that explains types, categories, dimensions or constituent components of a phenomenon, as well as their relationships and boundary conditions under which they hold.

Having defined theory, it is wise to finish this section by a brief discussion on the types of theory which populate the literature in our growing field.

1.2. Types of Theory

As scholars (Dubin, 1970; Mintzberg, 2005; Whetten, 1989) have explained, the field of management contains different types of theory. Besides typologies, classifications and categorizations, theories can be distinguished in terms of terms of their range and composition.

In terms of the range theories are broadly classified into grand and mid-range theories (Frese, 2005). Grand theories have a wide scopes and explain a broad range of phenomena in a scientific field even across fields. Whereas mid-range theories have a limited scope and are mostly applied to a narrow range of phenomena within a specific field (Frese, 2005). An example of a grand theory used in entrepreneurship is resource-based view of the firm (Barney, 1991). An example of a mid-range theory in entrepreneurship is the theory of interactive effects of international and product diversification on performance of new firms (Hitt, Hoskisson, & Ireland, 1994)

Sometimes, explaining a phenomenon requires combination of insights from multiple theoretical views. The outcome of such activities can be meta-theories. A meta-theory, in the broadest sense, is a theory composed of multiple theories (Dubin, 1978). An example of such meta theoretical research is a general theory of organizing in the organization theory developed by King, Felin, and Whetten (2010), or a meta theory of the accounting information system based on a synthesis of organizational, cognitive and technological theories (Mauldin & Ruchala, 1999).

In this journal, we ask our contributors to use, work with or develop strong theories whether in the form of typologies, classifications, categorizations, mid-range, grand or meta-theories. The point is to make a contribution that is to advance an established theory or develop a new one through the process of theorization.

1.3. Theorization, Use of Theory and Types of Theoretical Work

Given the centrality of theory in our field, any research can be positioned along a continuum. At one end, we have non-theoretical work, in the middle we have atheoretic and then weak theoretical work and at the other end we have strong theoretical research. One would ask if any-non-theoretic or research can be published. The answer is 'no'. Non-theoretic research also known has no place in our field because it is just a set of speculations or orchestration of statements and claims which are not based on or concerned with any theory (see Miller, 2007, for a discussion on atheoretic management research). So their foundation cannot be assessed let alone their contribution. All quality journals: "exist in large part to advance theory, not answer questions or point out important facts. They are loath to publish empirical articles that do not develop, extend or test theory." (Miller, 2007, p. 178). Therefore, I deliberately ignore the non-theoretical end of the continuum and focus on research which is somehow theoretical.

Atheoretic research is also known as pre-theoretic (Miller 2007) aspires to develop new theories where existing knowledge is unorganized or the field is nascent and requires theories to get a shape. Ground-breaking paradigm-building research are mostly atheoretic (Kuhn, 1962; Miller, 2007). The contribution of such research is to build, develop, create and shape new theories where there is a lack or an absence of theoretical knowledge (Edmondson & Mcmanus, 2007).

When research is based on existing theories it becomes theoretical. A theoretical research can be weak or strong on its theoretical basis (Bacharach, 1989). The so-called weak theoretical work is very common and constitutes the majority of submissions to quality journals. In the first round of 'call for papers' we received up to 20 papers, 14 of them (70%) would fall under this category. This type of research is related to and based on some theoretical grounds but only in a weak and unclarified and unjustified way. In other words, it benefits from theory but does not make any significant and meaningful contribution to any theoretical body.

2. THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS VS. THEORIZATION

To make theoretical contributions we need to distinguish between theories and theorization. The distinction between these two is essential to plan and execute a strong theoretical contribution. Formal theorizing involves the consolidation of theories and data in the cumulative growth of knowledge (Freese, 1980). Thus, theorizing is the process of linking data and theories to advance understanding about a phenomenon.

