Conjoint Survey Experiments: Methodological Advances and Applications

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Conjoint analysis is a preference elicitation technique used in marketing research and behavioral economics for a long time. Recently, the technique has been reanalyzed as a method for causal inference in survey research and researchers from wider range of social scientific disciplines – especially political science – have started to adopt the method for their survey experiments. For survey researchers, a key advantage of conjoint design is its ability to incorporate multiple preference dimensions potentially affecting respondents' choice decisions and to analyze them all at once in a single, unified framework without loss of statistical power. Moreover, conjoint designs can be combined with various forms of other experimental stimuli and act as a tool for preference measurement in response to those stimuli. Furthermore, although conjoint experiments are typically associated with their tabular representation of the experimental attributes, their design principle can be extended to non-tabular presentations or even non-textual treatments, making it a versatile framework for analyzing multidimensional preferences and choice behavior for survey researchers.

This panel seeks to bring together some of the cutting-edge contributions to the method and practice of conjoint survey experiments. Shiraito and Liu (Paper 3) tackle the problem of multiple hypothesis testing endemic to conjoint designs, which typically involve a large number of causal attributes to be tested. Across many social scientific disciplines, researchers are increasingly concerned about the inflated false positive rates due to conducting multiple hypothesis tests at once, and Shiraito and Liu use the methodological insights from this broader literature to assess the problem in the context of conjoint experiments. Miller and Ziegler (Paper 2) shed light on an important design aspect of conjoint experiments – abstention – by formally analyzing the consequences of including an option to abstain for the standard causal estimand and empirically evaluating these consequences through reanalysis of published results. Finally, Eshima, Horiuchi, Kuriwaki and Smith (Paper 1) use a conjoint design in their national multi-wave survey of Japanese voters for the

purpose of analyzing their multi-dimensional policy preferences and separating their effects on vote choices from non-policy considerations. In doing so, Eshima et al. develop a novel measure of multidimensional preferences and combine it with respondents' vote intentions to examine the correspondence between the two. These three papers, collectively, represent "state of the art" contributions to the growing literature on conjoint methods and how they should be adopted for survey research.