The 50 Shades of Social Rejection: The Role of Rejection-Sensitivity in Everyday Exclusion Experiences

By Alison Miller
Overview

• Previous research
• Rejection Sensitivity
• My research
• Future Direction
Responses to Social Exclusion: an example

William McGregor Paxton - The Breakfast (1911)
Responses to Social Exclusion: an example

William McGregor Paxton - The Breakfast (1911)

I’m so stupid, I should have known better.
Responses to Social Exclusion: an example

I feel like I'm going to explode

William McGregor Paxton - The Breakfast (1911)
Responses to Social Exclusion: an example

He doesn’t even notice me…

William McGregor Paxton - The Breakfast (1911)
Responses to Social Exclusion: an example

William McGregor Paxton - The Breakfast (1911)
Social Exclusion

- Molden et al., 2009
  - Rejected
    - Explicit, active, and direct
    - Sense of social loss
    - Prevention-focused responses
      - Enhanced vigilance
  - Ignored
    - Implicit, passive, and indirect
    - Failure to achieve social gain
    - Promotion-focused responses
      - Enhanced eagerness
Social Exclusion: Being Rejected Versus Being Ignored
Molden et al., 2009

Rejected
- Perception of loss
- Prevention motivation
- Enhanced vigilance

Ignored
- Failure to obtain gains
- Promotion motivation
- Enhanced eagerness
Rejection Sensitivity Model

- Developmental origins
  - Attachment style
  - Cognitive schemas
- Interpersonal vulnerability
  - Defensive motivational system
  - Maladaptive “overreactions”
  - Self-fulfilling prophecy

Diagram:
- Anxiously expect rejection
- Lowered threshold for perceiving negativity
- Personalization of negative cue
- Overreact to rejection
Present Study

- What *kinds* of exclusion experiences do rejection-sensitive people have?
  - By whom?
  - In what way?
  - With what reactions?

- Does rejection-sensitivity mean more *anger* in response to exclusions?
  - Rather than sadness or anxiety…
Method

- Source of rejection
  - Relationship
    - Friend
    - Romantic partner
    - Family member
    - Acquaintance
    - Stranger
    - Group/institution
  - Gender
  - Relative status (success, popularity, wealth, etc.)
Present Study

- Experience of rejection
  - Permanence
  - Explicitness of rejection (rejected versus ignored)

- Reactions to rejection
  - Re-engagement (or withdrawal)
  - Expectancy
  - Unfairness
  - Vengeance
Present Study

- Rejection sensitivity questionnaire
Results

- Rejection-sensitivity scale was reliable, $\alpha = .XX$

- Coder Agreement
  - Relationship; $\kappa = .XX$
  - Relative Status; $r = .XX$
  - Permanence; $r = .XX$
  - Explicitness; $r = .XX$
  - Expectancy; $r = .XX$
  - Unfairness; $r = .XX$
  - Vengeance; $r = .XX$
## Results

- What were the general features of rejection episodes?

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Results

- What kinds of experiences did rejection-sensitive people tend to report?

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Summary
Future Direction

- Big picture – research ideas
  - Interventions for high rejection sensitive individuals
  - Consequences of social exclusion on goals

- Little picture – individual lesson
  - Learn from mistakes, respond proactively