

Investigating Rejection Sensitivity: An Exploration of Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Factors

Submitted by

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## DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma. No parts of this thesis have been submitted towards the award of any other degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution. No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the thesis. All research procedures reported in the thesis received the approval of the relevant Ethics/Safety Committees (where required).

Signed.....

Emily L Musgrove

## ABSTRACT

Rejection sensitivity is defined as the tendency to “anxiously expect, readily perceive, and overreact to rejection” (Downey, Feldman, Khuri, & Friedman, 1994, p. 496). It has been conceptualised as a cognitive-affective processing disposition that undermines adaptive functioning. The overall aim of the current research was to explore the rejection sensitivity dynamic and investigate its association with maladaptive intrapersonal and interpersonal outcomes. To address this aim, four studies, each of which used a cross-sectional design, were undertaken. Study one explored the relationship between rejection sensitivity and depressive symptoms, and specifically sought to examine the role of social anxiety and loneliness within this relationship. One hundred and ninety five participants completed questionnaires assessing rejection sensitivity, depression, loneliness, and social anxiety. Consistent with predictions, the results indicated that rejection sensitivity was related to depressive symptoms. The experience of loneliness and social anxiety was found to further explicate this relationship. The second study investigated how rejection sensitive individuals think about and relate to others. Two hundred and five participants were required to complete questionnaires assessing rejection sensitivity, adult attachment styles, and the personality dispositions of sociotropy and autonomy. It was found that rejection sensitivity was most closely associated with an anxious attachment style and intimacy seeking coping strategies within close relationships. However, no set discernable pattern with which rejection sensitive individuals relate to people in general could be identified. On the basis of the emerging patterns of behaviour within close relationships, study three aimed to explore how rejection sensitive individuals react to experiences of rejection from different significant others. Using the same sample as study two, study three required participants to describe how they would respond behaviourally to a series of hypothetical rejection scenarios. Rejection sensitivity was found to be associated with the enactment of maladaptive behaviours in response to rejection situations. However not all rejection situations were associated with the enactment of these

behaviours. That is, in some rejection situations, rejection sensitive individuals responded adaptively. Study four sought to replicate and extend the findings of study three. With a sample of 223 participants, information regarding behavioural reactions to rejection and conflict resolution styles were gathered. Consistent with the findings of study three, rejection sensitivity was found to be associated with the use of maladaptive behaviours in response to experiences of rejection. In addition, higher levels of rejection sensitivity were associated with the use of maladaptive conflict resolution styles. However, as demonstrated in study three, in some situations rejection sensitive individuals responded to rejection by using adaptive behaviours. These findings suggest there may be greater specificity in the situations that are activating the rejection sensitivity dynamic and/or those that are eliciting maladaptive behaviours, than has been previously theorised. Overall, the current research has found that rejection sensitivity is associated with internalising symptoms and compromised interpersonal functioning. It was concluded that rejection sensitivity is a complex construct that cannot be characterised by a single cross-situational pattern of relating. The research has served to reinforce the conceptualisation of rejection sensitivity as a situationally determined, information processing dynamic.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: CONCEPTUALISING REJECTION SENSITIVITY**

### **Overview of Chapter**

The current research aims to explore the intrapersonal and interpersonal factors associated with being sensitive to rejection. This chapter presents a preliminary exploration of the conceptualisation of rejection sensitivity as it has been described within the literature to date. The chapter begins by discussing the human need for interpersonal relationships and the consequences of experiencing interpersonal rejection. The subsequent sections explore the construct of rejection sensitivity and outline the ways in which it has been variously defined and conceptualised. The theoretical framework and the accompanying empirical findings, which have informed and guided the current research, will be discussed. The final section of this chapter delineates the overall aims of this thesis.

### **The Need for Interpersonal Relationships**

The relational nature of the self is unequivocal. It is widely acknowledged that interpersonal relationships are fundamental to the functioning of the individual. Numerous theories have explored the need for close interpersonal relationships and the effects of interpersonal loss and rejection (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Bowlby, 1969, 1973; Erikson, 1963). For example, Erikson's (1963) psychosocial theory of development postulates that social relationships are integral to psychological wellbeing. The capacity to develop a sense of trust, security, and a strong sense of oneself is embedded within an individual's interactions with close others (Erikson, 1963). Bowlby's (e.g., 1969, 1973) attachment theory (to be explored in depth later in this chapter and in Chapter Three) also emphasises the relevance of an individual's early relationships to adaptive psychological functioning. The nature and quality of an individual's early relationships is considered pivotal to later interpersonal and intrapersonal functioning. Baumeister and Leary's (1995) need to belong theory may be considered a point of departure for the integration of the numerous theories which discuss the importance of interpersonal relationships. This theory delineates the processes and reasons as

to why humans are intrinsically interpersonal beings. The theory proposes that the need to belong is a fundamental human striving that leads individuals to form and maintain interpersonal bonds. This need is considered an innate motivation for seeking social contact and is thought to underlie much of human behaviour, emotion, and cognition (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Hoffman, Heinrichs & Moscovitch, 2004). The need to belong theory attempts to conceptualise this human need for social contact and affiliation, and outlines the maladaptive nature of social isolation, rejection, and exclusion (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). The theory encompasses two components: a motivation for frequent interactions with other people; and an overarching structure of relatedness that involves the experience of mutual concern and care (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). It is suggested that one's need to belong is not satisfied until both components are met (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Based upon evolutionary principles, the need to belong theory represents the human being as instinctively driven to establish and sustain belongingness. It is thus postulated that social contact and group membership serve an adaptive purpose by promoting reproductive success and ensuring survival of the species (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Nesse, 1998). Social groups provide food, offer mates, and assist in the caring of offspring. In addition, group membership offers individuals important benefits in terms of defending and protecting oneself against potential danger and external threats (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). The theory assumes that humans possess high functioning motivational incentives to compete for the approval and support from others (Barkow, 1989). It is suggested that individuals strive to be liked, valued and approved of, in order to engage successfully in social interactions (Tooby & Cosmides, 1996). This innate need to belong, serves the function (among others) of eliciting parental investment, establishing and maintaining peer relationships, and attracting desirable mates (Tooby & Cosmides, 1996). Failure to engage in a bid for these social resources however has detrimental effects (Gilbert, 2001).



Baumeister and Leary (1995) suggested that the motivation for belongingness is a need, much like the need for food and safety. Failure to fulfill one's need to belong therefore constitutes severe deprivation. Thus, the need to belong is distinguished from a want or desire. The distinction between a need and a want is determined by the magnitude of aversive effects that follow from deprivation. In the case of belongingness, the aversive reactions of deprivation extend beyond the effects of temporary affective distress. Individuals who are socially deprived are hypothesised to display a range of negative effects including evidence of maladjustment or stress, behavioural or psychological pathology, and physiological problems (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Consistent with this notion, Erikson (1968) explored deprivation specifically in terms of isolation in early adulthood. Difficulty achieving intimacy (the central psychosocial task of young adulthood) and thus a failure to develop close interpersonal relationships during this period is postulated to result in range of negative outcomes (Erikson, 1968).

Evidence to show that deprivation of belongingness leads to maladaptive outcomes has been provided by various researchers (e.g., Cohen & Wills, 1985; DeLongis, Folkman, & Lazarus, 1988). In general, research tends to indicate that for individuals who experience difficulty establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships, psychological disturbance is typically manifest in terms of loneliness, depression, anxiety, and anger (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Empirical research has also demonstrated that mortality from most physical diseases is reportedly higher among individuals who are single and/or lack a close network of relationships when compared to individuals who have close relationships (Lynch, 1979, as cited in Baumeister & Leary, 1995). DeLongis et al. (1988) also reported that individuals who were happily married were less likely to experience psychological and somatic health problems both during and following stressful days when compared to other participants. The social support literature further lends support to the notion of an inherent need for interpersonal relationships and that deprivation can have aversive effects. The stress-buffering

hypothesis suggests that individuals who lack social bonds are more likely to experience the ill effects of stress when compared to individuals who don't lack social bonds (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Accordingly individuals who report high levels of support have been shown to be in better overall physical and mental health than those who report low levels of support (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Evidently, there is an abundance of research that attests to the aversive role of social deprivation in engendering poorer psychological and physiological outcomes. Some of these outcomes will be examined in more detail in the following chapters.

### **Interpersonal rejection as a threat to belongingness needs.**

Experiencing interpersonal rejection has been regarded as one of the most influential disruptions to belongingness needs, serving to undermine this inherent human drive (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Williams, Forgas and von Hippel (2005) suggest that experiencing rejection is a disorienting experience which decreases the importance of an overarching goal of affiliation and takes away the basis for many other behaviours. Within the literature, interpersonal rejection has been variously defined. The term has often been used interchangeably to refer to a range of aversive experiences (Leary, 2005). Negative reactions from others may manifest as exclusion, disinterest, criticism, prejudice, stigmatisation, ostracism, avoidance, betrayal, rejection, neglect, abandonment, abuse, and bullying (Leary, 2005; Smart Richman & Leary, 2009). Although interpersonal rejection may come in differing forms, common to all experiences is the threat that it poses to belongingness needs and goals of social acceptance. Experiences of interpersonal rejection, irrespective of their form, encompass the possibility of lowering an individual's perception of his or her relational value. Relational value is defined as extent to which an individual believes that he or she is someone worth having a relationship with (Smart Richman & Leary, 2009). Rejection is considered a state of low relational evaluation that conveys to the individual that he or she is not considered valuable or important to others (Leary, Twenge, & Quinlivan, 2006). Leary (2005) conceptualises rejection and acceptance as existing along a continuum of relational

evaluation, whereby acceptance encompasses perceptions of high relational evaluation, and rejection encompasses perceptions of low or declining relational evaluation. The concept of differing kinds of rejection experiences and the effects that these experiences may produce will be further explored in Chapter Four and Five. Throughout the current research, except where specified, the term rejection will be used generally to refer to any negative interpersonal experience or event, which connotes low or declining relational value.

There is an abundance of empirical evidence that highlights the negative impact of rejection on interpersonal behaviour and overall subjective wellbeing. Research indicates that rejection experiences are consistent predictors of current and future relational difficulties (e.g., Boivin, Hymel, & Burkowski, 1995; Parker & Asher, 1987). Factors such as social anxiety, loneliness, withdrawal, aggression, hostility, and jealousy have been identified as interpersonal consequences associated with peer rejection (e.g., Asher & Paquette, 2003; Baumeister & Tice, 1990; Burks, Dodge & Price, 1995; Hodges & Perry, 1999; Leary, 1990). Experiences of rejection have also been associated with the hastened onset of depressive symptoms (Slavich, Thornton, Torres, Monroe, & Gotlib, 2009). In addition, rejection has been shown to decrease pro-social behaviour and increase the occurrence of antisocial behaviour. Several studies utilising experimental techniques have indicated that rejection and/or exclusion results in more aggressive behaviour, more self defeating or self destructive behaviour, and less cooperative and helpful behaviour (Twenge, Baumeister, Tice, & Stucke, 2001; Twenge, Catanese, & Baumeister, 2003). Leary and Downs (1995) also suggested that perceived social exclusion is likely to decrease state self esteem, enhance motivation to regain social approval and acceptance, and further, affect one's overall social perceptions and interpersonal behaviour.

Whilst the negative outcomes associated with perceived rejection are numerous and well documented, past research also indicates that people do not necessarily perceive and react to experiences of rejection in a homogeneous manner (Romero-Canyas & Downey,

2005). That is, people tend to vary in their behavioural, cognitive and emotional responses to rejection (Downey, Mougios, Ayduk, London & Shoda, 2004). Some individuals are likely to interpret and react to experiences of rejection in a relatively benign manner, while others may exhibit a heightened sensitivity to such experiences, showing an increased readiness to perceive and overreact to the interpersonal events (Downey & Feldman, 1996). For the latter group of individuals, experiences of rejection precipitate a host of negative outcomes (e.g., Ayduk, Downey & Kim, 2001; Ayduk, Downey, Testa, Yen, & Shoda, 1999; Downey & Feldman, 1996; London, Downey, Bonica, & Paltin, 2007). These individuals may be characterised as rejection sensitive. An exploration of rejection sensitivity and its association with maladaptive intrapersonal and interpersonal outcomes will form the basis for the current research.

### **Defining Rejection Sensitivity**

The concept of being rejection sensitive has been variously described and operationalised (Boyce & Parker, 1989; Downey & Feldman, 1996; Downey et al., 1994; Feldman & Downey, 1994; Mehrabian, 1970). Within the rejection sensitivity literature, there exist two main schools of thought. Although related, they are differentiated on the basis of their conceptualisation of the construct as either a feature of a personality trait (such as neuroticism), or as a cognitive-affective processing disposition influenced by situational factors. In order to differentiate these two schools of thought, it is first necessary to clarify the definition of a personality trait. McCrae and Costa (1990) define personality traits as “dimensions of individual differences in tendencies to show consistent patterns of thoughts, feelings, and actions” (p.23). Fundamentally, traits are enduring characteristics, which remain relatively stable across both situations and across the lifespan (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2007; McCrae & Costa, 1990). Behaviours representative of different personality traits are likely to be exhibited cross-situationally and may therefore be reliably predicted (Tellegen, 1991). Traits are distinguishable from transient states and therefore, by definition are largely

uninfluenced by situational factors (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2007). Boyce and Parker (1989) conceptualise rejection sensitivity in a manner consistent with a trait perspective. They view rejection sensitivity as an element of neuroticism. They define interpersonal rejection sensitivity as “undue and excessive awareness of, and sensitivity to, the behavior and feelings of others” (Boyce & Parker, 1989, p. 342). In accordance with their conceptualisation, individuals who are interpersonally sensitive exhibit a high preoccupation with interpersonal relationships, are hypervigilant in regards to the behaviour and mood of others, and tend to be overly sensitive to changes during interpersonal interactions. Mehrabian (1970) similarly conceptualises interpersonal rejection sensitivity as a personality trait, primarily characterised by generalised negative social expectations. For individuals who are highly sensitive to rejection, interpersonal interactions are embodied by fear and apprehension of rejection, discomfort and suffering. These individuals tend to feel they lack control or influence in their social interactions (Mehrabian, 1994). Their sensitivity is typically manifest in terms of a “reluctance to express opinions, avoidance of arguments or critical discussion, reluctance to make requests or impose on others, easily being hurt by negative feedback from others and fearing such feedback, and a reliance on familiar others and situations so as to avoid rejection” (Mehrabian, 1994, p. 9). Consistent with a trait conceptualisation, both Mehrabian (1994) and Boyce and Parker (1989) have viewed rejection sensitivity as *global* orientation toward interpersonal relationships.

The alternative model of rejection sensitivity conceptualises the construct in terms of the cognitive-affective process school of thought (Downey & Feldman, 1996; Downey et al., 1994; Downey, Lebolt, Rincon, & Freitas, 1998; Feldman & Downey, 1994). Although this conceptualisation shares some similarities with those of Boyce and Parker (1989) and Mehrabian (1970, 1994), it is differentiated on the basis of its emphasis upon situational features. In contrast to the personality trait perspective, which views rejection sensitivity as a *global* orientation characterised by cross-situational stability, this perspective views rejection

sensitivity as a cognitive-affective processing disposition, which is situationally activated (Ayduk & Gyurak, 2008). Grounded within the context of a cognitive-affective processing system (CAPS) framework (Mischel & Shoda, 1995), rejection sensitivity from this perspective is defined as the tendency to “anxiously expect, readily perceive, and overreact to rejection” (Downey et al., 1994, p. 496). On the basis of an extensive body of empirical research (e.g., Mischel, 1973; Mischel & Shoda, 1995), which has consistently demonstrated that a person’s behaviour is influenced by situational factors, and is thus not necessarily cross-situationally stable, the current research has chosen to utilise the cognitive-affective processing disposition conceptualisation to explore the notion of being sensitive to rejection. The following sections will explore this model in depth. To differentiate this model further from a trait approach and to gain a theoretical understanding of the processes and mechanisms underlying the rejection sensitivity model, the CAPS framework will first briefly be outlined.

#### **Cognitive-affective processing system framework.**

Acknowledging the utility of the personality construct, the cognitive-affective processing system (CAPS) theory attempts to integrate the concept of personality invariance and behavioural variance across situations (Mischel & Shoda, 1995). The CAPS theory recognises that a person’s behaviour does vary across different situations, however the theory proposes that such intra-individual differences in behaviour across situations are in fact stable. In other words individuals exhibit predictable patterns of behavioural variability (Mischel & Shoda, 1995). For example, in the presence of certain situational features an individual will reliably behave in a particular way. Unlike a traditional trait approach, the CAPS theory thus places significant emphasis upon situations, events, or contexts. Situations however are defined not in terms of the physical setting or characteristics of an environment, but in terms of the psychological features that they elicit (Ayduk & Gyurak, 2008; Mischel & Shoda, 1995). It is proposed that situational features activate a network of connected and interacting, internal cognitive and affective processes (Mischel & Shoda, 1995). These processes are

formed by an individual's unique history of experiences with those specific situational features (Mischel, 1973; Mischel & Shoda, 1995). The theory reasons that there are intra-individual differences in which specific features of a situation are selectively attended to, how these features are encoded and how these encodings activate and interact with existing cognitions and affects in the personality system (Mischel & Shoda, 1995). Mischel (1973) outlined five types of person variables or cognitive-affective units, which are suggested to mediate the relationship between the psychological features of a situation and the behaviour which is subsequently enacted. These are encodings (i.e., categories for the self, people, events and situations); expectancies and beliefs (i.e., regarding the social world, outcomes of behaviour in certain situations, and one's self efficacy); affects (i.e., emotions and emotional reactions); goals and values (i.e., desired and non desired outcomes and affective states, goals, values, and life projects); and competencies and self-regulatory plans (i.e., possible behaviours and scripts that one can do, the strategies for enacting action and for influencing outcomes, behaviours, and internal states). The core of the personality is determined by the organisation of the relationships among these cognitive-affective units (Mischel & Shoda, 1995). Accordingly, an individual's cognitive-social learning history is postulated to inform the organisation of cognitions and affects in the system (Mischel & Shoda, 1995).

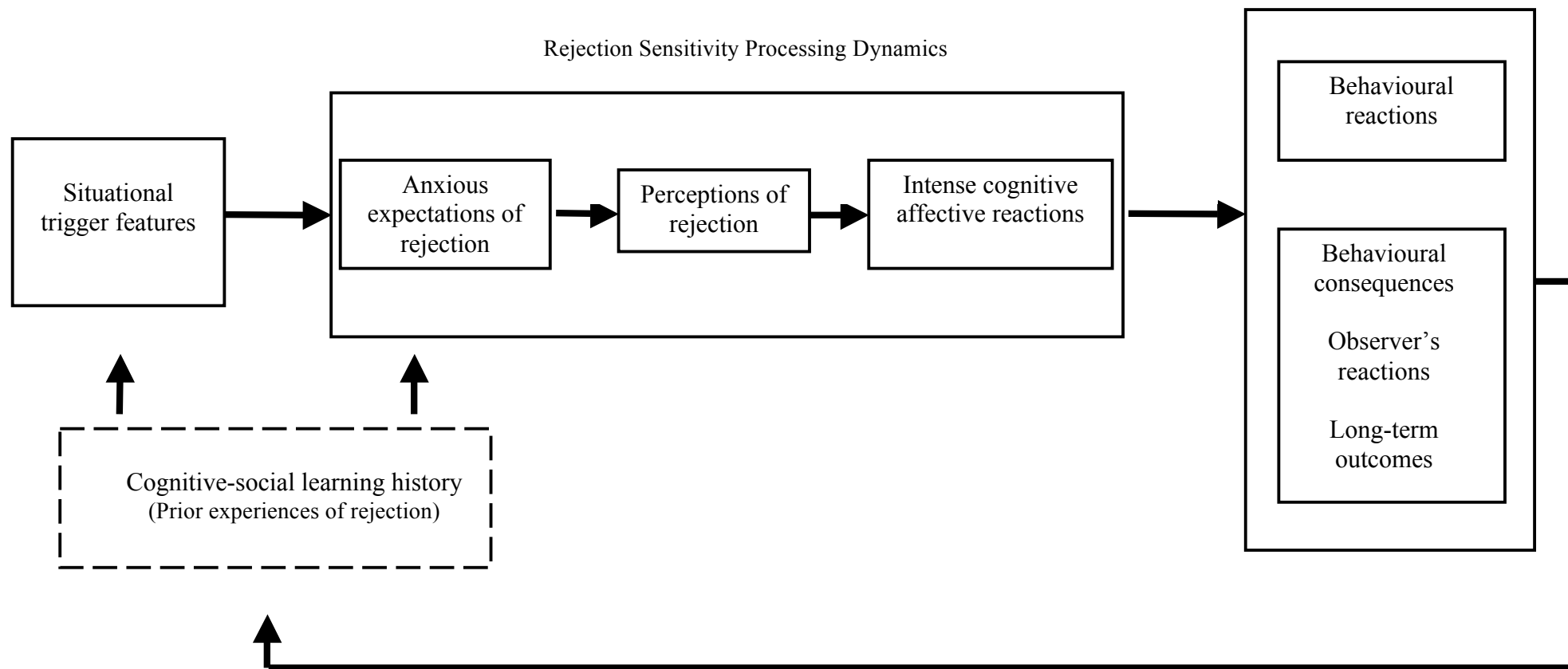
Accounting for intra-individual differences in behaviour across situations, the CAPS theory in essence, postulates that different situations activate different cognitive-affective units that may be linked with different behavioural outcomes. The system is stable in the sense that certain situations will reliably induce certain cognitive, affective, and behaviour reactions in an *if...then* manner (Mischel & Shoda, 1995). Rejection sensitivity is conceptualised as a dynamic, which functions in this way.

### **The Rejection Sensitivity Model**

In accordance with a CAPS approach, rejection sensitivity is viewed as a cognitive-affective information-processing dynamic. Underlying the dynamic is a stable activation

network that connects anxious expectations of rejection, perceptions and attributions of rejection, and overreactions to rejection (Ayduk & Gyurak, 2008). The rejection sensitivity dynamic is proposed to shape an individual's perception of his or her social world through expectations, perceptual biases, and encoding strategies that are activated under certain and specific interpersonal circumstances (Romero-Canyas & Downey, 2005). An individual's social learning history informs how these cognitive-affective variables are mentally represented and organised, and how these cognitive-affective variables interact to generate behaviour in new situations (Feldman & Downey, 1994). An adapted illustration of the rejection sensitivity model is presented Figure 1. It forms the context for the current research. To summarise, the rejection sensitivity dynamic is conceptualised as a self-perpetuating cycle. As demonstrated in Figure 1, as a function of early rejection experiences, an individual may come to expect rejection from significant others. In situations that encompass the possibility of rejection, these expectations are activated, leading to an increase readiness to perceive rejection cues. Perceptions of rejection then lead to cognitive, affective, and behavioural overreactions, which in turn lead to maladaptive intrapersonal and interpersonal outcomes (Levy, Ayduk, & Downey, 2001). The defining features of the rejection sensitivity model will be explored in depth in the following sections. In conjunction with the wealth of empirical data, the reviews of the extant literature conducted by Ayduk and Gyurak (2008), Levy, Ayduk, and Downey, (2001) and Romero-Canyas and Downey (2005) are also drawn upon to delineate the salient features of the rejection sensitivity model. Importantly, for the purpose of the current research individuals who exhibit high levels of rejection sensitivity will be referred to as high rejection sensitive. Except where specified, individuals who exhibit low levels of rejection sensitivity will be referred to low rejection sensitive.





*Figure 1.* The rejection sensitivity model. Adapted from “Rejection Sensitivity and Girls’ Aggression” by G. Downey, L. Irwin, M. Ramsay, & O. Ayduk, 2004, in M. Moretti, C. Odgers, & M. Jackson (Eds.), *Girls and aggression: Contributing factors and intervention principles*. Washington, D.C: American Psychological Association Press.

### **Cognitive-social learning history: The origins of rejection sensitivity.**

As indicated in Figure 1, an individual's cognitive-social learning history is an integral part of the rejection sensitivity dynamic. Researchers posit that the rejection sensitivity dynamic originates within the context of early rejection experiences (Feldman & Downey, 1994). It is suggested that when an individual's needs are persistently met with rejection, whether conveyed through abuse, cruelty, hostility, physical and/or emotional neglect, an expectation that significant others will reject them is readily established (Levy et al., 2001). At the core of the rejection sensitivity dynamic is thus the expectation that valued or significant others will be rejecting (Levy et al., 2001). The internalisation of these early rejection experiences and the subsequent development of rejection expectations are suggested to profoundly, and adversely impact later interpersonal functioning (Feldman & Downey, 1994). The premise that early rejection experiences lead to negative interpersonal outcomes evidently has its foundation in numerous related theories. Horney's (1937, as cited in Hergenhahn, 2009) preeminent research claimed that an orientation toward maladaptive relationships were attributable to a basic anxiety regarding desertion, abuse, humiliation, and betrayal and manifest as an "all pervading feeling of being lonely and helpless in a hostile world" (p. 77). Similarly, Sullivan (1953) suggested that the expectations and associated behaviours specific to an individual's early childhood relationships shapes and informs how individuals come to perceive and relate to others as adults. The rejection sensitivity model draws primarily upon Bowlby's (1969, 1973, 1980) conceptualisation of the link between early rejection experiences and compromised interpersonal functioning, to explain how an individual may develop rejection expectations and ultimately become rejection sensitive.

Bowlby's (1973) attachment theory proposes that "each individual builds working models of the world and of himself in it, with the aid of which he perceives events, forecasts the future, and constructs his plans"(p. 203). The foundation of these working models is the pattern of reliability with which a primary caregiver meets the needs of their child (Bowlby,

1973). On the basis of these early child-caregiver interactions a child develops expectations surrounding the capacity for significant others to either satisfy their needs or be rejecting (Bowlby, 1973). The expectation that others will be accepting and supportive, a secure working model, is facilitated by caregivers who meet a child's needs sensitively and consistently. Children who have developed secure attachment styles typically perceive significant others as supportive, hold mental representations of attachment relationships as warm and accepting, and perceive themselves to be worthy of affection (Bowlby, 1973; Feldman & Downey, 1994). In contrast, an insecure working model, whereby the expectation that others will be accepting and supportive is undermined by doubt and anxiety, is facilitated by caregivers who consistently fail to meet a child's needs (Bowlby, 1973). Children who have developed an insecure attachment style are likely to perceive significant others as unresponsive, unsupportive, or untrustworthy, and experience relationships as neglecting or overtly rejecting, and perceive themselves as unworthy of love (Bowlby, 1973). Bowlby (1973) suggested that these working models of self and other are of particular significance for social behaviour. From the perspective of the rejection sensitivity model, past research has highlighted a positive association between rejection sensitivity and exposure to rejecting or unpredictable parenting during childhood (Feldman & Downey, 1994). Similarly, defensive expectations of rejection have been significantly associated with childhood experiences of emotional neglect (Downey, Khouri & Feldman, 1997). In general, rejection sensitivity has been shown to be both conceptually and empirically linked to insecure attachment styles, which may be considered markers of early rejection experiences (Downey & Feldman, 1996). This association will be further elaborated upon in Chapter Three.

