



Managing in the Pacific Century

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University of Auckland, New Zealand

Contextualization and International Management Research: What, Why and How

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Academy of Management

Outline of Presentation

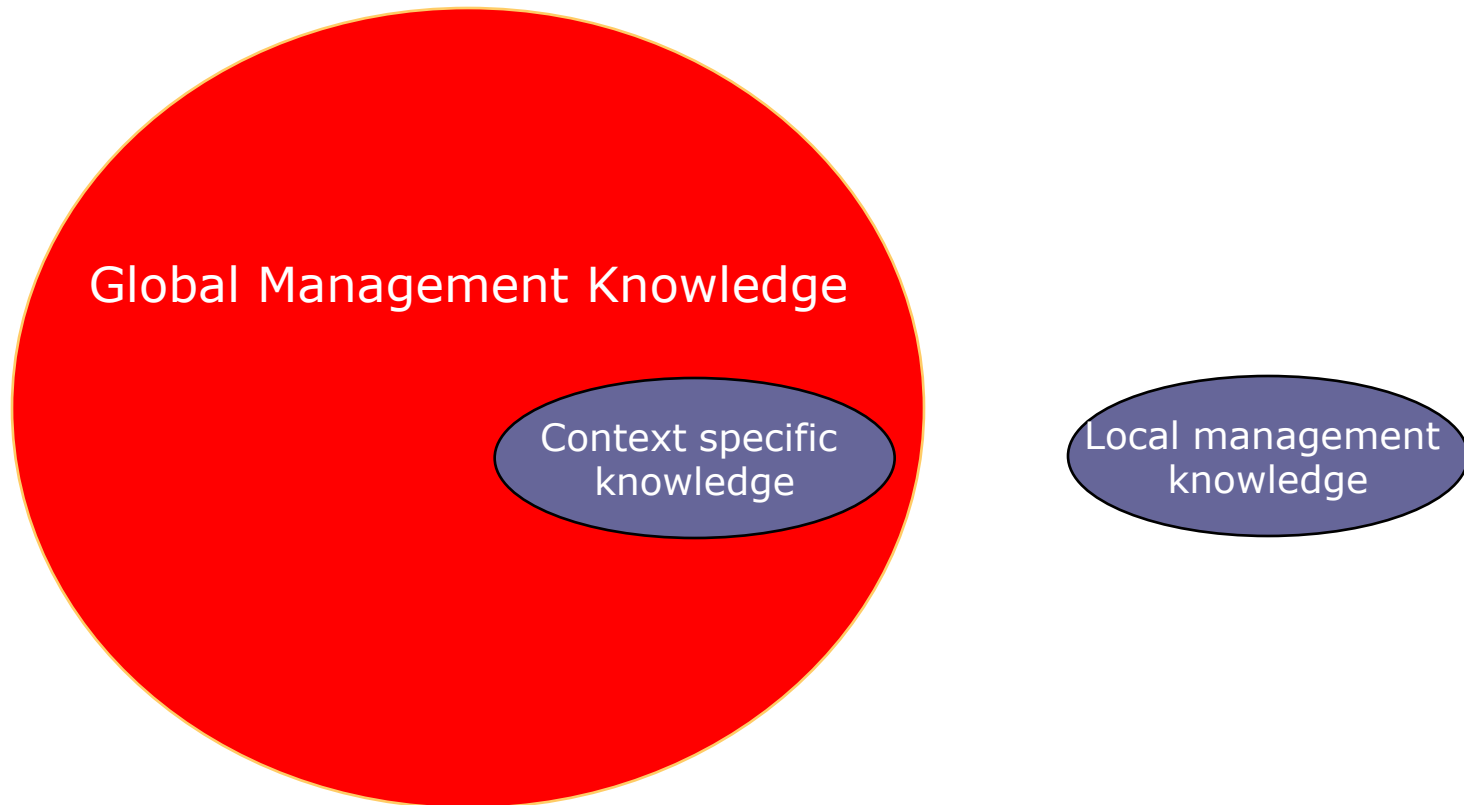
- Types and purposes of international management research
- Definition and role of context
- Five types of contextualized studies
- Examples from my own studies
- Editors' advice on publishing international management research

3 types of International Management research (Werner, 2002)

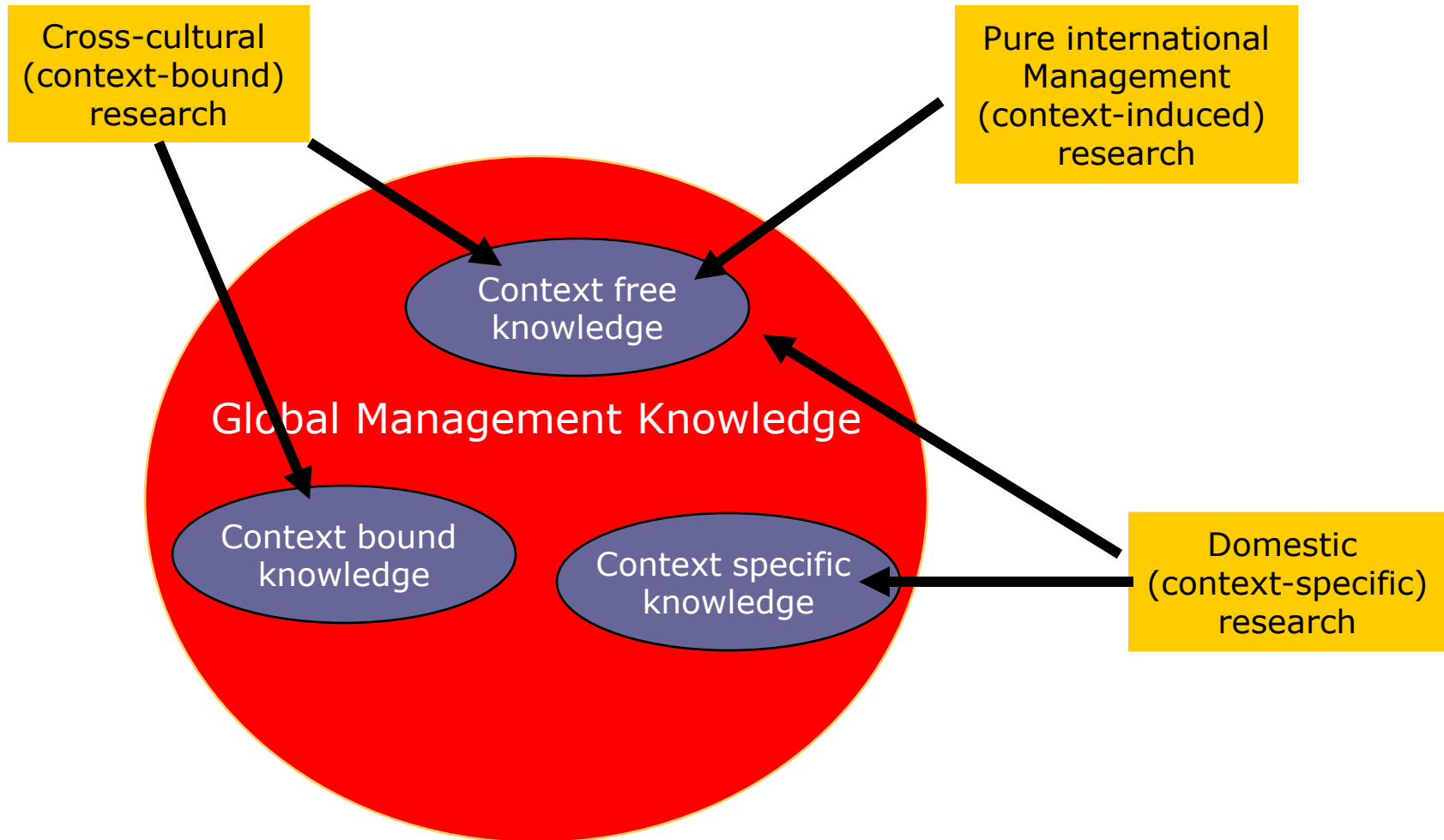
- Pure international management research
 - Location choice, entry mode, knowledge transfer, expatriate management
- Cross-cultural research
 - Comparative management and cross-cultural studies
- Foreign domestic (or indigenous) research
 - Non-U.S. single country studies

