

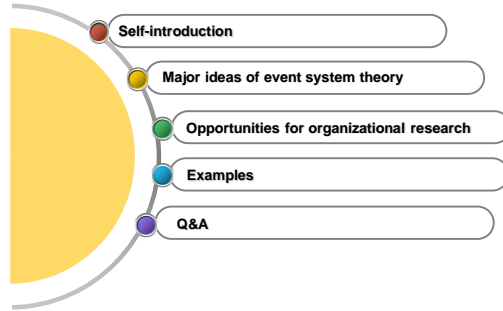


Event System Theory: Insights and Applications in Organizational Research

Dong Liu
Georgia Institute of Technology

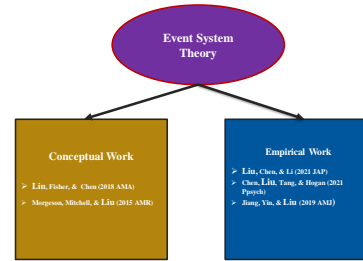
Georgia Tech | Ernest Scheller Jr. College of Business

Presentation Outline

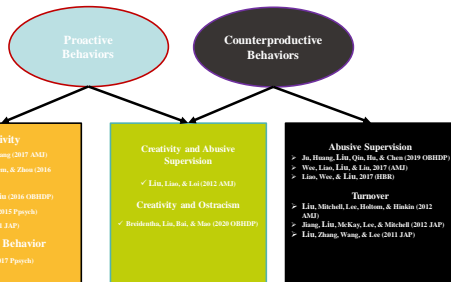


Who Am I?

- 2019-present, Georgia Tech Gregory J. Owens Professor
- 2020-present, Georgia Tech Professor of OB with Tenure



Georgia Tech | Scheller College of Business



Major Teaching Experiences:

- EMBA Global Workforce Management
- EMBA Organizational Behavior and Leadership
- EMBA Analysis of Global Business Environment
- MBA Cross-cultural Management
- MBA Leadership Development
- PhD Advanced Research Methods
- Undergraduate Cross-cultural Management
- Undergraduate Organizational Behavior

Morgeson, F. P., Mitchell, T. R., & Liu, D. (2015). Event system theory: An event-oriented approach to the organizational sciences. *Academy of Management Review*, 40(4), 515-537.



Fred Morgeson



Terry Mitchell



Dong Liu

What is event?

- ✓ Allport (1940, 1954, and 1967) defined an event as the point in **space** and **time** where **multiple entities** or **entity actions** contact, encounter, or meet each other.
- ✓ Time- and space-bounded happenings in context which break people out of routines and stimulate controlled information processing.

What is NOT event?

- ✓ Entities' internal features (e.g., personality traits, emotions, cognitive states, attitudes, team structure, organizational culture)
- ✓ Intrapyschic or intraindividual psychological states (e.g., an affective or cognitive arousal)

Why Should We Care about Events?

- Events are an additional level of analysis beyond individual, team, and organizational attributes (Dinh, Lord, Gardner, Meuser, Liden, & Hu, 2014)
- A major task of leaders is to interpret and direct organizational members to respond to significant events (Isabella, 1990)

United Airlines Dragging Incident

This is an upsetting event to all of us here at United. I apologize for having to re-accommodate these customers. Our team is moving with a sense of urgency to work with the authorities and conduct our own detailed review of what happened. We are also reaching out to this passenger to talk directly to him and further address and resolve this situation.

- Oscar Munoz, CEO, United Airlines

The July horrific event that occurred on this flight has elicited many responses from all of us: outrage, anger, disappointment. I share all of those sentiments, and one above all, my deepest apologies for what happened to you. I continue to be disturbed by what happened on this flight, and I remain committed to the customer forcibly removed and to all the customers aboard. No one should ever be mistreated this way.

I want you to know that we take full responsibility and we will work to make it right.

