

Developing Theory and Theoretical Contributions

Session 6

Variance and Process Theorizing
Summary and Integration

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Topics for today

1. The role of **time** in theorizing?
 - Soap box 1
2. What is **process** theorizing?
 - Soap box 2
3. Learn to speak a temporal language
 - 7 heuristics for process theorizing
4. Summary and integration

Temporal adagio

Things are what they 'do'

“The sun is not thing, it is a flaming fire.

*A river is not an object, but an ever-
changing flow”*

(in Rescher, *Process metaphysics*, 1996)

Philosophers of time

Time: an elusive concept

"Time is elusive, every time I try and grasp it, I lose it" (St. Augustine)

Ancient: Heraclitus (Greek), Syna (Persian),

19th/20th century: Leibnitz, Hegel, Pierce, James, Bergson, Heidegger, Dewey, Whitehead

Natural science protagonist: Ilya Prigogine (Nobel Prize winner)

Process thinkers social science and management: Van de Ven, Tsoukas, Chia, Pentland, Roe, Waller, Bluedorn, Abbott, Hernes

Process theorizing

- When thought trials, research questions, propositions, and/or aspired contributions explicitly consider *inter-temporal contrasts*, that is, *within*-case differences over time
- Explaining ‘why’ by showing ‘how’

Temporal thinking is the raw material for process theory

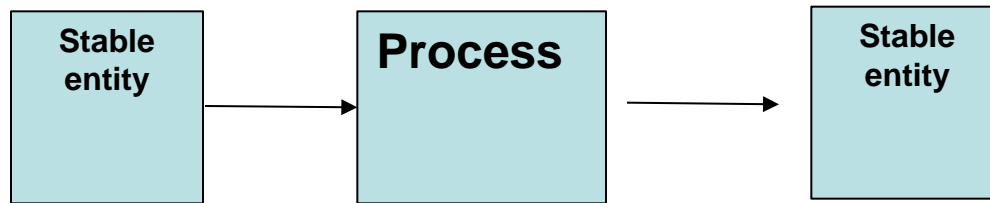
Temporal thinking is the capacity to represent and understand changes over time (Pons & Montangero, 1999).

A set of heuristics for (original) thought

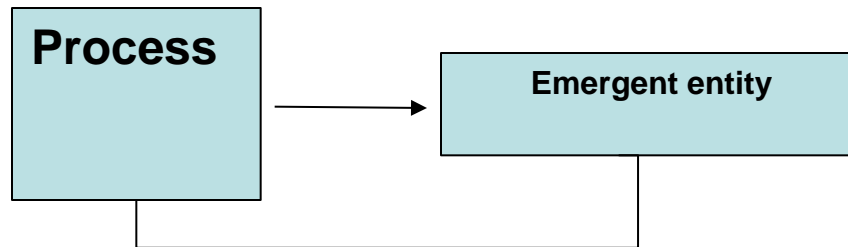
- Objective time (outsider view):
 - change, growth, decline, pre-post differences, development, dynamics, learning curves, lags of effect, spirals, scenarios, sequences of events
- Subjective time (insider view)
 - Storyteller (narratives), ongoing present (past & future), time perception, phenomenological “becoming”

'Weak' and 'strong' process thinking

- 'Weak' process view



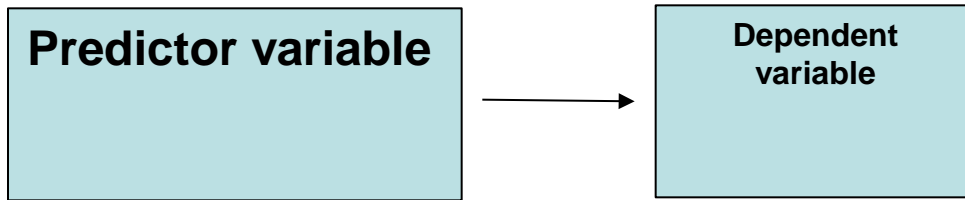
- 'Strong' process view



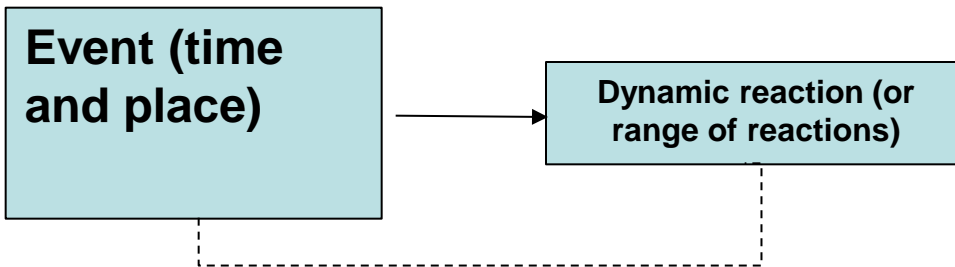
Continuous 'becoming'

