

## THURSDAY INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLOQUIUM

**Thursday 04/12/2025**

**16:15-17:45**

**Webb 103**

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### **Weak Crossover, Competition, and Intervention**

Weak Crossover (WCO), exemplified in (1), is the surprising restriction against certain cases of pronominal binding in displacement contexts (Postal 1971).

(1) \*Which boy<sub>1</sub> will his<sub>1</sub> mother scold t<sub>1</sub>?

The purpose of this talk is to revive, refine, and argue for a largely forgotten proposal about WCO due to Ruys 1994, according to which (W)CO effects are a result of a global Economy principle 'Shortest Move' which compares competing derivations of the same interpretation and (roughly) seeks to minimize the movement dependencies involved in reaching that interpretation. On that approach, (1) competes and loses to the semantically equivalent *which boy<sub>1</sub>'s mother scolded him<sub>1</sub>*?

I will defend a version of this approach based on its ability to account for an old and hitherto unexplained WCO puzzle due to Postal (1993): WCO effects disappear when focus-sensitive operators (*only, even*) are added as in (2).

(2)

a. Which boy<sub>1</sub> will only his<sub>1</sub> MOTHER scold t<sub>1</sub>?

b. Which boy<sub>1</sub> will even his<sub>1</sub> MOTHER scold t<sub>1</sub>?

I will argue that (2) is good per Shortest Move, because the competitor in which the bound pronoun and the trace switch places is independently ill-formed, due to a configuration of Focus Intervention (Li & Law 2016, a.o.). (2) are therefore ok because nothing blocks them.

I will present a number of further predictions that the theory makes, both in focus contexts and outside of them, and will attempt to corroborate them. Challenges remain, some of which will be discussed.

Relevant reference:

Ruys 1994. *A Global Economy Analysis of Weak Crossover*

Click [here](#) to see the colloquium program.