Theorizing takes two forms: 1) choosing fine-grained data and extracting theory from data or 2) choosing theories and collect coarse-grained data to test, prove, validate theories (Langley, 1999). Any structured and purposeful work concerned with theory either from data to theory in a pre-theoretic (a theoretical) fashion or form theories to data in a theoretical fashion is in fact the act of theorizing. As Weick (1995) puts it, 'what theory is not theorizing is'. Theorizing is a "creative activity requiring critical engagement, which, at its best, results in new ways of understanding the world." (Graham, 2005, p. 259). We add to Weick's point by saying that theory is not theorizing but theorizing is a necessary element of every theoretical work. All in all, theoretical contribution involves theorization. It is to make a scientific contribution to the theoretical filed either by building new theories where a field is pre-theoretic (atheoretic) or testing, refining or extending some existing theories.

Taken together, we define a theoretical contribution as:

a theorizing process in which a body of knowledge in enriched by either 1) receiving new theories where there is a lack of theories or 2) having its existing theories refined, validated or extended.

The first mode of contribution is theory-building and the second mode is theory-refinement. Both types can be done poorly or strongly. The evaluative criteria for good contributions will be discussed in a different section.

2.1. Making Theoretical Contributions: Type One Building New Theories

The first form of theoretical contribution is to build new theories. Scholars have suggested different theorizing approaches to build new theories. In this section, we briefly summarize four of them. 1) Dubin's approach. 2) Lynham's approach 3) Van de Ven's approach 4) Christensen's approach.

Dubin (1970, 1978) proposed a deductive theory-building approach: "the theorist 1) creates hypotheses that describe relationships, 2) tests the hypotheses by collecting data using instruments and procedures, and 3) adjusts the original theory based on the results" (Storberg-Walker, 2003 p. 211). Theories build using the Dubin's approach: 1) have units that interact with one another, 2) posit laws of interaction among the units. 3) describe boundaries within which the relationships are supposed to hold. 4) Describe different system states that exist in the real world. 4) Provide propositions which have empirical indications or implications for various contexts which can turn into testable hypothesis, and 5) can continuously be applied (e.g., continual research) (Holton & Lowe, 2007; Storberg-Walker, 2003).

Lynham (2002) completed the deductive model of Dubin and proposed a theory-building approach which is "both deductive and inductive logic, is recursive and iterative, and is inclusionary in that alternative ontological and epistemological perspectives are fully embraced" (Storberg-Walker, 2003 p. 213). Lynham's approach involves five steps. Storberg-Walker (2003 pp. 213-214) summarizes them as follows: 1) Conceptual development in which key elements of the theory are identified, relationships are described, and limitations and conditions are delineated. 2) Operationalization in which concepts are connected with the practice. The conceptual framework is translated into elements that can be confirmed in the real world. 3) Confirmation or disconfirmation in which a purposeful and intentional testing of the theoretical framework is done in order to determine the trustworthiness of the theory. 4) Application in which practice gets to judge and inform the usefulness and relevance

of the theory for improved action and problem solving and 5) Ongoing refinement and development to ensure that the theory is continuously updated and improved on over time.

Van deVen (2003) proposed an alternative theory-building approach based on the philosophy of engaged scholarship. This approach is composed of four steps summarized by Storberg-Walker (2003 pp. 216-217) 1) formulating the problem in which a concrete description of the symptoms, conditions, or anomalies as they exist in the real world on a topic or issue is developed. 2) Developing alternative theories or conceptualization is the second phase at which the researcher selects the body of knowledge that is relevant to the research problem. 3) In the fourth phase or theory building, the researcher develops clear statements of relationships or comparisons between two or more constructs that are expected to hold within a set of assumptions or boundary conditions and finally 4) in the last phase named the research designs, the researcher connects a theory with empirical evidence. It involves the selection and execution of operational procedures for bringing valid scientific evidence to bear to examine a theory that addresses the research question about the problem or issue as it exists in reality.