Goals of International Management Research

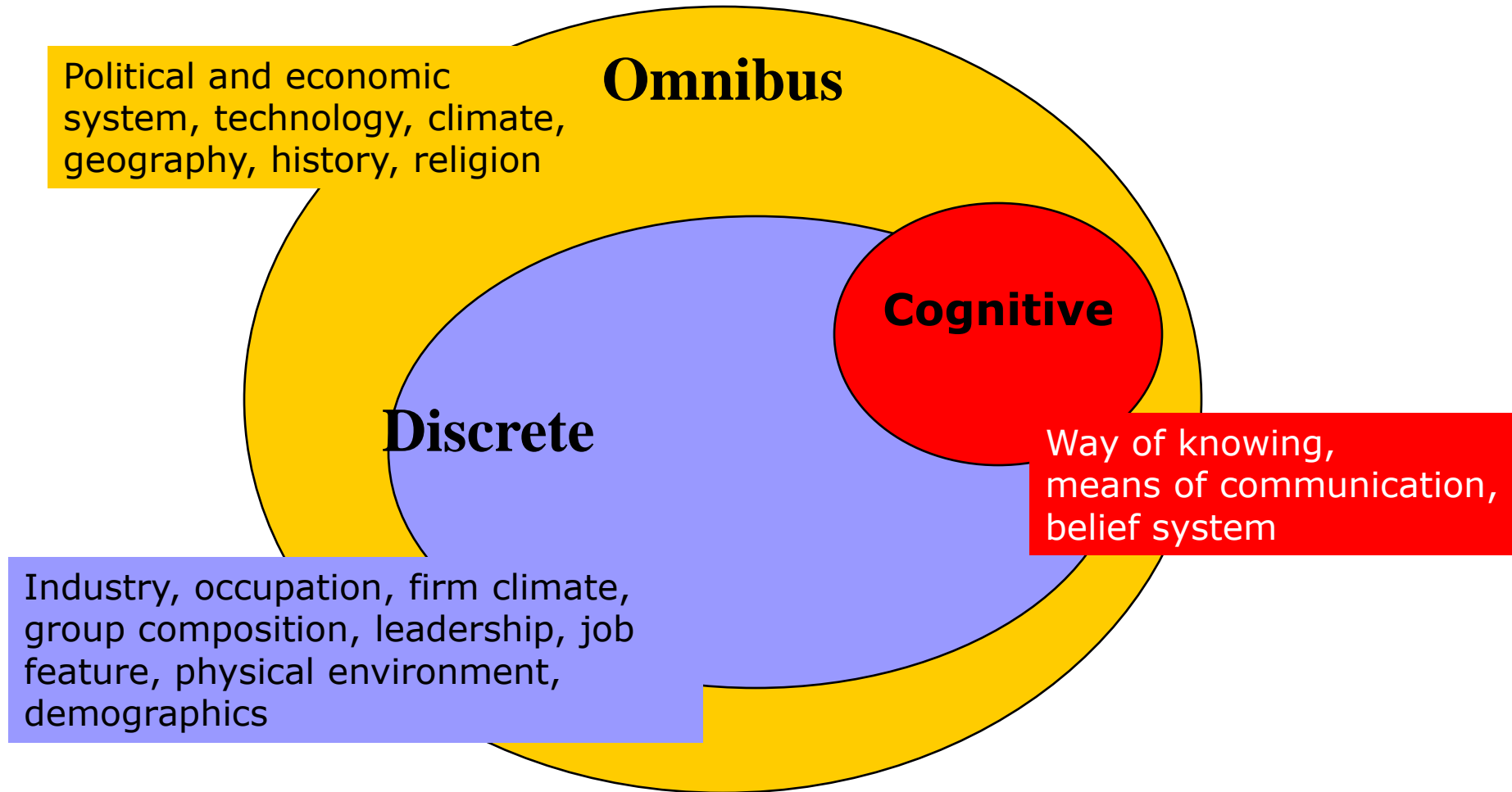
- Contribute to global management knowledge
- Contribute to local management knowledge



International Management Research and Global Management Knowledge



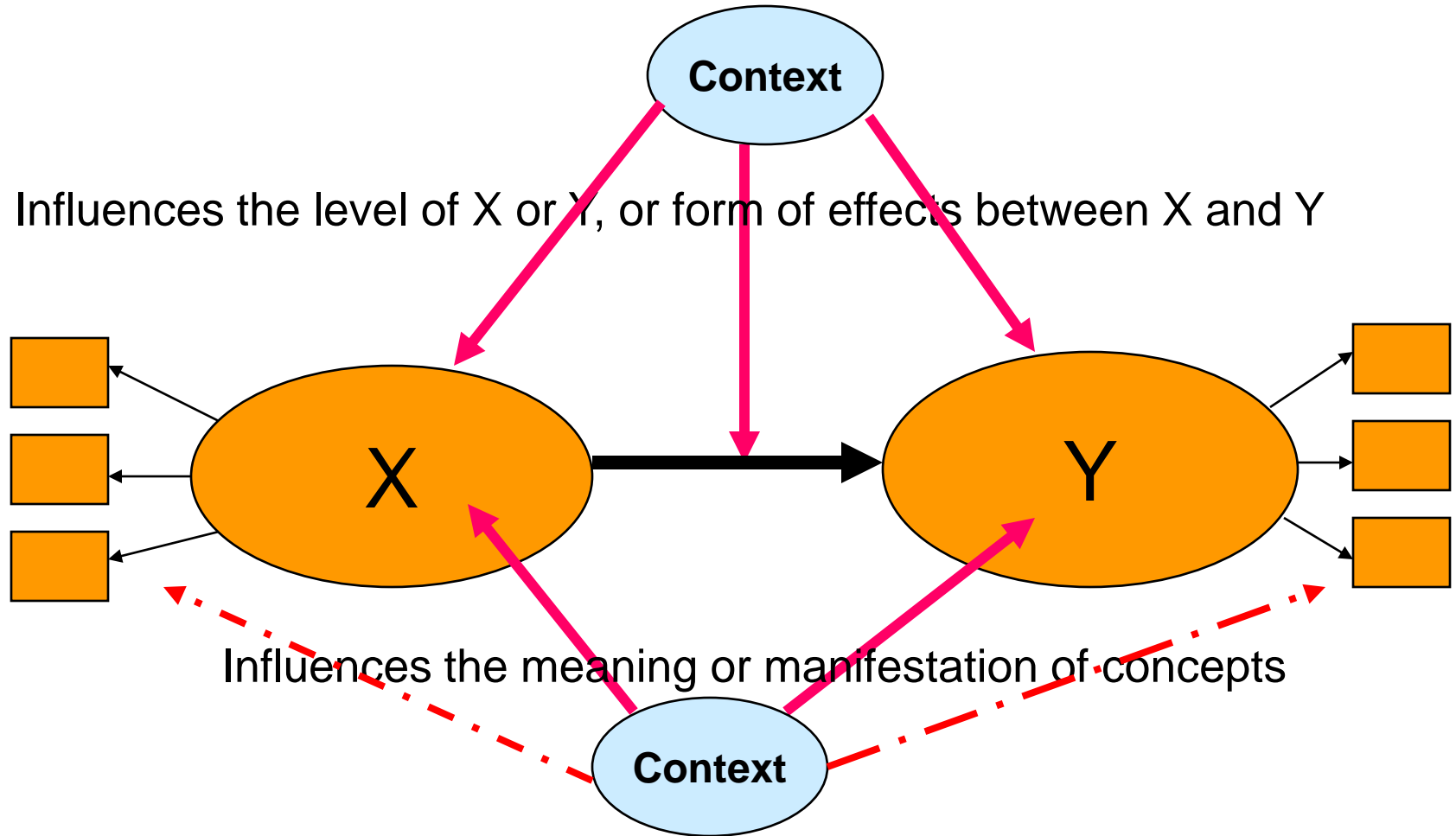
3 Levels of Context (Child, 2000; Johns, 2006; Redding, 2008; Tsui et al., 2007)