Consistent with the CAPS approach, Downey, Bonica, and Rincon (1999) suggested that early rejection experiences are important in the conceptualisation of rejection sensitivity to the extent that they establish acceptance-rejection schemas. Schemas can be defined as “enduring ways of processing information about an object of thought, such as the self and

relationships” (Westen, Burton, & Kowalski, 2006, p. 503). These relationship schemas form the foundation from which an individual interprets any subsequent experience of acceptance or rejection. Importantly, schemas or working models are susceptible to change as a function of an individual’s unique history of relationship experiences. From this perspective, the rejection sensitivity model takes into account the influence of rejection from sources other than primary caregivers. Past research has suggested that an individual’s peer group may be an integral factor in the development of rejection expectations (e.g., London et al., 2007). Levy et al. (2001) proposed that irrespective of the source and type of relationship, rejection experiences facilitate the development of defensive expectations of rejection. Adolescence may be a period which requires particular attention, as it is during this time of physiological and social disequilibrium that the peer group becomes highly salient. In the transition from childhood to adolescence, an individual’s attunement to signs of peer acceptance and rejection is said to intensify, thus making it an appropriate time in which to assess the development and relevance of rejection expectations (London et al., 2007). In a longitudinal study of middle school aged children, London et al. found that rejection from peers at time one led to an increase in self reported rejection sensitivity levels at time two (four months later). Moreover, these defensive expectations of rejection were found to predict children’s maladjustment manifest in the form of social avoidance, loneliness, and hostility (London et al., 2007). Levy et al. (2001) acknowledged however that rejection experienced during certain significant developmental periods (such as infancy, childhood, and adolescence) may be more relevant to the development of rejection expectations than rejection experienced later in life. Evidently, experiencing rejection from a partner in the absence of a history of rejecting experiences may not be as influential in the development of rejection expectations for future relationships as for someone who has a history of rejecting experiences (Levy et al., 2001). In summary, the literature suggests that early rejection experiences from primary caregivers and peers are

fundamental to the development of maladaptive relationship schemas, and specifically to the development of rejection expectations.

### **Expectations and perceptions of rejection.**

As outlined, a history of rejecting experiences is said to foster the development of rejection expectations. Rejection expectations are the central feature of the rejection sensitivity model because their activation sets in motion the stable network of cognitive-affective processes (Ayduk & Gyurak, 2008). Exemplifying the context-dependent nature of the rejection sensitivity dynamic, rejection expectations are activated specifically in situations where rejection is perceived as a possibility (Levy et al., 2001). Situations that do not engender the possibility of rejection do not activate this network of cognitive-affective processes. Upon the activation of rejection expectations, a rejection sensitive individual enters a state of negative arousal. This state, which is characterised by hypervigilance and defensive emotions, such as anger and anxiety, serves to ready the individual to defend him or herself against possible rejection (Downey et al., 1999; Downey & Feldman, 1996). Ayduk et al. (2000) postulated that high rejection sensitive individuals might have difficulty deploying their attention strategically during interpersonal interactions, as a function of this heightened state of arousal. It causes a narrowing of attention, which facilitates rapid detection of confirmatory threat related cues (Öhman, Flykt, & Esteves, 2001). More specifically, high rejection sensitive individuals are likely to attend exclusively to rejection features or to aversive internal affective states. The opportunity to encode important contextual information, which may provide alternative explanations for the behaviour of others, is thus compromised (Ayduk et al., 2000; Downey & Feldman, 1996; Dodge, 1980; Dodge & Somberg, 1987). This self-defensive system becomes dysfunctional in that it is activated with very minimal rejection cues (Downey et al., 2004).

Whilst the vigilance for rejection cues may be enacted as a coping strategy to prepare the individual to respond defensively, it increases the likelihood of individuals perceiving

rejection in the ambiguous or neutral behaviour of others (Levy et al., 2001). Empirical evidence to support this assertion is provided by Downey and Feldman (1996; studies two and three). In study two, an experimental design was used to test the notion that rejection sensitivity increases an individual's readiness to perceive rejection in the ambiguous behaviour of others. Participants were informed that they would be introduced to an opposite-sex stranger (a confederate) and would be required to converse with them over two short sessions. After the initial session, participants who were randomly assigned to the experimental group were told that the stranger did not want to continue with the experiment, without explanation. Participants assigned to the control group however were told that the interaction was to end because of time restraints. All participants completed pre and post-test questionnaires assessing feelings of rejection, and behaviourally manifest emotional reactions were also observed by the experimenter. The results indicated that for high rejection sensitive individuals, the presentation of ambiguous rejection feedback led to greater reported feelings of rejection compared with low rejection sensitive individuals. In addition, feelings of rejection were behaviourally manifest to the experimenter. However, consistent with the CAPS approach, high rejection sensitive individuals who were exposed to the control condition (which did not involve potential rejection cues) did not differ from low rejection sensitive individuals in their level of rejected mood. It was concluded that such findings provide evidence that high rejection sensitive individuals more readily perceive rejection in the ambiguous behaviour of others (Downey & Feldman, 1996). Study three sought to examine the relationship between rejection sensitivity and perceptions of rejection within the context of romantic relationships. In a longitudinal design, it was predicted that high rejection sensitive individuals would attribute hurtful intent in their romantic partner's insensitive behaviour. Participants were individuals who had recently begun a new relationship. They completed a series of questionnaires at time one, and again at time two, four months later. Attributions of hurtful intent were measured using an adapted version of the Relationship

Attribution Scale (Fincham & Bradbury, 1992) in which items convey behaviour that is insensitive, but may have arisen for a various reasons, and was not necessarily due to a partner's intentional desire to be hurtful. Results showed that individuals who exhibited anxious expectations of rejection at time one were likely to attribute hurtful intent in their partner's insensitive behaviour at time two. Importantly, this relationship remained stable after controlling for other personality factors such as neuroticism, social anxiety, social avoidance, adult attachment styles, and introversion (Downey & Feldman, 1996). In general, past research suggests that the activation of rejection expectations facilitates a readiness to perceive rejection cues.

### **Cognitive-affective responses to rejection.**

As highlighted in Figure 1, once the behaviour of others has been encoded as rejecting (whether accurate or not), maladaptive cognitive-affective responses are typically elicited. Such responses include, hurt, jealousy, sadness, depression, despondency, anger, resentment, and blaming self or others (Downey & Feldman, 1996; Downey et al., 1994; Levy et al, 2001). In addition to experiencing these aversive outcomes, high rejection sensitive individuals have been shown to experience a greater intensity of distress following the perception of rejection than non-rejection sensitive individuals. This distinction between high rejection sensitive and low rejection sensitive individuals was initially highlighted by Downey and Feldman (1996, study 2), as outlined above, who demonstrated that within the context of ambiguous feedback, high rejection sensitive participants reported greater feelings of rejection, when compared to low rejection sensitive participants. Moreover, such distress was readily observable to the experimenter. These findings are further reiterated by a study that investigated rejection sensitivity and interpersonal difficulties in early adolescence (Downey, Lebolt, et al., 1998). A sample of 76 early adolescents were randomly assigned to either a control or experimental group. All participants were individually brought to a room and introduced to the examiner. They were told that it would helpful if they undertook the

interview with a friend and were asked to nominate a classmate who they would like enjoy working with. A research assistant was requested to bring the friend to the room. Whilst doing so, participants completed a measure of distress. Upon returning, the research assistant informed the adolescents in the experimental group that the friend did not want to come. For those in the control group, participants were informed that the teacher told the friend that he/she couldn't go right now. Following the news, all participants completed the distress questionnaire for the second time. The results indicated that high rejection sensitive participants exposed to the experimental condition showed the highest levels of distress. In contrast low rejection sensitive participants in the experimental condition showed similar levels of distress to those in the control condition. Comparable to the findings obtained by Downey and Feldman (1996, study two), perceiving rejection within the context of ambiguous cues induces greater distress in high rejection sensitive individuals than in low rejection sensitive individuals (Downey, Lebolt, et al., 1998).

In summary, grounded within the context of the aforementioned findings and the CAPS approach, Levy et al. (2001) concluded that there are three basic premises which underlie the processes linking expectations of rejection to perceptions of rejection and intense cognitive-affective reactions within the rejection sensitivity model: (a) expectations of rejection are activated in situations which afford the possibility of rejection; (b) when compared to low rejection sensitive individuals, high rejection sensitive individuals are more likely to perceive rejection in the ambiguous behaviour of others; and (c) when rejection expectations are activated and rejection cues perceived, rejection sensitive individuals experience distress and negative affect.

### **Behavioural reactions to rejection.**

The cognitive-affective responses elicited by the perception of rejection cues are central to the self-perpetuating nature of the rejection sensitivity dynamic. As demonstrated in Figure 1, an individual's interpretative biases and affective overreactions are suggested to



then facilitate the enactment of maladaptive behavioural reactions (Downey et al., 2004; Downey & Feldman, 1996; Downey, Freitas, Michaelis, & Khouri, 1998) Specifically, within rejection relevant contexts, the elicitation of intense cognitive-affective reactions translates to the automatic enactment of defensive behavioural responses (Ayduk & Gyurak, 2008; London, et al., 2007). Behavioural responses are manifest as fight or flight reactions, such as social withdrawal or social aggression or hostility (e.g., Downey & Feldman, 1996; Ayduk, et al., 2000). The extant literature has provided extensive of evidence that attests to the maladaptive behavioral responses associated with and caused by the tendency to anxiously expect and readily perceive rejection (e.g., Ayduk et al., 1999; Downey & Feldman, 1996; Downey, Feldman, & Ayduk, 2000; Downey et al., 2004). These behavioural patterns and accompanying empirical findings will explored in depth in Chapters Four and Five. Although such fight or flight behaviours are employed with the goal of protecting oneself from the perceived threat, they serve to compromise the goals of acceptance and avoidance of rejection. Such interpersonal behaviours are undesirable, and thus people are likely to respond to rejection sensitive individuals when they display such behaviour, by exhibiting real rejection cues (Ayduk et al., 2000; Downey & Feldman, 1996; Romero-Canyas & Downey, 2005). Paradoxically this dynamic leads to the fulfillment of rejection expectations and the realisation of an individual's most feared outcome (Romero-Canyas & Downey, 2005). Additional experiences of rejection then function to perpetuate the anxious expectation of rejection and thus the rejection sensitivity dynamic is strengthened. Evidently, the rejection sensitivity dynamic reflects a self-perpetuating cycle that is initiated by a history of rejection experiences and the fostering of rejection expectations.

### **Efforts to prevent rejection.**

An important component of the rejection sensitivity model is how rejection sensitive individuals attempt to prevent exposure to rejection and regulate their heightened sensitivities (e.g., Downey et al., 1999; Levy et al., 2001). Although not specified in Figure 1,

the current research views the coping strategies and efforts used to prevent rejection (which will be delineated below) as integral to the maintenance of the rejection sensitivity dynamic. The coping strategies used by high rejection sensitive individuals are suggested to be implemented in an effort to control the situation in the belief that rejection can be prevented or acceptance regained (Downey et al., 1999). When it is believed that rejection may be prevented, high rejection sensitive individuals typically employ one of two major coping strategies (Levy et al., 2001). Reflecting the influence of Horney (1937, as cited in Levy et al., 2001), these maladaptive styles of coping may be broadly defined as intimacy seeking and intimacy avoidance. Whilst the goal of each strategy is the same, that is, to avoid rejection or maintain acceptance, the cognitive and behavioural features of the respective strategies differ significantly. The characteristics of and the distinction between these strategies are elaborated upon below.

### ***Intimacy seeking.***

On the basis of the belief that “if you love me, you will not hurt me” (Horney, 1937, p. 96, as cited in Levy et al., 2001), high rejection sensitive individuals who utilise intimacy seeking strategies, attempt to avoid rejection by way of securing intimacy and unconditional love (Levy et al., 2001). Adoption of this coping strategy increases an individual’s vulnerability to engaging in inappropriate efforts or behaviours to prevent rejection. Past research has identified two distinct categories of intimacy seeking behaviours which infer vulnerability to maladaptive outcomes, specifically, compliance and coercion strategies (Downey et al., 1999). Within the context of intimate or close relationships, compliance strategies are enacted under the misperception that if an individual changes him or herself to comply with the expressed or imagined wishes of his or her partner, then rejection can be avoided (Downey et al., 1999). Such self defeating behaviours encompass, being ingratiating and overly agreeable, being inappropriately self disclosing, or at the extreme, self silencing (suppressing emotional and cognitive reactions in order to avoid rejection and maintain

desired levels of intimacy, Jack & Dill, 1992), being self blaming, tolerating a partner's physically or emotionally abusive behaviour, and initiating, or acquiescing to a partner's requests for sexual intimacy, in order secure commitment and avoid rejection (Ayduk, May, Downey & Higgins, 2003; Downey et al., 1999; Downey et al., 2004). These behaviours are typically employed at the expense of an individual's own desires or goals. Moreover, the maladaptive nature of these coping skills serves to compromise both the psychological and physical wellbeing of the individual (Downey et al., 1999). For women in particular, compliance strategies heighten an individual's vulnerability to victimisation as she fails to speak up and/or leave an abusive relationship, which further reinforces the behavioural patterns exhibited by an abusive partner (Ayduk et al., 1999). Some individuals also show an increased readiness to engage in anti-social or risk taking behaviours, despite feeling uncomfortable doing so, in order to avoid rejection (Downey et al., 2004). For example, high rejection sensitive adolescent girls have been shown to exhibit a willingness to do anything to maintain their romantic relationships, to the extent that they would engage in behaviours that they thought were wrong (Purdie & Downey, 2000). In addition to increasing one's exposure to victimisation and unsafe situations, compliance behaviours function to heighten an individual's vulnerability to internalising disorders such as depression (Thompson, Whiffen, & Aube, 2001), and self harming behaviours such as substance abuse and/or eating disorders (Downey et al., 2004).

Contrary to the behavioural strategies characteristic of a compliant coping style, the behavioural strategies characteristic of a coercive coping style involve forcing another to meet the needs and wishes of the individual (Patterson, 1982, as cited in Downey et al., 1999). High rejection sensitive individuals who employ this strategy are likely to use threats and guilt induction in order to prevent rejection, particularly in intimate relationships (Downey et al., 1999). Coercive strategies may involve one or more of the following: (a) using aggression or threats of aggression in order to keep one's partner in the relationship and to make them

fearful of the consequences of leaving or rejecting them; (b) regulating and monitoring a partner's social contacts so that they become dependent upon them and a partner's access to alternatives to the relationship is minimised; and (c) threatening self harm to induce one's partner to stay in the relationship (Downey et al., 1999). Evidently, males categorised as highly rejection sensitive have been shown to exhibit heightened levels of jealous and controlling behaviour (Downey & Feldman, 1996; Study 4). The use of coercive strategies to regulate one's sensitivity to rejection ultimately leads to partner dissatisfaction, which may make relationship breakdown more likely (Downey & Feldman, 1996; Study 4).

### *Intimacy avoidance.*

Based upon the belief that "if I withdraw, nothing can hurt me" (Horney, 1937, p. 96, as cited in Levy et al., 2001), and in contrast to intimacy seeking strategies, some high rejection sensitive individuals attempt to prevent rejection by avoiding relationships. It has been suggested that rejection sensitive individuals may in fact be more prone to using this strategy to cope with their heightened sensitivities than the intimacy seeking strategy (Brookings, Zembar, & Hochstetler, 2003). Brookings and colleagues (2003) indicated that rejection sensitivity was more closely associated with an autonomous personality disposition, which is conceptually equivalent to an intimacy avoidant style of coping, than a sociotropic personality disposition, which is conceptually equivalent to intimacy seeking style of coping. The relationship between rejection sensitivity and the personality dispositions of autonomy and sociotropy is discussed and explored in Chapter Three.

In an effort to protect themselves from the pain and distress associated with rejection, individuals characterised as intimacy avoidant, are likely to reduce their involvement in intimate relationships, both friendships and romantic relationships (Downey et al., 2000). When intimacy avoidant rejection sensitive individuals do enter relationships, it is probable that their caution and reluctance to invest in relationships makes it particularly easy for them to withdraw in anticipation of or in response to perceived rejection cues (Downey et al.,

2000). Although individuals who employ this coping strategy may avert the occurrence of rejection and thus the accompanying negative affective responses, the opportunities for feeling worthy, loved, and valued which intimate relationships provide are compromised (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Downey et al., 2000). Consistent with the outcomes of employing compliant intimacy seeking strategies, a failure to develop and maintain adaptive interpersonal relationships may similarly serve to increase an individual's vulnerability to internalising problems such as depression and loneliness (Downey et al., 2000).

Although the nature of intimacy avoidance and intimacy seeking strategies are clearly different, the outcomes of both styles of coping are maladaptive and are likely to perpetuate rejection (Levy et al., 2001). Generally, as a function of the maladaptive coping styles and behavioural overreactions symptomatic of the rejection sensitivity dynamic, high rejection sensitive individuals are vulnerable to experiencing numerous long-term negative consequences. Of particular significance is the notion that an individual's capacity to form and benefit from positive relationships is severely undermined by the rejection sensitivity dynamic (Downey, Freitas, et al., 1998; Levy et al., 2002). As previously highlighted, fear of rejection, expectations of rejection, and hypervigilance for rejection cues severely decreases one's ability to develop and maintain relationships.

In addition to the negative impact of behavioural overreactions and maladaptive coping styles, high rejection sensitive individuals tend to be anxious and highly preoccupied with rejection related cognitions during interpersonal interactions serving to decrease the facility to concentrate and respond appropriately and effectively (Downey & Feldman, 1996). Past research has consistently highlighted the link between rejection sensitivity and poor interpersonal outcomes. Downey and Feldman (1996; Study 4) initially demonstrated that rejection sensitivity works to erode the foundations of a relationship by reducing rejection sensitive individual's and his or her partner's overall relationship satisfaction. The relationships of high rejection sensitive individuals are in general more likely to break up than

those who are low in rejection sensitivity (Downey, Freitas et al., 1998). Downey, Freitas and colleagues (1998) investigated this phenomenon by asking couples to complete a series of questionnaires at time one and again at time two, 12 months later. Controlling for partners' initial level of rejection sensitivity, relationship satisfaction, and commitment, rejection sensitivity was found to predict relationship breakdown again for both males and females. In addition, observation of relationship status statistics indicated that for couples that included a high rejection sensitive female, 44% had broken up a year after completion of the study, in comparison to 15% of couples which included a low rejection sensitive female. Similarly, for couples that included a high rejection sensitive male, 42% had broken up one year later in comparison with 15% which included a low rejection sensitive male. In addition to these findings, research has also indicated that for males, rejection sensitivity predicts lower number of close friends, and lower number of significant, past dating relationships, relative to low rejection sensitive males (Downey et al., 2000). The long terms outcomes of rejection sensitivity will be explored in detail in the prospective studies.

### **Gender differences in rejection sensitivity.**

Rejection sensitivity has been conceptualised as a dynamic, which is not gender specific. The factor structure of the measurement tool used to assess rejection sensitivity, the Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire (Downey & Feldman, 1996) has been demonstrated to be similar for both males and females. Equally, to date, gender has not been identified as a determining factor in the aetiology of rejection sensitivity. However, there exists substantive research that has highlighted gender differences in some aspects of the rejection sensitivity model. These differences become primarily apparent when examining how high rejection sensitive individuals interact with and relate to their romantic partners. Downey and Feldman (1996) initially delineated these differences in an investigation of the quality of the romantic relationships of rejection sensitive individuals. Eighty heterosexual couples were required to complete several questionnaires regarding relationship security and relationship satisfaction.

In addition, they were asked to give reports of their partners' relationship behaviour, specifically in terms of the incidence of jealous, hostile and emotionally supportive behaviour. While high rejection sensitive males and females did not differ in their reported levels of relationship satisfaction and relationship security, gender differences were identified in the kinds of relationship behaviours enacted by high rejection sensitive individuals. As indicated by their partners' reports, high rejection sensitive males were shown to exhibit more jealous and controlling behaviour. For high rejection sensitive males, their jealous relationship behaviours lead to their partners reported levels of relationship dissatisfaction. The pattern of findings was different for high rejection sensitive females. High rejection sensitive females were shown to exhibit more hostile behaviour and to be less emotionally supportive. For high rejection sensitive females, these behaviours lead to partners reported levels of relationships dissatisfaction.

Downey, Freitas, and colleagues (1998) also identified a similar pattern of results with regards to gender differences within the context of romantic relationships. Across two studies examining the self-fulfilling nature of rejection sensitivity dynamic, high rejection sensitive females were shown to exhibit more hostile behaviour during conflicts with their romantic partners when compared with both high rejection sensitive males and low rejection sensitive individuals. Moreover, the behaviours exhibited by high rejection sensitive females during conflict interactions were shown to result in an increase in their romantic partner's reported levels of relationship dissatisfaction, post-conflict anger, and thoughts of ending the relationship. These findings were specific only to high rejection sensitive females and not high rejection sensitive males or low rejection sensitive males or females (Downey, Freitas et al., 1998).

In light of the findings of the aforementioned studies, it may appear that high rejection sensitive females exhibit greater hostility and aggression in their romantic relationships than high rejection sensitive males. Moreover, it may be posited that high rejection sensitive

females are actually dispositionally more hostile than low rejection sensitive individuals in general. However, contrary to such suggestions, first, the relationship between rejection sensitivity and hostile behaviour in romantic relationships has also been demonstrated for males. For example, the rejection sensitivity dynamic has been shown to function as a significant risk factor for the enactment of aggression and violence by males in romantic relationships (Downey et al., 2000). Similarly, the notion that high rejection sensitive individuals are more dispositionally hostile than low rejection sensitive individuals has also been refuted. Ayduk and colleagues (1999) indicated that when high rejection sensitive females were primed with rejection related words (i.e., abandon), functioning as rejection cues, hostile thoughts were fostered to a greater extent than in low rejection sensitive females. However, as evidence that rejection sensitive females are not dispositionally more hostile, in the absence of rejection cues, when high rejection sensitive females were primed with neutral words, there was no significant difference in the accessibility of hostile thoughts, when compared with low rejection sensitive females. Such findings also serve to reiterate the *if...then* conceptualisation of the rejection sensitivity dynamic.

Various researchers have speculated as to what gender differences in rejection sensitivity (if they exist) might mean. Ayduk and colleagues (1999) postulated that in comparison to high rejection sensitive females, high rejection sensitive males exhibit greater heterogeneity in both their responses to rejection and the ways in which they cope with their heightened sensitivities. This implies that when threatened with rejection females will tend to respond with hostility, while for males, this relationship may be determined by their level of investment in the relationship. For example, in the study conducted by Downey et al. (2000), the relationship between dating violence and rejection sensitivity in males was found to be dependent upon the differential strategies with which high rejection sensitive males use to cope with their rejection sensitivity. For high rejection sensitive males who were identified as intimacy seekers and thus high in relationship investment, rejection sensitivity predicted



dating violence. Specifically, anxious expectations of rejection were shown to foster a tendency to interpret a partner's ambiguous behaviour as intentionally rejecting, in turn facilitating angry thoughts, feelings, and actions in response to the perceived rejection. For males who were identified as intimacy avoidant however, and thus low in relationship investment, high rejection sensitivity instead predicted reduced involvement in close relationships (both romantic and friends) and was associated with social distress and avoidance.

Past research has also suggested that gender differences may be a manifestation of the relative importance that females place on close interpersonal relationships and that males place on social devaluation or social status respectively (Baumeister & Sommer, 1997; Downey, Freitas, et al., 1998). Females are suggested to be oriented toward maintaining close dyadic relationships and males are oriented toward maintaining social status. As such, for high rejection sensitive females, private conflicts, for example a disagreement with a partner, may activate the rejection sensitivity dynamic, whereas for high rejection sensitive males, situations which engender public devaluation, such events which threaten the loss of respect or esteem, may activate the rejection sensitivity dynamic (Ayduk et al., 1999; Downey, Freitas et al, 1998). Alternatively, some researchers have suggested that gender differences may be attributable to the use of either reflexive or reflective coping strategies (Ayduk et al., 1999). Males may be more susceptible to using reflective strategies in response to threats, as exemplified by the enactment of controlling or jealous behaviour (Downey & Feldman, 1996), whereas females may be more vulnerable to the use of reflexive strategies, displayed in terms of immediate reactive hostility and aggression (Ayduk et al., 1999). It has been suggested that males employ reflective strategies under the misapprehension that it will prevent their partner from leaving through by the control and minimization of their partner's contacts with perceived rivals (Downey & Feldman, 1996). In contrast, it may be postulated that females employ reflexive strategies in the belief that they are powerless to avert rejection,

and thus these unmitigated hostile responses represent affective reactions such as hurt, anger, despair and hopelessness, to the perception of rejection (Ayduk et al., 1999; Ben-David, 1993; Downey & Feldman, 1996; Downey, Freitas et al., 1998). Given that there is little evidence base to support such propositions however, it is difficult to determine the processes and factors involved in identifying and understanding gender differences.

In addition to what has just been reviewed there is an abundance of research which has discounted or failed to find any gender differences (e.g., Ayduk, Gyurak, & Luerssen, 2008; Ayduk, Mischel, & Downey, 2002; Gilbert, Irons, Olson, Gilbert, & McEwan, 2006). Thus, on this basis, with regards to gender, the findings appear both inconsistent and inconclusive. It could be surmised that males and females respond to and cope with rejection in both different and similar ways. The distinction between genders may be more representative of the notion that anxious expectations of rejection interact with personality dispositions (such as intimacy seeking or intimacy avoidant tendencies) and situational or contextual factors (such as rejection cues), which then determine the chosen coping strategies (i.e., approach or avoidance) (Romero-Canyas & Downey, 2005). Further research is thus required to delineate the role of gender, if any, within the rejection sensitivity model. Gender differences will be further explored in the prospective studies.

#### **Age differences in rejection sensitivity.**

To date, research indicates that age does not appear to be significantly related to or predictive of rejection sensitivity. However, as discussed in Bowlby's (1969, 1973) attachment theory and Erikson's (1963) psychosocial theory of development, there may be times across the lifespan where the rejection sensitivity dynamic may more pertinent to interpersonal and intrapersonal functioning. For example, if a developmental goal of early adulthood is to develop and maintain close, intimate relationships, an individual's fears and anxieties surrounding the occurrence of rejection may be particularly heightened during this time. The rejection sensitivity dynamic, in particular, the self-fulfilling nature of the dynamic

may therefore be particularly salient, given these key developmental goals. Perhaps reflective of the relevance of the rejection sensitivity dynamic at different developmental stages, three measures have been developed to examine rejection sensitivity. In addition to the main assessment tool used to measure rejection sensitivity in adult and late adolescent populations (to be outlined in Chapter Two), there exist two additional rejection sensitivity measures. The Child Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire (CRSQ; Downey, Lebolt, et al., 1998) was developed to measure rejection sensitivity in children in grades three to eight. Additionally, an age based rejection sensitivity questionnaire has been recently developed to assess the tendency to expect, perceive and overreact to age-based rejection amongst older populations (Kang & Chasteen, 2009).

### **Summary**

The research reviewed indicates that adaptive interpersonal relationships are fundamental to psychological wellbeing. While avoiding interpersonal rejection may be considered a universal motivation, the literature indicates that some individuals anxiously expect rejection, readily perceive rejection, and overreact to experiences of rejection (Downey & Feldman, 1996). These individuals may be characterised as rejection sensitive. Posited within the context of CAPS approach, and drawing upon attachment theory, rejection sensitivity is conceptualised as a cognitive-affective processing disposition (Bowlby, 1969, 1973; Downey & Feldman, 1996; Feldman & Downey, 1994; Mischel & Shoda, 1995). The dynamic is activated in situations where rejection is perceived as a possibility. Anxious expectations of rejection foster hypervigilance for rejection cues, which in turn lead to an increased likelihood of perceiving rejection in the behaviour of others. Functioning as a self-fulfilling prophecy, perceptions of rejection subsequently facilitate the enactment of affective and behavioural overreactions, which make it more likely that the rejection sensitive individual will in fact be rejected (Levy et al., 2001; Romero-Canyas & Downey, 2005). The processing dynamics of the rejection sensitivity model undermines one's capacity to develop

and maintain interpersonal relationships, significantly affecting adaptive functioning and one's overall psychological health (Downey, Freitas, et al., 1998). The present research will explore the aversive outcomes associated with rejection sensitivity and attempt to delineate how rejection sensitive individuals interact with and relate to those around them.