Christensen (2006) proposes a relatively different theory-building approach. According to this approach, a theory follows a bottom-up approach starting with observation, then categorization and ending with statement of relationships. Statements are used to predict and prescribe similar phenomena and new observations and anomalies are used to confirm and adjust the relationships. Therefore, new theories are built and continuously improved in two phases: the descriptive and the predictive. The descriptive phase is "a preliminary stage because researchers generally must pass through it before developing normative theory" (39). It involves observation, categorization, and association which result in models that describe the phenomena, its building blocks and their relationships. The predictive phase seeks to find and confirm relationships. As Christensen argues "the confusion of competing categorization schemes that often accompanies descriptive theory is resolved when researchers, through careful observation, move beyond statements of correlation to define what causes the outcome of interest." (p.42). He adds that, "understanding of causality enables researchers to assert what actions managers ought to take to get the results they need" (p. 42). Furthermore, "normative theory has much greater predictive power than descriptive theory does" (p. 42). The normative theory is predictive and should become prescriptive as well. Christensen and Carlile (2009) argue that, "prescriptive theory, like its descriptive predecessor, still needs to be improved—and researchers do this by following the same steps that were used in the descriptive stage. Hypothesizing that their statement of causality is correct, they cycle deductively to the bottom of the pyramid to test the casual hypotheses." (p. 244).

2.1.1. Some Theory-Building Techniques

The business and management literature is replete with theory-building tools and techniques. Grounded theory-building methodology, case study and simulations will be reviewed briefly here. Grounded theory methodology was developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as an inductive method which uses qualitative data to build theories of social phenomena. The resultant theory is called a 'grounded theory' which is "one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, it is discovered, developed and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon. Therefore, data collection, analysis and theory stand in reciprocal relationship to one another" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 23). See Egan (2002) for an overview of this theory-building technique.

Case study methodology (Eisenhardt, 1989) is an extension of grounded theory through which a single or multiple cases are used to build new theories inductively (Yin, 2009). This approach involves eight key steps (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 533): 1) getting started: to define research objectives, questions and determine the scope of the research. 2) Selecting cases using theoretical nor random sampling and retaining theoretical flexibility. 3) Crafting instruments and protocols in order to collect data from multiple sources and enable triangulation. 4) Entering the field: collecting field data and adjusting data collection by searching for emergent themes. 5) Analyzing data: gaining familiarity with data and developing preliminary theories through within and cross case pattern-searching divergent

techniques. 6) Shaping hypotheses through iterative tabulation of data, searching for 'why' behind relationships and confirming, sharpening and extending the theory. 7) Enfolding literature through comparisons with conflicting and similar literatures and 8) reaching closure, that is to end the process when theoretical saturation is achieved and marginal improvement becomes small. See Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007) for a more recent overview of this technique.

Another theory-building technique or method is simulation. Simulation is "a method for using computer software to model the operation of "real-world" processes, systems, or events" (Davis, Eisenhardt, & Bingham, 2007, p. 481). As J. P. Davis et al. (2007) put it: "simulation can provide superior insight into complex theoretical relationships among constructs, especially when challenging empirical data limitations exist" (p. 480). Theory-building through simulation involves seven steps (Davis et al., 2007, p. 462): 1) developing a theoretically-intriguing research question. 2) identifying a sample theory which gives shape to theoretical logic, propositions, constructs, and assumptions. 3) Choosing a simulation approach that fits with research question, assumptions and theory. 4) Creating computational representation by operationalizing theoretical constructs and building computational algorithm that mirror theoretical logic. 5)Verifying computational representation by replicating propositions of simple theory with simulation results and conducting robustness checks of computational representation. 6) Experimenting to build novel theory through exploration, elaboration, and extension of simple theory and 7) Validating the new theory with empirical data to strengthens its external validity.