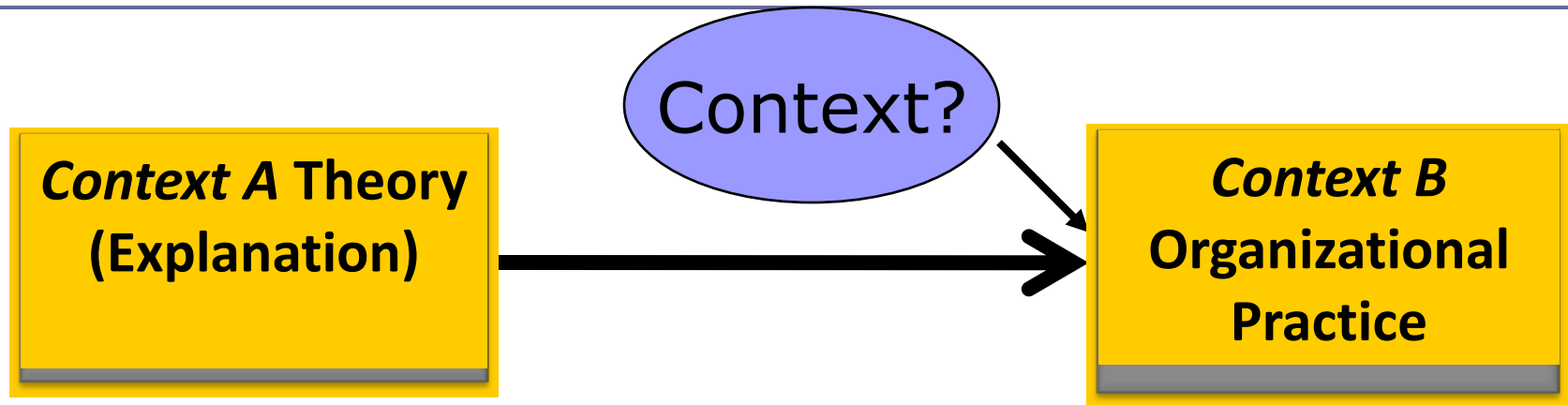
Conceptualizing “Context”

- Context has to be addressed holistically
- It is complex and dynamic
- It is a complex system, best understood as a unique configuration of features
- It evolves and changes, best understood as features co-evolving with organizational systems
- Single versus multiple contexts
- Most studies has used single and static contexts

Multiple Influences of Context

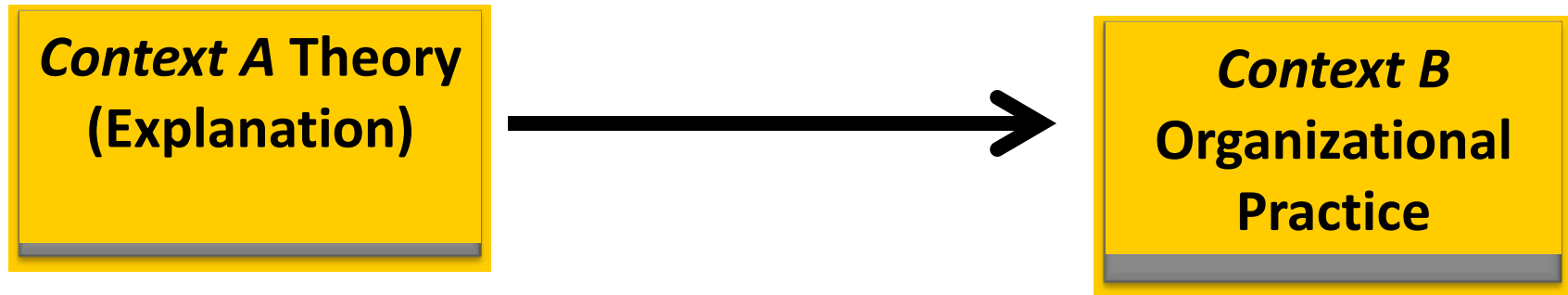


5 Types of Contextualized Studies

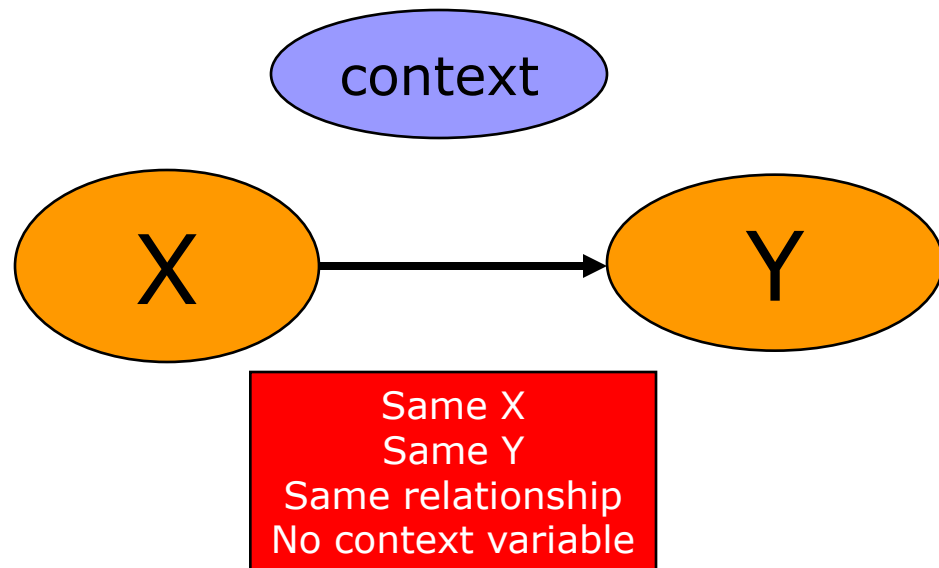


They vary in the extent “context” is incorporated into an existing or a new theory for explaining a phenomenon or practice in a new context.

