

Decision Processes Colloquia

Monday, November 6, 2017

Where: 250 JMHH

When: 12:00 – 1:15 pm

Geoffrey Fisher

Assistant Professor of Marketing

Cornell University, Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management
and the College of Business

Intertemporal Choices are Causally Influenced by Fluctuations in Visual Attention

ABSTRACT:

Intertemporal discount rates vary widely across contexts and individuals. We propose that a sizable fraction of this variation results from differences in how visual attention is allocated to different features of the decision, such as immediate versus future rewards, and that fluctuations in attentional patterns alter choices. We first tested this hypothesis in an experiment in which subjects chose between receiving smaller-sooner versus larger-later monetary rewards, while their attention was recorded with eye tracking. We found that cross-subject variation in the allocation of attention explained between 22% and 53% of the individual differences in discounting, and that cross-trial variation explained about 15% of the subjects' propensity to choose the delayed option. To test causality, four additional experiments exogenously manipulated the allocation of visual attention and found that shifting attention to attributes that are relatively more attractive in a larger-later option increased patient decision-making and altered purchasing behavior. Together, these results are consistent with the existence of a causal impact of visual attention on intertemporal choice.