### **The Current Research**

On the basis that rejection sensitivity may function to undermine an individual's psychological wellbeing, gaining a comprehensive understanding of the construct is an important undertaking. The overall aim of the current research was therefore to provide an exploration of rejection sensitivity and to determine how this disposition increases one's susceptibility to maladaptive outcomes. The specific aims were to (a) to identify whether being highly sensitive to rejection is associated with poorer psychological outcomes, (b) to understand how individuals who are more sensitive to rejection relate to others and negotiate their interpersonal relationships, and (c) to determine how rejection sensitivity impacts on individual's reactions to rejection, and whether individuals who are more sensitive to rejection react differently from those who are less sensitive to rejection. In order to address these research aims, four studies were undertaken. Study one explores the association between rejection sensitivity and depressive symptoms, study two explores how high rejection sensitive individuals relate to others, and studies three and four explore how high rejection sensitive individuals react to experiences of rejection. The final chapter presents a discussion and review of the overall research.

## **CHAPTER TWO: STUDY ONE - THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REJECTION SENSITIVITY AND DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS**

### **Overview of Chapter**

The previous chapter outlined a number of interpersonal and intrapersonal consequences associated with rejection sensitivity. Rejection sensitivity may be considered a construct worthy of attention because of its possible association with such outcomes. Existing theory and empirical research attest to the role of rejection sensitivity in increasing one's vulnerability to developing depressive symptoms (i.e., Adyuk et al., 2001; Bandura, 1986). However, relatively little is known about how the rejection sensitivity dynamic may function as a risk factor for the experience of depressive symptoms. On the basis of past research and theory, it may be proposed that there are several associated factors which serve to further explicate the link between rejection sensitivity and depressive symptoms. Specifically, whether loneliness and social anxiety mediate the relationship between rejection sensitivity and depressive symptoms will be examined. In the subsequent sections, a review of the extant literature will be provided, within which definitions and conceptualisations of the variables of interest will be presented. The relationship between rejection sensitivity and depressive symptoms, as it is currently understood, is explored first. The sections thereafter will attempt to delineate the influence of social anxiety and loneliness in increasing vulnerability to depressive symptoms for rejection sensitive individuals.

### **Depression**

One of the most concerning potential consequences of the rejection sensitivity dynamic is the experience of depressive symptomatology, and in severe circumstances, the experience and development of a depressive disorder. In order to understand how rejection sensitivity may function as a risk factor for these internalising outcomes, it is first necessary to define depression and to specify how it will be conceptualised within the current research.

The DSM-IV-TR (2000) defines depression in reference to a disturbance in mood. The mood of an individual with depression has been variously described as sad, hopeless, discouraged or “down in the dumps” (DSM-IV-TR, 2000). Symptoms of depression may include, feeling constantly tearful, anxious, or irritable, empty, feeling nothing or having no feelings at all. Depressive symptoms can also encompass experiencing somatic complaints such as aches or pains and psychomotor agitation or retardation, loss of appetite, sleep disturbance, lethargy, difficulties concentrating and making decisions, feelings worthlessness or guilt, and suicidal ideation. Loss of interest in previously pleasurable activities is also typical symptom of depression, and may be exhibited through social withdrawal, neglect of hobbies, an attitude of not caring about anything, and a reduction in sexual interest or desire (DSM-IV-TR, 2000). For the purpose of the current research, the focus was upon the presence of depressive symptomatology. It did not seek to ascertain whether an individual meets the criteria for a clinical diagnosis of a depressive episode or major depressive disorder. Thus, symptomatology was conceptualised dimensionally, and primarily reflect symptom frequency. However, it is important to delineate the meaning and nature of a clinical diagnosis of depression. Depression has been described as a severely debilitating disorder, which critically impairs adaptive functioning and causes clinically significant distress (World Health Organisation, 2004). The clinical nature of depression is complex with symptomatology varied in terms of both quantitative and qualitative presentation. Major depressive disorder is characterised by one or more major depressive episodes of which the predominant feature is a period of at least two weeks in which there is either depressed mood or a loss of interest or pleasure in most activities (DSM-IV-TR, 2000). Given the pervasive nature of the disorder and the associated rates of mortality (DSM-IV-TR, 2000), depression poses as a significant and serious mental health problem. It is one of the most common psychiatric disorders, with the World Health Organisation (2004) estimating that it affects approximately 121 million individuals worldwide. The lifetime risk for developing major depressive disorder has been

variously estimated between the range of 10-25% for women and 5-12% for men (DSM-IV-TR, 2000). Observation of the growing rates of depressive disorders amongst the general population suggests that this illness will increasingly become a major public health concern and thus continual empirical research is warranted. Indicatively, examination of factors that may increase an individual's vulnerability to developing depressive symptoms initially is necessary. It is particularly important as such information may prevent the subsequent development of a depressive disorder.

### **Rejection Sensitivity and Depressive Symptoms**

There exists a plethora of research that has examined the aetiology and maintenance of depression. The literature has identified numerous associated variables and risk factors for depressive symptoms, attesting to the influence of biological, genetic, environmental, cognitive, and developmental factors. While there are varied and complex pathways through which an individual may develop depressive symptoms, rejection sensitivity may be considered one source of vulnerability. Accordingly, previous research has highlighted the association between rejection sensitivity and depressive symptoms, and identified that it can function as a risk factor for depressive symptoms. For example, in a cross-sectional study assessing the association between interpersonal sensitivities and mood, anger, and gender, rejection sensitivity was found to correlate with increased distress, self-blame, and depressive symptoms (Gilbert et al., 2006). Ayduk and colleagues (2001) further demonstrated the predictive association between rejection sensitivity and depressive symptoms. Two hundred and twenty three undergraduate females participated in a year-long longitudinal study on interpersonal relationships. Participants were required to complete two sets of questionnaires at the commencement of the academic year, which included an assessment of rejection sensitivity, depression, attachment and basic demographic information. At the completion of the academic year, participants were required to answer questions regarding their dating history and their expected and actual academic performance. The dating history questionnaire

specifically asked participants to indicate when any romantic relationships had begun, when or if they had ended, and whether the breakup of the relationship was initiated by the partner, by the self, or mutually by both parties. Depression was measured again at this stage. The results showed that females who were high in rejection sensitivity showed a greater increase in depressive symptomatology following partner-initiated breakup when compared with females low in rejection sensitivity. This finding remained consistent after controlling for reported levels of depression at time one. Furthermore, demonstrating that the occurrence of depressive symptoms was specific to interpersonal rejection and not attributable to alternative kinds of loss, rejection sensitivity was not significantly associated with depressive symptoms following the experience of an academic failure. Similarly, the effect of rejection sensitivity on depressive symptoms within the context of partner-initiated breakup was held when controlling for secure, avoidant, and anxious-ambivalent attachment styles (Ayduk et al., 2001). Rejection sensitivity has also exhibited predictive qualities in determining depressive symptomatology in males. Romero-Canyas, Downey, and Cavanaugh (2003, as cited in Romero-Canyas & Downey, 2005) found that males high in rejection sensitivity who held conservative political views whilst attending a liberal university displayed more depressive symptoms than males who held liberal political views. The rejection sensitive males indicated that they felt devalued and disliked by their peers as a result of their political orientation, which subsequently impacted their trust and sense of belongingness to the university.

The relationship between rejection sensitivity and depressive symptoms has also been demonstrated within an Australian sample. Zimmer-Gembeck and Vickers (2007) found that participants with higher levels of rejection sensitivity had greater levels of concurrent depressive symptoms and reported increasing levels of depressive symptoms over the course of one year. Reiterating the association between rejection sensitivity and depressive symptoms, Harper, Dickson, and Welsh (2006) indicated that adolescents who were high in



rejection sensitivity reported greater levels of depressive symptomatology in contrast to adolescents who were low in rejection sensitivity.

On the basis of the aforementioned empirical findings, it is apparent that a relationship between rejection sensitivity and depressive symptoms can be established. However, there exists a paucity of research that has delineated exactly how rejection sensitivity may be linked to depressive symptoms. The following sections will explore the relevance of social anxiety and loneliness as two factors that may account for this relationship.

### **Contributing Factors in the Relationship between Rejection Sensitivity and Depressive Symptoms**

It may be considered that being rejection sensitive does not in of itself produce vulnerability to experiencing depressive symptoms. Evidently, there are related processes and factors, which more comprehensively account for the relationship between rejection sensitivity and depressive symptoms. As outlined in Chapter One, the interpersonal dysfunction associated with rejection sensitivity may facilitate subsequent depressive symptoms. Such interpersonal difficulties may be manifest in terms of increased social anxieties and an increasing sense of loneliness. Both social anxiety and loneliness have been theoretically, empirically, and clinically linked to rejection sensitivity and depressive symptoms. Thus, they may be conceptualised as two factors, which further explicate this relationship. Investigation into the association between these variables is thus warranted, and necessary to understand the nature of the risk of depressive symptoms for rejection sensitive individuals.

#### **Social anxiety.**

In order to provide a thorough investigation into the association between the respective constructs it is necessary to define social anxiety. According to Leary (1983, p. 15), anxiety refers to “a cognitive-affective syndrome that is characterised by physiological arousal (indicative of sympathetic nervous system arousal) and apprehension or dread

regarding an impending, potentially negative outcome that the person believes he or she is unable to avert". Thus, social anxiety refers to anxiety that is activated by the anticipation or presence of certain kinds of social situations (Crozier & Alden, 2005). More specifically, social anxiety can be defined in terms of fear, self-doubt, discomfort, apprehension, or worry arising from the anticipation or presence of real or imagined social situations and interactions with others (Crozier & Alden, 2005; Schlenker & Leary, 1982). Socially anxious individuals are highly concerned about making a desirable impression upon others however perceive a low likelihood of being able to do so (Clark & Wells, 1995; Schlenker & Leary, 1982). Thus, it is the perceived inability to avert negative evaluation, which is suggested to precipitate the experience of anxiety (Schlenker & Leary, 1982). Individuals who are socially anxious typically view themselves as socially undesirable and exhibit a chronic preoccupation with the existence of a critically low social status (Clark & Wells 1995; Kashdan & Roberts, 2007).

In reviewing the extant literature it is evident there has been some disagreement surrounding the definition of social anxiety. There exists significant debate as to whether the terms shyness, social anxiety, social phobia, and avoidant personality disorder are representative of qualitatively distinct disorders or simply representative of quantitative differences (Alden & Taylor, 2004; Hofman et al., 2004). Highlighting the relevance of this notion, the terms social anxiety and social phobia (or social anxiety disorder) have at times been used interchangeably to describe the same phenomenon, and at other times used to represent differing constructs. It is beyond the scope of thesis to provide a comprehensive analysis of the arguments regarding the conceptual distinctions and similarities between the aforementioned terms. The current research will take the dominant perspective, which emphasises a dimensional conceptualisation of the terms. As exemplified by Holt, Heimberg and Hope (1992) the significant degree of overlap in the experience and manifestation of these terms makes it difficult to support a categorical conceptualisation. They suggest that the terms be conceptualised as lying on a continuum of increasingly severe and pervasive

symptomatology, with avoidant personality disorder representing the upper end of the spectrum. Rapee and Heimberg (1997) similarly understood the terms shyness, social anxiety, social phobia, and avoidant personality disorder to be indicative of low to extreme degrees of concern over social evaluation. With specific reference to the difference between social anxiety and social phobia or social anxiety disorder, the current research views social anxiety as representative of non clinical levels of anxiety, and social phobia as representing the clinical levels of anxiety. Differences between social anxiety and social phobia are therefore also seen as quantitative rather than qualitative (Ledley & Heimberg, 2006). Given that the prospective studies conducted for this thesis will draw from non-clinical populations, the term social anxiety will be used with the focus on the presence of symptomatology, rather than the focus on meeting the requirements for a clinical cut-off.

Delineation of the diagnostic criteria for social phobia may, however, provide both further insight into the nature of social anxiety and an understanding of the point at which social anxiety becomes recognisable as a clinical disorder. Accordingly, the central feature of social phobia, as described by the DSM-IV-TR (2000) is a “marked or persistent fear of social or performance situations in which embarrassment may occur” (p. 450). When individuals are faced with a social or performance situation, an immediate anxiety response is thought to be provoked. The anxiety response tends to take the form of a situationally activated panic attack. Typically, individuals with social phobia will avoid the feared situation to the extent that daily functioning is significantly impaired (DSM-IV-TR, 2000). Individuals tend to possess an excessive fear of negative evaluation and scrutiny from others, and are likely to exhibit irrational expectations of humiliation and embarrassment (Walters & Hope, 1998). It has been described as a distressing and highly disabling disorder, characterised by a chronic and unremitting course (Crozier & Alden, 2005; DeWit, Ogorne, Offord & MacDonald, 1999). Epidemiological studies have indicated a high rate of prevalence for social phobia within the general population. The DSM-IV-TR (2000) reports a lifetime prevalence ranging

from 3% to 13%. The DSM-IV-TR (2000) suggests that prevalence rates vary depending upon the threshold with which impairment or distress is determined and the number and type of social situations surveyed. The National Comorbidity Survey-Replication (NCS-R; Ruscio, Brown, Chiu, Sareen, Stein, & Kessler, 2008) conducted in the USA revealed a 12-month prevalence of rate 7.1% and a lifetime prevalence of 12.1%. The study further indicated that 69 -90.2% (dependent upon severity of symptoms) of respondents with lifetime social phobia also met the criteria for at least one other DSM-IV disorder. Previous studies have also reported that social phobia is the third most prevalent psychiatric disorder in United States next to major depression (17% lifetime prevalence) and alcohol dependence (14% lifetime prevalence) (National Comorbidity Survey; Kessler et al., 1994). Furmark (2002) reviewed 43 epidemiological studies from 1980 to recent times, and established that in Western countries, the lifetime prevalence of social phobia ranged between 7% and 13%. In terms of sociodemographic correlates, the NCS-R (Ruscio et al., 2008) indicated that less severe social phobia was more commonly exhibited in men, whilst more severe social phobia was more commonly exhibited in females. In light of past research, it is clear that social phobia is a commonly occurring psychiatric disorder. On this basis, if social anxiety is conceptualised as less severe manifestation of social phobia and representative of subclinical levels of problematic social fears and anxiety, it is presumed that the experience of social anxiety is even more prevalent within the general population (Crozier & Alden, 2005). Given the potential for such a high rate of occurrence, social anxiety it is therefore considered a factor particularly deserving of attention. Consistent with the assessment of depressive symptoms, the current research will assess for the presence of social anxiety symptoms.

Currently there exist varying theoretical explanations of the nature and experience of social anxiety. However, one of the most commonly supported and empirically validated theories is the cognitive-behavioural model (Rapee & Heimberg, 1997). A cognitive behavioural conceptualisation also accords with underlying theoretical principles of the

rejection sensitivity model. From the perspective of this theoretical framework, one of the characterising features of social anxiety is the maladaptive assumption that people are inherently critical. Socially anxious individuals however place great importance on receiving a positive appraisal from others. The cognitive behavioural model attempts to explicate the processes and mechanisms which generate and maintain the cycle of social anxiety. Rapee and Heimberg (1997) outlined that every time an individual enters a social situation he or she forms a mental representation of how he or she believes others perceive his or her external appearance and behaviour. Their attentional resources are simultaneously focused upon this internal representation and onto perceptions of threatening environmental cues. Information retrieved from long term memory, such as recall of past experiences and memory of one's physical appearance, internal signs of threat, such as symptoms of physiological arousal, and external feedback from others including behavioural reactions (i.e., frowns, low eye contact, verbal communications), contribute to the formation one's mental representation of appearance and behaviour. In addition to forming this internal mental representation, socially anxious individuals also make predictions regarding the standard of performance or norm from which the audience will judge their appearance and behaviour. The likelihood of negative evaluation is determined by the presence of a discrepancy between the perception of the audience's appraisal of the individual's performance and the perception of the audience's standard of evaluation. In addition to determining the likelihood of negative evaluation, appraisals are simultaneously made regarding the anticipated consequences of receiving a negative evaluation. A perception of negative evaluation subsequently elicits anxiety manifest in terms of physiological, cognitive, and behavioural reactions. These reactions further contribute to the individual's mental representation of himself or herself and how others perceive his or her appearance and/or behaviour, thereby functioning to further strengthen and maintain the cycle (Rapee & Heimberg, 1997).

Rapee and Heimberg (1997) suggested that the processes and mechanisms symptomatic of the social anxiety cycle, in particular attentional, memory, and interpretative biases as well as behavioural reactions, facilitate the perpetuation of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Past research has identified several dysfunctional interpersonal strategies, which are associated with social anxiety. These include strategies of not asserting oneself, avoiding emotional expression and conflict, avoiding eye contact, limiting verbal output or modifying tone of voice, standing on the edge of a group of people, emotional distancing, depending on others and general submissive behaviours (e.g., Davila & Beck, 2002; Kachin, Newman & Pincus, 2001; Rapee & Heimberg, 1997). These so called *safety behaviours* however are said to engender poorer social outcomes and elicit negative responses from others (Alden & Taylor, 2004). For example, studies which have compared socially anxious and non anxious individuals within the context of *getting acquainted* discussions, have indicated that people are less likely to desire future interaction with individuals who are socially anxious than those who are not. Socially anxious individuals are evidently more likely to exhibit social behaviour which promotes partner disengagement and discourages relationship development (e.g., Alden & Wallace, 1995; Meleshko & Alden, 1993; Papsdorf & Alden, 1998). It is assumed that whilst dysfunctional patterns of interpersonal behaviour are maladaptive, they are nonetheless attempts to maintain a sense of social connectedness (Benjamin, 1993). Cognitive-behavioural theorists suggest that these behaviours reflect a cue activated self-protective strategy aimed at preventing feared outcomes, such as criticism and rejection (e.g., Rapee & Heimberg, 1997). Research thus shows that individuals with social phobia have fewer social relationships when compared to non-socially phobic individuals (Alden & Taylor, 2004).

### ***Social anxiety and rejection sensitivity.***

Based upon a cognitive-behavioural perspective, it may be suggested that the rejection sensitivity model shares common elements with the nature and experience of social anxiety as discussed above. The development and maintenance of dysfunctional interpersonal patterns

displayed in social anxiety also appears present in the self-perpetuating cycle of the rejection sensitivity dynamic. For example, the tendency to misinterpret ambiguous social situations in negative and threatening ways as displayed by high rejection sensitive individuals, has been shown to be a core component of social anxiety (Clark & Wells, 1995; Rapee & Heimberg, 1997). Similarly, research also emphasises commonality in the experience of fear and escape/avoidance in both social anxiety and rejection sensitivity (e.g., Clark & Wells, 1995; Downey et al., 2000; London et al., 2007; Walters & Hope, 1998). The association between social anxiety and rejection sensitivity is further evidenced by the similarity in the behavioural manifestations and consequences of the respective constructs. Consistent with the behaviours characteristic of a highly rejection sensitive individual who employs compliance intimacy seeking strategies, Trower and Gilbert (1989) suggested that social anxiety is characterised less by dominating behaviour and more by submission and escape/avoidance behaviour. Hofmann, et al. (2004) also indicated that individuals with social anxiety are likely to exhibit more submissive behaviours during social interactions than those who do not have social anxiety. In support of the association between rejection sensitivity and social anxiety, Walters and Hope (1998) found that self reported high levels of social anxiety were associated with low levels of commands, bragging and interruptions during social interactions. In general, the literature indicates that individuals with social anxiety tend to behave in a socially innocuous manner. Socially anxious individuals make greater use of excuses and apologies and are more likely to display behaviours such as polite smiling, increased head nodding and agreeableness than non-socially anxious (Leary, 1983; Leary, Knight, & Johnson, 1987; Patterson & Ritts, 1997; Schenkler, 1987). Similarly, rejection sensitivity has been associated with socially ingratiating behaviours. For example, within a valued social group context, highly rejection sensitive individuals who reported feeling isolated displayed a greater willingness to adopt group rules when compared to isolated low rejection sensitive individuals (Levy, Eccleston, Mendoza-Denton, & Downey, 1999, as cited in Leary, 2001). In accordance with the

theoretical underpinnings of both social anxiety and rejection sensitivity, these behaviours may be viewed as attempts to secure acceptance as well as to avoid rejection and negative evaluation, elements which are common to both constructs.

Integral to an understanding of the relationship between social anxiety and rejection is however the distinction between the two constructs. Whilst clearly exhibiting theoretical and empirical similarities, Downey and Feldman (1996) asserted that rejection sensitivity and social anxiety represent distinct entities. Despite evidence of a significant association (Downey & Feldman, 1996; Feldman & Downey, 1994), social anxiety is differentiated from rejection sensitivity on the basis that it is operationalised in terms of measuring levels of fear and avoidance of interactions with strangers or acquaintances. Socially anxious individuals are highly concerned about making a positive impression upon others and thus fear public or performance situations which may engender negative evaluation such as public speaking, parties, dating, or meetings, (Gilbert, 2001; Leary & Kowalski, 1995; Schlenker & Leary, 1982). In contrast rejection sensitivity is operationalised in terms of an individual's expectations and concerns about rejection from significant others (Downey & Feldman, 1996). Rejection sensitivity therefore focuses on an individual's beliefs and anxieties surrounding significant others' capacity to be accepting and to meet the individual's needs. The Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire (Downey & Feldman 1996), which operationalises the rejection sensitivity dynamic, has exhibited distinctive predictive utility in demonstrating that expectations of rejection predict the attribution of hurtful intent to a romantic partner's insensitive behaviour. Social anxiety however was not a significant predictor of attributions of hurtful intent (Downey & Feldman, 1996). In summary, the distinction between rejection sensitivity and social anxiety is based upon the notion that the rejection sensitivity dynamic is activated specifically in situations which encompass the possibility of rejection from significant others, and not strangers or acquaintances. Social anxiety in contrast, is concerned



with fears of negative evaluation, humiliation, and embarrassment, from strangers and/or acquaintances.

In light of the distinctions and commonalities, it is suggested that rejection sensitivity is intimately connected with social anxiety. Utilising an adolescent sample, London, et al. (2007) found that anxious expectations of rejection uniquely predicted increases in social anxiety and social withdrawal over time. It could be postulated that as a result of the maladaptive cognitive, affective, and behavioural patterns associated with rejection sensitivity, an individual may become vulnerable to developing other forms of social maladjustment, such as social anxiety. In other words, the cognitive, affective and behavioural components that are specific to the rejection sensitivity dynamic and which manifest in close interpersonal relationships, may become generalised to interactions with non-close others. Understanding the relationship between rejection sensitivity and social anxiety may be twofold. First, the use of avoidance and withdrawal behavioural strategies to regulate highly rejection sensitive individuals' sensitivity in their close relationships may translate to or motivate the use of avoidance and withdrawal strategies with non significant others. The success achieved in preventing rejection in their close relationships and thus preventing distress, may make an individual more likely to implement such strategies with strangers and/or acquaintances. The self-reinforcing nature of avoidance strategies functions also in perpetuating social fears and rejection expectations. Second, it is possible that the hypervigilance for rejection cues exhibited by highly rejection sensitive individuals in their close relationships may translate to interactions with non significant others. If a highly rejection sensitive individual repeatedly experiences rejection as a function of interpretative and attentional biases and behavioural reactions such as anger, hostility, social awkwardness, and/or excessive reassurance seeking, the belief that he or she can master interpersonal interactions and maintain close interpersonal relationships may be undermined. The reduced likelihood of experiencing interpersonal success in one's close relationships may foster a

decrease in his or her general social self-efficacy, facilitating the onset of more global social fears. It may be proposed that the maladaptive interpersonal nature of the dynamic poses risks for developing more generalised fears surrounding interactions with strangers and acquaintances.

***Social anxiety and depressive symptoms.***

To understand how social anxiety functions as a contributing factor in the relationship between rejection sensitivity and depressive symptoms, it is necessary to investigate the relationship between social anxiety and depressive symptoms. Past research has consistently demonstrated a link between these two factors. The clinical rates of comorbidity between social phobia and depression, the conceptual distinction between the respective factors, and the typical order in which they occur will be explored and attest to the importance of understanding how social anxiety and depressive symptoms are related.

Empirical research has demonstrated that social phobia and depression frequently co-occur (e.g., Brown, Campbell, Lehman, Grisham, & Mancill, 2001; Ingram, Ramel, Chavira, & Scher, 2005). Large scale epidemiological studies and various investigations of diagnostic co-morbidity amongst clinical populations have consistently supported this assertion. The National Comorbidity Survey (NCS) conducted in 1994, revealed that 37.2% of individuals with a lifetime diagnosis of social phobia had a history of mood disorders (Kessler et al., 1994). In an investigation of 1,127 outpatients, Brown and colleagues (2001) similarly reported that current and lifetime diagnoses of social phobia were associated with an elevated risk of developing major depressive disorder and dysthymia. Furthermore, 60% of individuals with a lifetime diagnosis of social phobia had met the criteria for major depressive disorder at some point during their lives, while an additional 20% had met the criteria for dysthymia (Brown et al., 2001). Given these figures, it appears that the presence of depressive symptomatology within the context of a diagnosis of social phobia is a common experience. If social phobia is conceptualised dimensionally and thus represents the more severe and less

commonly occurring end of the spectrum, these figures also suggest that the rate of co-occurrence between social anxiety and depressive symptoms could be presumed to be even greater than documented rate of co-occurrence between social phobia and depression.

Given that social anxiety and symptoms of depression are likely to co-occur frequently, various questions may be raised concerning the distinction between the respective constructs. In general, prior research however has demonstrated that social anxiety and depression are distinct entities (Ingram, et al., 2005). Distinctions between the respective variables become apparent when investigating the specific cognitive and behavioural processes involved in social anxiety and depression. For example, while avoidance of social situations is commonly experienced in both socially anxious and depressed individuals, the motivation for this behaviour is different. In individuals with social anxiety, exposure to social situations is often linked to fears of arousal behaviours, such as blushing or fidgeting, and frequently involves the experience of panic attacks (Ingram et al., 2005). The persistent fear of negative evaluation in conjunction with the physiological symptoms of anxiety leads to these avoidance behaviours. In contrast, individuals with symptoms of depression do not typically experience physiological symptoms, and avoidance of social situations is more likely to be linked to sad mood or loss of interest in previously pleasurable activities. Thus individuals with symptoms of depression may exhibit a reduced desire to socialise, but do not hold a fear of it. An examination of the DSM-IV-TR (2000) criteria for social phobia and depression also highlights the differences between the respective conditions. As suggested by Ingram and colleagues (2005), the criteria for depression place emphasis on symptoms of sadness and anhedonia, while the criteria for social phobia place emphasis on symptoms of fear, anxiety and avoidance. The two disorders also evidence distinctions in cognition. Beck's schema model (1976) posits that depression and anxiety are exemplified by mood-congruent biases that function across all facets of cognitive processing. These include areas such as attention, reasoning and memory. However, he outlined that anxiety involves

maladaptive schemas which primarily centre upon the theme of threat. For example, various studies have identified that individuals with social anxiety display interpretative biases which are specific only to social and interpersonal content (Voncken, Bögels, & de Vries, 2003). In contrast, depressive schemas focus on themes of deprivation and loss, such that individuals with depression typically display interpretative biases that are not content-specific (Bruch, & Belkin, 2001). It is therefore presumed that each disorder operates differently with regard to cognitive content (Beck, 1978). Kendall and Ingram (1989) have indicated that self-referent, definite, and past oriented cognitions of sadness, failure, degradation, and loss characterise depressive affect. Conversely, future oriented and questioning cognitions of danger and harm are most closely associated with anxiety (Kendall & Ingram, 1989). Rapee and Heimberg (1997) further suggested that individuals with social anxiety tend to exhibit a preoccupation with how they are viewed by others, which typically results in the perception that social and performance situations are particularly threatening. Evidently, whilst social anxiety and symptoms of depression are likely to co-occur, they display distinctions in terms of cognitive content and symptom presentation.