Type 1 – Application of Context A Theories to Context B



Application of Context A theory to Context B (assuming that the original conceptual and contextual assumptions underlying the Context A theory hold in Context B)



An Example of Type 1 Study: Employment Relationship in China

- Employment relationship during economic transition, 1980 – 1990's (Tsui et al., 1997, *AMJ*) and 1980- current in China
- Tsui, Wang & Zhang, 2002 (chapter): EOR with Chinese middle managers (measurement)
- Wang, Tsui, Zhang & Ma, 2003 (*JOB*): EOR and firm performance
- Hom Tsui et al., 2009 (*JAP*): EOR – outcome mediation

Four Types of EOR

Most positive outcomes

Employee performance
Employee commitment
Firm performance

**High/broad
contributions
expected**

**Low/narrow
contributions
expected**

**High/broad
inducements
offered**

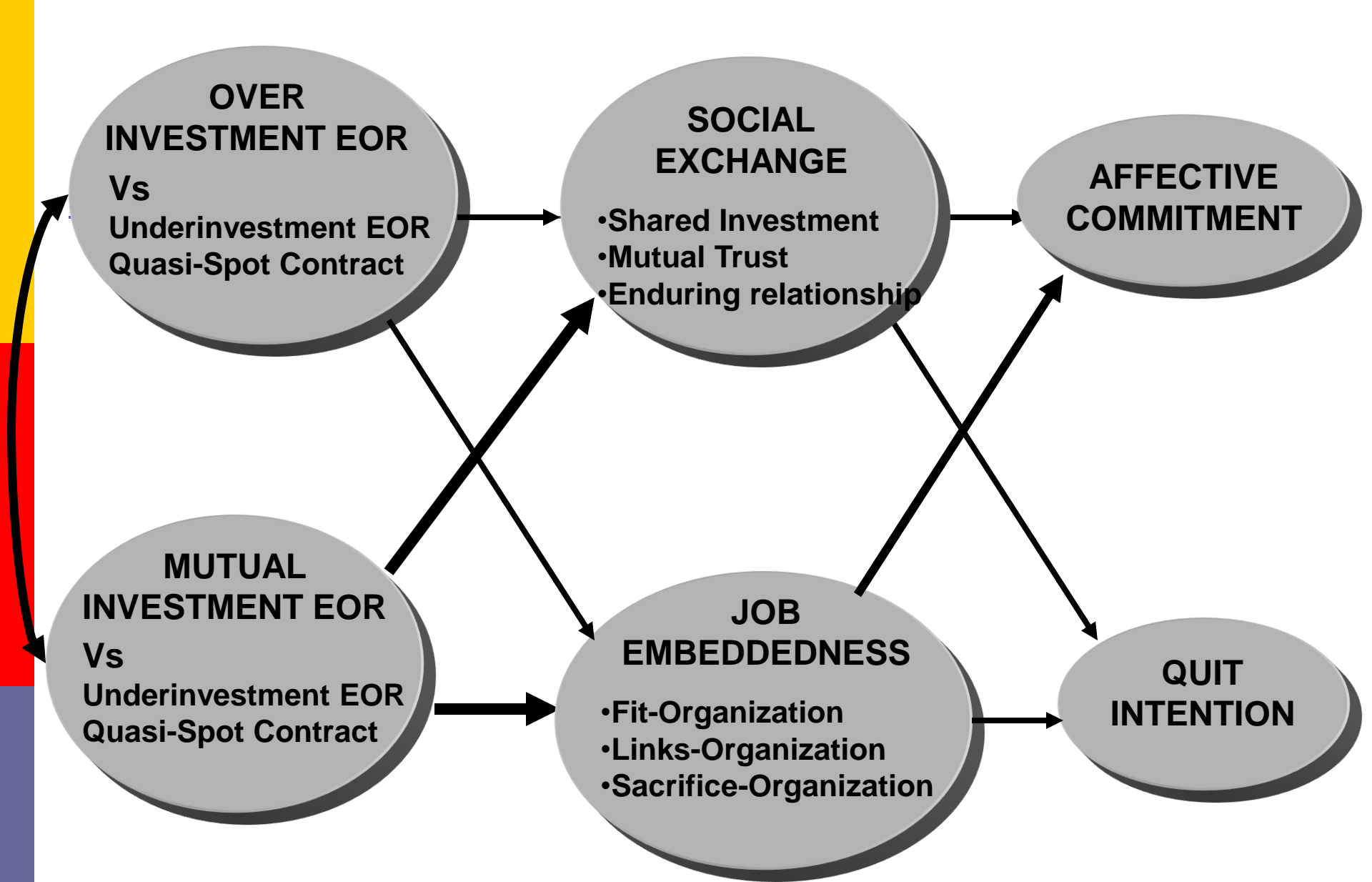
**Low/narrow
inducements
offered**

Mutual
investment
(org and employee
focused)

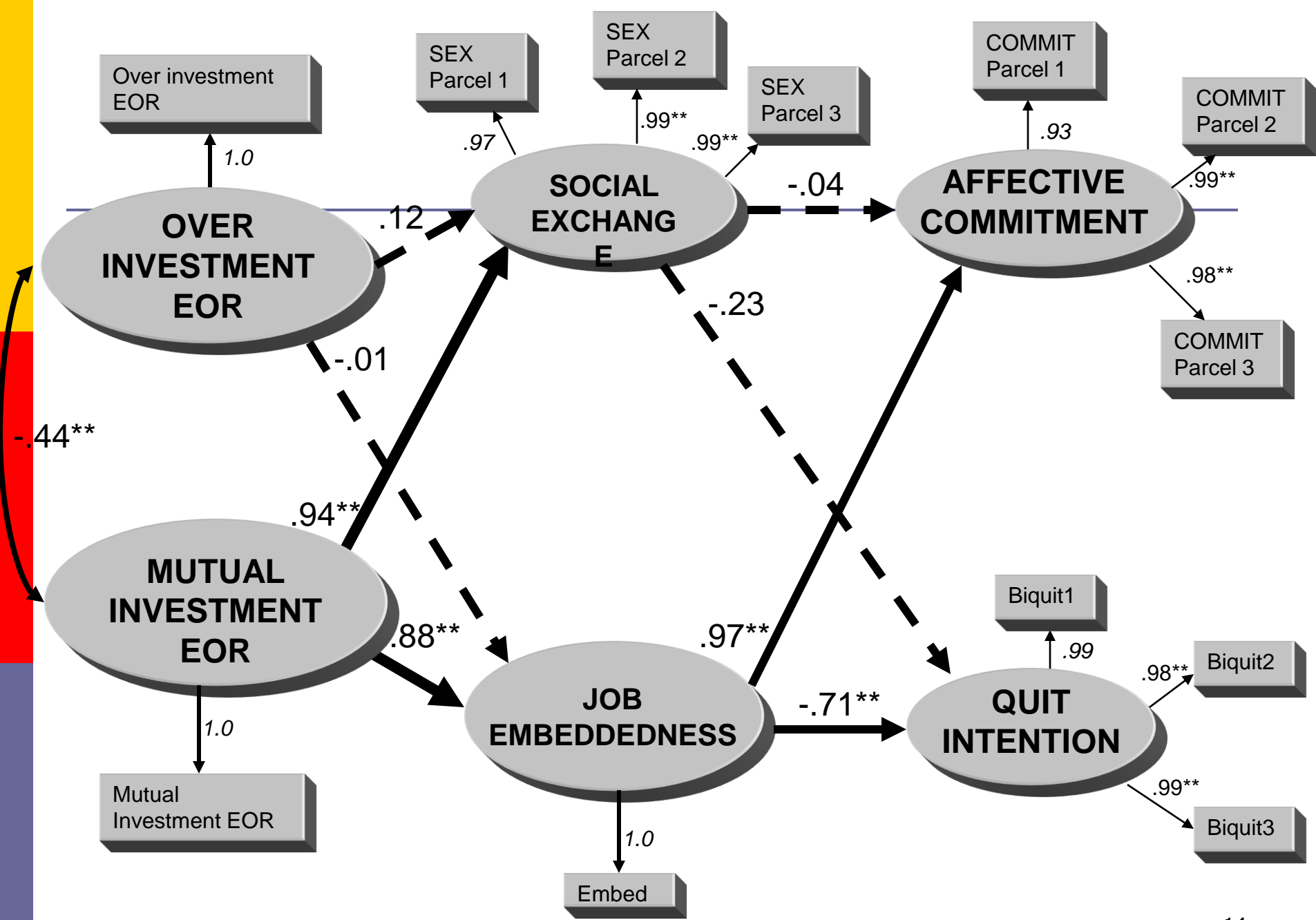
Over
investment
(favor
employee)

