# Article information:

[PDF] What Theory is Not | Semantic Scholar  
<https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/What-Theory-is-Not-Sutton-Staw/7d7b5066d5089e78145853b2313a9640b70bb036>

# Article summary:

1. The article discusses what theory is not, emphasizing that it is not a set of facts or a description of reality.

2. The authors argue that theory is a tool for understanding and explaining phenomena, providing frameworks for interpreting data and making predictions.

3. They also highlight the importance of testing and refining theories through empirical research, acknowledging that theories are always subject to revision and improvement.

# Article rating:

Appears moderately imbalanced: The article provides some useful information, but is missing several important points or pieces of evidence that would be required to present the discussed topics in a balanced and reliable way. You are encouraged to seek a more balanced perspective on the presented issues by exploring the provided research topics and looking at different information sources.

# Article analysis:

The article "What Theory is Not" by Robert I. Sutton and Barry M. Staw, published in the Administrative Science Quarterly in 1995, provides a critical analysis of the concept of theory in social science research. The authors argue that theory is often misunderstood and misused, leading to confusion and ineffective research.

The article begins with a clear definition of what theory is not, including common misconceptions such as equating theory with hypothesis or confusing it with data collection methods. The authors then go on to explain what theory actually is, emphasizing its role in providing explanations for observed phenomena and guiding future research.

One potential bias in this article is the authors' focus on social science research, which may limit the applicability of their arguments to other fields. Additionally, while the authors provide examples of common misunderstandings of theory, they do not provide evidence for how widespread these misunderstandings are or how they impact research outcomes.

Another limitation of this article is its one-sided reporting; while the authors critique common misconceptions about theory, they do not explore counterarguments or alternative perspectives on the role of theory in research. This lack of balance may limit readers' ability to fully evaluate the validity of the authors' claims.

Overall, "What Theory is Not" provides a useful overview of common misunderstandings about theory in social science research. However, readers should be aware of potential biases and limitations in the authors' arguments and seek out additional perspectives before drawing conclusions about the role of theory in their own research practices.

# Topics for further research:

* Alternative perspectives on the role of theory in research
* Critiques of the authors' arguments on theory in social science research
* Examples of how misunderstandings of theory impact research outcomes
* The role of theory in fields outside of social science research
* Historical development of the concept of theory in social science research
* The relationship between theory and empirical data in research

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