Outcome-driven versus event-driven

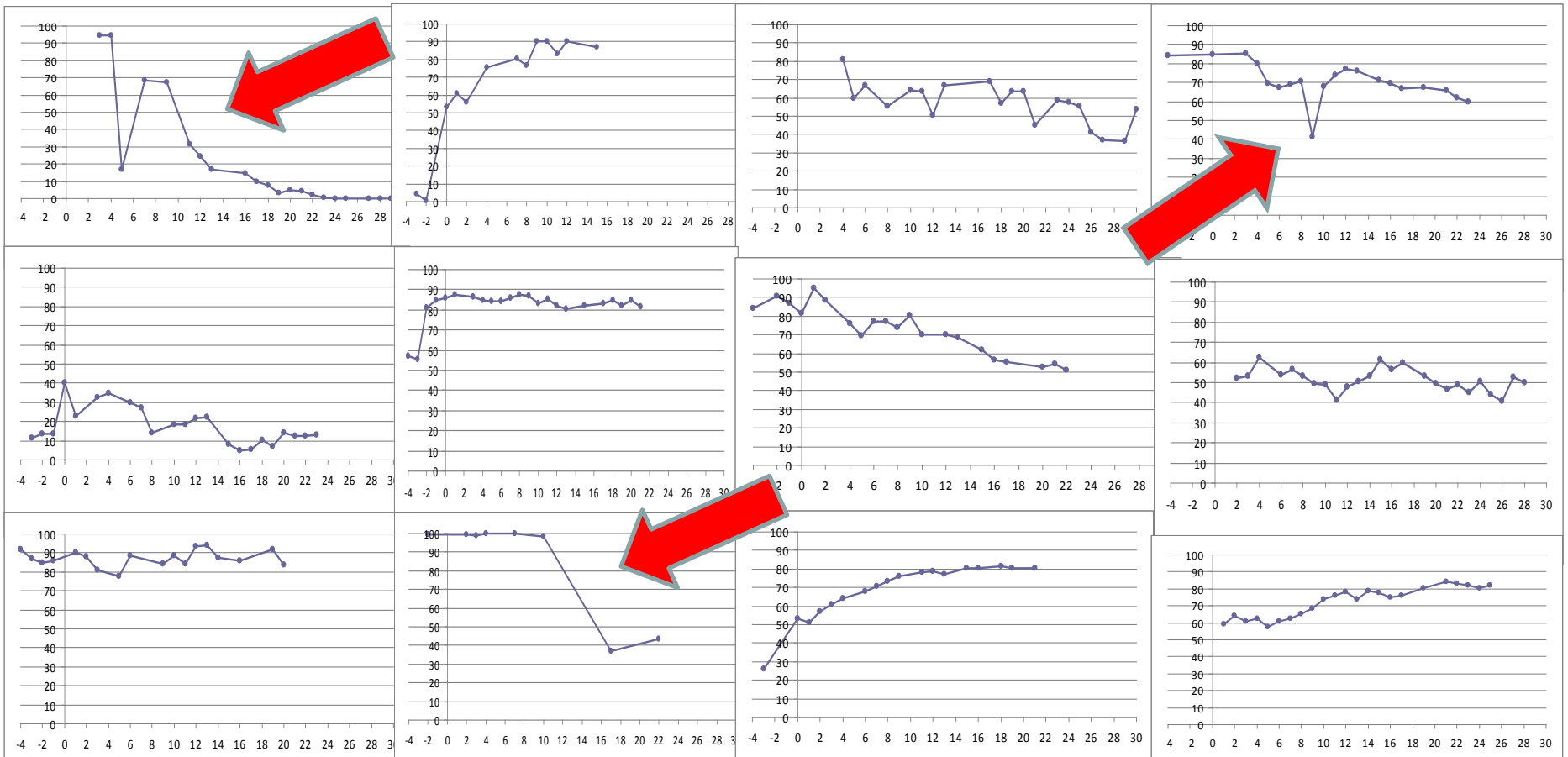
- Classic 'variance' approach



- Event-driven approach



What happened here...?



Why include time in theorizing?

1. It increases a theory's sophistication (Ofori-Dankwa & Julian, 2001)
 - It leads to better understanding of the 'how' question
2. Causal (mostly linear) laws abstracted from time and space are, in fact, not applicable to organizational behavior which is inherently temporal (Abbott, 1988; Faulconer & Williams, 1985; Slife, 1993; Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2011)
3. Opportunity to build *interesting theory* that stands out

