



September 4, 2008, Convo Hour  
Collins Center

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## **“Self-esteem Shapes Neuroendocrine and Psychological Responses to Interpersonal Rejection”**

My research focus is on the interactive role that close relationship events and personality play in determining health outcomes. We know that certain personality factors (such as low self-esteem) predispose individuals to interpret relationship events in ways that are harmful to psychological wellbeing and to one's relationship functioning. However, little work has been done to understand how these personality factors may interact with relationship events to affect health. In this talk I will present data from a study that investigated the role of self-esteem in shaping psychological and physiological responses to interpersonal rejection. Seventy-eight participants experienced an ambiguous interpersonal rejection (or no rejection) from an opposite sex partner in the context of an on-line dating interaction. Salivary cortisol was assessed at five time points, and self-reported cognitive and emotional responses were also assessed. Compared to those with high self-esteem, individuals with low self-esteem responded to rejection by appraising themselves more negatively, making more self-blaming attributions, exhibiting greater cortisol reactivity, and derogating the rejector. Path analysis findings suggest that low self-esteem individuals experienced greater stress reactivity because they perceived the ambiguous rejection cues as more threatening and harmful to their overall sense of self worth and perceived regard. Stress reactivity, in turn, predicted greater self-defensive action, as reflected by partner derogation. Implications for health outcomes will be discussed.

Please **RSVP** by noon, Aug 29, 08  
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