Attesting to the notion that social anxiety functions as a risk factor for depressive symptoms, research has consistently shown that social anxiety tends to precede the onset of depressive symptoms e.g., Kessler, Stang, Wittchen, Stein, & Walters, 1999; Lewinsohn, Zinbarg, Seeley, Lewinsohn, & Sack, 1997; Schneier, Johnson, Hornig, Liebowitz, & Weissman, 1992, Stein & Chavira, 1998). It is important to note, that consistent with the research documenting comorbidity rates, research in this area has typically utilised diagnostic criteria to ascertain the order of the onset of symptoms. Thus, the prospective findings refer to a clinical diagnosis of social phobia. However, it should be reiterated that such information is relevant because social anxiety represents subclinical levels of the same disorder. Examination of the mean ages of development for social phobia and depression provide support for the order in which they occur. Magee and colleagues (Magee, Eaton, Wittchen,

McGonagle, & Kessler, 1996) reported that the mean age for onset of social phobia is in the mid teens to early 20's, with onset after the age of 25 relatively rare. In contrast, the mean age of onset for depression is likely to be much later and of more variance than compared to the age of onset of social phobia. The Epidemiologic Catchment Area study (Robins & Regier, 1991) revealed that mean age of onset for depression to be 27 years and those between the ages of 18 and 44 at highest risk for developing the disorder. Perhaps the most important studies however, are those that investigate the temporal relationship between the two disorders. In general, the research has provided support for the possibility that individuals develop social phobia first and then develop symptoms of depression as a consequence of this condition. For example, in a large-scale study, Lepine, Wittchen, and Essau (1993) reported that in 70% of cases, social phobia had preceded the onset of depression, in individuals with lifetime comorbid diagnoses of social phobia and depression. Similarly, in a more recent study, it was found that 72% of patients developed social phobia first in comparison with only 5% who developed depression first (Regier, Rae, Narrow, Kaelber, & Schatzberg 1998). Dilsaver, Qamar, and Del Medico (1992) suggested that in cases where social phobia is considered the secondary disorder, an accurate diagnosis of social phobia can only be made if the symptoms persist when the depressive symptoms are not present. It has been noted that individuals may develop fear of embarrassment in social situations, which occurs only during depressive episodes and subsides in conjunction with a remission in depressive symptomatology (Dilsaver et al., 1992). Thus, with the exception of social fears symptomatic of a depressive episode, the literature generally demonstrates that individuals are likely to develop symptoms of social anxiety prior to the experience of depressive symptoms.

On the basis of past research, evidence of co-morbidity rates, and typical order of symptom onset, it may be suggested that when individual is faced with psychosocial adversity and stressors such as those associated with social anxiety the risk of developing depressive symptoms increases dramatically (Kaufman & Charney, 2000). Various researchers have thus

identified social anxiety as a risk factor for the development of depressive symptoms and depressive disorders (e.g., Kessler, et al., 1999; Stein et al., 2001). Eng, Hart, Schneier, and Liebowitz (2001) suggested that social anxiety inhibits an individual's capacity for rewarding interpersonal experiences, and prevents the achievement of salient interpersonal goals. They demonstrated that social anxiety mediates the relationship between insecure attachment styles and depressive symptoms. Accordingly, it is evident that dysfunctional interpersonal patterns of behaviour deprive an individual from developing and maintaining adaptive interpersonal relationships. Many of the interpersonal behaviours exhibited by individuals with social anxiety are employed with the purpose of avoiding rejection and maintaining interpersonal closeness. However, paradoxically these safety behaviours often result in rejection, subsequent social isolation and ensuing feelings of loneliness, despair, and hopelessness (e.g., Banerjee & Henderson, 2001; Trower & Gilbert, 1989). Such feelings have been shown to feature prominently in the experience of depression (DSM-IV-TR, 2000). Stein et al. (2001) suggest that the primary threat and/or experience of social isolation and rejection characteristic of social anxiety may lead to the eventual onset of depressive symptoms. In addition to failing to satisfy one's inherent need to belong, significant interpersonal dysfunction, such as the inability to interact in social situations, also serves to disrupt social role transitions across the lifespan (i.e., high school to university, university to employment etc.). This is evident as greater social facility is increasingly required as people age. A failure to master and progress successfully through life stages is postulated to lead to a pervasive sense of helplessness and despair (Erikson, 1963, 1968). These periods are said to be pivotal markers for the onset of depression and other psychiatric illnesses (Kessler, Stein, & Berglund, 1998; Kessler, 2003). In general, it may be purported that a lack of goal attainment and social mastery, in conjunction with the experience of social rejection, isolation, and deprivation all lead to pervasive feelings of frustration, loneliness, despair, hopelessness, and

helplessness. These outcomes are associated with and feature in the experience of depressive symptoms.

### **Loneliness.**

Loneliness is one of many possible outcomes of social rejection and interpersonal difficulties, but it also may function as a contributing factor in the link between rejection sensitivity and depression. In order to understand the relationship between the rejection sensitivity dynamic and depression it is first necessary to define loneliness. Loneliness has been defined as an aversive experience which occurs when one's social network is perceived as deficient either quantitatively (i.e., not enough friends) or qualitatively (i.e., lack of emotional support from friends). Individuals are said to experience loneliness when there exists a discrepancy between the social relationships one desires and the social relationships one actually has (Peplau & Perlman, 1981). It is the individual's subjective perception of the quality and quantity of the relationships that he or she has that determines whether he or she is lonely, and it is in this way that the construct may be further distinguished from social isolation (Russell, Cutrona, Rose, & Yurko, 1984). While researchers consistently define loneliness in terms of two fundamental components, affective distress and subjective perception, there appears little agreement as to whether loneliness is conceptualised as a multidimensional or unidimensional phenomenon. Weiss' (1973, 1974, as cited in Russell et al., 1984) typology of loneliness proposed there exist two distinct subtypes of loneliness, distinguished on the basis of quantitative or qualitative social deficiencies. Emotional loneliness is conceptualised to result from a "lack of close, intimate attachment to another person" (Russell et al., p. 1314). In contrast, social loneliness is conceptualised to result from the "lack of a network of social relationships in which the person is part of a group of friends who share common interests and activities" (Russell et al., 1984, p. 1314). Weiss (1974, as cited in Russell et al., 1984) proposed that different types of relationships serve to meet different interpersonal needs. When individuals experience interpersonal loss or deficits, the

extent to which this experience is distressing is determined by the social provisions or needs that were supplied by that relationship (Russell et al., 1984). Accordingly, Weiss (1974, as cited in Russell, 1984) outlined six different social provisions. These include, (a) attachment; (b) social integration; (c) opportunity for nurturance; (d) reassurance of worth; (e) reliable alliance; and (f) guidance. Weiss (1973, as cited in Russell et al., 1984) outlined that deficits in different social provisions did not necessarily result in a homogenous set of behavioural and emotional consequences. He purported that deficits in different social provisions may lead to differential experiences of distress. For example, he suggested that attachment deficits were associated with the experience of emotional loneliness and social integration deficits were associated with the experience of social loneliness. He further proposed that the two types of loneliness were qualitatively distinct in terms of subjective experiences and behaviours. Emotional loneliness was said to be characterised by feelings of anxiety and isolation and social loneliness was said to be characterised by feelings of boredom, aimlessness and marginality respectively.

Russell and colleagues (1984) provided empirical evidence for the existence of two types of loneliness distinguished on the basis of the kind of social deficit experienced. They found that the experience of social loneliness appeared highly related to casual contact with others, while emotional loneliness appeared highly related to intimate contact with others. However, support for the notion of differential affective responses to the respective forms of loneliness appears more limited. Russell et al. (1984) indicated a commonality in the subjective experience of both social and emotional loneliness. In addition, DiTommaso and Spinner (1997) more recently reported anxiety to be a response more closely associated with the experience of social loneliness rather than emotional loneliness as previously advocated by Weiss (1974, 1974, as cited in DiTommaso & Spinner, 1997). However, irrespective of the differential emotional and behavioural consequences, loneliness remains a highly aversive experience. Loneliness is considered a normative experience and a consequence of the human



need to belong. Various researchers have asserted that loneliness is indeed a part of human existence and experienced by everyone to differing degrees across the lifespan (Hymel, Taurulli, Hayden Thomson, & Terrell-Deutsch, 1999; Peplau & Perlman, 1982). As an example, Borys and Perlman's (1985) review of the literature indicated that loneliness affects both males and females. Research suggests that feelings of loneliness may be transient and short lived, determined by situational factors and typically not cause for concern. Chronic and persistent feelings of loneliness however, may be considered more concerning (Asher & Paquette, 2003; Neto & Barros, 2000; Peplau & Perlman, 1982). Indicatively, recent research has served to highlight the clinical significance of the construct, in particular, the association between loneliness and psychopathologies such as depression has been well documented (i.e., Anderson & Harvey, 1988; Nolen-Hoeksema & Ahrens, 2002).

***Loneliness, rejection sensitivity, and depression.***

There currently exists a lack of research, which has specifically examined the association between rejection sensitivity, loneliness, and depressive symptoms, particularly during adulthood. However, past research suggests that it is an association that requires attention. As indicated by London and colleagues (2007), loneliness is variable which warrants investigation specifically because it is a potential outcome of being high rejection sensitive, and in turn may function to increase one's vulnerability to the experience of depressive symptoms.

While previous research has not examined the associations between the three factors, the link between loneliness and depression has been documented. For example, in a sample of undergraduate university students, Rich and Scovel (1987) found that loneliness preceded the onset of depressive symptoms. Similarly, Cacioppo, Hughes, Waite, Hawkley & Thisted (2006) in a longitudinal and cross-sectional study of middle to older aged adults, found that after controlling for demographic factors (including age, gender, ethnicity, education, income, and marital status), loneliness is a unique risk factor for depressive symptoms. It may be

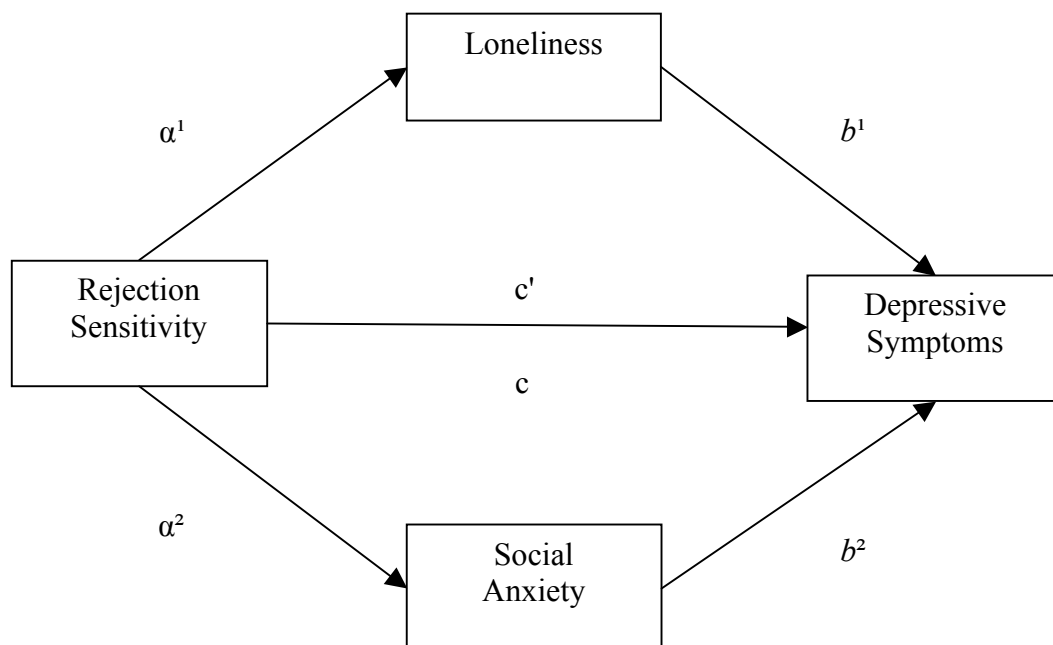
argued that the nature of the rejection sensitivity dynamic is a factor which leads individuals initially to experience loneliness and ultimately to experience depressive symptoms. The rejection sensitivity dynamic encompasses a desire for the supply of more social provisions than one perceives one has in any particular situation, in conjunction with a tendency to underestimate the social provisions supplied in that situation. This proposition evidences consistencies with Weiss' (1973, 1974, as cited in Russell et al., 1984) conceptualisation of loneliness, wherein the affective response is hypothesised to arise from a perceived discrepancy between actual and desired social provisions. Rejection sensitivity promotes the deployment of behavioural strategies, such as aggression, social awkwardness and withdrawal, which function to undermine an individual's capacity to develop and maintain positive adaptive relationships (London et al., 2007). In turn, these individuals are then likely to be deprived of relationships which provide them with a sense of being adequately supported, thus disrupting one's ability to belong. Accordingly, in a longitudinal study of adolescents, London and colleagues' (2007) found that rejection sensitivity measured at time one predicted increased feelings of loneliness at time two, four months later. Posited within the context of the rejection sensitivity dynamic, such findings do not appear unexpected. The rejection sensitivity dynamic is said to promote expectations and increased perceptions of rejection in situations where social acceptance is desired. When an individual fails to achieve the social acceptance they desire, the perceived discrepancy between the desired and actual level of acceptance is thus heightened thereby increasing one's sense of loneliness. In addition, the behavioural overreactions that typically manifest as a result of defensively expecting and readily perceiving rejection, tend to elicit negative responses from others (London et al., 2007). Thus, in conjunction with the reduced possibility of developing positive relationships, that may combat feelings of loneliness, and an increased likelihood of perceiving further rejection, the onset and maintenance of depressive symptomatology becomes more likely. While the relationship between rejection sensitivity, depressive

symptoms, and loneliness has not specifically been examined to date, Joiner (1997) presented findings that support the relevance of examining these constructs together. In a longitudinal study, Joiner explored the effect of shyness on depressive symptoms, with the aim of elucidating the mediating role of loneliness. It was postulated that the interpersonal difficulties that result from being shy lead to an experience of emotional depletion and isolation, or in other words, loneliness. Subsequently, an individual is susceptible to the experience of depressive symptoms. The results indicated that loneliness mediated the relationship between shyness and depressive symptoms. Accordingly, given the interpersonal dysfunction associated with rejection sensitivity, similar processes may be occurring. On the basis of these findings and the aforementioned literature, it is suggested that the relationship between rejection sensitivity and depression in adulthood is further explicated by the experience of loneliness.

### **The Current Study**

Overall, the current study aimed to investigate the relationship between rejection sensitivity and depression. Based upon a lack of empirical research in this area, it specifically aimed to investigate whether social anxiety and loneliness significantly contribute to the understanding of how rejection sensitivity and depressive symptoms are associated. The current research proposes that as a result of the dysfunctional interpersonal nature of the rejection sensitivity dynamic, an individual may be at risk of experiencing symptoms of social anxiety and loneliness. These two factors may further increase one's vulnerability to experiencing depressive symptoms. The present research tested several hypotheses. Given the documented association between rejection sensitivity and depression, it was first hypothesised that there would be a significant positive relationship between rejection sensitivity and depression. It was secondly hypothesised that both rejection sensitivity and depression would be highly correlated with social anxiety and loneliness. On this basis, a multiple mediator model was proposed, such that loneliness and social anxiety would function to explicate

further the relationship between rejection sensitivity and depression. This relationship is exhibited in Figure 2. The relative influence of social anxiety and loneliness in the relationship between social anxiety and depression was also explored. Whilst there were several alternative models, which could have been examined and tested, the current research does not presume to make causal attributions but rather aimed to provide a preliminary insight into the associations between these variables. No hypotheses regarding age and gender have been made, however the influence of these demographic factors was explored.



*Figure 2.* Hypothesised multiple mediator model for direct and indirect effects of rejection sensitivity on depressive symptoms

## Method

### Participants

Following deletion of incomplete data, the final sample consisted of 193 participants, specifically 111 females (57.5%) and 77 males. The sample ranged in age between 18 and 54

years, with a mean age of 21.17 ( $SD = 4.92$ ). Five participants did not indicate their gender and seven participants did not indicate their age. Participants were initially gathered via the Australian Catholic University psychology undergraduate student pool. Students received course credit for participation. After data collection from the undergraduate student pool, an uneven gender split (71% female) was identified. In order to increase the percentage of male participants, an online advertisement was placed on social utility networking sites seeking male participants. Thirty three male participants were recruited via the online advertisements. Demographic information showed that 68.9% of the sample was single, as would be expected from an undergraduate student sample. For participants currently in a relationship the median length time in a relationship was two years. Twenty six point nine per cent of participants reported that they had previously sought counseling, and of those, 10.9% participants indicated it was for depression, 3.6% for social anxiety, and 3.6% for both social anxiety and depression. Participation was voluntary, with consent inferred by completion of the survey.

## **Materials**

Participants were provided with an information letter which outlined the nature of the study and the nature of participation (see Appendix A), and a questionnaire package which consisted of measures assessing rejection sensitivity, social anxiety, loneliness, and depression (see Appendix B). A demographic information form also sought information regarding, gender, age, country of birth, number of siblings, relationship status, current living situation, and previous psychiatric treatment history (see Appendix B).

### **Measures.**

#### ***The Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire.***

Rejection sensitivity was measured using the Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire (RSQ; Downey & Feldman, 1996). The RSQ is an 18 item self-report scale, which was developed to measure this information-processing disposition. It is measured by way of assessing an individual's expectations of rejection in conjunction with an individual's degree

of concern about the occurrence of rejection. The RSQ is comprised of 18 hypothetical situations wherein rejection from an acquaintance or significant other is posed as a possibility. Rejection sensitivity is assessed across three different sources of rejection, peers or friends, parents, and romantic partners. Example hypothetical situations include: “*You ask your parents for extra money to cover living expenses*” (parents); “*You approach a close friend to talk after doing or saying something that seriously upset him/her*” (peer); and “*You ask your boyfriend/girlfriend to move in with you*” (romantic partner). Utilising a 6 point Likert-type scale, respondents are first required to rate their level of concern or anxiety about whether the significant other/s would meet their request from 1 (*very unconcerned*) to 6 (*very concerned*). They are then required to rate the likelihood of the significant other/s accepting their request, from 1 (*very unlikely*) to 6 (*very likely*). For each hypothetical situation, a score is attained by weighting the expected likelihood of rejection by the level of concern regarding the outcome of the request. Acceptance expectancy scores are reversed to reflect high rejection expectations, and then multiplied by the concern ratings. A total cross-situational rejection sensitivity score is then calculated by summing the scores for each situation and then dividing them by the total number of situations. Possible scores range between one and 36. The RSQ is a frequently utilised assessment tool, displaying very good psychometric properties (Downey & Feldman, 1996). It has exhibited high internal reliability with Cronbach’s alpha originally reported at .83, and test-re-test reliability reported at .83 (Downey & Feldman, 1996). Cronbach’s alpha for the current study was .80. Scores on the RSQ have been shown to be normally distributed and the scale demonstrates good discriminant and convergent validity (Downey & Feldman, 1996). Research has also highlighted the distinctive predictive validity of the RSQ, and thus the conceptual and empirical relevance of the rejection sensitivity construct. The measure is dimensional, with higher scores reflective of higher levels of rejection sensitivity. However, as outlined by Levy et al. (2001), high and low rejection sensitive individuals can be identified by employing a median split procedure,

whereby participants with scores above the median are categorised as highly rejection sensitive and participants with scores below the median are categorised as low rejection sensitive. Both applications of the RSQ have been frequently used. In summary, the RSQ is a widely used tool and has been shown to be a reliable measure of an enduring cognitive-affective processing disposition (Downey & Feldman, 1996).

### ***The Social Phobia Diagnostic Questionnaire.***

Social anxiety was measured using the Social Phobia Diagnostic Questionnaire (SPDQ; Newman, Kachin, Zuellig, Constantino, Cashman-McGrath, 2003). The SPDQ is a 25-item measure developed as a diagnostic self-report screen for social phobia. The scale requires respondents to answer three yes/no questions regarding excessive fearfulness of social situations and social avoidance. The following 16 questions include a list of social situations which require respondents to rate on a 5-point Likert-type scale how much they (a) fear, and (b) avoid the specified situations, from 0 (“*no fear or avoidance*”) to 4 equaling (“*very severe fear or consistent avoidance*”). The next three questions are yes/no items which assess when the fear is experienced, the frequency at which it is experienced and whether the fear is perceived as unreasonable. The final questions are on a 4-point Likert-type scale which measures severity and the degree of functional impairment. In order to obtain an overall social phobia score and diagnostic impression, the sum across items was used. All yes/no questions are coded as 1 and 0 respectively, items utilising the 5 point Likert-type scale are each divided by four, and items utilising the 4 point Likert-type scale are divided by 2. All answers are then summed, with total scores ranging between 0 and 27. The test authors indicated that the 16 avoidance items are not found to add anything to the understanding of social phobia. As such avoidance items were excluded from the current analyses (Newman et al., 2003). A cut off score of 7.38 has been specified to indicate a clinical diagnosis of social phobia, however as the current study was assessing social anxiety symptomatology and not determining diagnoses, the cut off score was not utilised. The scale exhibits strong

psychometric properties, with Cronbach's alpha reported at .95 (Newman et al., 2003). The clinical validity of the scale has been demonstrated with diagnoses made by the scale reported at 85% specificity and 82% sensitivity. Test-re-test reliability and convergent and discriminant validity were also shown to be sound (Newman et al., 2003). The current study yielded an internal reliability statistic of .93.

### ***UCLA Loneliness Scale Version 3.***

Loneliness was measured using the UCLA Loneliness Scale Version 3 (UCLA-LS; Russell, 1996). The UCLA Loneliness Scale consists of 20 self-report items designed to tap an individual's experience of loneliness. Using a 4 point Likert-type scale, respondents are asked to indicate how often they feel they way described in each item, ranging from 1 (*never*) to 4 (*always*). An example item is, "*How often do you feel alone?*" To control for response bias, eleven items are worded negatively to reflect being lonely, and nine items are worded positively to reflect being non lonely. A total loneliness score is obtained by summing negatively worded items with reverse scored positively worded items such that high scores reflect higher degrees of loneliness. The scale has been employed in a variety of populations and consistently exhibits sound psychometric properties. Reliability coefficients have ranged across samples from .89 to .94 and test-re-test reliability has also been reported at .73 across a 12-month period. The scale also demonstrates good convergent, discriminant, and predictive validity (Russell, 1996). Cronbach's alpha for the current study was .92.

### ***Self-Rating Depression Scale.***

Depressive symptoms were measured using the Self Rating Depression Scale (SDS; Zung, 1965), which assesses depressive symptoms in terms of psychic-affective symptoms, physiological disturbance, psychomotor disturbance, and psychological disturbance. The 20-item questionnaire utilizes a 4-point scale, which requires respondents to rate the frequency of depressive symptoms, ranging from, 1 (*none or little of the time*) to 4 (*most or all of the time*). Ten items are worded positively and ten items are worded negatively accounting for response



bias. Example items include, “*I feel down hearted and blue*” and “*I feel hopeful about the future*”. A total score is obtained by summing reverse scored positive items with negatively worded items. High scores are a reflection of more depressive symptoms. Scores can also be converted to an index score, which provides a global clinical impression. Index scores ranging between 20 and 49 are indicative of little to no depressive symptomatology, scores between 50 and 59 indicative of minimal to mild depressive symptomatology, scores between 60 and 69 indicative of moderate to marked depressive symptomatology, and scores over 70 indicative of severe to extreme depressive symptomatology (Zung, 1965). For the purpose of the current study, total raw scores will be examined only. The scale is widely used in both clinical and community samples and exhibits good internal consistency, with Cronbach’s alpha coefficients ranging from .73 to .92 (Zung, 1973). Concurrent and discriminant validity has also been found to be appropriate (Thurber, Snow, & Honts, 2002). Cronbach’s alpha was .85 for the current study.

### **Procedure**

Under the ethical research guidelines, permission to undertake the present research was sought and approved from the Australian Catholic University Human Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix C). Participants accessed via the Australian Catholic University undergraduate student pool, were required to complete a pen and paper questionnaire, which took approximately 30 minutes. Participants gathered via online advertisements were asked to complete and submit the questionnaire package online utilizing *Psychdata computer package*. In order to ensure similar sample characteristics the online advertisements specifically sought participants who were currently studying and who were Australian. For participants who were recruited via the undergraduate student pool all attempts were made to ensure confidentiality and anonymity was maintained. For participants recruited online, anonymity was assured.

## Results

### Data Screening

Data were collated and analysed electronically using SPSS (Version 15) for Windows. Prior to the commencement of the analyses, data screening and assumption testing was implemented in accordance with checklist instructions outlined by Tabachnick and Fidell (2007). Data was first screened for accuracy of input, involving investigation of out of range values, plausible means and standard deviations, coefficients of variation, and univariate outliers. There were six out of range values which were re-entered appropriately.

### Missing data.

A total of 21 (9.8%) cases had incomplete data, missing greater than 5% of items on one or more scales. These cases were subsequently deleted from all future analyses as recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (2007). Following deletion of cases, further inspection of the data revealed a non-random pattern of missing values on two items; one on the SDS (*"I still enjoy sex"*) and one on the RSQ (*"You ask your parents to come to an occasion important to you"*). On the basis that missing values exceeded 5% of responses on the respective items, they were similarly deleted as suggested (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). For the remaining items, missing data was scattered and formed a random pattern, with less than 5% of the data missing. The conservative method of mean substitution was employed to manage these missing items (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

### Outliers.

In order to test for the presence of univariate outliers, standardized z-scores were obtained for each variable. Standardised scores in excess of  $\pm 3.29$  ( $p < .001$ , two tailed test) were considered potential outliers, unduly influencing the distribution of the data (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). One univariate outlier was identified on the RSQ. Examination of plots further confirmed the presence of one outlier. The Mahalanobis distance technique was employed to screen the data for multivariate outliers. Utilising a  $\chi^2$  critical value of 18.47

with a criterion of  $p < .001$ , one multivariate outlier was found. The two identified univariate and multivariate outliers were assessed and it was determined they did reflect the population from which the sample was intended and hence they were deleted (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Following deletion, the data was re-screened for the emergence of new outliers and no further were found.