Under
investment
(favor employer)

Quasi-spot
contract
(job focused)



Hom, Tsui, Wu, Lee, Zhang, Fu, & Li: Explaining Employment Relationships with Social Exchange and Job Embeddedness, JAP, in press.

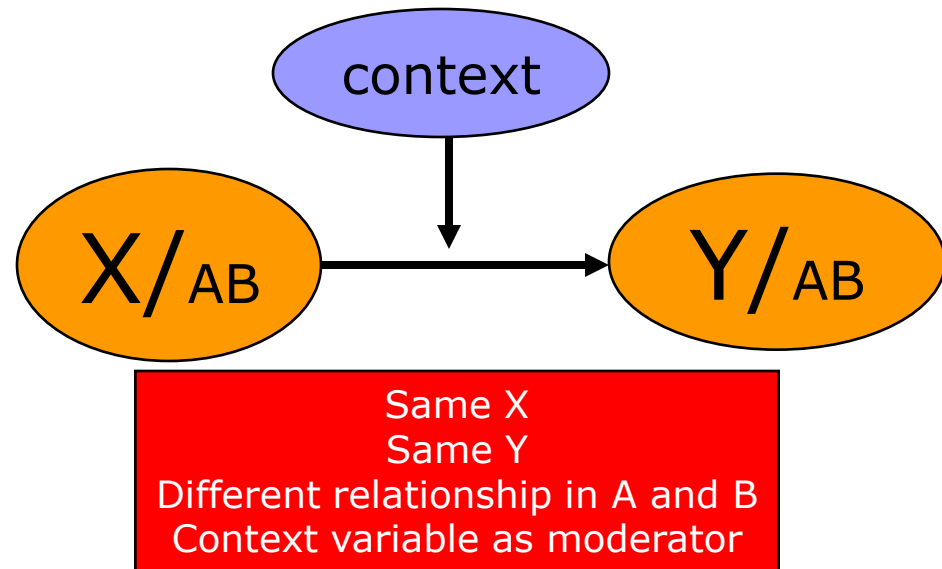


Study 2 Between-Firm Structural Panel Model

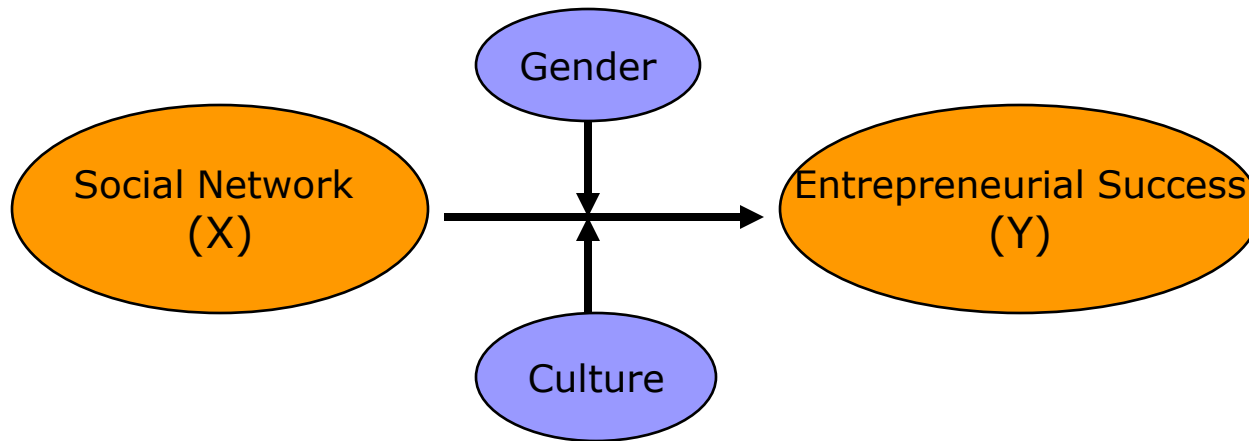
Type 2 – Extension of Context A Theories – cross-context study



Does the hypothesized relationship in Context A theory hold in Context B which is different from Context A in Z (such as cultural value, economic development, political system, etc.)?



An Example of Type 2: Role of Context on Entrepreneurial Success



H1: Network effects on entrepreneurial success will be stronger for men than for women entrepreneurs

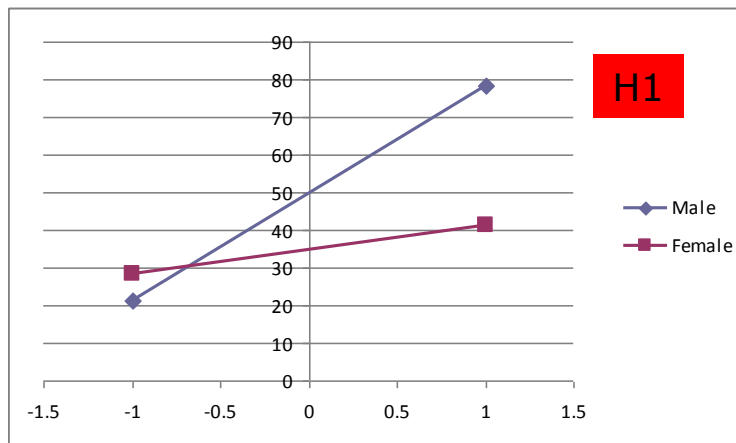
H2: Network effects will be stronger in high relationship oriented than in low relationship oriented cultures

H3: Network effects will be the strongest for men in high relationship oriented culture and weakest for women in low relationship oriented culture.

