Decision Processes Colloquia

Monday, October 19, 2026

Where: JMHH 260

When: 12:00 – 1:20 pm

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Beyond Yes or No: Quantity Integration Increases Uptake in the Lab and Field

ABSTRACT:

In everyday life, people often must decide not only whether to act, but also how much: whether to run and for how long, whether to purchase and how many to buy, whether to save for retirement and how much to contribute. This research examines how the structure of these decisions shapes whether people will act. Integrating the action and quantity decisions into a single choice ("quantity integration"), rather than resolving them sequentially, makes people much more likely to say yes. First, lab experiments and a field experiment with an online retail website find that quantity integration increases purchasing. Second, lab experiments and a field experiment with a personal finance app find that it boosts enrollment in financially beneficial programs. Third, the effect extends to health behavior, increasing both sign-ups for guided meditation sessions and actual follow-through. Evidence suggests the effect arises because sequential formats invite decision avoidance rather than considered rejection. Integration interrupts avoidance, making the benefits of acting more cognitively accessible. Accordingly, the effect attenuates when the benefits of acting are weak and when those benefits are made salient in both formats. This work contributes to the judgment and decision-making literature by demonstrating how decomposing complex decisions into smaller steps can sometimes reduce engagement. I close by discussing practical implications and welfare considerations.

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