Variance vs Process

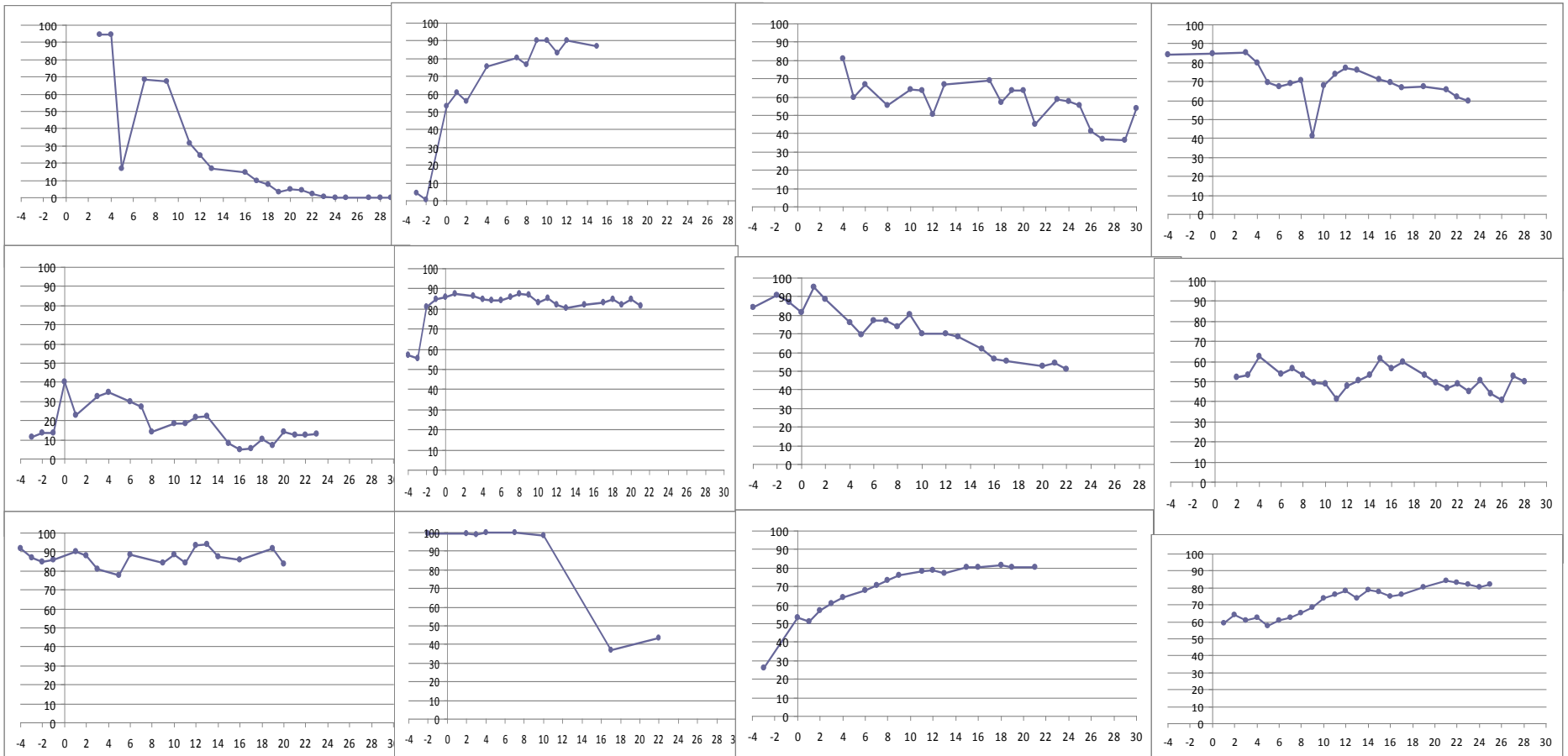
A common ontological/epistemological distinction with many faces

- Between-subject heterogeneity versus within-subject variability (Collins, 2006; Salthouse et al., 2007);
- ‘Idiographic’ versus ‘nomothetic’ kinds of research (Allport, 1960; Jaccard & Dittus, 1990; Molenaar, 2004);
- ‘Synchronic’ versus ‘diachronic’ research (Bluedorn, 2002),
- Outcome-driven versus event-driven research (Abbott, 1990; Van de Ven, 2007);
- ‘Mechanic’ versus ‘generative’ explanations
- Substance versus process epistemologies (Rescher, 1996).
- Static vs dynamic
- Etc....