#### **Normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity.**

The current study employed bootstrapping methodology to test the hypotheses. As this is a non-parametric test, it is considered robust to the assumption of normality, so therefore it was not assessed. Graphical methods were employed to ensure that assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity were not violated. Inspection of bivariate scatter plots between all combinations of variables revealed that the assumption of linearity was met, with all plots exhibiting an oval shape (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The bivariate scatter plots for all combinations of variables were also of similar width across the spread of scores with some bulging or expansion occurring toward the middle, indicating the assumption of homoscedasticity was satisfied. Tolerance statistics were assessed to ensure that there were no excessively high correlations amongst the predictor variables (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Predictors that produce a variance inflation factor (VIF) of greater than three typically indicate a cause for concern (Francis, 2004). Analyses revealed bivariate correlations did not exceed .70 and the VIF was less than 3 for all variables, indicating the assumptions of multicollinearity and singularity were not violated.

#### **Reliability tests.**

The reliability of the scales used in the current study was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. As a measure of the internal consistency of a set of scale items, coefficients of .7 and above are indicative of acceptable levels of internal consistency (Francis, 2004). As previously indicated in the method section, all scales exceeded this value.

## Demographic Characteristics and Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics for all variables were obtained. The means and standard deviations for respondents' scores on the measures of rejection sensitivity, loneliness, social anxiety, and depression are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

*Means and Standard Deviations for the Rejection Sensitivity, Loneliness, Social Anxiety, and Depression Scales*

Scale	Female ( <i>n</i> = 111)		Male ( <i>n</i> = 77)		Total ( <i>n</i> = 193)	
	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Rejection Sensitivity	9.61	3.50	9.84	3.57	9.83	3.37
Loneliness	39.46	8.81	42.04	10.18	45.17	10.81
Social Anxiety	7.99	4.81	8.32	5.17	8.31	5.21
Depression	38.12	8.71	38.40	9.17	38.31	9.30

RSQ scores ranged between 2.18 and 22 out of a possible range of 1 to 36. Scores obtained on the UCLA-LS ranged between 22 and 69, with possible scores ranging between 20 and 80. Scores obtained on the SPDQ ranged between zero and 23.75, with possible scores ranging between zero and 27. A value of one was added to each score in order to conduct the statistical analyses without values of zero. Scores obtained on the SDS ranged between 22 and 68. As one item was deleted due to missing data, the possible range of scores was between 19 and 76.

### **Gender differences.**

To assess differences in mean scores obtained on the measures of rejection sensitivity, loneliness, social anxiety and depression, between genders, independent samples *t*-tests were conducted. Males and females did not differ significantly in their responses to rejection

sensitivity,  $t(186) = -.45, p = .66$ , social anxiety,  $t(186) = -.44, p = .66$ , and depression scales,  $t(186) = -.15, p = .88$ . However, males scored significantly higher than females on the loneliness scale,  $t(141.50) = -3.84, p < .001, d = .59$ .

### Correlations

Pearson's product moment correlation coefficients were calculated to test the directions and the strength of the relationship between all measured variables. These correlations are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2

*Pearson's Correlations between the Rejection Sensitivity, Loneliness, Social Anxiety, and Depression Scales*

Scale	1	2	3	4
1. Rejection Sensitivity	-			
2. Loneliness	.45**	-		
3. Social Anxiety	.62**	.55**	-	
4. Depression	.49**	.60**	.55**	-

*Note.*  $N = 193$ .

\*\* $p < .01$ , two tailed.

### Mediation Model

In order to test the multiple mediator model, bootstrapping analyses were employed using the methods outlined by Preacher and Hayes (2008). Bootstrapping is a nonparametric test designed to assess specific and total indirect effects. It utilises a resampling procedure which generates an approximation of the sampling distribution based on a statistic derived from the available data (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The sampling distributions are produced by taking a sample (with replacement) of size  $n$  from the original data set and calculating the indirect effects in the resamples. Analyses yield point estimates and 95% bootstrap

confidence intervals for direct and indirect effects. As exhibited in Figure 2, weight  $c$  represents the *total effect*. This value is expressed as the sum of the direct effect (weight  $c'$ ) and the indirect effect (weight  $a \times b$ ). The direct effect represents the effect of the IV on the DV. Path  $a$  represents the effect of the IV on the mediator (M), and path  $b$  represents the effect of M on the DV whilst controlling for the effect of the IV. A total indirect effect is obtained by multiplying the unstandardised regression weights of the IV on the M (path  $a$ ) and the M on the DV (path  $b$ ). Recent research emphasizes the advantages of using the bootstrapping method (MacKinnon, Lockwood, & Williams, 2004; Preacher & Hayes, 2004; Shrout & Bolger, 2002). The method permits multiple mediators to be tested simultaneously allowing for the relative magnitudes of the specific indirect effects to be both determined and contrasted. In addition, the method does not rely upon the assumption of normality and moreover, the likelihood of Type I error is reduced as fewer inferential statistics are required. It has been shown to be superior to alternative methods of testing mediation specifically in small to moderate samples, including the product-of-coefficients approach (Bishop, Fienberg, & Holland, 1975), and the causal steps approach (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

Given the current sample comprised less than 200 cases (reflecting a moderate sample size, Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007) the bootstrapping method provided a powerful and robust method of estimating confidence limits for total and specific indirect effects. To test the hypothesised model, analyses were conducted using the SPSS macro created by Preacher and Hayes (2008, see Appendix D). Rejection sensitivity was entered as the IV, loneliness and social anxiety as the mediators (M1 and M2 respectively), and depression as the DV. Bootstrap estimates were based on 5000 bootstrap samples (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Following the stringent procedures outlined by Preacher and Hayes (2008), point estimates were considered significant when zero was not contained within the confidence interval. The results from the mediation analyses are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

*Mediation of the Effect of Rejection Sensitivity on Depression Through Loneliness and Social Anxiety*

	Point Estimate	Product of Coefficients		Bootstrapping	
		SE	Z	BCa* 95% CI	
				Lower	Upper
Indirect Effects					
TOTAL	.82	.14	5.86	0.57	1.13
Loneliness	.47	.10	4.65	0.28	0.70
Social Anxiety	.35	.12	2.90	0.81	0.62
Contrasts					
Loneliness vs. social anxiety	.12	.17	0.68	-0.27	0.52

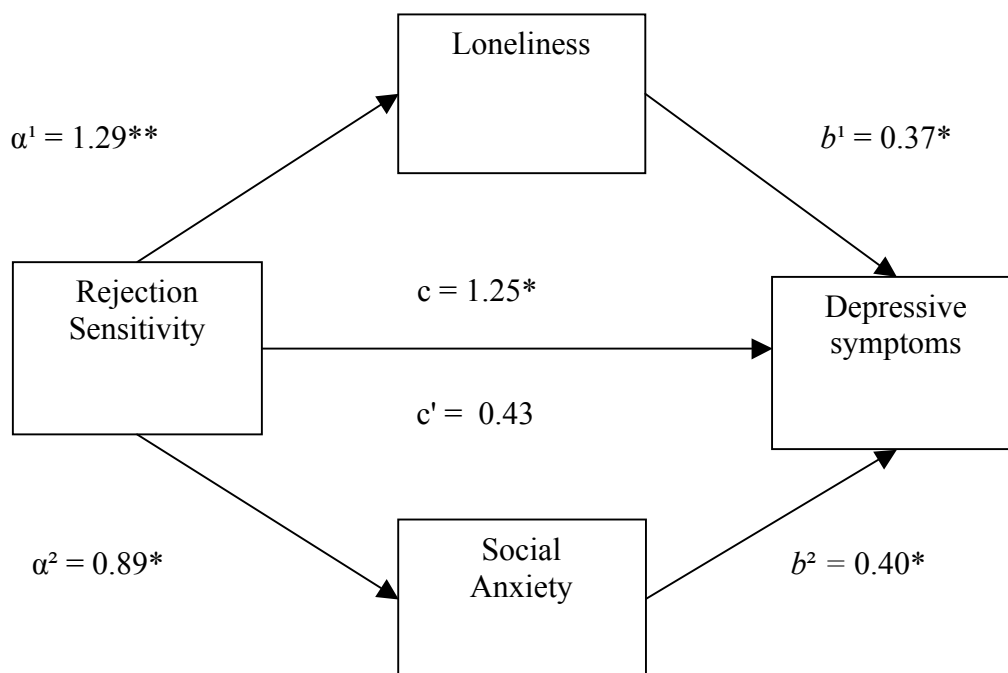
*Note.* \* = Bias-corrected and accelerated

**Total indirect effects.**

Overall, the model, which reflects the total influence of rejection sensitivity, loneliness, and social anxiety on depression, was significant, accounting for 45% (44% adjusted) of the variance,  $F(3, 189) = 51.24, p < .001$ . The bootstrap results indicated that the effect of rejection sensitivity on depression (total effect,  $c = 1.25, p < .01$ ) was no longer significant when loneliness and social anxiety are included in the model and taken into account (direct effect,  $c' = .43, p = .02$ ). Furthermore, the analyses revealed that the total indirect effect (the difference between the total and direct effects), of rejection sensitivity on depression through the two mediators, loneliness and social anxiety, was significant. The difference between the total and direct effect of rejection sensitivity on depression was

significantly different from zero. Thus the combined effects of loneliness and social anxiety mediate the effect of rejection sensitivity on depression. The multiple mediator model and the accompanying unstandardised regression coefficients are displayed in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Multiple mediator model for direct and indirect effects of rejection sensitivity on depressive symptoms. \* $p < .05$ , two tailed. \*\* $p < .001$ , two tailed



### Specific indirect effects and pairwise contrasts.

An examination of the specific indirect effects indicated that both loneliness and social anxiety uniquely mediate the effect of rejection sensitivity on depression. Investigation of pairwise contrasts of the indirect effects shows that the specific indirect effect through loneliness is not larger than the specific indirect effect through social anxiety. The contrasts demonstrated that the respective mediators cannot be distinguished in terms of their magnitude of effect in the mediator model. This shows that neither social anxiety nor loneliness is a more important mediator. In summary, the bootstrap results indicated that



loneliness and social anxiety function to mediate the effect of rejection sensitivity on depressive symptoms. Both mediators affect the relationship between rejection sensitivity and depressive symptoms, however, the relative influence of each variable on the effect of rejection sensitivity on depression could not be distinguished.

## **Discussion**

### **Summary of Findings**

The results of the current study provide support for the hypotheses and the empirical link between rejection sensitivity, social anxiety, loneliness, and depressive symptoms. Supporting the first hypothesis, a positive association between rejection sensitivity and depressive symptoms was identified, such that individuals who were more rejection sensitive reported higher levels of depressive symptoms. Supporting the second hypothesis, rejection sensitivity was positively associated with social anxiety and loneliness, indicating that higher levels of rejection sensitivity were associated with higher levels of reported symptoms of social anxiety and loneliness. In addition depressive symptomatology was positively associated with social anxiety and loneliness, suggesting that higher levels of reported depressive symptomatology were associated with higher levels of reported symptoms of social anxiety and loneliness. The support of the aforementioned hypotheses provided the appropriate foundations for conducting the subsequent mediational analysis. This analysis sought to test whether social anxiety and loneliness contribute significantly to the understanding of how rejection sensitivity and depression are related. The hypothesis was supported, with social anxiety and loneliness together functioning to mediate this relationship. Social anxiety and loneliness served to mediate the effect of rejection sensitivity on depressive symptoms to the extent that this relationship was no longer significant after controlling for their combined influence. Given that complete mediation was achieved, there is a case to suggest that the experience of social anxiety and loneliness serves to account for

the occurrence of depressive symptomatology. The current results also demonstrated that social anxiety and loneliness separately account for the relationship between rejection sensitivity and depressive symptoms. They could not be statistically distinguished in terms of their relative influence, suggesting that neither social anxiety nor loneliness has a greater impact on the relationship between rejection sensitivity and depressive symptoms. While hypotheses regarding gender were not identified, the results showed that males and females do not differ on measures of rejection sensitivity, social anxiety and depression, however, males reported higher levels of loneliness than females.

The findings of the current study are consistent with the literature which has documented a link between rejection sensitivity and depressive symptomatology (e.g., Ayduk et al., 2001; Gilbert et al., 2006; Harper et al., 2006; Romero-Canyas et al., 2003; Zimmer-Gembeck & Vickers, 2007). The results provide support for the notion that rejection sensitivity may be associated with an increased risk of experiencing depressive symptoms. However, the current research points to the importance of examining additional factors that may account for, and further explicate the association between rejection sensitivity and depressive symptomatology. It is apparent that social anxiety and loneliness are two such factors.

With reference to the relationship between rejection sensitivity and social anxiety and loneliness, the results are congruent with previous research. First, the finding that higher levels of rejection sensitivity are associated with higher levels of social anxiety is consistent with the findings of Downey and Feldman (1996) and Feldman and Downey (1994) who similarly demonstrated a positive association between these variables. Although longitudinal data may have provided capacity for making definitive causal conclusions, the results do lend support to the concept that rejection sensitivity may be a risk factor for social anxiety. In this sense the current study, is supportive of the findings of London and colleagues (2007) who indicated that rejection sensitivity predicted increases in social anxiety and withdrawal over

time. Whilst London et al.'s study was conducted using an adolescent sample, as argued by Romero-Canyas and Downey (2005), the rejection sensitivity dynamic exhibited during childhood and adolescence is maintained into adulthood. Thus, if rejection sensitivity is predicting social anxiety in adolescence, by adulthood, it may be postulated that social fears and patterns of interpersonal dysfunction are well established and potentially more pervasive. Downey and colleagues (2000) for example indicated that rejection sensitivity predicted increased distress in and avoidance of social situations in males who exhibited low investment in romantic relationships. It has been suggested that rejection sensitivity fosters a general wariness about social relationships (Downey et al., 2000). This wariness about social relationships may then translate to an increased vulnerability to developing more global social fears and symptoms of social anxiety. It may be proposed that experiences of interpersonal loss or rejection that characterise rejection sensitivity undermine a person's belief that they can attain desired interpersonal goals and reinforces fears of rejection (i.e., Ayduk et al., 2001; Downey, Freitas et al., 1998). When such experiences become more frequent, through the enactment of maladaptive behaviours, these interpersonal fears may become generalised to more global interpersonal domains, and such may be manifest in terms of social anxiety. Further research using longitudinal data is required however to further conceptualise the association between rejection sensitivity and social anxiety.

The current research also points to an important association between rejection sensitivity and the experience of loneliness. It appears that higher levels of rejection sensitivity are associated with higher degrees of loneliness. Although little research has been conducted specifically assessing the relationship between rejection sensitivity and loneliness, the current findings are consistent with those of London and colleagues (2007) who also revealed that rejection sensitivity predicted increases in loneliness over time. It may be contended that the maladaptive nature of the rejection sensitivity dynamic confers vulnerability to the experience of loneliness. In accordance with Weiss's (1973, 1974, as

cited in Russell et al., 1984) conceptualisation of loneliness, being rejection sensitive may prevent the attainment of numerous social provisions, thus accounting for the experience of loneliness. Deficits in social provisions are hypothesised to result in a profound sense of loneliness and distress (Weiss, 1973, 1974, as cited in Russell et al., 1984). If the rejection sensitivity dynamic reduces an individual's capacity to develop and maintain interpersonal relationships through the deployment of maladaptive behavioural strategies such as social awkwardness, aggression, and withdrawal, an individual may potentially experience deprivation in all six facets of social provision: attachment, social integration, opportunity for nurturance, reassurance of worth, reliable alliance, and guidance. Rejection sensitivity may therefore increase an individual's susceptibility to frequent experiences of loneliness. However longitudinal research is required to more appropriately lend support to this proposition.

In conjunction with the findings that rejection sensitivity is associated with social anxiety and loneliness, the results show that social anxiety and loneliness are similarly associated with depressive symptoms, such that higher levels of social anxiety and loneliness are associated with greater levels of depressive symptomatology. This result is consistent with the myriad of empirical data, which have attested to the relationship between the experience of social anxiety and symptoms of depression. It reinforces the documented rates of comorbidity between the clinical conditions of social phobia and depression (i.e., Brown et al., 2001; Ingram et al., 2005; Kessler et al., 1994). In addition, although conclusive causal links could not be attained within the context of the current research, the findings highlight the notion that the distress and impairment associated with social anxiety may increase an individual's risk of experiencing depressive symptoms. Thus, support for previous research, which has identified social anxiety as the precursor to the experience of depressive symptoms (i.e., Kessler et al., 1999; Stein et al., 2001) may be inferred. Following the arguments of Eng et al. (2001), it may be postulated that the nature of social anxiety prevents an individual from

achieving important interpersonal goals and blocks the pathway to rewarding social experiences. Thus, in turn, the likelihood of experiencing depressive symptoms is increased. Similarly, as suggested by Stein et al (2001), the threat or experience of social isolation and rejection that is symptomatic of social anxiety may in and of itself, prompt a readiness to experience depressive symptoms. Difficulties interacting in social situations may significantly impair an individual's capacity for social mastery, successful social role transitions, and threaten goal attainment, thus potentially leading to profound feelings of despair, frustration, helplessness, and hopelessness, which are key depressive symptoms (Erikson, 1963, 1968; DSM-IV-TR, 2000).

The current findings also highlight an important relationship between loneliness and depressive symptoms, and thus reiterate the findings of previous empirical research. As pertinent to the additional factors explored within the current study, longitudinal methods are required to ascertain the predictive relationship between loneliness and depressive symptomatology, however, loneliness may still be viewed as a critical factor in the understanding of depressive outcomes. As previously outlined, loneliness has been identified as a unique risk factor for depressive symptomatology (e.g., Cacioppo et al., 2006; Rich & Scovel, 1987). Joiner (1997) purported that loneliness functions as a proximal contributor to depressive symptoms, such that its presence signals the impending occurrence of depressive symptoms. Reflecting an aversive internal emotional experience characterised by interpersonal loss, need, or deficiency (Joiner, 1997), the nature of loneliness is suggested to facilitate the immediate experience of depressive symptomatology.

In addition to the aforementioned findings, the mediator model demonstrated that social anxiety and loneliness together and separately, mediate the relationship between rejection sensitivity and depressive symptoms. They may thus be considered integral factors in the conceptualisation of the association between rejection sensitivity and depressive symptoms. These findings suggest that the maladaptive nature of the rejection sensitivity

dynamic functions to increase an individual's risk of experiencing social anxiety and loneliness, and it is the experience and outcomes of these conditions that increase the likelihood of experiencing depressive symptoms. Both loneliness and social anxiety have previously been identified as mediators of depressive symptoms. For example, Eng and colleagues (2001) found that social anxiety mediated the relationship between attachment style and depressive symptoms. Similarly, in a study examining the effect of shyness on depressive symptoms, loneliness was found to mediate this relationship (Joiner, 1997). Interestingly, the present results show that social anxiety and loneliness could not be differentiated in terms of their mediating influencing, perhaps suggesting that both factors contribute meaningfully to the understanding of how rejection sensitivity may associated with depressive symptoms.

While the present study did not formulate any gender specific hypotheses, it is important to note that males and females did not differ across the measures of rejection sensitivity, social anxiety, and depression. Although males obtained significantly higher scores on the measure of loneliness, this result did not influence the level of depressive symptomatology reported by males. To date, empirical findings have generally suggested that loneliness is not experienced to a greater degree or more frequently by one gender. Borys and Perlman (1985) reviewed the extant literature and found that of the 28 studies conducted using the UCLA loneliness scale, only four revealed gender differences. Consistent with the present study, these four studies showed that males scored higher than females. Interestingly, Borys and Perlman (1985) in their review suggested that females are more likely than males to *admit to feelings* of loneliness, therefore the gender difference may be even greater in reality. Borys and Perlman (1985) concluded that while gender differences were not consistently demonstrated, in circumstances where they were found, males tended to be more lonely than females. While the current findings are consistent with this pattern, further

research is required to understand any differences in experiences of loneliness for males and females and whether they have differential effects on depression.

### **Implications and Future Directions**

The current research serves to reinforce the value of continued investigation of rejection sensitivity, particularly because of its identified association with internalising symptoms. One major implication of these findings thus concerns the prevention and treatment of internalising symptoms for high rejection sensitive individuals. It is apparent that rejection sensitivity may be related to the experience of depressive symptoms as function of social anxiety and loneliness. The present findings imply that reducing a high rejection sensitive individual's vulnerability to symptoms of social anxiety and loneliness also reduces an individual's vulnerability to experiencing depressive symptoms. The central feature that appears to connect these factors is the presence of maladaptive interpersonal functioning, and the notion that the rejection sensitivity dynamic undermines an individual's capacity to develop and maintain interpersonal relationships. Therefore it would seem appropriate that treatment focus upon facilitating positive interpersonal experiences, bolstering social supports, and in general fostering adaptive interpersonal functioning. However, before interventions can be developed and implemented, a more comprehensive understanding is needed of how highly rejection sensitive individuals are actually relating to and interacting with those around them. This would provide information about how a high rejection sensitive person may become lonely and experience social anxiety. Upon further delineation of these key aspects of the rejection sensitivity dynamic, appropriate and effective interventions may be devised. Explicating how high rejection sensitive individuals relate to both significant others and people in general will thus form the focus of the subsequent study in this thesis. In general, the current study has reiterated the importance of understanding the processes and factors that are related to increased risk of experiencing depressive symptoms for rejection sensitive individuals.

## **Limitations**

There are limitations to this study that require acknowledgment. The current study assessed the mediation model using cross-sectional data. This methodology does not provide a sufficient test of causality, limiting inferences about the aetiological significance of rejection sensitivity for social anxiety and loneliness, and similarly of social anxiety and loneliness for depressive symptomatology. Definitive conclusions cannot be drawn about the validity of the intermediary pathways of social anxiety and loneliness, which were proposed to link rejection sensitivity with depressive symptoms. Based upon theory and empirical research, directions of causality were assumed, however in the absence of longitudinal data, the current findings can only be suggestive of mediation. Future research using longitudinal designs is therefore required to determine causal ordering and the temporal sequencing of pathways to depressive symptomatology. The current research also acknowledges that there are numerous and varied pathways to developing depressive symptoms. It therefore does not suggest that social anxiety and loneliness are the only pathways through which one may be vulnerable to experiencing depressive symptomatology. The current research has however highlighted the importance of investigating and understanding the processes and variables that are associated with the rejection sensitivity dynamic and that function to increase susceptibility to depressive symptoms.

In addition, it is possible that the different methods with which data was collected (undergraduate student pool versus online advertisements) unduly influenced the results. Although all participants who responded to the online advertisements also identified themselves as students, there may be differences in the kinds of people that are likely to participate in online research in comparison to undergraduate students who are participating with the knowledge that they will receive course credit. To ensure that the sampling procedures do not influence future findings, the subsequent studies employ only one methodology.



## **Conclusions**

Despite the limitations of the current study, the findings provide support for the notion social anxiety and loneliness are important factors in the relationship between rejection sensitivity and depressive symptoms. The findings have provided an insight into the psychological processes that may link rejection sensitivity with depressive symptomatology. As a function of the association with symptoms of social anxiety, loneliness, and depression, the current research emphasises the importance of exploring further the nature and experience of rejection sensitivity, and in particular, understanding the interpersonal processes that characterise the rejection sensitivity dynamic.

## **CHAPTER THREE: STUDY TWO – REJECTION SENSITIVITY, ATTACHMENT STYLES, AND PERSONALITY DISPOSITIONS**

### **Chapter Overview**

Study two aims broadly to understand how high rejection sensitive individuals related to and interact with others. Specifically, it aims to delineate how rejection sensitivity is associated with the personality dispositions of sociotropy and autonomy, and adult attachment styles. With the goal of providing a more comprehensive understanding of highly rejection sensitive individuals, and subsequent to the findings obtained in study one which indicated that rejection sensitivity may function to increase an individual's vulnerability toward experiencing symptoms of social anxiety, loneliness, and depression, this study will explore whether there is a discernable pattern in how rejection sensitive individuals relate to others.

Past research has highlighted an association between personality dispositions and vulnerability toward maladaptive psychological outcomes (Beck, 1983). Similarly, past research has demonstrated that the effective development of psychological health is often associated with early bonds with attachment figures (Mallinckrodt & Wei, 2005). To date, the relationship between rejection sensitivity and the personality dispositions of sociotropy and autonomy, and patterns of adult attachment, remains relatively unclear. In order to provide sufficient understanding of this relationship, the underlying theoretical frameworks and accompanying empirical findings will be explored.

#### **Personality Dispositions: Sociotropy and Autonomy**

Past research has highlighted the presence of two sets of personality dispositions, termed sociotropy and autonomy, which are suggested to confer increased vulnerability to depressive symptoms (Beck, 1983). Given that the first phase of the current research identified a significant relationship between rejection sensitivity and depressive symptomatology, examination of these personality dimensions is particularly pertinent to the conceptualisation of the rejection sensitivity dynamic. The dispositions of sociotropy and

autonomy are conceptualised within the context of a diathesis-stress model of depression (Beck, 1983). Beck's (1983) individual differences paradigm proposes that vulnerability to depression is mediated by individual differences in motivations to either invest in and focus upon *oneself*, or invest in and focus upon *one's interpersonal relationships*. These dimensions encompass a combination of beliefs, attitudes, and behavioural dispositions (Beck, 1983) and are theorised to result from particular developmental experiences (the diathesis). Sociotropy is defined as the predisposition to attend to and focus on others for personal satisfaction. Individuals who are highly sociotropic strive for interpersonal interactions, which are characterised by intimacy, sharing, empathy, understanding, approval, affection, protection, guidance. Significant emphasis is placed upon securing acceptance and approval and avoiding disapproval (Beck, Epstein, & Harrison, 1983). Personal satisfaction is derived from the nature and quality of these interpersonal interactions (Beck, 1983).

In contrast, autonomy is defined as the predisposition to invest in and focus on oneself to achieve personal satisfaction. It is characterised by a striving for mastery of one's body and control of one's environment, with the fundamental aim of obtaining individuality. Self-reliance, self-definition, and individualistic goals are of particular importance for highly autonomous individuals (Beck et al., 1983). Autonomous individuals have a tendency to place emphasis on their rights and needs, and thus may find it necessary to avoid close attachments so that the achievement of internal goals and standards is not compromised (Beck, 1983; Beck et al., 1983).

Highlighting the relevance of the diathesis-stress perspective, Beck (1983) proposed that depressive symptoms arise when an individual who is either highly autonomous or highly sociotropic is exposed to a threat or loss relevant to his or her corresponding domain. For example, if highly sociotropic individuals were to experience interpersonal loss or rejection their vulnerability toward experiencing depressive symptoms would increase.

Correspondingly, if highly autonomous individuals were to be faced with an achievement

failure, their vulnerability toward experiencing depressive symptoms would increase (Beck, 1983). Various researchers have proposed that the disposition to orient toward and invest in either oneself or one's interpersonal relationships resembles the conceptual distinction between avoidant and anxious adult attachment styles (e.g., Sibley, 2007; Sibley & Overall, 2007). Prior to discussing how these dual dimensions bear conceptual resemblance to patterns of insecure attachment, and also how both constructs are related to rejection sensitivity, it is first necessary to explore and describe attachment theory.

### **Adult Attachment**

Attachment theory fundamentally proposes that through repeated interactions with the primary caregiver, infants learn what to expect from others and match their behaviour accordingly (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). These early interactions with attachment figures produce a set of internal working models which inform an individual of (a) the accessibility and responsiveness of others, and (b) the worthiness of the self as someone towards whom others are likely to sensitively respond (Bowlby, 1973). The internalised model of the attachment figure and the internalised model of the self develop in a manner which is both complementary and mutually confirming (Bowlby, 1973). Children with secure working models of attachment are likely to perceive their caregiver as accessible and consistently responsive, and as a result, perceive themselves as worthy of love. Children with insecure working models of attachment in contrast are likely to doubt or feel anxious about the accessibility and responsiveness of their caregiver, and perceive themselves as unworthy of love (Bowlby, 1973).

