Event System Theory: Insights and Applications in Organizational Research

Dong Liu
Georgia Institute of Technology

Presentation Outline

Self-introduction
Major ideas of event system theory
Opportunities for organizational research
Examples
Q&A

Who Am I?

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

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- 2019-present, Georgia Tech Gregory J. Owens Professor
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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

Examples

Conceptual Work

- Liu, Chen, & Li (2021 JAP)
- Chen, Liu, Tang, & Hogan (2021 Ppsych)
- Jiang, Yin, & Liu (2019 AMJ)

Empirical Work

- Liu, Chen, & Li (2021 JAP)
- Jiang, Liu, Tang, & Hogan (2021 Ppsych)
- Ju, Huang, Liu, Qin, Hu, & Chen (2019 OBHDP)
- Wee, Liao, Liu, & Liu, 2017 (AMJ)
- Liao, Wee, & Liu, 2017 (HBR)

Creativity and Abusive Supervision

- Liu, Liao, & Loi (2012 AMJ)
- Breidenthal, Liu, Bai, & Mao (2020 OBHDP)

Abusive Supervision

- Ju, Huang, Liu, Qin, Hu, & Chen (2019 OBHDP)
- Wee, Liao, Liu, & Liu, 2017 (AMJ)
- Liao, Wee, & Liu, 2017 (HBR)

Creativity and Ostracism

- Breidenthal, Liu, Bai, & Mao (2020 OBHDP)

Turnover

- Jiang, Liu, McKay, Lee, & Mitchell (2012 JAP)
- Liu, Zhang, Wang, & Lee (2011 JAP)

Citizenship Behavior

- Liu, Chen, & Holley (2017 Ppsych)
- Liu & Fu (2011 JAP)

Leadership Development

- MBA Leadership Development

Advanced Research Methods

- PhD Advanced Research Methods

Cross-cultural Management

- Undergraduate Cross-cultural Management
- Undergraduate Organizational Behavior

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)

- Intrapsychic 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**

Thank you for your patience as we work to accommodate the needs of all of our customers. We regret this incident and are very sorry for the hardships our customer has endured. We are reaching out to this passenger to talk directly to him and further address and resolve this situation.

- Oscar Munoz, CEO, United Airlines

**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)

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**Event System Theory**

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

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**Major Insights of Event System Theory (cont’d)**

How to operationalize *event strength*?

- Novelty
- Disruption
- Criticality

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**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)

Event Space
- Origin (proposition 4a & 4b)
- Dispersion (proposition 5)
- Proximity (proposition 6)

Event Time
- Duration (proposition 7)
- Timing (proposition 8)
- Strength change (proposition 9)

Event Strength
- Novelty (proposition 1)
- Disruption (proposition 2)
- Criticality (proposition 3)

level, change, or emergence of behaviors, features, and events

2016 AMR Best Paper Award Finalist


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/journals/resource/jom-elm%20special%20issue%20call%20for%20papers%2020-

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


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

**New Hypotheses (strength and duration of event; peak)**

- $H_1 +$ Peak Displayed Joy Intensity
- $H_2 +$ Funding Performance
- Duration of Peak Displayed Joy

**New Hypotheses (timing)**

- $H_{3a} +$ Peak Displayed Joy Intensity at the Beginning Phase
- $H_{3b} +$ Funding Performance
- Peak Displayed Joy Intensity at the Ending Phase

- $H_{4a} +$ Duration of Peak Displayed Joy at the Beginning Phase
- $H_{4b} +$ Funding Performance
- Duration of Peak Displayed Joy at the Ending Phase

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

Figure 2. Event types and magnitudes: A typology of event effects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Type</th>
<th>Strong Positive Effect</th>
<th>Neutral Positive Effect</th>
<th>Neutral Negative Effect</th>
<th>Strong Negative Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Temporal dynamics: Strong positive effects as well as significant pre-event and long-term post-event effects.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Example: Olympic Games</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Temporal dynamics: Moderate positive effects and long-term post-event effects are relatively weak.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Example: Local natural disasters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low-Moderate</td>
<td>Temporal dynamics: Moderate positive effects in the short-term, negative post-event effects are relatively weak.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Example: Small-scale natural disasters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moderate-Moderate</td>
<td>Temporal dynamics: Moderate positive effects in the short-term, negative post-event effects are relatively strong.</td>
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<td>Example: Small-scale natural disasters</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Example: Large-scale natural disasters</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: The diagram illustrates the different types of event effects and their impacts on organizations and societies.