Decision Processes Colloquia

Monday, April 27, 2026

Where: JMHH 360

When: 12:00 – 1:20 pm

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Masculine Objectification: How Androcentrism Dehumanizes Men

ABSTRACT:

From a social-cognitive perspective, “man” is the measure of all things and the societal and cognitive default when we think about a “person.” When people anthropomorphize objects, read gender-neutral names, or envision humans, they tend to picture men. Yet at the same time, a broad body of evidence suggests that feminine traits are seen as descriptive of and fundamental to what makes humans “human.” How can it be that we simultaneously see humans as men but see women as more human? The present research aims to resolve this paradox with the hypothesis that masculinity is the cognitive default not only when perceiving humans but also when perceiving many non-human things (i.e., objects), which results in people associating men and masculinity, compared to women and femininity, with objects—an association that has consequences for the way that men’s humanity is understood. This talk explores and tests the masculine objectification hypothesis, finding that objects are more likely to be described with masculine, compared to feminine, traits; men, compared to women, are more likely to be described using object-like traits; and masculinity’s association with objects contributes to the dehumanization of men. In sum, the very fact that men are “the measure of all things,” ironically, may make them seem less fundamentally human.

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