Comparative Markedness

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The markedness constraints of classic Optimality Theory assign violation-marks to output candidates without reference to the input or to other candidates. This talk explores an alternative conception of markedness that is COMPARATIVE: markedness constraints compare the candidate under evaluation with the fully-faithful candidate. These constraints distinguish two situations: the candidate under evaluation contains an instance of a marked structure that is also present in the fully-faithful candidate (an "inherited" violation); or the candidate under evaluation contains an instance of a marked structure that is not present in the fully faithful candidate (a "new" violation). Empirical consequences for derived environment effects, long-distance and local processes, and counter-feeding opacity are discussed, as are theoretical questions concerning harmonic ascent and other topics. Comparative markedness is found to have some advantages and disadvantages in comparison with classic OT and alternatives like sympathy, local conjunction, and targeted constraints.