

# Decision Processes Colloquia

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Monday, October 17, 2022

Where: JMHH 355

When: 12:00 – 1:00 pm

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## The Behavioral Labeling Effect

### ABSTRACT:

This research introduces *behavioral labeling* (i.e., giving a name to a behavior) and predicts that attaching a word label to a behavior stimulates this behavior. Contrary to the common intuition that descriptions of behaviors emerge as markings for popular actions (i.e., the label is a consequence of the behavior), the authors propose that a description itself can also induce the corresponding action (i.e., the label is an antecedent of the behavior). Building on linguistic relativity theory and based on robust evidence across six studies conducted in the lab and field, the authors demonstrate that merely attaching a fictitious word label to a behavior induces that very behavior. This effect can be explained by the mental imagery a behavioral label evokes regarding the associated behavior, which enhances the implementation of the behavior. The findings contribute to marketing theory by uncovering a novel effect highlighting how language shapes behaviors and offer managerial implications for the field.

