

The University of Hong Kong  
Department of Psychology  
*Departmental Seminar*

*From Vulnerability to Resilience: Multiple Routes to Social Acceptance and*

*Self-acceptance as Buffers of Norm-based Rejection Sensitivity*

Date: May 8, 2014 (Thursday)  
Time: 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.  
Venue: Room 813, 8/F, The Jockey Club Tower, Centennial Campus, HKU  
Speaker: Mr. Yip Wai Kin Charles  
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Have you ever worried about losing friends if you do not follow norms? Have you ever experienced a loss of self-worth following social rejection or failure? People with high norm-based rejection sensitivity have heightened anxiety and expectation of rejection due to non-conformity to norms. They suffer from heightened conformity pressure, lower self-esteem following social rejection, and elevated anxiety for failure. The main purpose of the present research is to examine strategies to alleviate the negative impacts of norm-based rejection sensitivity. In Study 1, participants of the experimental group were presented stories of public figures who gain social acceptance through ego strength and morals rather than through conforming to norms. After reading the stories, participants showed less pressure to conform but their self-esteem was still based on others' approval. In order to enhance their resilience to social rejection, Study 2 moved one step further to weaken contingent self-worth based on others' approval. Participants of the experimental group were presented stories of ordinary people whose self-worth was not contingent on others' approval. After reminding them that others' approval was not required for one's self-acceptance, they reported less decline in self-esteem following social rejection but they were still susceptible to greater negative affect following failure. Therefore, Study 3 aimed to promote unconditional self-acceptance. Participants of the experimental group read a passage highlight the idea that everyone is intrinsically valuable regardless of whether one is popular and self-efficacious. After reminding them that others' approval and achievement would not determine one's worthiness, they experienced less negative affect following failure and social rejection. In sum, the present research revealed various readily learnt strategies to reduce the negative impacts of norm-based rejection sensitivity. The findings have important implications for dealing with conformity pressure and negative affect following failure and social rejection.