The When and Why of Effects: Moderation and Mediation in Strategic Management Research

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Abstract: For decades, hypotheses that involve moderation and mediation have been central to strategic management research and many other fields such as organizational behavior, human resource management, and industrial and organizational psychology. Moderation represents the “when” of effects because it addresses whether the magnitude of the effect of an antecedent (e.g., organizational structure or strategy) on firm outcomes depends on contingency factors, such as the uncertainty and instability of the environment and the products and services produced by the firm. On the other hand, mediation points to the “why” of effects because it addresses whether an intervening variable or mechanism transmits the effect of an antecedent variable on an outcome. For instance, mediation is captured by the notion that the effect of the competitive environment on firm performance is transmitted by firm strategy, such that the environment influences strategic choices that in turn affect performance. This webcast clarifies differences among moderation, partial mediation, and full mediation and identifies methodological 13 problems related to moderation and mediation from a review of articles in Strategic Management Journal and Organization Science published from 2005 to 2014. The webcast also offers specific and actionable recommendations for improving the appropriateness and accuracy of tests of moderation and mediation. The recommendations can also be used as a checklist for editors and reviewers who evaluate manuscripts reporting tests of moderation and mediation.

Bio: Herman Aguinis is the Avram Tucker Distinguished Scholar and Professor of Management at the George Washington University School of Business. Prior to joining GWSB, he was the John F. Mee Chair of Management and Founding Director of the Institute for Global Organizational Effectiveness at the Kelley School of Business, Indiana University. Professor Aguinis has written the following three books: Performance Management (3rd edition, 2013, Prentice Hall), Applied Psychology in Human Resource Management (7th edition, 2011, Prentice Hall, with W.F. Cascio), and Regression Analysis for Categorical Moderators (2004, Guilford). He has written more than 130 refereed journal articles, delivered more than 230 presentations and keynote addresses at professional conferences, and delivered more than 110 invited presentations.