

Decision Processes Colloquia

Monday, January 14, 2013

Where: JMHH 240

When: 12:00 noon to 1:20 PM

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Understanding the Origins of Social, Economic and Attractiveness Preferences: Lessons from Hunter-Gatherers

ABSTRACT: This talk reports the results of three empirical studies on the evolutionary origins of human behavior. Human preferences are usually studied in people in industrialized contexts (often undergraduate students). However, these well-studied people may not be representative of the wider breadth of contemporary and historic humanity. I explore behavior within an isolated and evolutionarily relevant population of hunter-gatherers living in remote regions of Tanzania—the Hadza. The first study considers the evolution of cooperation and how social structure may have supported cooperation in our ancestors. Second, I show that the endowment effect bias is not a human universal – a result that points to the importance of culture in generating differences in economic behavior. The last study concerns averageness in judgments of attractiveness in faces and suggests that experience is important in shaping standards of beauty.