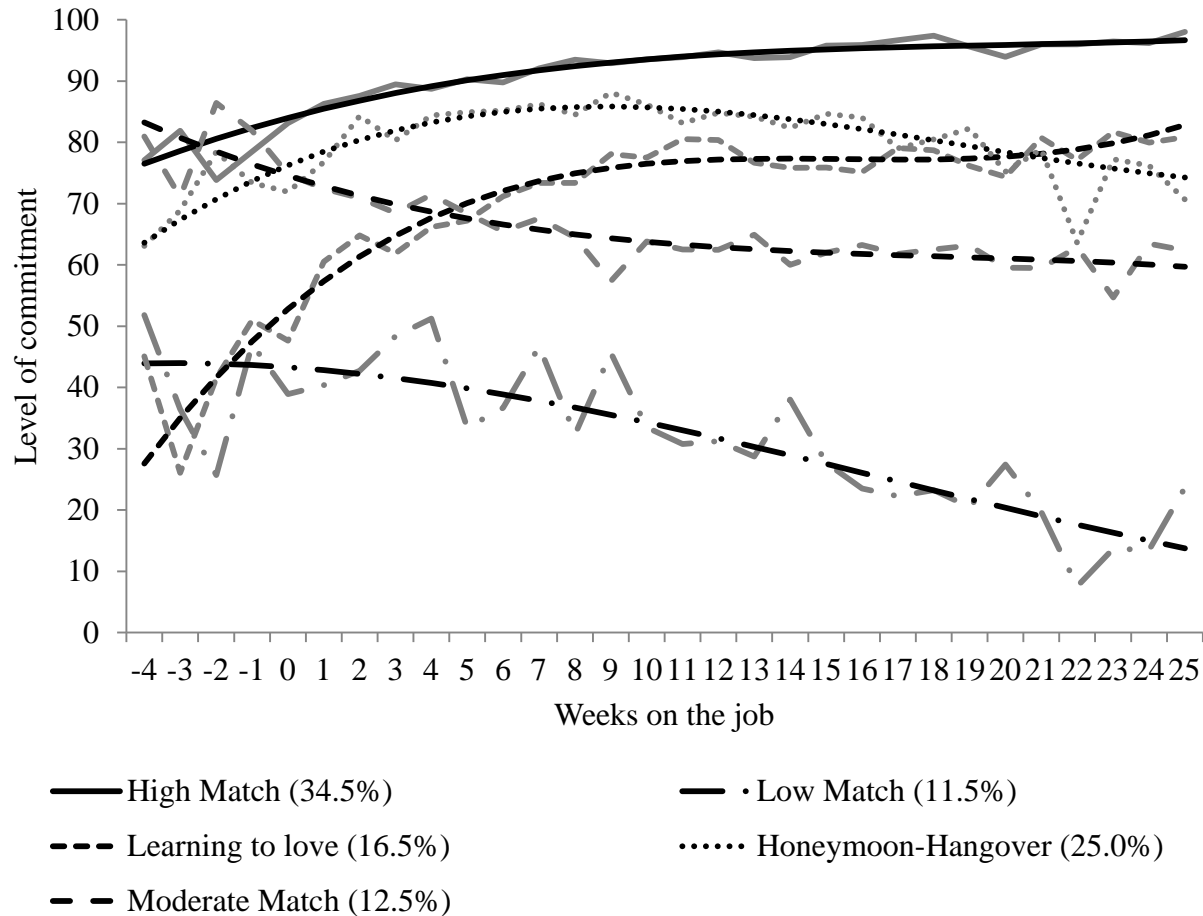
Soap box!

Langley, A., Smallman, C., Tsoukas, H., and Van de Ven, A. H. (2013). Process studies of change in organization and management: Unveiling temporality, activity, and flow. ***Academy of Management Journal***, 56(1), 1-13.

'What is this a case of?'