2.2. Making Theoretical Contributions: Type Two Refining Existing Theories

As noted earlier, the second type of theoretical contribution is to refine, extend or test existing theories. This can be done in many different ways. Traditionally, scholars would refine the conceptual foundation of theories by reviewing, integrating and criticizing literatures on a body of theoretical knowledge. Examples include, conceptual refinements to the theory of absorptive capacity by Zahra and George (2002), conceptual extensions to the dynamic capabilities theory (Katkalo, Pitelis, & Teece, 2010; Teece, 2007) and to the upper echelon theory (Hambrick, 2007) and assessments and refinements of the agency theory (Eisenhardt, 1989).

In addition, empirical replications have been proposed as a key approach to test and validate existing theories under new empirical circumstances or in new empirical settings (Tsang & Kwan, 1999). Tsang and Kwan (1999) argue that replications advance theories by examining their validity and generalizability so although it is an important tool to advance theories, "it seems that replication has not been adequately recognized as a valuable part of theory development" (p.759).

Finally, the most common type of theoretical refinement takes place when scholars mix, blend and /or modify variables involved in theories and as a result new theoretical relationships are hypothesized, formulated, proposed and tested. This mode of theory-refinement is most closely related to the hypo-deductive approach proposed by (Dubin, 1970, 1978).

To advance theories using this approach, scholars deductively develop hypotheses that propose new orchestration of variables, collect data, analyze them and test their hypothetical relationships. The results will confirm or reject modifications to theories and by virtue of their originality they will advance scholarly understanding about subject theories. Generally, this type of theoretical contribution involves proposing new drivers or antecedents of a phenomenon. Examples are proposing testing some antecedents of process innovation (Piening & Salge, 2015), antecedents of person-group fit in organizations (Seong, Kristof-Brown, Park, Hong, & Shin, 2012), and cognitive antecedents of organizational response to disruptive innovations (Osiyevskyy & Dewald, 2015).

Scholars also theorize new intervening mechanisms or mediating factors to better explain social phenomena and improve the way theories explain and predict organizational processes and procedures. Some examples of this type of contribution include: theorizing and testing the mediating role of strategic orientation in the relationship between HRM systems and organizational performance (Chow, Teo, & Chew, 2012), theorizing the mediating role of organizational capabilities in the link

between middle managers involvement and organizational performance (Ouakouak, Ouedraogo, & Mbengue, 2014), and advancing the theoretical relationship between corporate entrepreneurship and corporate performance by testing the mediating role of organizational knowledge capital (Simsek & Heavey, 2011).

Finally, theoretical refinements can be made when new contingency factors or moderating conditions are incorporated into theoretical relationships. Moderators examine the intensity or significance of theoretical relationships under different empirical conditions (Davison, Kwak, Seo, & Choi, 2002). Some examples of such contribution are examining if environmental dynamism and complexity moderates the strategy type-firm performance relationships (McArthur & Nystrom, 1991), theorizing the moderating role of firm resources in the strategic alliance-firm growth relationship (Park, Chen, & Gallagher, 2002) and testing the moderation effect of environmental dynamism on the link between strategic orientation and new product commercialization.

It is to be noted that, although proposing and testing new antecedents, consequences, mediators and moderators can meaningfully refine theories, their underlying assumptions and their constituent relationships, they are not necessarily always considered as significant theoretical contributions. Similar logic applies to theory building research. In the last section of this paper we briefly discuss some commonly used evaluative criteria used by editors and reviewers to assess the value and significance of both theory-building and theory-refining contributions.

3. CRITERIA TO EVALUATE SIGNIFICANCE OF THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Conventionally, scholars judge the quality of a theory on the extent to which it withstands rigorous empirical tests and provides an accurate reflection of reality (Popper, 1959). Different scholars have expanded on the Popper's view of a good/strong contribution. The most popular set of evaluative criteria for theoretical contributions were proposed by Whetten (1989). Whetten argues that a good theoretical contribution improves a theory's 'What,' 'How,' 'Why,' as well as its 'Who,' 'When,' and 'Where.' This guideline can be summarized as follows:

1. What and How: As Whetten points out, "although, in principle, it is possible to make an important theoretical contribution by simply adding or subtracting factors (Whats) from an existing model, this process seldom satisfies reviewers." (P.492). One way to demonstrate the value of a proposed change in a list of factors- new moderators, antecedents, drivers, consequences, mediators, etc. - is to identify how this change affects the accepted relationships between the variables (Hows). "Theoretical insights come from demonstrating how the addition of a new variable significantly alters our understanding of the phenomena by reorganizing our causal maps". (p. 492).

