

# Decision Processes Colloquia

---

Monday, February 20, 2017

Where: 260 JMHH

When: 12:00 – 1:15 pm

**David Sherman**

Professor of Psychology

University of California, Santa Barbara

## Motivating Change in Health, Conflict, and Education: A Self-Affirmation Perspective

**ABSTRACT:** Experiences, events, and information that threaten a valued self-image can lead to defensiveness, biased intergroup judgments, and underperformance. Self-affirmation theory proposes that individuals possess a flexible self-system such that they can respond to threats in one part of life by affirming self-worth in other domains. In social psychology research, this has been examined in studies where people affirm important values in the context of self-threatening events or information. This talk will present an overview of the effects of self-affirmations in domains such as health, intergroup conflict, and academic performance. Self-affirmations have been shown to reduce defensiveness in response to threats to individuals' health and their social identities, and to improve academic performance among individuals experiencing academic threat. I propose a model that focuses on three components: Self-affirmations boost psychological resources, broaden the perspective with which people view information and events in their lives, and lead to an uncoupling of the self and the threat, reducing the threat's impact in affecting the self. Evidence for the model will be presented from a longitudinal study examining the effect of affirmations on identity threat and academic performance in educational settings. This model helps explain what occurs when individuals affirm the self in the context of threats, and how self-affirmations may instantiate lasting effects through changing the construal of ongoing experience.