

Decision Processes Colloquia

Monday, October 30, 2023

Where: JMHH G50

When: 12:00 – 1:30 pm

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Exposing Omitted Moderators: Explaining Differences in Treatment Effects in the Social Sciences

ABSTRACT:

Policymakers increasingly rely on behavioral science in response to global challenges, such as climate change or global health crises. But applying behavioral science faces an important problem. Interventions exert substantially different effects across contexts and individuals. We examine this heterogeneity for different paradigms that provide the basis for many behavioral interventions. We study the paradigms across one in-person and 10 online panels with over 11000 respondents. We propose a framework of typically omitted moderators to explain this heterogeneity. The framework's factors (Fluid Intelligence, Attentiveness, Crystallized Intelligence, and Experience) affect the effectiveness of many behavioral interventions and preference measures. The observed treatment effect depends on the distribution of moderators in each sample. Our results motivate observing these moderators and provide a theoretical and empirical framework for understanding varying effect sizes.