Three major patterns of caregiver accessibility and responsiveness have been systematically observed and linked to Bowlby's (1969, 1973) conceptualisation of secure and insecure working models: (1) the caregiver is consistently accessible and responsive; (2) the caregiver is inconsistently accessible and responsive; and (3) the caregiver is consistently inaccessible and nonresponsive (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). Based upon these

observations of infant-mother interactions, Ainsworth and colleagues (Ainsworth et al., 1978) initially identified three major patterns of attachment, or attachment styles: secure, anxious/ambivalent, and anxious/avoidant. Attachment styles are postulated to reflect systematic patterns of expectations, needs, emotions, affect-regulation strategies, and interpersonal behaviour (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002). Insecure patterns of attachment are likely to undermine the satisfaction of an infant's need for security, safety, and comfort (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). When one of the most fundamental of human needs is not satisfied through these early interactions, both the physical and psychological wellbeing of the child may be severely compromised (Bowlby, 1973; Hazan & Shaver, 1994).

Working models of early attachment relationships and attachment styles are suggested to generalize to new relationships (Bowlby, 1973). One of the primary tenets of attachment theory is the notion that the attachment system operates from “the cradle to the grave” (Bowlby, 1979, p. 129). An individual's expectancies about the accessibility and responsiveness of others are thus considered relatively enduring (Bowlby, 1973). The internal working model of self and other, developed during infancy and childhood, is postulated to account for this stability of the attachment system across the lifespan (Bowlby, 1973). Attachment style in adulthood is conceptualised as an extension of an individual's attachment style formed during infancy and childhood (Bowlby, 1988; Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Adult attachment styles are representative of an individual's expectancies surrounding the availability and responsiveness of most often, his or her romantic and/or sexual partners (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). The nature of the attachment relationship in adulthood may be considered reciprocal, rather than complementary (as exemplified within the parent-child attachment relationship). The individual thus functions as both the target for attachment and the attachment figure (Hazan & Shaver, 1994).

Researchers of adult attachment have attempted to operationalise the internal working model as first theorised by Bowlby, and translate Ainsworth and colleagues' (1978)

conceptualisation of attachment styles observed in infancy into adulthood (i.e., Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Collins & Read, 1990; Hazan & Shaver, 1987, 1994). Whilst the literature highlights differing conceptualisations, one the most frequently explored approaches concerns the quality of attachment and the security of one's internal working models (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Drawing parallels with Ainsworth and colleagues' (Ainsworth et al., 1978) tripartite typology of attachment styles in infancy, the literature demonstrates the presence of three working models or attachment styles, which underlie differences in how individuals think, feel, and behave in their relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Secure attachment, avoidant attachment, and anxious attachment represent these working models. Secure attachment is reflective of the normative aspects of close relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). Securely attached individuals are likely to perceive their attachment figures as reliable, accessible, supportive, trustworthy, and well intentioned. They characterise themselves as easy to get to know and generally likeable, and are likely to perceive themselves as worthy of the care, concern, and affection of others. Their close relationships are more likely to endure longer than the relationships of insecurely attached individuals, and they characterise their childhood relationships with their parents as affectionate, caring, and accepting (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). The operationalisation of attachment security may be encapsulated by the multi-sentence description initially used by Hazan and Shaver (1987, 1990) in their Adult Attachment Questionnaire, to assess this attachment style: "I find it relatively easy to get close to others and am comfortable depending on them and having them depend on me. I don't worry about being abandoned or about someone getting too close to me" (1987, p. 515). Attachment security is associated with adaptive psychological functioning and general intrapersonal and interpersonal wellbeing (Bowlby, 1969; Feeney & Noller, 1990; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Simpson, 1990)

Avoidant attachment and anxious attachment represent the two major patterns of attachment insecurity. In contrast to securely attached individuals, persons who display an

avoidant attachment style typically perceive others as untrustworthy. It has been postulated that this attachment style results from consistently inaccessible and nonresponsive caregiving from the attachment figure in infancy and childhood (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). An avoidant style reflects an individual's discomfort with interpersonal "closeness, self disclosure, feelings and expressions of vulnerability, and dependency" (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002, p. 136). Attachment avoidance is characterised by a fear of intimacy and a tendency to keep *close* others at a distance (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Avoidance of interdependence and a striving toward self-reliance and control is emphasised, in conjunction with efforts to suppress distressing thoughts and repress painful memories (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002). The avoidant attachment style may be exemplified by Hazan and Shaver's (1987, 1990) description used in the Adult Attachment Questionnaire to assess this attachment style: "I am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others; I find it difficult to trust them completely, difficult to allow myself to depend on them. I am nervous when anyone gets too close, and often, others want me to be more intimate than I feel comfortable being" (Hazan & Shaver, 1987, p. 515). Individuals with an avoidant attachment style exhibit a pessimistic view of relationships and have been shown to experience a higher rate of relationship dissolution when compared to securely attached individuals (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). In contrast to securely and anxiously attached individuals, they are likely to be judged as hostile by their peers, are more likely to engage in problem drinking, and uncommitted sexual relations (Brennan, Shaver, & Tobey, 1991).

An anxious attachment style, contrary to an avoidant attachment style, encompasses an intense need to be close, accepted, supported, and reassured by others (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002). It is typically manifest in terms of hypervigilance for and excessive fear of abandonment and neglect (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002). Individuals with an anxious pattern of attachment are likely to make recurrent attempts at maintaining close proximity to their attachment figures and tend to elicit their love and support through controlling and clinging

behaviours (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002). Individuals with an anxious pattern of attachment exhibit a general preoccupation with their partner's responsiveness (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). Unlike avoidantly attached individuals, those who are anxiously attached have difficulty detaching from distressing thoughts and emotions (Shaver & Mikulincer). This pattern of attachment is suggested to result from the provision of inconsistent caregiving in childhood, such that the primary attachment figure is inconsistently accessible and responsive to the child (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). Anxious attachment may be further demonstrated by Hazan and Shaver's (1987, 1990) description used in their Adult Attachment Questionnaire, to assess this attachment style, "I find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me or won't want to stay with me. I want to get very close to my partner, and this sometimes scares people away" (Hazan & Shaver, 1987, p.515). Consistent with an avoidant attachment style, an anxious attachment style is related to a higher rate of relationship dissolution as compared with a secure attachment style (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). In contrast to avoidant individuals, anxious individuals' experiences of romantic relationships involve "obsession, desire for reciprocation and union, emotional highs and lows, and extreme sexual attraction and jealousy" (Hazan & Shaver, 1987, p. 515). In general both attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance have been associated with and shown to result in a wide range of interpersonal difficulties and experiences of psychological distress in adulthood. Whilst it is not within the scope of the current research to provide a comprehensive review of these correlates, the association between adult attachment styles and rejection sensitivity will be explored in this chapter.

### **Conceptualising the Association between Personality Dispositions and Attachment Styles**

Previous research postulates that patterns of adult attachment and personality dispositions are systematically related (Sibley, 2007; Sibley & Overall, 2007). It has been argued that people hold multiple working models that are hierarchically organised according to their relational specificity (Sibley, 2007). For example, internal working models of specific



people (such as a romantic partners) are nested under internal representations of relationship domains (such as close relationships), which are further nested under global personality-level internal representations (Bowlby, 1979; Overall, Fletcher, & Friesen, 2003; Sibley, 2007). Sociotropy and autonomy are conceptualised as the dimensions that represent the highest level of this cognitive hierarchy, reflecting the most global level of the attachment representational network (Overall, et al., 2003; Sibley, 2007). As attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance are suggested to account for individual differences in the cognitive subsystems, which underlie interpersonal behaviour in close relationships, they are therefore conceptualised as domain-specific models of relational specificity (Sibley, 2007). Sociotropy and autonomy are suggested to be more reflective of generalised interpersonal dispositions and cognitions, accounting for mental representations of the self in relation to non-close and unfamiliar others. Conceptualised in terms of a global model of relational specificity, these personality dimensions are hypothesised to broadly govern behaviour across all relationships and domains (Sibley & Overall, 2007). According to Overall and colleagues (2003), global relational models help to encode general information that is relevant to all relationship contexts and incorporates “the most consistent, central, influential, and significant attachment information into the representational network” (p. 1482). The parallels between the respective personality dimensions and patterns of attachment are self-evident. Common to both sociotropy and autonomy are elements reflecting concern about the content and quality of an individual’s interpersonal relationships. Similarly, common to both autonomy and attachment avoidance are elements reflecting an uncomfortableness with and avoidance of closeness with others (Sibley, 2007). Based upon meta-analytic findings and the results of two cross-sectional studies, Sibley concluded that attachment anxiety and avoidance represent an individual’s working model of close and romantic relationships, and sociotropy and autonomy represent abstracted and generalised working models of relationships which incorporate more broad categories of interpersonal relations.

### **Rejection sensitivity, personality dispositions and attachment styles.**

On the basis that personality dispositions and attachment styles reflect how an individual relates generally to those around himself or herself, and specifically to close others respectively, examining these factors concurrently may provide important information with regards to the interpersonal beliefs, behaviours, and tendencies of the highly rejection sensitive individual. First, examination of the literature demonstrates that relatively little research has investigated how rejection sensitivity and sociotropic and autonomous personality dispositions are related. However, it has been proposed that the two personality dispositions are theoretically similar to the conceptualisation of intimacy-avoidance and intimacy-seeking coping strategies differentially used by high rejection sensitive individuals (Brookings et al., 2003). Intimacy-avoidant high rejection sensitive individuals attempt to evade rejection by shunning intimate relationships and evidence a general wariness about interpersonal relationships (Downey et al., 2000; Levy et al., 2001). This coping strategy draws parallels with the autonomous disposition, which encompasses avoidance of interpersonal relationships (Brookings et al., 2003). Intimacy-seeking individuals attempt to evade rejection by placing great emphasis on acquiring and securing intimate relationships, often ascertained through the use of compliance and coercive strategies (Levy et al., 2001). This coping strategy is clearly comparable to the sociotropic disposition, which emphasises the need for, and investment in interpersonal relationships. Brookings and colleagues pointed to the association between rejection and these two coping strategies. Employing a cross-sectional methodology with 177 undergraduate students the interpersonal content of the RSQ (Downey & Feldman, 1996) was analysed using an interpersonal circumplex. Rejection sensitivity was shown to be highly correlated with sociotropy. However, the RSQ's placement on the interpersonal circumplex suggested that rejection sensitivity (as measured by the RSQ) is more closely associated with autonomy. Brookings et al. (2003) concluded that in attempting to avoid rejection, highly rejection sensitive individuals might be more likely to

avoid others or keep themselves at a safe distance from them, rather than to seek intimacy with them. In accordance with Horney's (1937, as cited in Levy et al., 2001) conceptualisation of maladaptive styles of coping, the authors surmised that in circumstances when a rejection sensitive individual perceives threatening cues he or she is likely to respond by *moving away* from others, rather than *moving toward* them (Brookings et al., 2003). In the absence of additional empirical findings, further research is required to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between rejection sensitivity and the personality dispositions of sociotropy and autonomy.

With reference to the association between rejection sensitivity and attachment styles, comparatively more research examining these factors has been conducted. As indicated in Chapter One, the rejection sensitivity model draws primarily upon attachment theory to explain how an individual comes to "anxiously expect, readily perceive, and overreact to rejection" (Downey et al., 1994, p. 496). Researchers of rejection sensitivity postulate that an individual's internal working model or attachment style can guide himself or herself to develop anxious expectations of rejection (Downey et al., 2000). As delineated in Chapter One, repeated experiences of rejection from significant others, differentially conveyed through cruelty, hostility, physical, and emotional neglect and abuse may foster rejection expectancies (Romero-Canyas & Downey, 2005). These expectancies form the basis of the rejection sensitivity dynamic (Feldman & Downey, 1994). The activation of rejection expectations is said to prompt a vigilance for rejection cues, facilitating a readiness to perceive intentional rejection in the ambiguous behaviour of significant others (Downey & Feldman, 1996). Behavioural overreactions are suggested to subsequently result. Feldman and Downey (1994) asserted that rejection sensitivity represents the "internalised legacy of early rejection experiences" (p. 232). As the rejection sensitivity model draws heavily upon attachment theory to account for its occurrence, an investigation of how rejection sensitive

individuals generally experience their current interpersonal relationships in terms of adult attachment styles is warranted.

Empirical research has consistently highlighted the association between rejection sensitivity and insecure patterns of attachment. Feldman and Downey (1994) indicated that avoidant and anxious attachment styles underlie the rejection sensitivity dynamic. Rejection sensitivity was found to be positively associated with both avoidant and anxious attachment style and inversely associated with secure attachment style. Similarly, in separate studies, Downey and Feldman (1996) and Ayduk et al. (2001) demonstrated that rejection sensitivity was positively associated with both insecure attachment styles and negatively with a secure attachment style. The correlations observed in the aforementioned studies were small to moderate in strength, which importantly points to a conceptual distinction between rejection sensitivity and adult attachment styles. Moreover, Downey and Feldman (1996) indicated that the predictive relationship between anxious expectations of rejection and attributions of hurtful intent in their partner's insensitive or ambiguous behaviour, was not accounted for by attachment style.

On the basis of the extant literature, it is unclear whether rejection sensitivity is characterised by a specific pattern of insecure attachment. Both attachment avoidance and attachment anxiety have been linked to rejection sensitivity (Ayduk et al., 2001; Downey & Feldman, 1996; Feldman & Downey, 1994). As highlighted in the literature examining the similarities between personality dispositions and rejection sensitivity, it has also been postulated that the intimacy seeking and intimacy avoidant coping strategies are conceptually equivalent to insecure attachment styles (Downey et al., 2000). This notion is further reinforced by the proposal that personality dispositions and adult attachment styles are part of the same representational attachment network, reflecting differing degrees of relational specificity (Sibley, 2007). Accordingly, intimacy-seeking strategies may be considered comparable to an anxious attachment style as it encompasses an intense desire to be close to

others. Intimacy-avoidant strategies may similarly be considered comparable to an avoidant attachment style as it is characterised by discomfort with and avoidance of close relationships (Downey et al., 2000; Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Whilst, to date the link between the differential coping strategies of rejection sensitive individuals and attachment styles has only been theorised but not yet empirically supported, it may provide a useful framework with which to conceptualise the relationship between rejection sensitivity and specific patterns of insecure attachment. Common to both attachment avoidance and attachment anxiety is a maladaptive orientation toward close interpersonal relationships. Presumably, a high rejection sensitive individual came to expect rejection as a function of previous rejection experiences. The kind of rejection experiences may be manifest in the development of specific patterns of attachment, which in turn may account for individual differences in cognitions, feelings, and emotions of the high rejection sensitive individual. The current research will seek to examine whether anxious attachment and avoidant attachment are equally predictive of rejection sensitivity or whether one attachment style is more characteristic of rejection sensitivity.

### **Study Aims and Research Questions**

The current study was primarily exploratory in nature, aiming generally to elucidate how rejection sensitivity is associated with attachment patterns and personality dispositions. As outlined, the literature appears inconclusive with regards to the interpersonal style of highly rejection sensitive individuals. Thus, the study aimed specifically to examine which features of attachment style and personality dispositions best characterise highly rejection sensitive individuals, and furthermore to explore if any of these styles or disposition differentiate highly rejection sensitive individuals from low rejection sensitive individuals. Whilst theory may suggest that highly rejection sensitive individuals will display more insecure patterns of attachment compared to low rejection sensitive individuals, on the basis of contradictory empirical findings, specific directional hypotheses cannot be made. However, it was generally hypothesised that rejection sensitivity would be associated with insecure

attachment patterns. Similarly, the absence of prior empirical findings concerning the association between rejection sensitivity and personality dispositions make this research exploratory in nature. While it was hypothesised that rejection sensitivity would be associated with both sociotropy and autonomy, specific hypotheses regarding the respective personality dispositions were not formulated.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Participants were recruited via online advertisements placed on social utility networking sites and mental health/support websites. The advertisements specifically sought participants who were currently studying. This was because the RSQ (Downey & Feldman, 1996) was developed to assess rejection sensitivity in student samples. The final sample consisted of 205 respondents and comprised 149 females (72.68%) and 59 males. There were significantly more females than males in the sample,  $\chi^2(1) = 43.31, p < .001$ . The mean age was 23.13 ( $SD = 6.88$ ) and ranged between 18 and 60 years. One participant did not indicate their gender and two participants did not indicate their age. Demographic information showed that 76.1% of the sample was single. For respondents who indicated they were currently in a relationship, the median length of the relationship was 24 months. Sixty seven point three per cent of the sample identified their country of birth as Australia, 7.3% as the United States of America, 7.3% as Britain, and the remaining 17.7% as Asian, European, and Central American countries. Forty seven point eight per cent of participants reported that they had previously sought counseling. Participation was voluntary, with consent inferred by participation and completion of the survey. The sample used in the current study was also utilised in study three.

### **Materials**

Participants were provided with an online information letter, which outlined the nature of the study and participation requirements (see Appendix E). They were then provided with

an online questionnaire package, which consisted of measures assessing rejection sensitivity, attachment style, and sociotropic and autonomous personality dispositions (see Appendix F). A demographic information form also sought information regarding, gender, age, country of birth, number of siblings, relationship status, current living situation, and previous psychiatric treatment history. Additional items included in this questionnaire package that were specific to study three will be described in Chapter Four (study three).

### **Measures.**

#### ***Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire.***

Rejection sensitivity was measured using the Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire (RSQ; Downey & Feldman, 1996), as described in the method section of Chapter Two. Cronbach's alpha for the current study was .76.

#### ***Experiences in Close Relationships Revised Version Questionnaire.***

Attachment anxiety and avoidance was measured using the Experiences in Close Relationships Revised version questionnaire (ECR-R; Fraley, Waller & Brennan, 2000). The ECR-R is a 36 item self-report measure which requires respondents to indicate how they generally experience emotionally intimate relationships. Participants in the current study were asked to think about their experiences in both past and current relationships. The measure utilises a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) with high scores indicative of higher endorsement of the construct. Eighteen items assess attachment avoidance and 18 items assess attachment anxiety. Example items include "*I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on romantic partners*" and "*I often worry that my romantic partner doesn't really love me*" respectively. Fourteen items are reverse scored to control for response bias. A total score for each dimension is obtained by averaging a person's responses. Average scores can range between one and seven. Confirmatory factor analyses have supported a two-factor solution reflecting the anxiety and avoidance dimensions (Fairchild & Finney, 2006). Unlike categorical measures of attachment, the ECR-

R provides an indication of an individual's level of anxiety and avoidance thus offering more information than typical categorical responses. For the purpose of the current study, the dimensional approach was utilised, with higher scores reflective of greater endorsement of attachment anxiety or attachment avoidance. The ECR-R exhibits sound psychometric properties as indicated by good construct validity and good internal consistency with estimates reported at .93 for the avoidance subscale and .92 for the anxiety subscale (Fairchild & Finney, 2006). Cronbach's alphas for the current study were .94 for the avoidance subscale and .93 for the anxiety subscale.

### ***Revised Personal Style Inventory.***

Sociotropy and autonomy, the personality dispositions related to an individual's vulnerability to depression, were measured using the Revised Personal Style Inventory (PSI-II; Robins et al., 1994). The PSI-II is a 48 item self report measure which is scored to produce two scales reflective of the sociotropy and autonomy dimensions. The sociotropy dimension is comprised of 24 items which assess three constructs; concern about what others think, dependency, and pleasing others. This dimension is representative of the interpersonal domain. The autonomy scale is similarly comprised of 24 items which assess three constructs; perfectionism/self criticism, need for control, and defensive separation. This dimension is representative of the achievement domain. The questionnaire employs a 6-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 6 (*strongly disagree*). Example items include, "*I try to please other people too much*" and "*I tend to keep people at a distance*" respectively. A separate score is calculated for each dimension by summing the responses which correspond to each domain. Scores for both dimensions can range between 30 and 180. The PSI-II displays sound psychometric properties exhibiting good factor structure, and good internal consistency, and test-retest reliability for both dimensions (Robins et al., 1994). Cronbach's alpha has been reported between .88 to .90 for the sociotropy dimension and at .86 for the



autonomy dimension (Robins et al., 1994). Cronbach's alphas for the current study were .87 and .85 for sociotropy and autonomy respectively.

### **Procedure**

Under the ethical research guidelines, permission to undertake the present research was sought and approved by the Australian Catholic University Human Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix G). Online advertisements invited participants to partake in research on rejection. Participants were required to click on the link in the advertisement which directed them to the online information letter and questionnaire package. Data was gathered using the data collection software program Psychdata.

## **Results**

### **Data Screening**

Data were collected using Psychdata and subsequently downloaded into SPSS (Version 15) for Windows. In accordance with checklist instructions outlined by Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), data were screened and statistical assumptions were tested prior to the commencement of analyses. Data were first screened for accuracy of input, which included investigation of out of range values, plausible means and standard deviations, coefficients of variation, and univariate outliers. There were no out of range values or inappropriately entered data. Means and standard deviations were also considered plausible, and correlations appeared honest.

### **Missing data.**

Three hundred and sixty five participants responded to the online advertisement. Of these, two hundred and seven participants fully completed the online survey, demonstrating a 56.7% completion rate. As the remaining 158 (43.3%) cases failed to complete more than 5% of the items on one or more scales they were deleted from all subsequent analyses

(Tabachnick & Fidel, 2007). Further inspection of the data revealed two cases whose parents were no longer alive. As more than 5% of the items in the survey pertained to current relationships with their parents, these cases were also deleted. Following deletion of cases, no further missing data were identified.

### **Outliers.**

As employed in study one, the presence of univariate outliers was assessed by obtaining standardized z-scores for each variable. Potential outliers were identified by z-scores in excess of  $\pm 3.29$  ( $p < .001$ , two tailed test). Using this method, one univariate outlier was found on the RSQ and one on the Sociotropy scale of the PSI. In order to determine the most appropriate process for dealing with univariate outliers, Mahalanobis distances were subsequently computed for all cases to detect the presence of multivariate outliers. Utilising a  $\chi^2$  critical value of 20.515 with a criterion of  $p < .001$ , no multivariate outliers were found. Given that only two univariate outliers were identified and they were determined to be sampled from the target population, these cases were manually transformed. The two scores were assigned a value one unit smaller or larger than the next most extreme score in the distribution (Tabachnick & Fidel, 2007). Following transformations, the data were reassessed for both univariate and multivariate outliers and none were found to exist.

### **Normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity.**

Normality is typically assessed using both graphical and statistical methods. As the sample size for the current study is large however, formal inference tests are likely to identify statistically significant skewness and kurtosis when there may be only minor deviations from normality (Field, 2005; Tabachnick & Fidel, 2007). Normality was therefore assessed by viewing the shape of the distribution for each variable and the size of skewness and kurtosis values. The visual appearance of the distribution for all variables appeared normal and skewness and kurtosis values were close to zero. Despite the large sample size, z-scores were calculated for skewness and kurtosis values and were all shown to be within the lower and

upper thresholds of  $\pm 3.29$  ( $p < .001$ , two tailed test), providing further confirmation of normality.

To ensure the assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity were not violated graphical methods were also employed. Bivariate scatter plots between all combinations of variables were inspected and indicated these assumptions were met (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). All plots were characterized by an oval shape, demonstrating a linear relationship between the pairs of variables, and exhibited a similar width across the spread of scores indicating homoscedasticity.

Multicollinearity and singularity was assessed via tolerance statistics and variance inflation factor (VIF) values (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). As recommended, tolerance statistics were above .2 (Menard, 1995) and VIF values were less than three for all predictors (Francis, 2004). Further analyses revealed that bivariate correlations did not exceed .70. These findings demonstrate the assumptions of multicollinearity and singularity were satisfied.

### **Reliability tests.**

As described in the method section of this chapter, reliability analysis indicated that Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all scales exceeded a value of .7 demonstrating acceptable levels of internal consistency (Francis, 2004).

### **Demographic Characteristics and Descriptive Statistics**

Descriptive statistics were obtained for all measures. The means and standard deviations of these measures are displayed in Table 4. The scores obtained are all consistent with the means and standard deviations reported in previous samples derived from student populations. RSQ scores ranged between 2.72 and 23.17, out of a possible range of 1 and 36. The ECR-R yields separate scores for attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance, with scores ranging between 1.11 and 6.61, and 1 and 6.44 respectively, out of a possible range for both scales of one to seven. As the ECR-R utilises a dimensional approach to

measuring attachment, mean scores reflect the level of endorsement of each dimension.

Based on these scores, the current sample endorsed more items reflective of attachment anxiety than attachment avoidance. Mean scores for the online sample were reported at 3.64 for the anxiety dimension and 2.93 for the avoidance dimension. Scores obtained on the sociotropy and autonomy scales derived from the PSI, ranged between 48 and 122, and 45 and 127 respectively, out of a possible range 30 to 180. An examination of the mean scores indicates that the sample endorsed on average more sociotropy than autonomy items.

Table 4

*Means and Standard Deviations for Rejection Sensitivity, Attachment Anxiety, Attachment Avoidance, Sociotropy, and Autonomy.*

Scale	Female ( <i>n</i> = 149)		Male ( <i>n</i> = 55)		Total ( <i>n</i> = 205)	
	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Rejection Sensitivity	10.20	4.02	11.20	3.49	10.48	3.89
Attachment Anxiety	3.97	1.36	4.22	1.21	4.04	1.33
Attachment Avoidance	2.93	1.18	3.20	1.12	3.01	1.17
Sociotropy	99.68	16.69	96.40	15.64	98.88	16.45
Autonomy	85.45	15.37	91.15	14.47	87.07	15.32

#### **Gender differences.**

An independent samples *t*-test was conducted to assess gender differences in mean scores obtained on the measures of rejection sensitivity, attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance, sociotropy and autonomy. As Levene's test showed no significant difference in the variances, the equal variances *t*-test was utilised for all mean comparisons. Males and females did not differ significantly in their responses to rejection sensitivity  $t(202) = -1.64, p = .10$ , attachment anxiety  $t(202) = -1.2, p = .23$ , attachment avoidance  $t(202) = -1.45, p = .15$ ,

and sociotropy  $t(202) = 1.27, p = .21$ . However, males scored significantly higher than females on the measure of autonomy,  $t(202) = -2.39, p = .02$ .

### **Correlations**

To test the directions and the strength of the relationship between the variables, Pearson's product moment correlation coefficients were calculated. The correlations are displayed in Table 5. Ten significant correlations were obtained. Significant correlations ranged from small (.17) to moderate (.59) in strength. Rejection sensitivity and attachment anxiety exhibited the strongest association. One weak positive significant correlation was found between gender and autonomy, consistent with the results of the independent samples  $t$ -test.