We never see this as the right thing. I speak committed to our customers and our employees that we are going to do what's needed to fix never happens again. This will include a thorough review of our employees, our policies for handling customers in these situations, how we handle unusual situations and an evaluation of how we partner with airport authorities and local law enforcement. I will communicate the results of our review by April 2017.

I promise you we will do better.

Sincerely,
Oscar



Why Should We Care about Events?

- Johns (2017: p. 584) pointed out that "if there has been a deficit in contextual theorizing, it is most apparent in a basic lack of theories that treat discrete events as context."

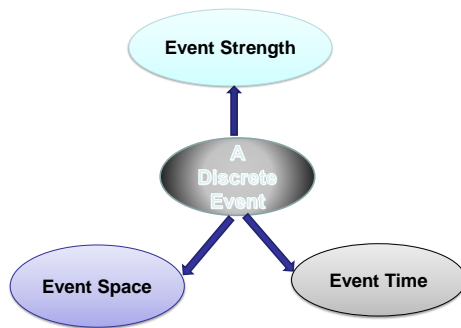
Why Should We Care about Events?

- A majority of organizational theories focus on studying internal features of entities
 - ✓ Individual personality (Big-five personality theory)
 - ✓ Team Demographics (Faultline theory)
 - ✓ Corporate governance structure (Agency theory)

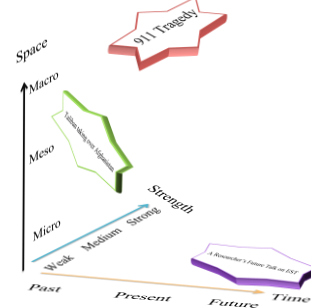
How have previous studies looked at events?

- Events are treated as research settings or contexts
- Events are coded as a dummy variable (1 = occurrence; 0 = Non-occurrence)

Event System Theory



Interpreting and Studying Events in terms of Event Strength, event space, and event time



Major Insights of Event System Theory (cont'd)

How to operationalize event strength?

- ✓ Novelty
- ✓ Disruption
- ✓ Criticality

Major insights of Event System Theory (cont'd)

How to operationalize event space?

- ✓ Direction
- ✓ Dispersion
- ✓ Origin
- ✓ Proximity

Major Tenets of Event System Theory (cont'd)

How to operationalize **event time**?

- ✓ Duration
- ✓ Timing
- ✓ Change

Major Tenets and Opportunities (cont'd)

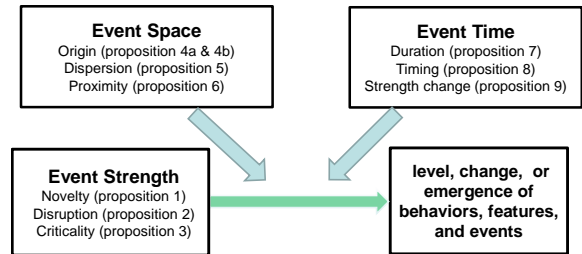
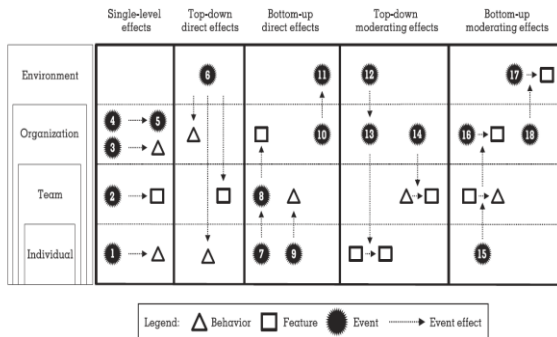


FIGURE 1
Prototypical Effects of Events on Entities^a



2016 AMR Best Paper Award Finalist

Morgeson, F. P., Mitchell, T. R., & Liu, D. (2015). Event system theory: An event-oriented approach to the organizational sciences. *Academy of Management Review*, 40(4), 515-537.

How can Event System Theory be applied to qualitative studies?