2013 -> Onboarding scenarios

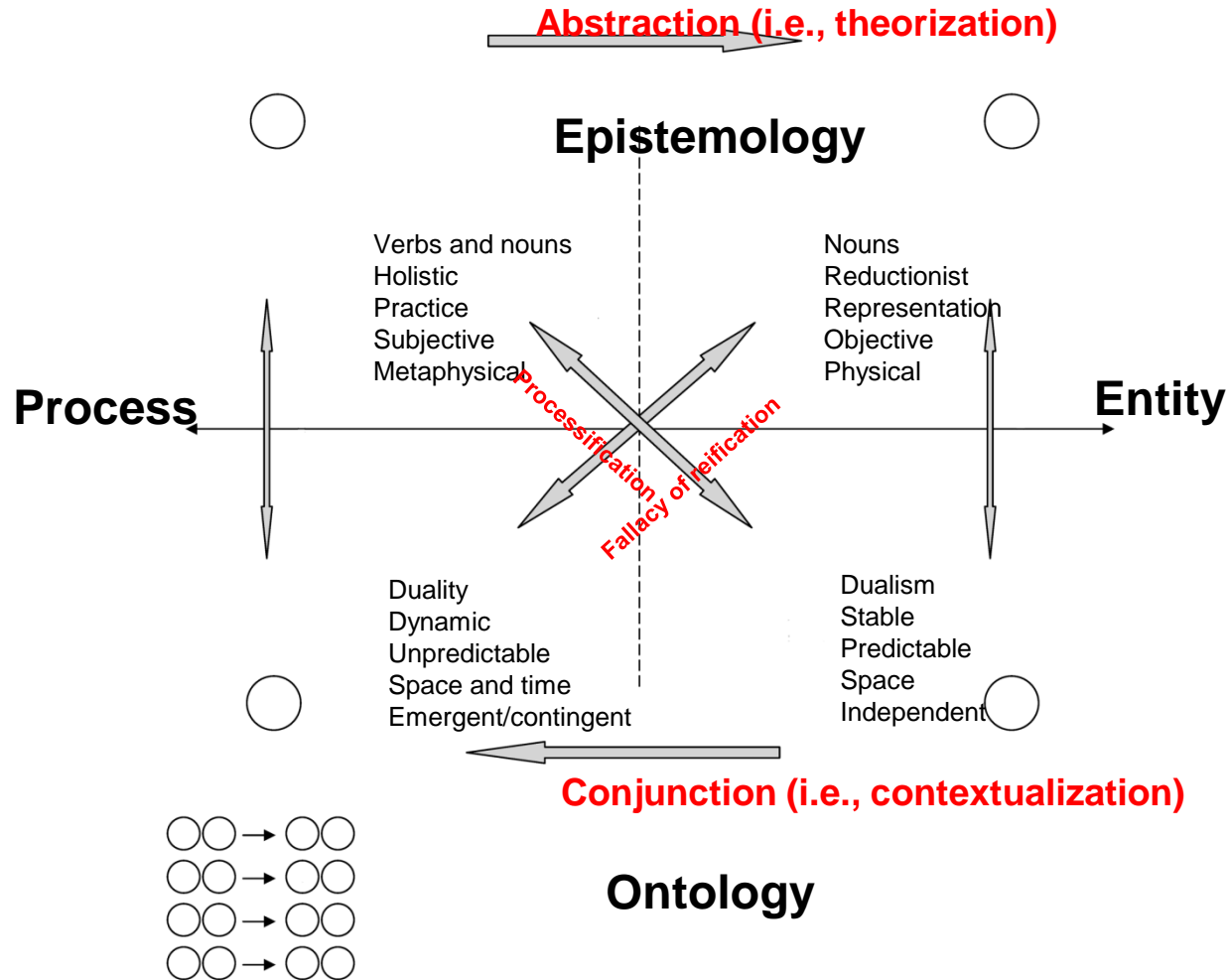


Solinger, O. N., van Olffen, Roe, & Hofmans, J. (2013). On becoming (un)committed: A taxonomy and test of newcomer onboarding scenarios. *Organization Science*, 24(6), 1640–1661

Why we should not confuse things with processes.....

Thompson, M. (2011). Ontological shift or ontological drift: Reality claims, epistemological frameworks and theory generation in organization studies. ***Academy of Management Review.***

Fallacies in reasoning



Soap box!

Cornelissen, J.P. (in press), Preserving theoretical divergence in management research: Why the explanatory potential of qualitative research should be harnessed rather than suppressed, *Journal of Management Studies*.

Thought “Styles”

- Differential and temporal thought domains represent distinct doctrinal tendencies: ingrained and habitual thought patterns which influence research decisions in all stages of inquiry
 - research questions, conceptualization theoretical modeling, design, methodology, analysis and theoretical contribution
 - All these elements must display internal consistency (e.g., ‘methodological fit’/ ‘epistemological alignment’)

Ontological assumptions	Differential thinking	Temporal thinking
1. View on the role of time in phenomena: <i>how</i> -questions ('from whence' and 'where to')	Phenomena are time-invariant and retain a unitary identity over time.	All phenomena imply change. Stability is only a temporal instantiation of an unfolding process. In other words, stability is only a special kind of dynamic form observed over a certain time interval.
	Phenomena have an indefinite existence	All phenomena have finite existence. All phenomena follow a life cycle of ascendance, subsistence, and eventual descendance.
2. View on the content of things: <i>what</i> , and <i>how</i> type questions	- Content is fixed and understood in relation to other things.	- Process is fundamental to the understanding of content. Human beings are agents and their agency implies change and transformation of entities under study.
	- Definition of content in terms of 'What is'. - Phenomena are fixed settings within which <i>variables act</i> .	- Definition of content in terms of 'What happens' - Content is defined by its activity: ' <i>Things are what they do</i> '.
3. Approach to causation: the <i>why</i> -question	- Causation is uniform (and consistent) and is typically push-type. Causation is always (uniformly and consistently) 'on'.	- The form, intensity and the kind of causation is time-specific, path-dependent and cannot be seen apart from the context in which it operates (i.e., causation is versatile). Causation is contextual by nature, and event-driven.

Temporal heuristics

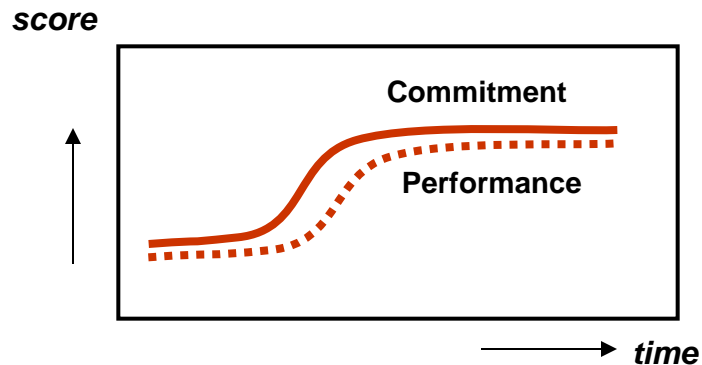
A different mode of thought, characterized by:

