

STATISTICS COLLOQUIUM

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2009

TALK: 4:00 PM — SCIENCE CENTER, ROOM 309

RECEPTION: 5:15 PM — SCIENCE CENTER, 7TH FLOOR

“Using Process Information to Assess the Effects of Registration Laws on Voter Turnout”

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ABSTRACT

Political participation is a critical component of democratic representation. However, previous attempts to estimate the effects of barriers to participation, such as laws that make it more difficult to register to vote, rely on questionable assumptions. We analyze total causal effects using a Bayesian potential outcomes path model in order to incorporate causal process information -- that is, observed post-treatment variables and partial information on the counterfactual values of post-treatment variables. We demonstrate that this additional information can sharpen causal inferences, and that traditional regression estimates for the effects of election day registration laws on African American turnout are likely overstated.

Joint Work with Kevin M. Quinn.