Deductive case studies

- Research questions regarding event strength
 - ❖ What factors may increase or decrease event novelty, disruption, and criticality? And how?
 - ❖ How entities respond to the novel, disruptive, critical dimensions of an event, respectively?

How can Event System Theory be applied to qualitative studies? (cont'd)

Deductive case studies

- Research questions regarding event time and space
 - ❖ What temporal and/or spatial factors of an event may alleviate or accentuate the impact of event novelty, disruption, and criticality? And how?
 - ❖ What temporal and/or spatial factors of an event may directly increase or decrease the impact of the event? And how?
 - ❖ How do entities respond to temporal and spatial factors of an event?

How can Event System Theory be applied to quantitative studies?

- Adopt a system perspective
- Engage in an integrative theory-building approach
- Operationalize an event as a continuous variable
- Examine underlying and contingency mechanisms

Journal of Management special issue on events

<https://journals.sagepub.com/eb-assets/cmscontent/PMX/Event%20Research%20JOM%20Special%20Issue%20Call%20for%20Papers%20-%20Final-1627419537.pdf>

Organizational Behavior Event Research: Morgeson (2005); Morgeson & DeRue (2006)

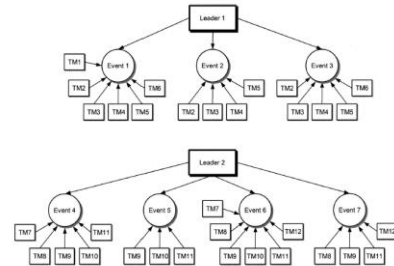


Figure 7. Research design. TM = team number.

Organizational Behavior Event Research: Morgeson (2005); Morgeson & DeRue (2006)

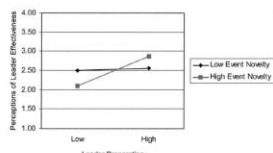


Figure 2. Event novelty as a moderator of the relationship between leader preparation and perceptions of leader effectiveness.

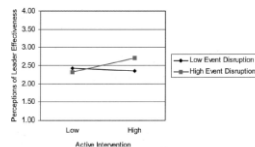


Figure 3. Event disruption as a moderator of the relationship between active intervention and perceptions of leader effectiveness.

- Lin, W., Shao, Y., Li, G., Guo, Y., & Zhan, X. (2021). The psychological implications of COVID-19 on employee job insecurity and its consequences: The mitigating role of organization adaptive practices. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 106(3), 317-329.

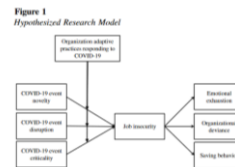
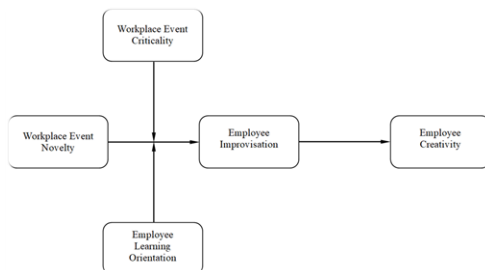
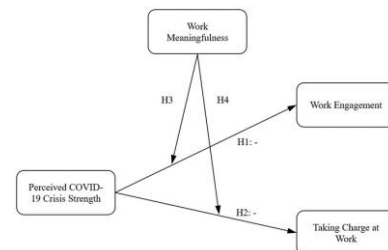


Figure 1. Hypothesized Research Model.

Chen, Y., Liu, D., Tang, G., & Hogan, T. M. (2021). Workplace events and employee creativity: A multistudy field investigation. *Personnel Psychology*, 74(2), 211-236.