1. Root assumption: continuous 'becoming' rather than 'being'
2. Studying development and change
 - Historical records (trajectories) over spans of time,
 - Stories, scenarios, scripts, event sequence (e.g. phases of socialization, routines)
3. Finite existence (emergence, maturity, senescence)
4. Activities rather than variables
5. From whence, and where to? (Faulconer & Williams, 1985).
 - Ongoing temporality: The role of the past, present and future in (constructionist) theory
6. Causation as a 'flow' (rather than a 'force')
7. Time frame has direct effects on what is observed

Heuristic 1

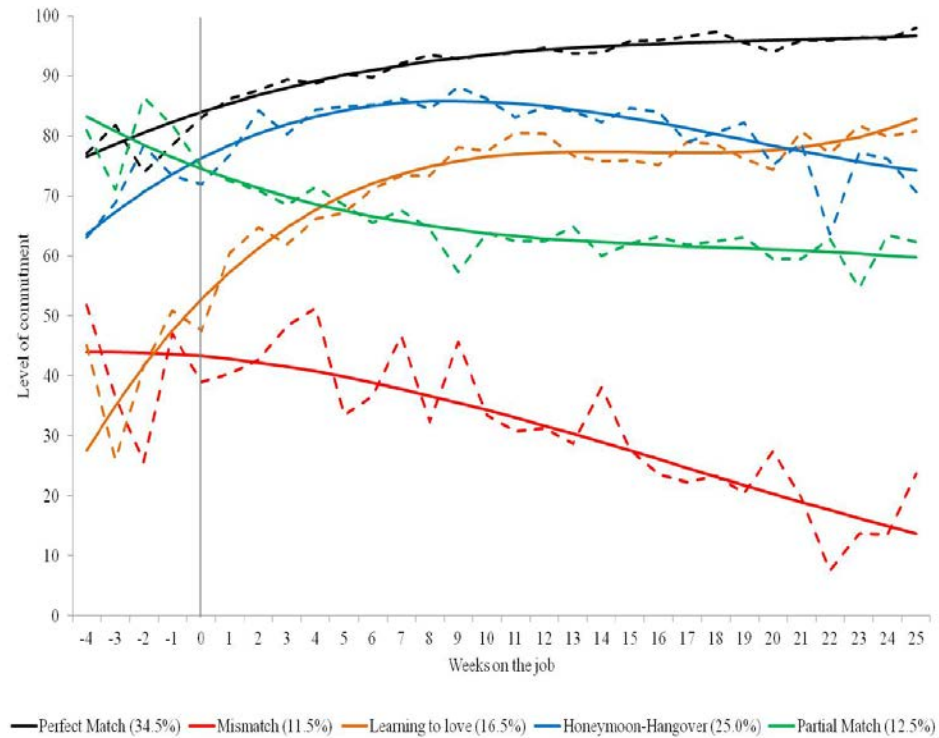
Every process is time-bound

Change ('becoming') is the rule; stability is one of the many dynamic forms (Roe, 2008; George & Jones, 2000; Monge, 1990)



Heuristic 2

Studying development and change



Heuristic 3

Every process has finite existence

Emergence, Subsistence, and Senescence

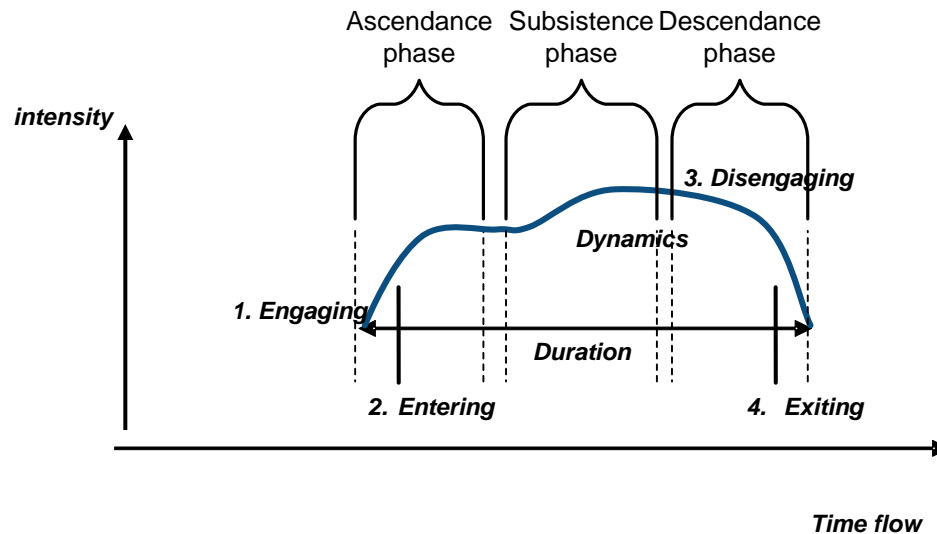


Table 2. Examples of nouns used to designate variables and verbs to designate corresponding phenomena.