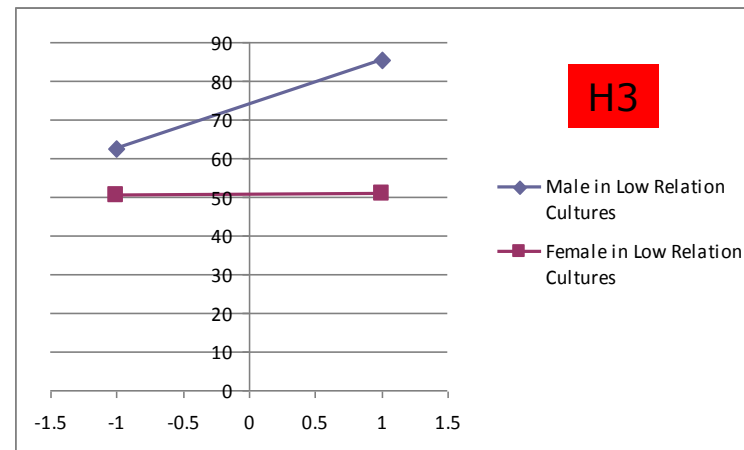
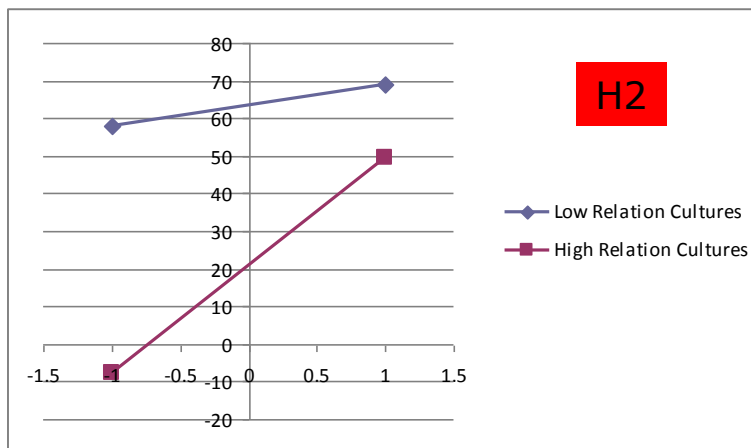
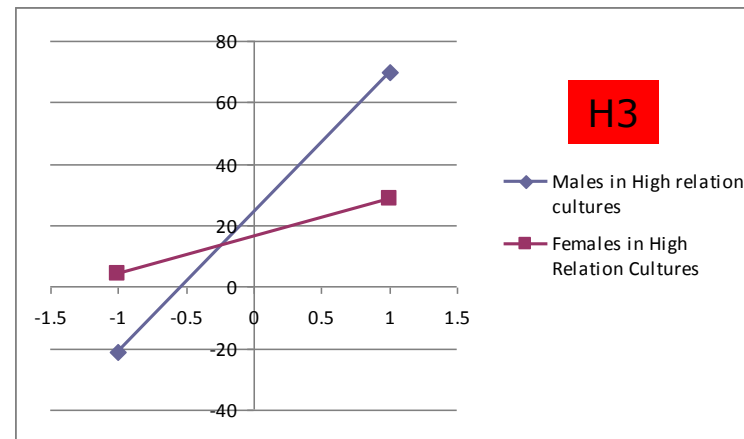
Arregle, Batjargal, Hitt, Miller, Tsui, Webb: WOMEN AND MEN ENTREPRENEURS' SOCIAL NETWORKS AND NEW VENTURE PERFORMANCE ACROSS CULTURES

Comparison of Network Effects in Context A and Context B

Gender Context: Men versus Women



Culture Context: Low (US and France) versus high (China and Russia) relationship-oriented culture

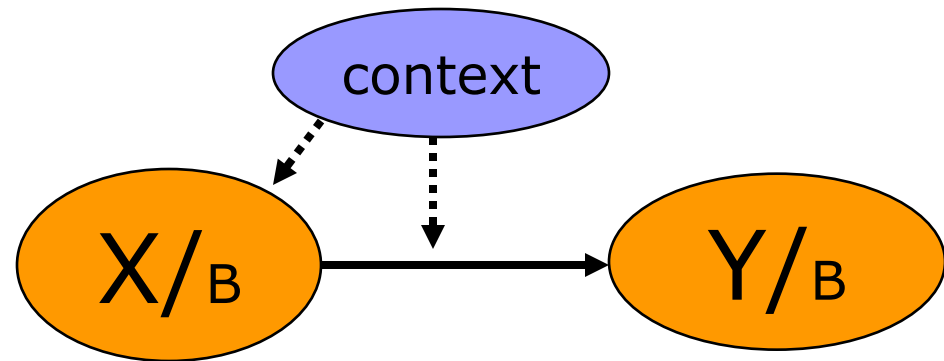


Type 3 – Elaboration of Context

A Theories – single-context study



The hypothesized relationship in Context A theory will operate differently in Context B because of difference in the contextual factors such as cultural value, economic development, political system, etc.

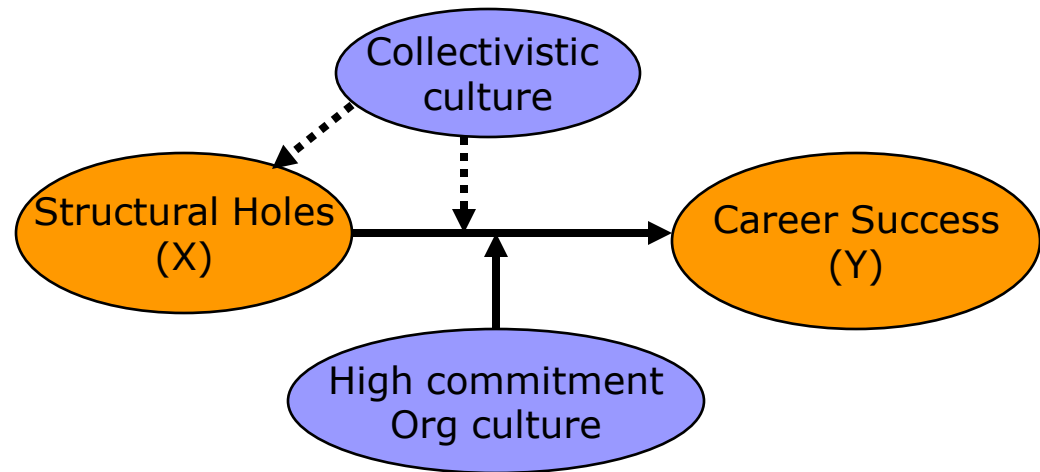


Same X but different meaning due to context
Same Y
Different relationship in B
Context variable as contextual explanation

An Example of Type 3: Cultural Contingency of Social Capital

Assumptions of context A (US): accept competitive and individualistic behavior

Assumption of context B (China): values cooperative and communal behavior



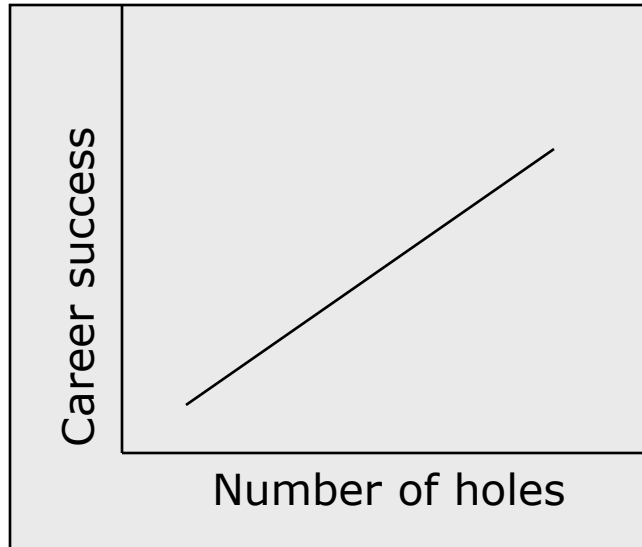
H1: Structural holes will relate negatively to employee career success in a collectivistic culture

H2: Structural holes will relate more negatively to career success in high-commitment than in low commitment organizations