2. Why. Whetten disserts that improving the 'why' in theories is "probably the most fruitful, but also the most difficult avenue of theory development". (p. 493). How to do it? Well, Whetten further adds that this type of contribution commonly "involves borrowing a perspective from other fields, which encourages altering our metaphors and gestalts in ways that challenge the underlying rationales supporting accepted theories" (p. 493).

3. Who, When, Where. As Whetten argues "Generally, it is insufficient to point out limitations in current conceptions of a theory's range of application. Theorists need to understand why this anomaly exists, so that they can revise the How and What of the model to accommodate this new information." (p. 493). He adds that, "It is preferable to investigate qualitative changes in the boundaries of a theory (applications under qualitatively different conditions), rather than mere quantitative expansions (applying an old model to a new setting and showing that it works as expected)" (p. 493). Therefore, "the common element in advancing theory development by applying it in new settings is the need for a theoretical feedback loop. Theorists need to learn

something new about the theory itself as a result of working with it under different conditions. That is, new applications should improve the tool, not merely reaffirm its utility" (p. 493).

Another set of criteria was developed by Bacharach (1989). Bacharach argues that good theories are falsifiable and useful. Falsifiability determines whether a theory is constructed such that empirical refutation is possible or refuted by experience. Usefulness of a theory refers to its utility or its ability to explain and predict. An explanation establishes the substantive meaning of constructs, variables and their linkages. A prediction tests that substantive meaning by comparing it to empirical evidence. According to Bacharach (1989), a good theory demonstrates its falsifiability by 1) ruling out alternative explanations between concepts and variables, 2) adopting accurate and precise measures, 3) using valid constructs and 4) exhibiting logical, and empirical adequacy. That is, its explanations be parsimoniously logical and reasonable, its statements be easily operationalized for empirical testing. Moreover, utility of a theory is reflected in its explanatory potential and predictive adequacy. The explanatory potential of a theory is compared on the basis of the specificity of 1) the objects of analysis 2) determinative relationships between antecedents and consequences and 3) scope and parsimony of propositions. The predictive adequacy refers to the degree to which hypotheses and propositions approximate the reality of complex empirical world. Theory-based predictions are different from probabilistic predictions in that they are delimited to periods of time and number of cases and are contingency on hypotheses and propositions (between a particular set of factors, antecedents and consequences). So a good theory has to show predictive potency using data collected from limited samples in a given time and space.

According to Kuhn (1998, p. 103) a good theory should be 1) accurate within its domain. That is, being consistent with experiments and observations. 2) Consistent internally with itself and externally with other related theories. 3) Broad in scope. That is, its consequences and implications go beyond particular observations and sub-theories it was initially designed to explain. 4) Simple, bringing order to phenomena that in its absence would be individually isolated and confused and 5) fruitful of new research findings. Judging by these characteristics, a good theoretical contribution 1) build a theory that stands these tests or 2) enables an existing or established theory to better demonstrate these characteristics.

More recently Christensen (2006) asserts that a good contribution has to withstand rigorous empirical testing; "we cannot judge the value of a theory by whether it is true. The best we can hope for is a body of understanding that asymptotically approaches truth. Hence, the value of a theory is assessed by its predictive power, which is why this article asserts that normative theory is more advanced, and more useful, than descriptive theory. A good theoretical contribution improves the predictive power of its users, readers." (p.42-3).