Nouns corresponding to active verbs	
Collaboration	Collaborating (a)
Communication	Communicating (a)
Coping	Coping (a)
Cynicism	Being cynical (a)
Decision making	Making decisions (a)
Empowerment	Empowering (a)
Networking	Networking (a)
Organizational citizenship behavior	Engaging in organizational citizenship behaviors (a)
Overtime	Working overtime (a)
Performance	Performing (a)
Planning	Planning (a)
Risk taking	Taking risks (a)
Socialization	Socializing (a)
Trust	Trusting (a)
Withdrawal	Withdrawing (a)
Nouns corresponding to passive verbs	
Climate	Perceiving climate (p)
Promotion	Being promoted (p)
Loyalty	Being loyal (p)
Stress	Being/feeling stressed (p)
Structure change	Experiencing structure change (p)
Unemployment	Being unemployed (p)
Nouns with corresponding active and passive verbs	
Bullying	Being/feeling bullied (p) Bullying (a)
Commitment	Being/feeling committed (p) Committing oneself (a)
Conflict	Experiencing conflict (p) Making conflict (a)
Fairness	Experiencing fairness (p) Being fair (a)
Harassment	Being/feeling harassed (p) Harassing (a)
Leadership	Leading (a) Perceiving leader behavior (p)
Rumors	Hearing rumors (p) Spreading rumors (a)

(a) = active verb, (p) = passive verb

Heuristic 4

Nouns vs verbs

Inputs/outputs vs
A story of (temporally)
unfolding action

“What is” vs “What happens”

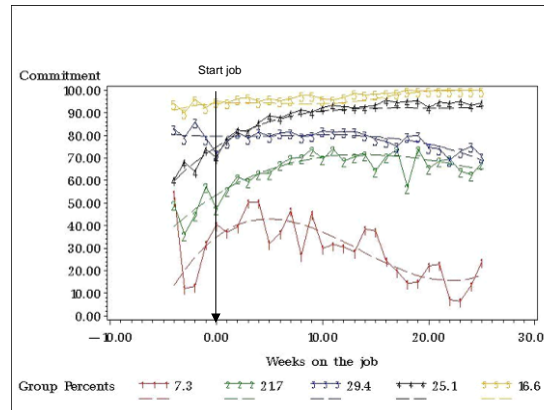
Heuristic 5

Past, present, future

Objectivist

Scenario-based theorizing (e.g. Solinger et al, 2013)

- *From whence*: Path dependency
- *Where to*: equifinality



Subjectivist

Sense making (Weick, 1995)

Agency (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998);

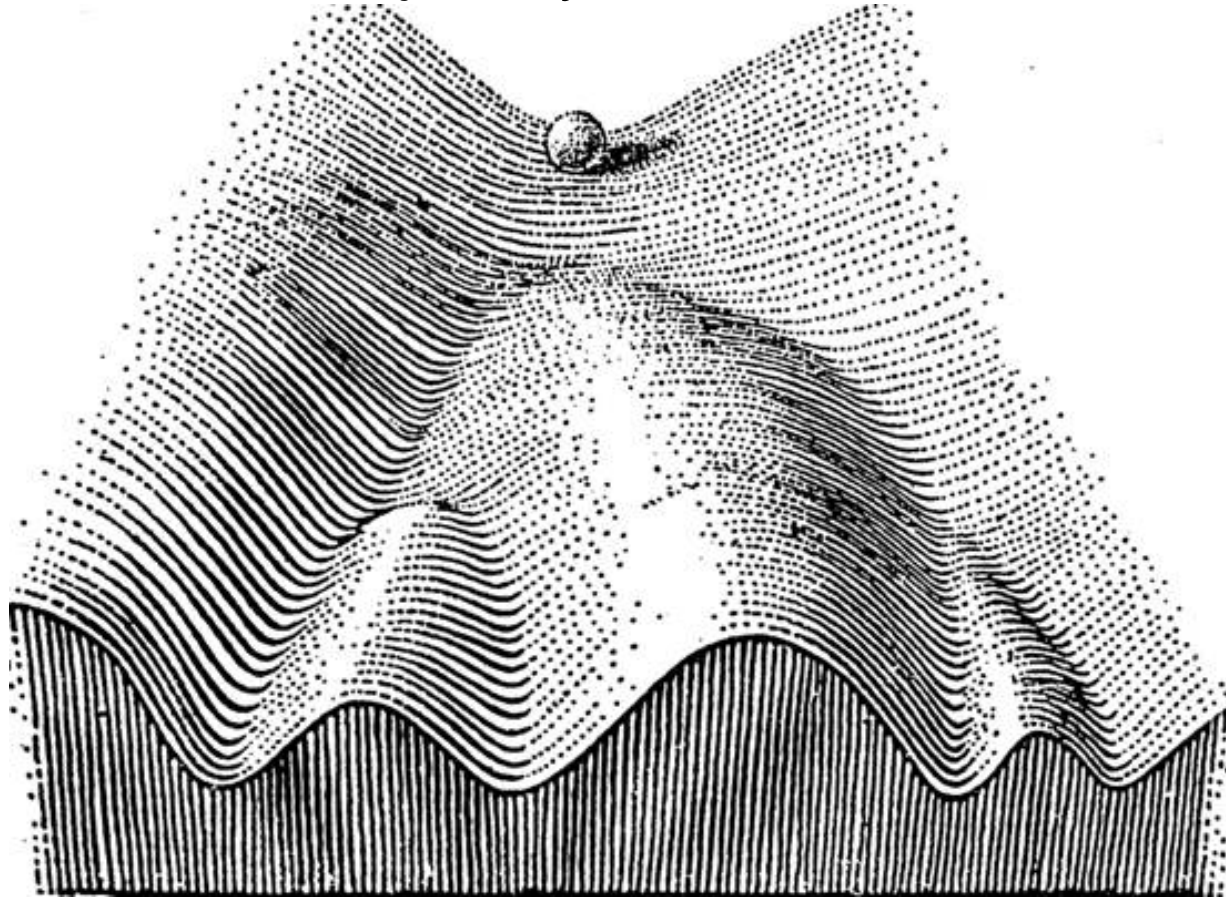
Organizational identity construction (Schultz & Hernes, 2013);

