Department of Psychology
The University of Hong Kong
香港大學心理學系

Brown Bag Lunchtime Seminar
(Theme: Social and Health Psychology)

Labelling High-status Women with Masculine References

12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.│ October 7, 2022 (Friday)
Rm 813, 8/F, The Jockey Club Tower │ Centennial Campus │ The University of Hong Kong

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Abstract
Around the world, women have been telling their stories and making their voices heard, from the suffragette movement fighting for the right to vote to the global diffusion of the #MeToo movement calling out sexual misconduct. The route of women's empowerment in the shadow of cultural norms is full of difficulties, such as motherhood mandate, workplace harassment, gendered language. A noteworthy phenomenon has emerged in recent years in China. When confronted with certain kinds of women, people sometimes label them with masculine references, such as "gē" ("brother" in English), "yé" ("master" in English). What are the function and mechanism behind the tendency to use masculine references?

The gender differences in role and resource lead to men being perceived as more socially valuable and competent than women, especially in those socially valuable domains. In societies where gender differences are salient, high-status women challenge the existing gender status quo. I propose that labelling them with masculine references can be a ploy for some people to follow the norms of the group or community they belong to and to maintain the existing gender hierarchy.

Six studies were conducted. The findings suggest that whereas masculine labels may look like respectful and likable appellations at first glance, they, functioning as a strategy for some individuals in responding to the perceived threat from high-status women, fail to advance women's status as a group and still position women subordinately. Language not only conveys biased attitudes, but in turn shapes our attitudes. The present research sheds light on the fact that masculine labels are not a shortcut but rather a barrier to women's empowerment, provides a linguistic perspective on the study of women's empowerment, and has implications for enhancing sensitivity to the use of gender biased language.

About the speaker
WANG, Shiyao is a final year Ph.D. student supervised by Prof. CHEN, Zhansheng. Wang is interested in androcentric language, gender stereotypes, especially how daily communication and cultural construct maintain and reinforce the gender status quo.

Zoom (For participants who couldn't attend the Seminar in person)
https://hku.zoom.us/j/3951550048?pwd=SncvL3RYakEycUtpL29vdDJEdlEwdz09
Meeting ID: 395 155 0048 │Password: psyc

~All are Welcome~

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