### **Predicting and Assessing Group Differences in Rejection Sensitivity**

#### **Predicting rejection sensitivity.**

A series of multiple regression analyses were conducted in order to explore the predictive utility of the respective attachment styles and personality dispositions (sociotropy and autonomy) on rejection sensitivity. Given the aim of the current study was to compare the influence of each of the predictors and to determine how best to characterise rejection sensitivity, a standard multiple regression analysis was used. The results of the regression analyses are shown in Table 6. Overall, the model, which reflects the total influence of attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance, sociotropy, and autonomy on rejection sensitivity, was significant, accounting for 39% ( $R^2 = .39$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .37$ ) of the variance,  $F(4, 200) = 31.43, p < .001$ . As indicated in Table 6, three of the four predictor variables contributed to the prediction of rejection sensitivity scores (attachment anxiety,  $t = 6.34, p = .001$ ; sociotropy,  $t = 2.14, p = .03$ ; autonomy,  $t = 2.03, p = .04$ ). Although significantly correlated with rejection sensitivity, attachment avoidance failed to contribute significantly ( $t = 1.29, p = .20$ ). Examination of the standardised regression coefficients highlights the relative importance of each of the predictors. The magnitude of the beta values demonstrated that

attachment anxiety is the most important predictor of rejection sensitivity followed (in order) by sociotropy, autonomy, and attachment avoidance. Examination of the part correlation coefficients showed that attachment anxiety uniquely explains 12.25% (part  $r = .35$ ) of the variability in rejection sensitivity when it is added to the model. Sociotropy and autonomy uniquely explained 1.39% (part  $r = .12$ ) and 1.28% (part  $r = .11$ ) of the variance respectively.

Table 5

*Pearson's Correlations between Rejection Sensitivity, Attachment Anxiety, Attachment Avoidance, Sociotropy, and Autonomy*

Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Rejection Sensitivity	-					
2. Attachment Anxiety	.59**	-				
3. Attachment Avoidance	.32**	.36**	-			
4. Sociotropy	.40**	.52**	.10	-		
5. Autonomy	.34**	.32**	.47**	.20**	-	
6. Age	.12	-.08	-.08	-.07	.03	-
7. Gender	.12	.08	.10	-.09	.17**	-.00

*Note.*  $N = 205$

\* $p < .05$ , two tailed. \*\* $p < .01$ , two tailed

Table 6  
*Summary of Standard Multiple Regression of Attachment Styles and Personality Dispositions  
 Predicting Scores on Rejection Sensitivity*

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	Partial	Part
Attachment anxiety	1.30	0.20	.44**	.41	.35
Attachment avoidance	0.28	0.22	.08	.09	.07
Sociotropy	0.03	0.02	.14*	.15	.12
Autonomy	0.03	0.02	.13*	.14	.11

*Note.*  $N = 205$

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$

### **Group differences.**

In order to investigate how rejection sensitive respondents differ from non-rejection sensitive respondents, the sample was divided into two groups based on scores obtained on the RSQ. Utilising a median split procedure to reflect highly rejection sensitive and low rejection sensitive persons, a between groups Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was conducted to assess differences in attachment style and personality dispositions. As previously outlined, the median split procedure is one that is commonly employed in research on rejection sensitivity (Levy et al., 2001). Box's test of the assumption of equality of covariance matrices was examined to ensure homogeneity. Results indicate this assumption was satisfied, Box's  $M = 14.07$ ,  $F(10, 194915.5) = 1.38$ ,  $p = .18$ . Using a critical alpha level of .05, the MANOVA showed a statistically significant difference between the high rejection sensitivity and low rejection sensitivity groups on the combined dependent variables (attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance, sociotropy and autonomy),  $V = .28$ ,  $F(4, 200) = 19.81$ ,  $p < .001$ . When the results for the respective dependent variables were examined separately (taking into consideration that univariate effects may be misleading as a result of the correlation between the dependent variables, Tabachnick & Fidel, 2007), differences between the groups reached significance. As displayed in Table 7, all univariate analyses

were significant, indicating that highly rejection sensitive and low rejection sensitive respondents scored significantly differently on measures of attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance, sociotropy and autonomy. Levene's test of equality of variances was satisfied for all dependent variables (attachment anxiety,  $F(1, 203) = 1.21, p = .27$ ; attachment avoidance,  $F(1, 203) = 2.24, p = .14$ ; sociotropy,  $F(1, 203) = .19, p = .67$ ; autonomy,  $F(1, 203) = .06, p = .80$ ).

Table 7

*Mean Ratings of Attachment Styles and Personality Dispositions for Low and High Categories of Rejection Sensitivity.*

Variable	Rejection Sensitivity Category				Univariate $F(1, 203)$	$\eta^2$
	Low ( $n=99$ )		High ( $n=106$ )			
	M	SE	M	SE		
Attachment anxiety	3.34	.11	4.70	.11	73.66**	.27
Attachment avoidance	2.68	.11	3.32	.12	16.44**	.08
Sociotropy	93.39	1.57	104.01	1.52	23.69**	.10
Autonomy	83.11	1.50	90.77	1.44	13.59**	.06

*Note.* \*\* $p < .01$ .

## Discussion

### Summary of Findings

The results of the current study provide support for the notion that rejection sensitivity is associated with less adaptive interpersonal functioning. This study set out to explore which attachment style and personality dispositions best characterise highly rejection sensitive individuals. Furthermore, it aimed to investigate whether these styles or dispositions differentiate highly rejection sensitive individuals from low rejection sensitive individuals.



Consistent with hypotheses, the findings demonstrated that rejection sensitivity was positively associated with both sociotropy and autonomy, and both anxious and avoidant attachment styles. That is, the more rejection sensitive an individual was, the more sociotropic and autonomous, and the more likely he or she was to exhibit anxious and/or avoidant attachment patterns. Highly rejection sensitive individuals were also differentiated from low rejection sensitive individuals, such that highly rejection sensitive individuals were more autonomous and sociotropic, and more likely to exhibit anxious and avoidant attachment styles. Previous research appears inconclusive with regards to whether there is a discernable pattern with which high rejection sensitive individuals relate to others. In aiming to elucidate the specific interpersonal patterns, the current results suggest that rejection sensitivity was most closely related to attachment anxiety. Building upon the foundations of previous research, the current findings provide an insight into how high rejection sensitive individuals interact and relate with those around them, particularly those with whom they share a close relationship. The current findings and associated empirical findings will be explored in depth below.

In general, the current findings remain consistent with prior research that has demonstrated a positive association between rejection sensitivity and patterns of insecure attachment (e.g., Ayduk et al., 2001; Downey & Feldman, 1994; Feldman & Downey, 1996). The results indicate that high rejection sensitive individuals are more insecurely attached than their low rejection sensitive counterparts. On the basis that rejection sensitivity was associated with higher levels of anxious and avoidant attachment styles, high rejection sensitive individuals appear to exhibit greater levels of dysfunction with regards to how they think, feel, and behave in their close relationships. These findings serve to reinforce the conceptual relevance of attachment theory to the rejection sensitivity model and lend support to Feldman and Downey's (1994) assertion that insecure patterns of attachment may underlie the rejection sensitivity dynamic. The findings fundamentally suggest that the internal

working models of highly rejection sensitive individuals are, at least quantitatively, distinct from those who are low in rejection sensitivity.

With regards to the differential patterns of insecure attachment, the current findings indicate that rejection sensitivity is most closely related to attachment anxiety. Of all the variables assessed in the present study, attachment anxiety was identified as the most meaningful predictor of rejection sensitivity. In accordance with the Hazan and Shaver's (1987; 1994) conceptualisation of insecure attachment styles, these results imply that high rejection sensitive individuals are likely to experience and think about their interpersonal relationships in a manner that is consistent with an anxious attachment style. Therefore, high rejection sensitive individuals may be more prone to exhibiting intense needs to be close, accepted, supported, and reassured by others (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002). Furthermore, they may be more likely to experience excessive fears of abandonment and neglect, show an increased preoccupation with the responsiveness of their partner, and may make repeated attempts to maintain proximity to their partner (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2007; Hazan & Shaver, 1994). It also may be inferred that the romantic relationships of high rejection sensitive individuals are likely to be characterised by "obsession, desire for reciprocation and union, emotional highs and lows, and extreme sexual attraction and jealousy" (Hazan & Shaver, 1987, p. 515).

Although the results showed that high rejection sensitive individuals scored significantly higher on the measure of attachment avoidance when compared to low rejection sensitive individuals, attachment avoidance was not found to be a meaningful predictor of rejection sensitivity. This finding suggests that high rejection sensitive individuals are less likely to experience and think about their relationships in terms of an avoidant attachment style, than they are to experience and think about their relationships in terms of an anxious attachment style. Thus, they may be less likely to exhibit fears of and discomfort with close interpersonal relationships. In addition, it appears less likely that high rejection sensitive

individuals would display desires for independence, self-reliance, and control, or have a tendency to keep close others at a safe distance (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002). This pattern of results is seemingly at odds with prior research which has demonstrated an association between rejection sensitivity and attachment avoidance (e.g., Ayduk et al., 2001; Downey & Feldman, 1994; Feldman & Downey, 1996). However, of important note, the empirical findings assessing insecure attachment styles have to date, primarily been based upon correlational data. Further assertions about the relationship between rejection sensitivity and specific attachment styles are however only theoretical in nature (e.g., Downey et al., 2000; Feldman & Downey, 1994). In general, the current findings demonstrate that rejection sensitivity is associated with less adaptive beliefs about the availability and responsiveness of significant others when compared to low rejection sensitive individuals. The nature and quality of the internal working models of high rejection sensitive individuals appear to resemble more closely an anxious pattern of attachment.

The relationship between rejection sensitivity and sociotropy and autonomy identified in the current study was generally consistent with the literature (Brookings et al., 2003; Feldman & Downey, 1994). The results showed that, when sociotropy and autonomy were entered as predictors in the regression analysis, they both significantly contributed to variance in rejection sensitivity scores. Similarly, the results of the MANOVA indicated that highly rejection sensitive individuals scored higher on both dimensions of personality when compared with low rejection sensitive individuals. These findings imply that high rejection sensitive individuals may be more motivated than low rejection sensitive individuals to invest in and focus upon either themselves or their interpersonal relationships to derive personal satisfaction. Moreover, in accordance with Beck's (1983) diathesis-stress theory of depression, which suggested that individuals may be vulnerable to depression as a function of increased investment in and focus upon either themselves or their interpersonal relationships, the current findings indicate that high rejection sensitivity may be associated with an

increased risk of experiencing depressive symptoms. Highly rejection sensitive individuals scored significantly higher on both dimensions of personality when compared with low rejection sensitive individuals. On the basis of Beck's (1983) theory, it may be suggested that if high rejection sensitive individuals experience a loss in the domain specific to their type of investment, they will be generally more vulnerable to experiencing depressive symptoms.

Contrary to the results concerning specific patterns of attachment, the relative influence of sociotropic and autonomous dispositions on rejection sensitivity could not be ascertained. It appears that rejection sensitivity is not characterised by one particular style of relating. High rejection sensitive individuals are therefore likely to exhibit variability in terms of how they might interact with people in general. These findings appear to contradict the notion that personality dispositions and attachment styles are systematically related, and rather reflect multiple internal working models organised on the basis of relational specificity (Overall et al., 2003; Sibley, 2007). Sociotropy and autonomy have been conceptualised as representing the highest level of the working model hierarchy, and thus are hypothesised to govern behaviour across all relational domains (Overall et al., 2003; Sibley, 2007; Sibley & Overall, 2007). Sociotropy has been shown to be related to attachment anxiety, and autonomy has been shown to be related to attachment avoidance (Overall et al., 2003; Sibley, 2007; Sibley & Overall, 2007). As rejection sensitivity appears to be more closely related to attachment anxiety, it may have been expected that rejection sensitivity would also be more closely related to the sociotropic disposition (Overall et al., 2003; Sibley, 2007; Sibley & Overall, 2007). As the findings demonstrate, this was not the case. High rejection sensitive individuals could not be categorised or defined in terms of having either a sociotropic or autonomous personality disposition. In light of all of these findings, it may be surmised that high rejection sensitive individuals interact with their significant others in a manner most closely associated with an anxious attachment style, however, in terms of how these individuals are interacting more generally there is not one discernable pattern. Given that

anxious expectations of rejection are activated in circumstances where rejection specifically from significant others is perceived as likely, how high rejection sensitive individuals are relating more generally, is perhaps not as relevant to the rejection sensitivity model. The finding that there is variability in the personality dispositions of high rejection sensitive individuals is therefore, in some respects, not unexpected. Within the context of these findings, it can be further argued that the current study lends support to the conceptualisation of rejection sensitivity as a construct that emphasises the importance of situational factors (Feldman & Downey, 1994).

### **Implications and Future Directions**

As a result of current findings, discussion of the implications and possible directions for future research is necessary. The finding that attachment anxiety is most closely related to rejection sensitivity has important implications for the understanding of highly rejection sensitive individuals. If adult attachment styles are conceptualised as an extension of childhood attachment experiences, it may be suggested that the development of anxious expectations of rejection is more a function of exposure to inconsistently responsive attachment figures, rather than exposure to consistently non-responsive attachment figures. Attachment anxiety is postulated to result from the former (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). High rejection sensitive individuals may have come to feel anxious about the responsiveness and availability of their current significant others because of the inconsistency with which their needs were met during infancy and childhood. However, such propositions can only be considered speculative and would require longitudinal data to be sufficiently supported. Although it is not within the scope of the current research to assess the etiological significance of attachment style and early attachment experiences, the current results indeed highlight the relevance of attachment theory to the rejection sensitivity model.

The tendency for high rejection sensitive individuals to exhibit an anxious attachment style also has implications for understanding how rejection sensitivity infers vulnerability to

negative intrapersonal outcomes. Past findings demonstrate that individuals with an anxious attachment style experience greater difficulty detaching from distressing thoughts and emotions than those with an avoidant attachment style (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002). The current results in part serve to reinforce the relationship between rejection sensitivity and the internalising symptoms of depression, social anxiety, and loneliness, which were identified in study one.

One of the central implications of the current study concerns how high rejection sensitive individuals cope with their fears of rejection. As previously outlined, research proposes that there is a resemblance between the two dimensions of insecure attachment and the two behavioural strategies which are used by rejection sensitive individuals to cope with their heightened sensitivities (Downey et al., 2000; Levy et al., 2001). It has been theorised that attachment anxiety is conceptually similar to intimacy-seeking strategies, and that attachment avoidance is conceptually similar to intimacy avoidant strategies. On the basis that rejection sensitivity was found to be more closely related to attachment anxiety than attachment avoidance, the current results imply that rejection sensitivity may be more closely associated with the use of intimacy seeking coping strategies, rather than intimacy avoidant coping strategies. In an effort to prevent rejection from occurring, highly rejection sensitive individuals may be more prone to *moving toward others*, holding the maladaptive belief that “if you love me, you will not hurt me” (Horney, p. 96, as cited in Levy et al., 2001). As a function of these beliefs, high rejection sensitive individuals may be more prone to engage in behaviors which are aimed at securing intimacy and acceptance from their significant others (Levy et al., 2001). As discussed in Chapter One, such behaviours may include compliance and coercion strategies. If high rejection sensitive individuals are more prone to using such strategies to cope with their fears and anxieties, there are clear implications for the functioning of not only their interpersonal relationships but also their psychological wellbeing

(Downey et al., 1999). The implications for the treatment and identification of rejection sensitive individuals will be further discussed in the final chapter.

The question that arises from the notion that high rejection sensitive individuals may use intimacy-seeking strategies to prevent rejection is: what happens when these strategies fail? That is, what happens when high rejection sensitive individuals actually experience rejection? If rejection sensitivity is primarily characterised by a pattern of attachment that specifically emphasises maintaining close proximity to significant others, then the need for further inquiry concerning how these individuals are likely to respond in the face of rejection, becomes apparent. These and similar questions will form the basis for following study.

### **Limitations**

One of the main limitations concerns the assessment of how rejection sensitive individuals generally relate to others. As previously outlined, sociotropy and autonomy have been conceptualised in terms of generalised interpersonal dispositions. These dispositions are suggested to explain differences in the mental representations of the self in relation to non-close and less familiar others (Sibley & Overall, 2007). However, the way in which individuals relate to unfamiliar others is likely to be influenced by an infinite range of confounding variables. Such variables could include: personality factors (i.e., introversion), self-esteem, self-efficacy, mood, communication styles, and motivation. It is beyond the scope of the present research to account for all of these variables. Therefore, one of the limitations of the current study is the inability to comprehensively assess whether there is or is not, a specific pattern of relating associated with rejection sensitivity.

### **Conclusions**

The current study aimed to provide an understanding of how high rejection sensitive individuals relate to others. In general, the findings indicate that rejection sensitivity is associated with less adaptive interpersonal functioning, as demonstrated by the associations of rejection sensitivity with insecure attachment styles, and sociotropic and autonomous

personality dispositions. The results suggest that there is a discernable pattern with which high rejection sensitive individuals specifically think about and experience their close interpersonal relationships. They are likely to be characterised by an anxious attachment style, and thus may be likely to exhibit intimacy-seeking strategies to prevent the occurrence of rejection. The findings further indicate that high rejection sensitive individuals are characterised by personality dispositions, which may increase vulnerability to depression. However, the dispositions of high rejection sensitive individuals appear heterogeneous in nature, with individuals exhibiting variability in terms of how they more generally experience and relate to others. It may be concluded that gaining an understanding how high rejection sensitive individuals negotiate their close interpersonal relationships is central to the overall understanding of the rejection sensitivity dynamic



## **CHAPTER FOUR: STUDY THREE - REJECTION SENSITIVITY AND BEHAVIOURAL REACTIONS TO REJECTION**

### **Overview of the Chapter**

This next study aimed to understand how high rejection sensitive individuals react to perceptions of rejection. Building upon the findings obtained in study two, which indicated that high rejection sensitive individuals relate to significant others in a manner consistent with an anxious attachment style, the current study aimed to elucidate how these individuals respond to significant others when their fears of rejection are realised. In other words, what do high rejection sensitive individuals do when their rejection prevention strategies fail (i.e., intimacy seeking coping strategies)? The extant literature demonstrates that perceptions of rejection facilitate the enactment of behavioural overreactions, typically manifest in the form of fight-or-flight type responses (i.e., Ayduk et al., 2000; Ayduk et al., 2002; Downey et al., 2004; London et al., 2007). While there is a extensive evidence that attests to the association between rejection sensitivity and behavioural overreactions in general, much of this research has focused upon the elicitation of fight responses rather than flight responses. In addition, there has been little consideration of the stability of behavioural reactions across interactions with different significant others (i.e., parents, friends, romantic partners). Accordingly, the current study aimed to address these gaps in the literature.

### **Rejection Sensitivity and Behavioural Reactions to Rejection**

As outlined in Chapter One, the rejection sensitivity model has been conceptualised as a cognitive-affective processing disposition (Downey & Feldman, 1996; Feldman & Downey, 1994). Posited within the context of a cognitive-affective processing system (CAPS) framework, an individual's behaviour is determined by the interaction between situational features and a set of cognitive-affective units. These cognitive-affective units include: encodings, expectations, beliefs, values, goals, competencies, self-regulatory abilities, and affect (Ayduk et al., 2000; Ayduk & Gyurak, 2008; Mischel & Shoda, 1995). To summarise

the salient points presented in Chapter One, the rejection sensitivity model specifies that it is situations that encompass the possibility of rejection, which trigger the rejection sensitivity processing dynamics (Ayduk & Gyurak, 2008). In rejection-relevant contexts, high rejection sensitive individuals become negatively aroused, experiencing a sense of threat and foreboding (Magios, Downey & Shoda, 2000, as cited in Ayduk et al., 2000). This defensive motivational state functions to ready the individual to defend against subsequent rejection experiences (Ayduk & Gyurak, 2008). In doing so, their attention is narrowed to allow for the detection of cues that would confirm their expectations of rejection (Öhman, Flykt, & Esteves, 2001). This hypervigilance makes an individual significantly more susceptible to perceiving rejection in the ambiguous or negative behaviour of significant others (Downey & Feldman, 1996; Downey, Lebolt et al., 1998). Once these confirmatory rejection cues are perceived, the individual, who is already in a state of stress and high arousal, reacts automatically (Ayduk et al., 2000). These automatic reactions are typically maladaptive, as there rarely exists real physical threat or danger. The maladaptive nature of these automatic reactions is thus at odds with valued interpersonal goals, such as the maintenance of important relationships (Ayduk & Mischel, in press, as cited in Ayduk et al., 2000).

### **Hot-cool self-regulatory framework.**

Research has further conceptualised the pattern of processing dynamics exhibited by high rejection sensitive individuals, in terms of a *hot-cool* self-regulatory framework (Metcalf & Mischel, 1999). This framework suggests that automatic behavioural reactions to rejection are characteristic of the emotional, *hot* system (Metcalf & Mischel, 1999). The hot system is designed to facilitate rapid emotional processing of biologically significant or *hot* stimuli in the environment. This system generates the enactment of unmediated, *reflexive* fight-or-flight reactions (Ayduk, et al., 2002; Metcalf & Mischel, 1999). The hot system holds adaptive value when implemented in response to threat conditions that do not allow for thinking time (such as avoiding a car accident). However, for high rejection sensitive

individuals this system is likely implemented indiscriminately, both in situations that would normally necessitate *reflective*, strategic responses, or indeed in situations where there is no physical or psychological threat to the self at all (Ayduk et al., 2002). Behaviours elicited under these circumstances are unregulated automatic reactions prompted by a narrowing of attention to external rejection features and internal emotional states (Ayduk, et al., 1999; Metcalfe & Mischel, 1999). Reactions to rejection typically take the form of one or more of the following: withdrawal, hostility, and/or aggression (Ayduk et al., 2000; Downey et al., 1999). It is thought that underlying the enactment of these reflexive, automatic responses is the belief that rejection is either inevitable and beyond their control, or has already occurred (Downey et al., 1999). Contrary to the dynamics of the hot system, the *cool* system is characterised by processes that are cognitively mediated. The cool system engenders the enactment of *reflective*, thoughtful, and instrumental responses (Ayduk, et al., 1999; Ayduk et al, 2002). Activation of the cool system is therefore facilitative of more adaptive interpersonal behaviours and more effective self-regulation (Ayduk et al., 2000; Ayduk et al., 2002).

There is a host of empirical research that highlights the association between rejection sensitivity and the automatic generation of fight-or-flight type reactions in response to perceptions of rejection. For example, Downey and colleagues have directly demonstrated the *hot* dynamics of the rejection sensitivity model (Downey et al., 2004). Forty three participants (60% male) were required to view paintings which depicted rejection and acceptance themes, as well as non rejection-relevant positive and negative themes. Immediately following the presentation of a startle probe, participants' eyeblink startle magnitude was measured. When viewing rejection related artwork, rejection sensitive individuals exhibited greater potentiation of their startle reflex, in comparison to when they viewed acceptance and non-rejection relevant artworks. This pattern of results was specific only to high rejection sensitive individuals. The authors concluded that such findings are indicative of the association between rejection sensitivity and the initiation of fight-or-flight responses in the presence of

rejection cues. This study further emphasises the context-dependent nature of the rejection sensitivity dynamic. That is, that the processing dynamics associated with rejection sensitivity are only activated under specific circumstances.

The association between rejection sensitivity and fight type behavioural reactions to rejection (aggression and hostility) has also been frequently demonstrated. According to Lieberman, Solomon, Greenberg, and McGregor (1999) aggression is defined in terms of an intention to physically or psychologically hurt another. While the current study will not be assessing intent, aggressive or hostile reactions will be considered those which involve being physically aggressive, yelling, using a hostile or negative tone of voice, blaming and shaming another, and using verbal and non-verbal put downs (Downey & Feldman, 1996; Downey, Freitas et al., 1998). The findings obtained by Downey, Freitas, and colleagues (1998), reiterate the association between rejection sensitivity and flight reactions to rejection. By observing 53 couples discussing an unresolved relationship issue, high rejection sensitive females were found to display significantly more negative behaviours during the discussion, when compared to low rejection sensitive females. Negative behaviour was manifest in terms of verbal and non-verbal signs of anger and hostility, such as a hostile tone of voice, or demeaning or mocking verbal statements. Downey and colleagues (2000) showed that the relationship between aggressive/hostile behaviour and rejection sensitivity is also applicable for rejection sensitive males. Investigating the association between rejection sensitivity and male violence in romantic relationships, it was proposed that high rejection sensitive males who are highly invested in their romantic relationships are at heightened risk of responding to perceptions of rejection from their romantic partners with violence. Downey and colleagues (2000) operationalised relationship investment in terms of the extent to which individuals believe the ability to develop romantic relationships is important, and the extent to which an individual's behaviour is reflective of this belief. It was measured using two items derived from the 24-item, self-perception profile for college students measure, developed by Neeman

and Harter (1984, as cited in Downey et al, 2000). Among highly invested individuals, anxious expectations were shown to predict dating violence.

In parallel with the aforementioned empirical findings, Ayduk et al. (2008) found that the rejection-aggression link is moderated by individual differences in rejection sensitivity. The enactment of hostility and aggression was operationalised in terms of the degree of hot sauce allocated to the interaction partner. After experiencing rejection in a web-based interaction, high rejection sensitive individuals allocated a greater amount of hot sauce to their partner when compared with low rejection sensitive individuals. Reiterating the notion that rejection sensitivity is reflective of situationally activated dynamic, these findings remained constant after controlling for trait neuroticism. As trait neuroticism was statistically controlled for in this study, the authors concluded that it is the disposition to anxiously expect rejection, which explains the enactment of aggressive reactions to rejection, rather than a generalised disposition to experience negative affect (Ayduk et al., 2008).

Past research has consistently pointed to an association between rejection sensitivity and hostile or aggressive behavioural overreactions to perceptions of rejection, a *fight* response. Ayduk and Gyurak (2008) indeed proposed that the signature of the highly rejection sensitive individual is to behave aggressively when rejected and to be accommodative in non-rejection circumstances. However, as initially outlined, theory proposes that high rejection sensitive individuals are similarly vulnerable to reacting to perceptions of rejection with *flight* type behaviours (Ayduk et al., 2000; Ayduk et al., 2002; Downey et al., 2004; Downey, et al., 1999; London et al., 2007). Drawing from the cognitive-affective processing system framework which speaks of both fight and flight reactions, it might be expected that some high rejection sensitive individuals react to cues of rejection by withdrawing from the situation, either physically or psychologically. Despite these assertions, there currently exists a paucity of research, which has specifically examined the automatic initiation of *flight* reactions.

Whilst comparatively little research has focused upon flight reactions, there is evidence to show that rejection induces withdrawing responses, highlighting the importance of investigating both types of responses to rejection. For example, Ayduk et al. (2003) explored the coping strategies associated with rejection sensitivity with 62 couples. Employing a daily diary methodology to assess participants' day-to-day relationship behaviour, the results demonstrated that conflicts with partners were more likely to induce withdrawal reactions, than aggressive, hostile reactions for high rejection sensitive individuals. The authors contended that the use of aggressive actions and behaviours may be viewed by high rejection sensitive individuals as likely to increase their risk of further rejection, and thus may be considered behaviours that should be avoided (Ayduk et al., 2003). Similarly, in a study assessing the effects of social exclusion, participants were asked to recall a time when they had been rejected and to describe how they immediately reacted following this experience (Molden, Lucas, Gardner, Dean, & Knowles, 2009). In circumstances where participants were actively rejected (as opposed to being passively ignored), they reported a greater tendency to react by withdrawing from social contact. It has been postulated that withdrawal behaviours reflect a rejection prevention focus, such that withdrawing functions as a means of protecting oneself from further experiences of social loss (Ayduk et al., 2003). Sommer and Baumeister (2002) also demonstrated the association between rejection and withdrawing responses. Participants were primed with rejection using a scrambled sentence task. This task required participants to solve a series of anagrams involving sentences which were suggestive of rejection, such as "from isolated on others," and "alone her the left". In comparison to participants with high self-esteem, participants with low self-esteem gave up on this task more quickly. Sommer and Baumeister (2002) concluded that in the presence of rejection cues, individuals with low self-esteem tend to respond by withdrawing. Although not specifically assessing immediate reactions to perceptions of rejection, using a longitudinal design, London et al. (2007) indicated that, in a sample of young adolescents, rejection

sensitivity at time one predicted reported levels of social withdrawal four months later. It was contended that the kind of defensive affect that accompanies an individual's expectations of rejection might influence the kind of behaviour enacted in the presence of rejection cues. Research using early adolescent samples thus suggests that expectations of rejection are likely to be either anxious or angry in nature (London et al., 2007). Anxious expectations of rejection are hypothesised more readily to fuel flight responses, whereas angry expectations of rejection are hypothesised more readily to fuel fight responses (London et al., 2007). Such postulations have not however been examined using adult populations. Evidently, although research indirectly points to the association between rejection sensitivity and the tendency to flee in response to rejection, further research is required to provide a more comprehensive understanding of this association.