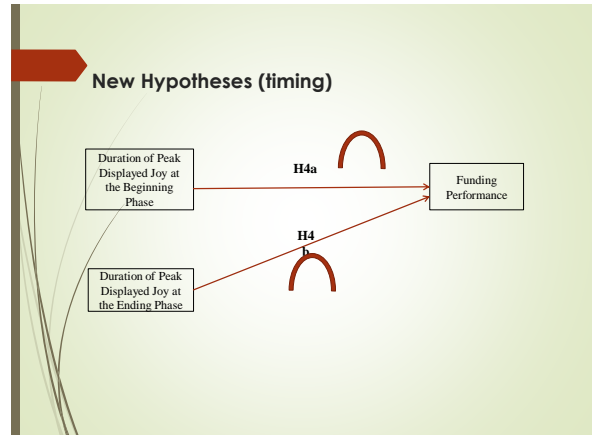
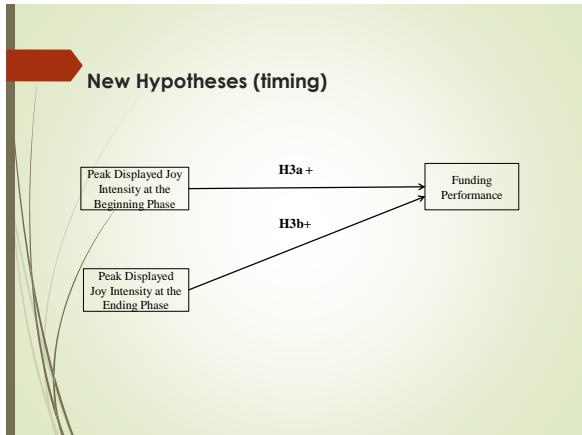
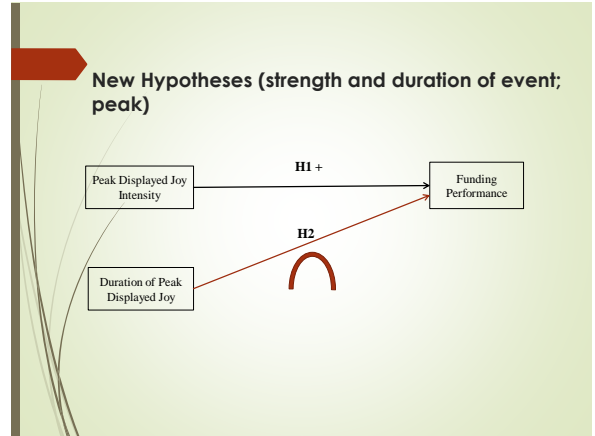


Liu, D., Chen, Y., & Li, N. (2021). Tackling the negative impact of COVID-19 on work engagement and taking charge: A multi-study investigation of frontline health workers. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 106 (2), 185-198.



Jiang, L., Yin, D., & Liu, D. (2019). Can joy buy you money? The impact of the strength, duration, and phases of an entrepreneur's peak displayed joy on funding performance. *Academy of Management Journal*, 62(6), 1848-1871.

- Peak Displayed Joy Strength
- Peak Displayed Joy Duration
- Peak displayed joy Timing



Any time
 Since 2021
 Since 2020
 Since 2017
 Custom range...

Event system theory: An event-oriented approach to the organizational sciences
 FP Morgeson, TR Mitchell, D Liu - *Academy of Management Journal*, 2015 - journals.aom.org
 Organizations are dynamic, hierarchically structured entities. Such dynamism is reflected in the emergence of significant events at every organizational level. Despite this fact, there has been relatively little discussion about how events become meaningful and come to impact ...
 ☆ Cited by 479 Related articles All 6 versions

▪ **International Business: Dai, Eden, & Beamish (2013)**

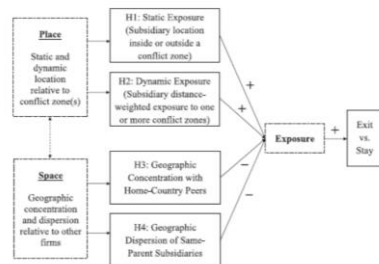


Figure 1 Impact of geography on foreign subsidiary survival in conflict zones.

