

Title:

The Effort Paradox: Why Cognitive and Physical Work is Loathed and Loved

Speaker:

Prof. **Michael Inzlicht**, Department of Psychology, University of Toronto, CA

When:

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Where:

Aula Galileo, ITAB



Abstract:

People and other animals dislike effort. This dislike is so robust in fact that in a discipline with few laws, psychology has proposed the law of least effort: when given equally rewarding options, organisms will choose option requiring the least amount of physical and cognitive work. Despite the robustness with which people avoid effort, there is also evidence that people find effort valuable and meaningful. In this series of talks, I will discuss the two sides of effort. In the first lecture, I will focus on effort's costs, examining the physiological antecedents and consequences of effort exertion, and the implications of these effort costs for interpersonal processes, such as empathy and prosociality. In the second lecture, I will focus on effort's value, whereby people and other animals value effort retrospectively, putting a premium on goods that were acquired via high effort, but also prospectively, for example, via the process of learned industriousness when effort choices are reinforced. Prominent models in psychology, neuroscience, and economics agree that effort is costly and avoided. Here, I highlight that this is only partly true, and that the law of least effort needs amending.

The Speaker

Michael Inzlicht is a Research Excellence Faculty Scholar at the University of Toronto. His primary appointment is as Professor in the Department of Psychology, but he is also cross-appointed as Professor in the Department of Marketing at the Rotman School of Management. Michael conducts research that sits at the boundaries of social psychology, cognitive science, and neuroscience. Although he has published papers on numerous topics, his current research interests concern work and play. His research on work or effort is mostly on the topics of self-control and motivation, but also includes research on the mentally demanding nature of empathy and compassion. His work on play or leisure is a relatively new direction for Michael and includes research on social media, puzzles (e.g., crosswords, Sudoku), and recreational drug use. Michael completed his B.Sc. in Anatomical Sciences at McGill University in 1994, his Ph.D. in Experimental Psychology at Brown University in 2001, and his postdoctoral fellowship in Applied Psychology at New York University in 2004. He has published more than 150 peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters and edited two books. His work has been featured in media outlets around the world, including The New York Times, The Globe and Mail, BBC News, TIME, The Daily Telegraph, and the CBC, among many others. His research and teaching have been recognized with the Wegner Theoretical Innovation Prize, the SPSSI Louise Kidder Early Career Award, the Ontario government's Early Researcher Award, the ISCON Best Social Cognition Paper Award, the Principal's Research Award (University of Toronto Scarborough), and the UofT Scarborough Professor of the Year Award.