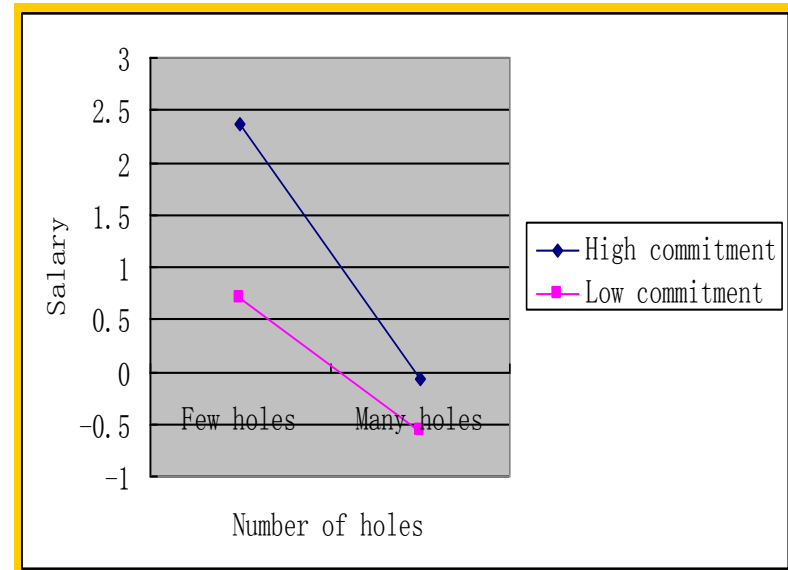
Xiao & Tsui, When Brokers May Not Work: The Cultural Contingency of Social Capital in Chinese High-tech Firms, ASQ, 2007.

Context B: Collectivistic culture and high cooperative/commitment organizations

Prediction and results in context A



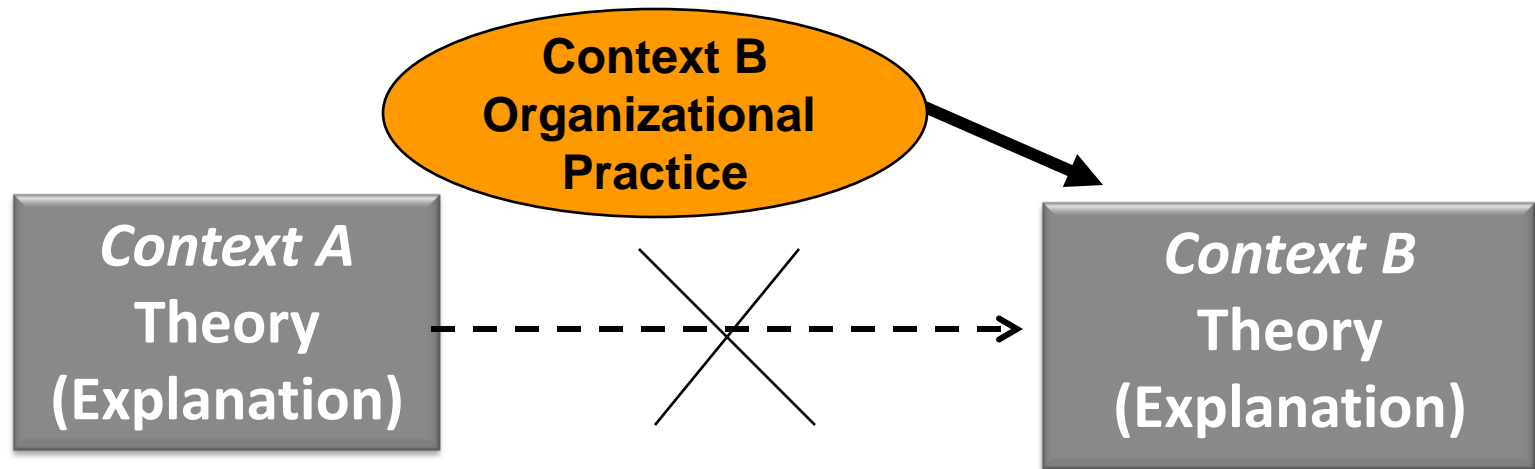
Prediction and results in context B



Context A (US): Individualistic culture and competitive process

Context B (China): Collectivistic culture and cooperative process

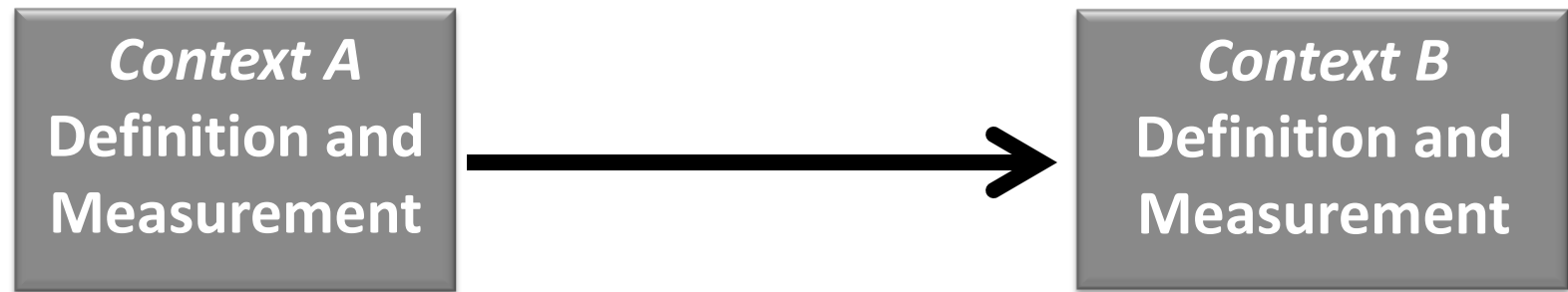
Type 4 – Development of Context B (Indigenous) Theories



Context B attributes explains Context B organizational practice (with direct or indirect guidance of Context A theory)

Examples: Boisot & Child, 1996, *ASQ*, reform and culture give rise to network capitalism;
Nee, Oppen & Wong, 2007, *MOR*, government direct involvement produces negative firm returns

Type 5 – Measurement of Context A Constructs in Context B



Defining and measuring a Context B organizational phenomenon with direct or indirect guidance of Context A's definition and measurement of the same phenomenon (Farh et al, 2006, MOR)

Examples: Tsui et al, 2004, *OD*, leadership styles in China; Farh, Zhong & Organ, 2004, *OS*, organizational citizenship behavior has different dimensions and indicators in China, compared to the US; Tsui et al, 2006, *MOR*, organizational culture have different dimensions in Chinese firms

Recap: Why Contextualization?

