UCI School of Education

Fall 2020 BrownBag Series

Moving from What Works to What Replicates:
A New Framework for Evidence Based Policy Analysis

Featuring **Vivian C. Wong**, Associate Professor
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Registration Required, Available Here:
https://uci.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_RG-jKYiBR4-1kYk2lCPuCQ

Abstract: Since the start of the war on poverty in the 1960s, social scientists have developed and refined experimental and quasi-experimental methods for evaluating and understanding the way public policies affect people's lives. The overarching mission of many social scientists is to understand "what works" in social policy for reducing inequality, improving educational outcomes, and mitigating harms of early life disadvantage. This is a laudable goal. However, mounting evidence suggests that the results from many studies are fragile and hard to replicate. The so-called "replication crisis" has important implications for evidence-based analysis of social programs and policies. At the same time, there is intense debate about what constitutes a successful replication and why certain types of replication rates are so low. A crucial set of questions for evidence-based policy research involve questions about external validity and replicability. We need to understand the contexts and conditions under which interventions produce similar outcomes. In this research program, I introduce a new framework that provides a clear definition of replication and highlights the conditions under which results are likely to replicate (Wong & Steiner, 2018). I present replication as a prospective research design. This makes it possible to define key assumptions for the direct replication of results, and shows how different replication designs can be derived, and used to evaluate treatment effect heterogeneity. I argue that replication designs are feasible, desirable, and relevant in real world evaluation settings that are important for empirical research in social policy.

Bio: Vivian C. Wong is a research methodologist in the field of Education. Currently, Dr. Wong is an Associate Professor in Research, Statistics, and Evaluation in the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia. Her research focuses on evaluating interventions in early childhood and K-12 systems. As a methodologist, her expertise is in improving the design, implementation and analysis of randomized experiments, regression-discontinuity, interrupted time series, and matching designs in field settings. Dr. Wong's work has appeared in the *Journal of Educational and Behavioral Statistics*, *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, and *Psychological Methods*. Dr. Wong participated in the Institute for Education Sciences (IES) Predoctoral Training Program at Northwestern University, and received the Outstanding IES Predoctoral Fellow Award in 2010 for her dissertation work.