It can be argued that, Christensen's criterion is essentially an integration of Kuhn's three criteria of accuracy, consistency and fruitfulness. Accordingly, the predictive power of a theory is enhanced when it achieves high levels of internal and external validity. Christensen and Carlile (2009) explain internal and external validities as follows: "a theory's internal validity is the extent to which (1) its conclusions are unambiguously drawn from its premises; and (2) the researchers have ruled out plausible alternative linkages of the phenomena with the outcomes of interest. Researchers improve the internal validity of a theory when they examine the phenomena from as many perspectives as possible." (p. 245).

Furthermore, the external validity of a theory is "the extent to which a relationship that was observed between phenomena and outcomes in one context can be trusted to apply in different contexts as well. Measures of statistical significance and goodness of fit are not relevant measures of external validity." (p.246). External validity can only be created through categorization, and there is a process by which theory progresses in this direction. When an understanding of causality first emerges and it is used to make ex post or ex ante predictions, re- searchers uncover anomalies— instances where the prediction failed. Then by asking, "What was it about the circumstance that

caused this unexpected outcome?" researchers come to understand the categories of circumstances. The improvement in predictability resulting from the transition from the attribute-based categorization of descriptive theory to the circumstance-based categorization of prescriptive theory." (p. 246). Thus, good theoretical contributions advance theories by improving their internal validity, external validity, prescriptiveness and circumstance-contingency power. These criteria collectively enable a newly-built theory or an improved/refined theory to better illustrate its empirical accuracy, theoretical consistency and research fruitfulness.

The last set of criteria that we discuss in this paper was identified and summarized by Corley and Gioia (2011). Corley and Gioia proposed that a good theoretical contribution is original and useful. Originality here refers to the ability of the contribution to "improve our understanding of management and organizations, whether by offering a critical redirection of existing views or by offering an entirely new point of view on phenomena" (Conlon, 2002, p. 489). They further identify two types of original contributions namely; incremental and revelatory.

Adding original incremental insights is important because science progresses incrementally (Kuhn, 1970). However, judging the significance of an incremental improvement in our understanding of a subject is not always an easy task. In fact, "advancing incremental understanding perspective has become rather too closely associated with the notion of minor, marginal, or even trivial improvements, where small advances in our thinking about a phenomenon provide the means to progress through "normal science"" (Corley & Gioia, 2011, p. 16). An alternative type of original contribution is when it is revelatory. That is when it "reveals what we otherwise had not seen, known, or conceived." (p. 17). This factors of surprise makes theoretical contributions interesting (Davis, 1971).

Corley and Gioia (2011) also highlight the importance of usefulness in theoretical contributions in the form of their utility. Utility or usefulness here refers to the potential of the contribution to either "improve the current research practice or the current managerial practice of organizational practitioners." (p.17). the former is called the scientific usefulness (utility) and the latter is called practical usefulness (utility) of a contribution. Scientific utility "is perceived as an advance that improves conceptual rigor or the specificity of an idea and/or enhances its potential to be operationalized and tested." (p. 18). In addition, practical utility "is seen as arising when theory can be directly applied to the problems practicing managers and other organizational practitioners face" (p. 18).

To sum up, theoretical contributions are made when a particular theory or a specific set of theories are empowered to make better predictions, explanations and/or offer better solutions to real world problems. There are different ways to make good and strong contributions. They can be incremental additions to or radically new revelations about theirs, their scope, breadth and depth of explanatory and predictive power or unexpected unexplored improvements in their empirical power and practical relevance. Authors have a wide spectrum of approaches and methods to think about, plan, execute end present their contributions but their contributions should be theoretically robust, original and useful.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Having theoretical contributions is essential for a submission to be reviewed and considered for publication in any peer-reviewed journal. However, making a theoretical contribution is no easy task. "Theorists must convince others that their propositions make sense if they hope to have an impact on the practice of research" (Whetten, 1989, p. 491). So, the final note is to make sure that we plan our contribution. Authors have to make sure that their contributions make sense and convince our readers, reviewers and editors. In future editorial manuscripts I will elaborate on these features. For now, let's just focus on our theories and contributions. Let's make sure that we understand our theories and do our best to advance them in a meaningful fashion as outlined here.

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