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Cultural Traits and Behavior During Crisis: Evidence from Courier Daily Performance During the Pandemic

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16:00 – 17:30

WYL314, Dorothy Y. L. Wong
Bldg., Lingnan University



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BIOGRAPHY

Heng CHEN finished his PhD studies at the University of Zurich in 2010. Before he moved to Switzerland, Heng has also studied at Harvard University, Stockholm University and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. His research areas include learning and information acquisition in macroeconomics and political economy. In particular, he works on topics related to financial, economic and political crises, belief formation and news market.

ABSTRACT

This paper studies the differential responses to crisis situations exhibited by individuals from different cultural and historical backgrounds. Using a novel dataset covering 10,000 couriers and 4 million daily delivery records spanning the periods before, during, and after the 2020 COVID-19 outbreak, we show that migrant couriers, in response to heightened infection risks, reduced delivery volumes. Couriers from hometowns governed by the Chinese Soviet Republic in the 1930s decreased volumes significantly more than their counterparts. Combining a large-scale survey of 2,800 couriers working for the same company and other social value surveys, we show that the panic-like response of Soviet base couriers can be partially attributed to the activation of distrust in the government, rather than lower levels of altruism or economic circumstances of their upbringing. Further evidence suggests that trust in government affects how couriers perceive risks and utilize various information sources. (JEL: D9, D74)