

Decision Processes Colloquia

Monday, November 4th

Where: JMHH F 55

When: 12:00 – 1:20 pm

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Minor Audiovisual Glitches Undermine Virtual Communication

ABSTRACT:

Widespread adoption of video conferencing introduces a novel communication issue: minor glitches, or fleeting errors in the transmission of audiovisual information during a virtual interaction. Although people trivialize these glitches, eight studies—including two archival datasets and six experiments using both live and recorded interactions—show that minor audiovisual glitches during video calls harm interpersonal judgments and decisions, such as hiring decisions after a video interview, trust in a medical provider after a telehealth visit, and parole decisions after a virtual hearing. We find that audiovisual glitches undermine interpersonal judgments and decisions because they violate ingrained expectations of human behavior (e.g., by distorting faces, misaligning audio and visual cues, making movements appear “choppy”), evoking a sense of “uncanniness.” Consequently, audiovisual glitches only undermine interpersonal judgments and decisions in video calls intended to simulate face-to-face interaction, demonstrating that the negative effect produced by glitches goes beyond mere comprehension difficulties, annoyance, and negative attributions. Our results suggest that, despite being considered a boon to equity and access, virtual communication may unintentionally perpetuate inequality, as disadvantaged groups with poor internet connection are more likely to experience glitches, and in turn, negative outcomes in contexts such as health, careers, justice, and social connection.