Person-Organization fit (Shipp & Jansen, 2011)

- *From whence*: e.g. autobiographical stories, different types of memory
- *Where to*: how history constrains the future (goals, identity claims, enactment, etc).

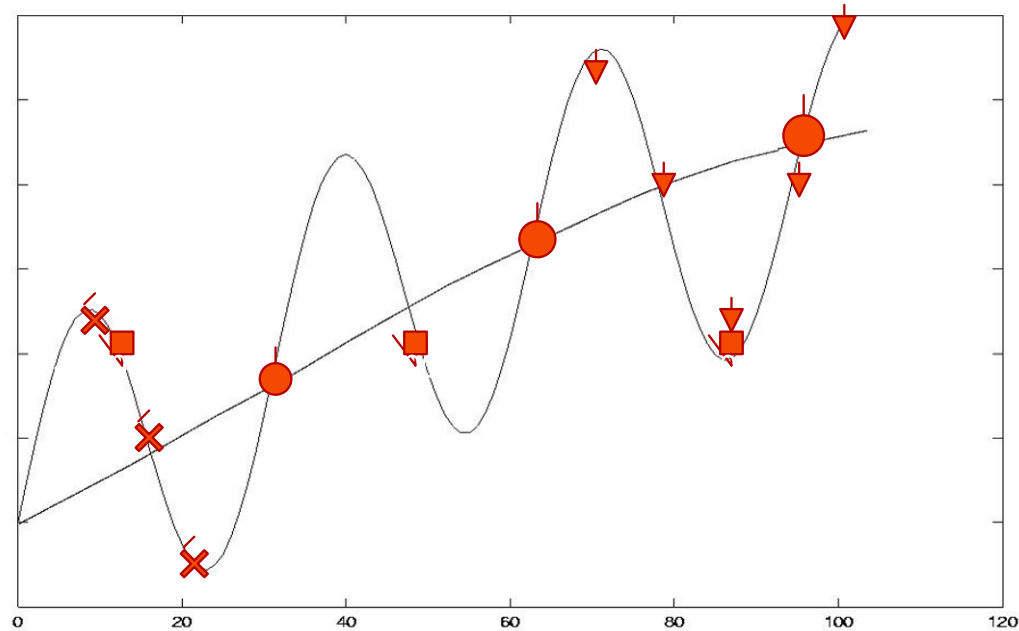
Heuristic 6

Causes as “flows” (versus “forces”): what is the likely trajectory of this ball?



Heuristic 7

Time frame has direct effect on observations



Case example

- Arend, R.J., Sarooghi, H. & Burkemper, A. (2015) "Effectuation as Ineffectual? A Critical Review of a Proposed New Theory of Entrepreneurship ". *Academy of Management Review*: 40(4).
- ...and Dialogue responses in AMR

Summary and integration

Overview of the course

- 1. Overview of theory in business and management domain (debates, interdisciplinary field, etc.)
- 2. Conventions of framing and claiming a theoretical contribution
- 3. Understanding of the critical “units” of theory; including blending, counterfactual reasoning and construct definitions
- 4. Methodological “tools” and transferable skills

- Course assignment: written essay (2,000 words max.) that describes your use of the methods discussed and used in class (e.g., construct operationalization, counterfactual reasoning, blending) in the context of your own research.
- Deadline: 16th of June via blackboard

That's it!
Nice work