- Address new and important questions
- Develop new or novel theories
- Provide better and more interesting research
- Make meaningful contribution to global knowledge

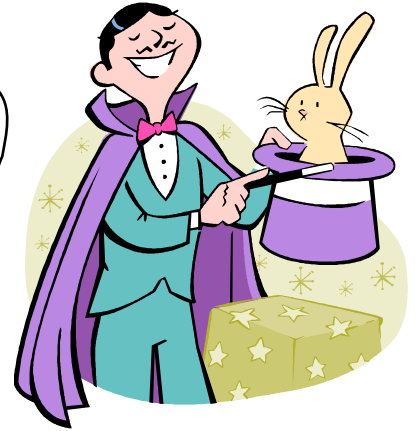
“Differences represent an opportunity to make a real contribution”

(Eden & Ryan, *AMJ*, 2003, p. 680)

Advice from Editors

(Eden & Ryan, 2003; Whetten, 2002, 2009)

“The trick is to be different” (p. 680)



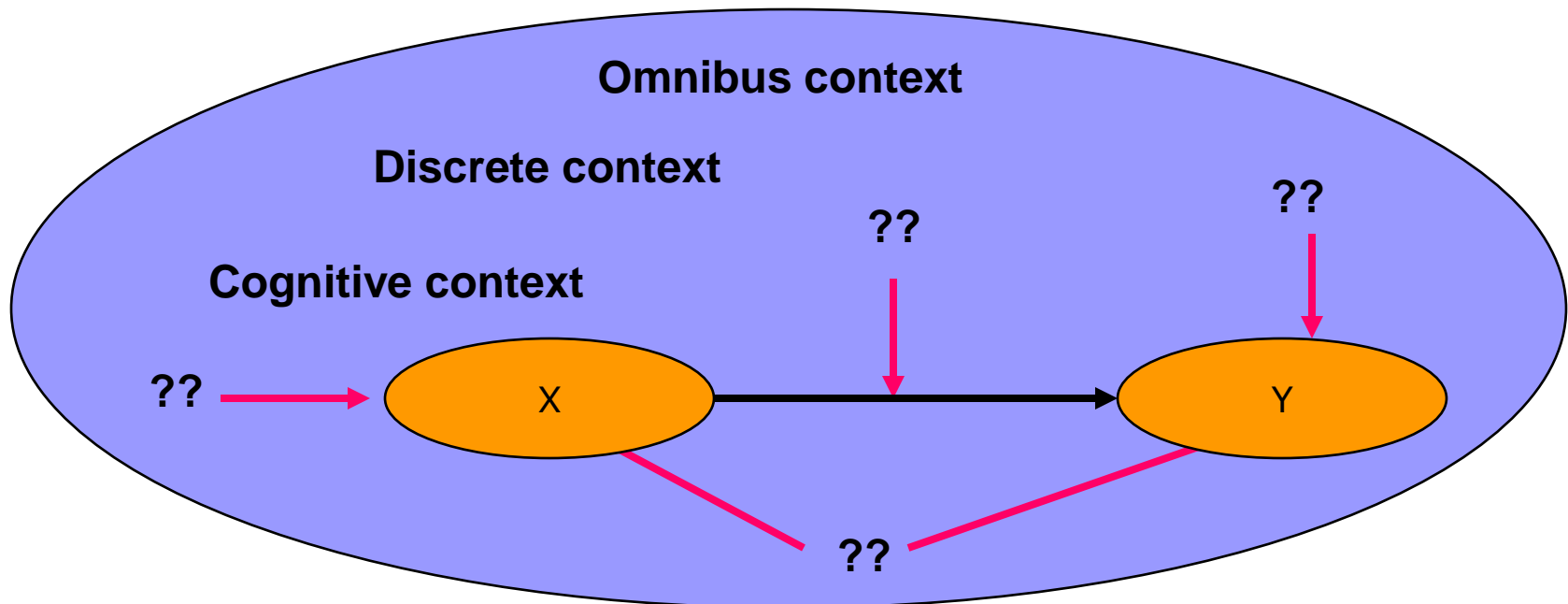
“Using the familiar to describe the novel” (p. 33)

“Using the novel to inform the familiar” (p. 35)

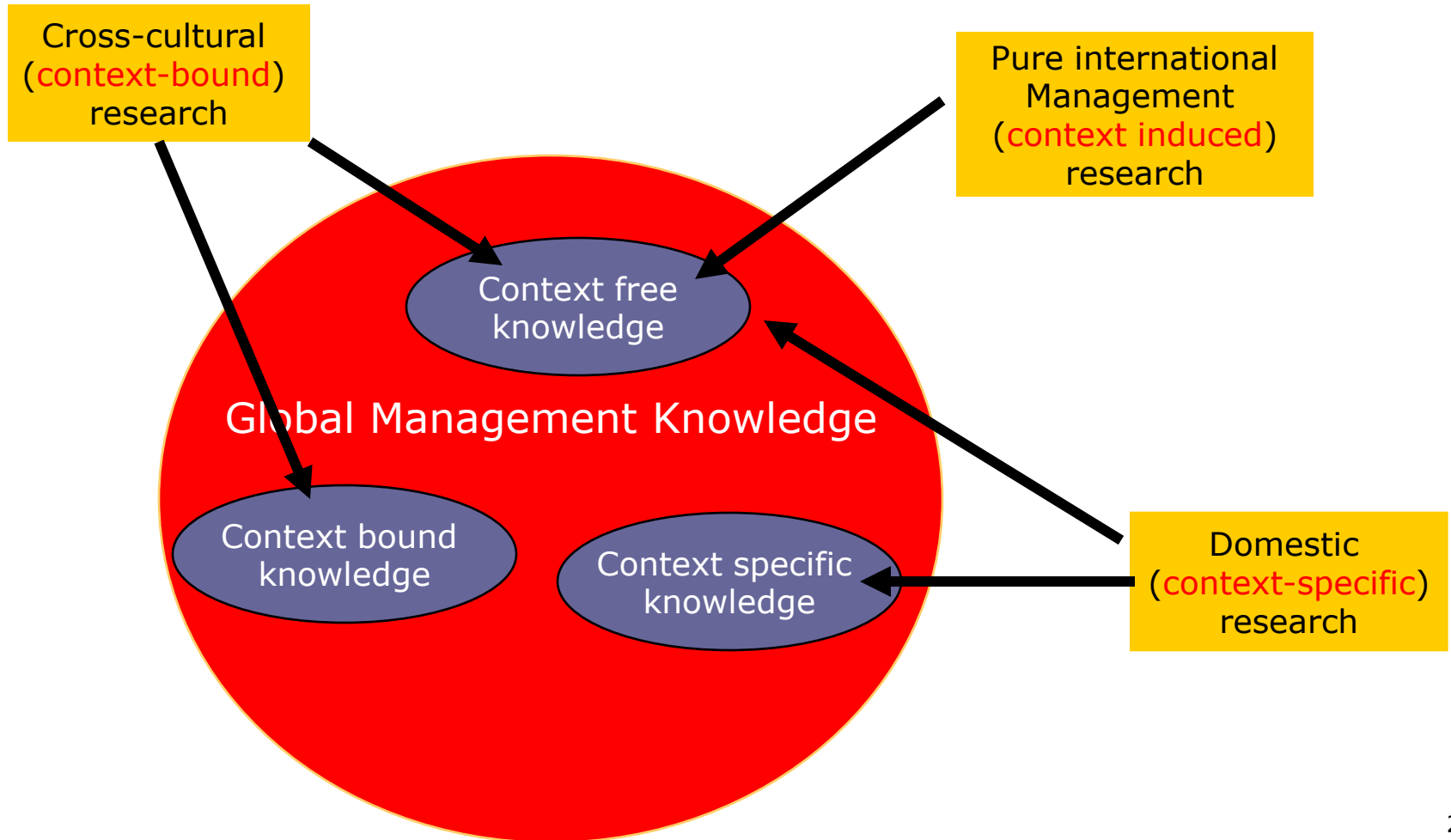
Interesting Because it is Different

- People expect or want to know how context B is different from context A.

What can I learn about the new context or about the received theory from this study in the new context?



Contextualization Contributes to Global Management Knowledge



IM research: Ripe for harvesting and to contribute to global management knowledge

**Take Context Seriously and
be bold in being different!**

Thank you!