#### **Conceptualising the situations that lead to maladaptive reactions to rejection.**

In accordance with the cognitive-affective processing system framework, rejection sensitivity is proposed to function as a stable *if...then* dynamic (Mischel & Shoda, 1995). That is, if certain situational features are encountered, then certain processes and outcomes will result. In rejection-relevant contexts, a reliable pattern of cognitive-affective processes unfolds, which consistently predicts the enactment of certain behavioural responses (Ayduk & Gyurak, 2008). In other words, when high rejection sensitive individuals encounter potential rejection situations, they are likely to react to perceived rejection cues with maladaptive behaviours, either fight or flight responses (see Figure 1 in Chapter One). To date, the *if* component of the dynamic, or what constitutes a rejection-relevant context, has been operationalised as situations that engender the potential for rejection from significant others (Ayduk & Gyurak, 2008; Downey et al., 1996; Levy et al., 2001). Significant others may include, romantic partners, friends, peers, and family members (Downey & Feldman, 1996). As previously indicated, it has been proposed that the signature of the highly rejection sensitive individual is one that sees the elicitation of fight or flight reactions upon perceptions

of rejection cues from significant others. However, previous research has not comprehensively considered whether *all* situations that afford the possibility of rejection from significant others activate the rejection sensitivity dynamic and elicit maladaptive reactions. In accordance with the cognitive-affective processing system framework, because any situation that encompasses the possibility of rejection is said to activate the rejection sensitivity dynamic, it would be expected that a high rejection sensitive individual would consistently behave maladaptively in any rejection situation. However, there is a general paucity of research that may confirm this notion. Downey et al. (1999) suggested that although high rejection sensitive individuals may exhibit general similarity in the behavioural consequences of perceiving of rejection, they are also likely to differ as function of individual differences in developmental history, gender, age, and culture. Moreover, the specific situations that activate defensive expectations of rejection may vary according to the nature of an individual's early rejection experiences. That is, the way in which caregivers and peers communicated a rejecting intent may determine the kind of situations that activate rejection expectations and thus trigger the enactment of behavioural overreactions (Downey et al., 1999). To date, the specificity of the situations that activate the rejection sensitivity dynamic and lead to maladaptive behavioural reactions remains relatively unexplored. Specifically, there appears a lack of research that has compared how individuals react to rejection from different significant others (i.e., parents vs. romantic partners). Research examining this question is thus required.

### **Study Aims**

Drawing upon the extant literature and the identified gaps in the research, the aim of the current study was to understand how high rejection sensitive individuals react to rejection. One of the initial aims of the study was to provide support for previous research, which has documented an association between rejection sensitivity and maladaptive behavioural reactions to rejection. Consistent with such research, it was hypothesised that high rejection



sensitive individuals would react to rejection by responding automatically with behaviours characteristic of the emotional, reflexive, hot system. That is, rejection sensitivity would be associated with the enactment of maladaptive behaviours. The current study further aimed to explore the specific nature of these responses and determine whether rejection sensitivity is associated with the enactment of *both fight and flight* type reactions to rejection. For low rejection sensitive individuals, it was hypothesised that they would respond to rejection in an adaptive manner. That is, their behaviour would facilitate relationship maintenance. As low rejection sensitive individuals are unlikely to be anticipating rejection, or to be highly concerned over its occurrence (Downey et al., 2004), they may be more likely to exhibit behaviours that are characteristic of the reflective cool system, thus engaging in more thoughtful, instrumental, and strategic responses to experiences of rejection, such as, wanting to discuss the rejection with the other person.

Given it was anticipated that rejection sensitivity would be associated with the enactment of maladaptive behavioural reactions to rejection, one of the final aims of the study was to determine whether high rejection sensitive individuals react to all rejection situations using such maladaptive behaviours. The cognitive-affective processing system framework suggests that exposure to situations that afford the possibility of rejection activates the rejection sensitivity processing dynamics and results in the automatic enactment of maladaptive behaviours. The current study aimed to determine whether there is greater specificity in the situations that elicit maladaptive reactions than has been previously theorised. Thus, one of the main research questions was: do high rejection sensitive individuals exhibit cross-situational stability or cross-situational variance in their reactions to rejection? Specifically, the study aimed to examine whether high rejection sensitive individuals are likely to react to rejection in the same way when faced with rejection from different significant others (parents, friends, and romantic partners).

## Method

### Participants

Participants in the current study were the same 205 participants (149 females and 59 males) who took part in study two. A detailed description of the sample, including mean ages and demographic features, is provided in the method section of study two (Chapter Three).

### Materials

As described in study two, participants were provided with an online information letter and a questionnaire package (see Appendix E). In addition to the measures outlined in study two, the questionnaire package included open-ended questions regarding behavioural reactions to rejection (see Appendix F). The RSQ (see method section, Chapter Three) and the four open-ended questions were the focus of the current study.

#### **Behavioural reactions to rejection.**

The hypothetical scenarios that are presented within the RSQ were chosen to form the framework for assessing behavioural reactions to rejection. They were chosen on the basis that Downey and Feldman (1996) indicated these scenarios were pertinent to the lives of young adults, which (like their research), is the target population for the current research. An expert panel of four raters was given the 18 available hypothetical situations that comprise the RSQ and were required to indicate which of these represented the least ambiguous experiences of rejection. The reason for wanting the least ambiguous experience was to ensure that the scenario communicated the clearest message of rejection, in order to adequately assess what happens when an individual is confronted with rejection. Rejection experiences were categorized into four types reflecting rejection from strangers/acquaintances, parents, friends, and romantic partners. One hypothetical situation was chosen for each respective rejection type. Unanimous rater responses revealed the least ambiguous rejection experiences were represented by the following four scenarios; *you ask someone you don't know well on a date; you ask your parents to come to an occasion*

*important to you; you ask a friend to do you a big favour; you ask your boyfriend/girlfriend if he/she really loves you.* Within the RSQ, typically following the presentation of the hypothetical scenarios, participants are asked to indicate their level of concern or anxiety concerning whether the other person would meet their request, and the perceived likelihood of the other person accepting their request. For the purpose of the current study and assessing behavioural reactions to rejection, each of the four chosen scenarios were presented to participants and then accompanied by the statement that their request was declined (indicating rejection). Participants were then asked to indicate how they would react in this given situation. An example of one of the open-ended question is, *You ask your parents to come to an occasion important to you and they decline your request. Describe how you would respond to that person in that situation. What would you DO?*

### **Categorising behavioural responses to rejection.**

Instructed by the overarching theoretical framework and associated aims of the current study, deductive analysis methods were implemented to categorise participants' responses to the four hypothetical rejection scenarios. According to Thomas (2006) "deductive analysis refers to data analyses that set out to test whether data are consistent with prior assumptions, theories, or hypotheses identified or constructed by an investigator" (p. 238). Given the purpose of the current research was to test the theory and accompanying hypotheses, deductive analysis was chosen as the most appropriate method as the structure of the analysis is operationalised according to prior knowledge (Kyngäs & Vanhanen, 1999, as cited in Elo & Kyngäs, 2007). The categorisation of responses concerned the kind of reaction and the frequency of its occurrence, rather than understanding why or how a reaction may occur. Participant responses were hypothesised to fall into three main categories: adaptive responses, fight (maladaptive) responses, and flight (maladaptive) responses. The current research therefore reflects a quantitative approach to analysing the text.

Guided by Elo and Kyngäs' (2007) suggestions for the process of analysis, the categorization of responses involved three key phases; preparation, organizing, and reporting. The preparation phase first required the unit of analysis to be determined and then for the researcher to become familiar with the data (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007). The unit of analysis was determined to be the whole response. As only one question was asked of participants in each scenario and was specific in nature, whole responses were considered small enough to demonstrate one characterizing response type and large enough to allow meaningful interpretation. The manifest content was only utilised for analysis given the difficulties associated with deciphering latent content (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007). Robson (1993) suggests allowing the research aims to determine the type of content to be analysed. Therefore, the research aims of the current study were limited to documenting the kind of reaction displayed and did not include analysis of why an individual behaves in a certain way following experiences of rejection. After determining the most suitable unit of analysis, the data was read through numerous times in order for the researcher to become familiar with the text. The uncoded and uncategorised responses to the hypothetical scenarios are provided in Appendix H.

The subsequent phase of analysis involved the organization of the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Following the initial readings, reactions to the rejection scenarios were coded according to their correspondence with the pre-determined and hypothesised behavioural response categories: adaptive, flight (maladaptive), and fight (maladaptive). A structured categorization matrix (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was developed to assist in the coding process and outlined how each response type was operationalised. Guided by previous research, adaptive responses were operationalised as those, which involve discussing, negotiating, understanding (or attempts at understanding), calm expression of feelings and request for further explanation, open and respectful discussion of the issue, or neutral responses. The fight responses were operationalised as those involving a direct, explicit

expression of one's thoughts and feelings in a confrontational style. Behaviour would involve verbal or physical aggression, violence, using a hostile or negative tone of voice, or being demeaning or mocking. The flight responses were operationalised as those which involve passive, indirect and avoidant behaviours, such as physically leaving the situation, withdrawing socially or psychologically whilst remaining present, avoidance of confronting the issue, being less responsive in conversation, acting cold or distant and suppressing one's true feelings. Responses were coded in reference to behavioural reactions only. If more than one response type was evident within a participants' answer, it was determined that the most dominant or primary theme be chosen to reflect the participant's reaction to rejection (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Participants who described affective responses (i.e., "I would feel sad or a little bit worthless") were not given a behavioural category and were coded as *other*. Similarly, responses which failed to fit any of the available categories were coded as "other". The *other* code was generally characterized by participants who experienced difficulty imagining the scenario, participants who responded sarcastically, or participants who failed to answer the question appropriately. Additional examples of an "other" response were, "really don't know, I'll have to think about this one" or "Ummmmmm haha no idea".

In order to control for the potential bias associated with the primary researcher coding the responses (Miles & Huberman, 1994), two independent expert raters also categorised the participants' responses. The raters were given an instruction sheet (see Appendix I), which outlined the requirements for coding and defined in detail the three available response categories. The raters were also given a research article (Ayduk et al., 2003) which provided further definitional information and an overview of the underlying theoretical principles associated with differential behavioural responses to experiences of rejection.

Once all coding was completed, the three coders' ratings were compared in order to achieve a final category code. In total, 820 responses were categorised, of which 506 (61.71%) responses received a unanimous code. For responses that did not receive a

unanimous code, a final category code was achieved by deferring to a majority rating. Fifteen responses (1.83%) failed to receive a majority rating. As a result these responses were coded as “other” in order to reduce their impact upon the data. The final phase of the deductive analysis is reported in the results section of this chapter.

### **Procedure**

As data were collected simultaneously for both the current and previous study, the procedure was the same as described in the method section of study two (Chapter Three).

## **Results**

Information pertaining to data screening, missing data, outliers, normality, linearity homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity, reliability tests, and descriptive analyses (concerning the RSQ) is presented in the results section of the previous chapter. The following sections will concern the analysis of the responses to the open-ended questions regarding behavioural reactions to rejection.

### **Descriptive and Frequency Analysis**

Following the procedures outlined above, reactions to hypothetical rejection scenarios were categorised into three prominent response styles. Figure 4 displays the frequency of response types for each rejection scenario. Responses which failed to fit the available response styles were categorised as *other*. Specific to the partner rejection scenario, 14 participants responded to the question with reference only to their emotional reaction. As the emphasis of the current research was on behavioural reactions to rejection, these responses were excluded from further analyses. Across all scenarios, the adaptive category was the most frequently occurring response type. An example of an adaptive response in reference to the partner scenario (in which the partner says no to the question as to whether he or she really loves the individual), is, “I would want to discuss with them why this was and whether or not this would have an impact on our future together, rather than getting upset I would

want to see if we could resolve this issue and discuss whether or not we would stay together as a couple or if there were reasons for such a response”. For the date and partner scenarios, the second most frequently occurring response was the flight category. An example of a flight response for the scenario in which the individual imagines that he or she asks someone on a date and his or her request is declined, is “I would hang my head down low, accept the person’s final answer as a definite answer and walk away and say nothing. An example of a flight response for the partner scenario is, “I would just sit there, looking at anything but them, trying and failing to hold back tears. I’d get embarrassed and say I was sorry I put them in an awkward position. Then I’d run away crying”. The flight category was the second most frequently occurring response for the parent scenario in which the individual imagines asking his or her parents to a special occasion and his or her request is declined. An example of a flight response is, “I would probably get into a massive screaming fight about them not being there for me”. The flight category was the second most frequently occurring response for the friend scenario in which the individual imagines asking his or her friend for a favour and his or her request is declined. An example of this is, “I’d keep it in mind for next time they ask for something (i.e., hold it against them and push them away a bit,...unless they had a good reason”.

Figure 5 displays the frequency of behavioural response types across the four rejection scenarios for the high rejection sensitivity group. For highly rejection sensitive individuals, the adaptive category was the most frequently occurring response for the date, the parents scenario and the friend scenarios. For the partner scenario, the flight category was the most frequently occurring response. Across all four scenarios, the flight category was a more frequently occurring response than the fight category.

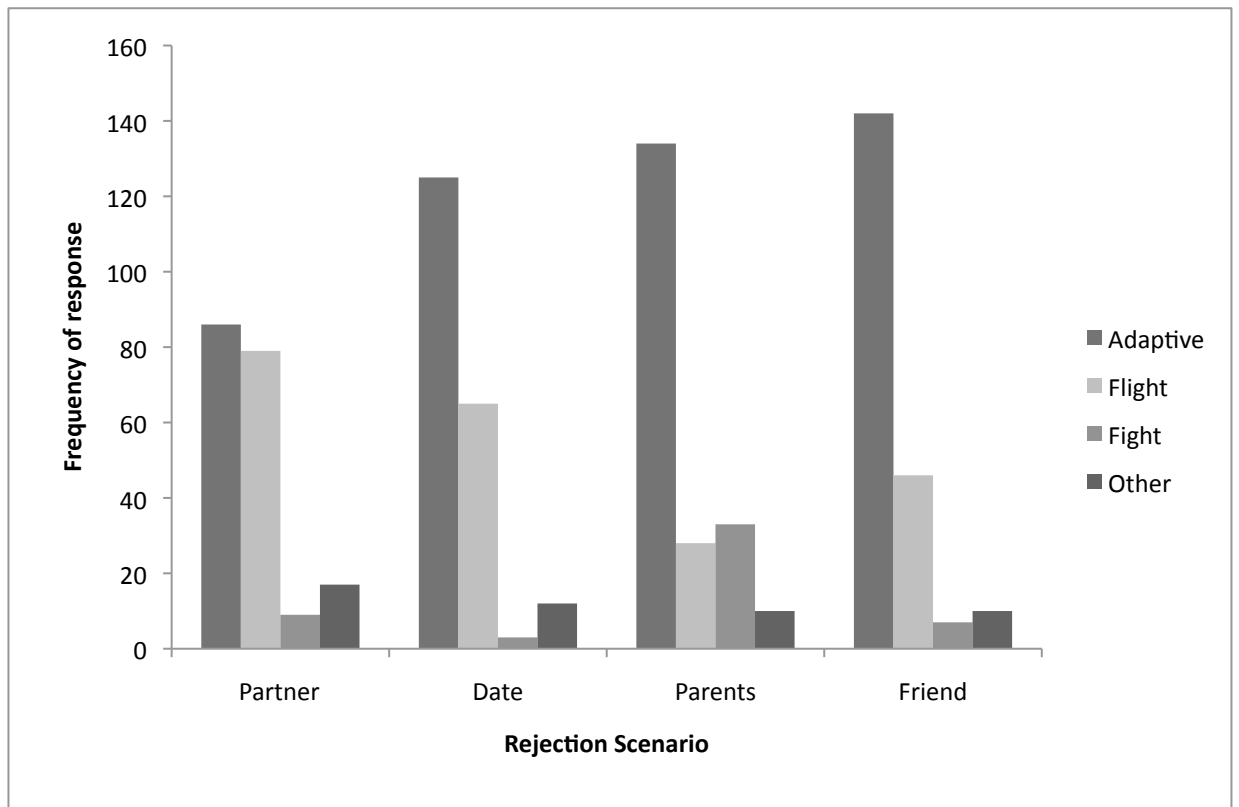


Figure 4. Frequency of behavioural response types across four rejection scenarios.  $N = 205$

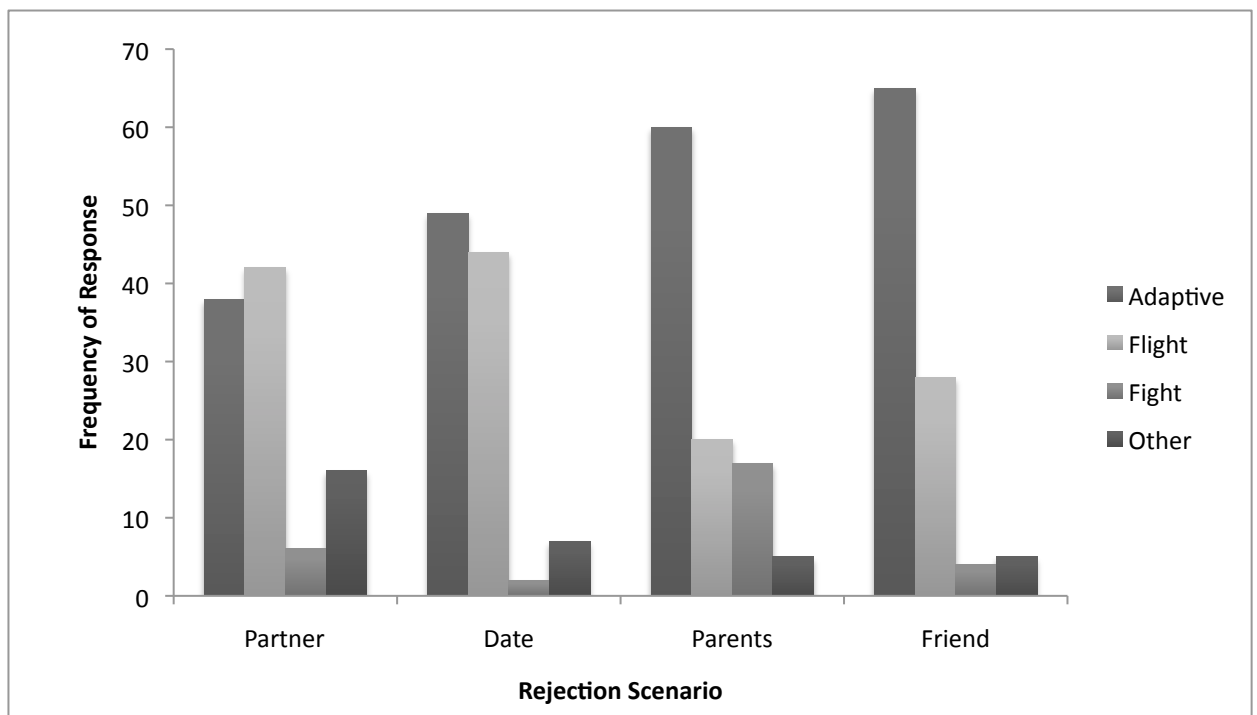


Figure 5. Frequency of behavioural response types across four rejection scenarios for high rejection sensitive individuals.  $N = 102$



### **Loglinear Analysis of Behavioural Responses to Rejection**

Using the descriptive responses and categories obtained from the hypothetical rejection scenarios, a three way hierarchical loglinear analysis was conducted to detect patterns among the variables. Given that the frequency of responses in maladaptive categories were low, and that loglinear analyses require that no more than 20% of cells be less than five (Tabachnick & Fidel, 2007), the cells were collapsed across the three maladaptive response types to form one category. This category was defined in terms of maladaptive responses to rejection. Once this was group was formed, cell sample sizes were adequate. The aim of the loglinear analysis was to determine whether responses to rejection are influenced by both the level of rejection sensitivity and the rejection scenario. A 4 x 2 x 2 contingency table displaying observed and expected frequencies was constructed to reflect the relationship between the four rejection scenarios (date, parent, friend, partner), the two response styles (adaptive vs. maladaptive), and rejection sensitivity (high and low) (see table 8). In order to assess the relationship between the variables, responses categorised as “other” were dropped from loglinear analyses. Sample sizes are displayed within the contingency table. The contingency table provided expected frequencies in excess of five for all cells. Analysis of the K-way and higher-order effects statistics showed that the removal of the three way effect (K= 3, scenario x response x rejection sensitivity) and higher order effects does not significantly affect the fit of the model, ( $\chi^2 (3) = 3.34, p = .342$ ). Removal of the two way interactions and the three way interaction however does have a significant detrimental effect on the model,  $\chi^2 (10) = 48.13, p < .001$ .

Table 8

*Crosstabulation of the Association between Response Style, Scenario, and Low and High Rejection Sensitivity*

Scenario		Response Style					
		Adaptive		Maladaptive		Total	
		LRS	HRS	LRS	HRS	LRS	HRS
Date	Count	76	49	22	46	98	95
	Expected	70.5	53.7	27.5	41.3	98	95
Parents	Count	74	60	24	37	98	97
	Expected	70.5	54.8	27.5	42.2	98	97
Friend	Count	77	65	21	32	98	97
	Expected	70.5	54.8	27.5	42.2	98	97
Partner	Count	48	38	40	48	88	86
	Expected	63.4	48.6	24.6	37.4	88	86
Total	Count	275	212	107	163	382	375
	Expected	275	212	107	163	382	375

*Note.* LRS = Low rejection sensitivity group. HRS = High rejection sensitivity group.

Backward elimination of simple effects was further employed to determine the best fitting model for the data. Combining the k-way and partial chi-square analysis, this procedure first evaluates the highest order effects to tests whether any effects can be eliminated without compromising the predictive power of the model. If an effect is removed and it does not produce a significant change in chi-square, it is deleted from further analyses. A new model is subsequently created and the remaining effects are explored. The same procedure is repeated until no further effects can be removed without reducing the predictive power of the model (Field, 2005). Reiterating the results of the k-way and higher order effects

results, when the three-way interaction term is removed, it does not have a significant effect on the model. When the two-way interaction terms are removed separately, both interactions independently cause a significant change in the model. Thus, the hierarchical loglinear analysis produced a final model which retained two, two-way interaction effects (response x scenario, and response x rejection sensitivity). Goodness of fit statistics indicates the final two-way interactions model is a perfect fit to the data,  $\chi^2(6) = 0, p = 1$ . A summary of the model which contains the backward elimination statistics is displayed in Table 9.

The significant two way interactions is interpreted to mean that, (a) the type of rejection scenario influences the type of response enacted, and (b) that the type of response enacted is influenced by a respondent's level of rejection sensitivity. These interactions are displayed in Figures 6 and 7. With reference to the interaction between response style and rejection (Figure 6) it appears, that when faced with rejection within the context of the date, friend, and parent scenarios, more participants endorsed adaptive responses. However when faced with rejection from a partner, more participants endorsed maladaptive responses. Odds ratios were subsequently calculated and demonstrated that the odds of responding in a maladaptive manner in the partner scenario were 2.76 times greater than the odds of responding in a maladaptive manner in the friend scenario, 2.22 times greater than in the parent scenario, and 1.89 times greater than in the date scenario.

With reference to the interaction between response style and high and low rejection sensitivity (Figure 7), it appears that respondents categorised as low rejection sensitive endorsed more adaptive responses to rejection compared with high rejection sensitive respondents. Moreover, high rejection sensitive respondents endorsed more maladaptive responses than low rejection sensitive respondents. Odds ratios indicate that if respondents were categorised as high rejection sensitive, they were 1.98 times more likely to respond to experiences of rejection in a maladaptive manner when compared to low rejection sensitive respondents.

Table 9

*Summary of the Backward Elimination*

Step	Model	Effect	If Effect Removed		
			$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
0	Generating class	Scenario*Response*RS	.00	0	-INF
	Deleted Effect 1	Scenario*Response*RS	3.34	3	.34
1	Generating class	Scenario*Response, Scenario*RS, Response*RS	3.34	3	.34
	Deleted Effect 1	Scenario*Response	24.97	3	.00
	Deleted Effect 2	Scenario*RS	0.79	3	.85
	Deleted Effect 3	Response*RS	20.58	1	.00
2	Generating Class	Scenario*Response, Response*RS	4.13	6	.66
	Deleted Effect 1	Scenario*Response	24.19	3	.00
	Deleted Effect 2	Response*RS	19.81	1	.00
3	Generating Class	Scenario*Response, Response*RS	4.13	6	.66

*Note.* RS = Rejection sensitivity level.

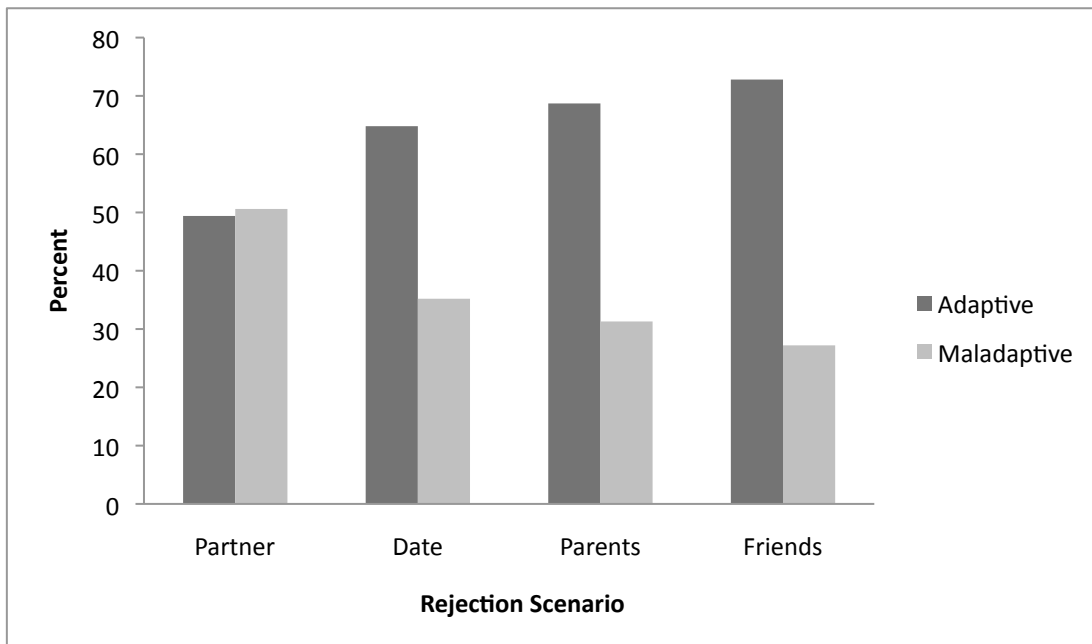


Figure 6. The interaction between adaptive and maladaptive response types and rejection scenario.  $N = 205$

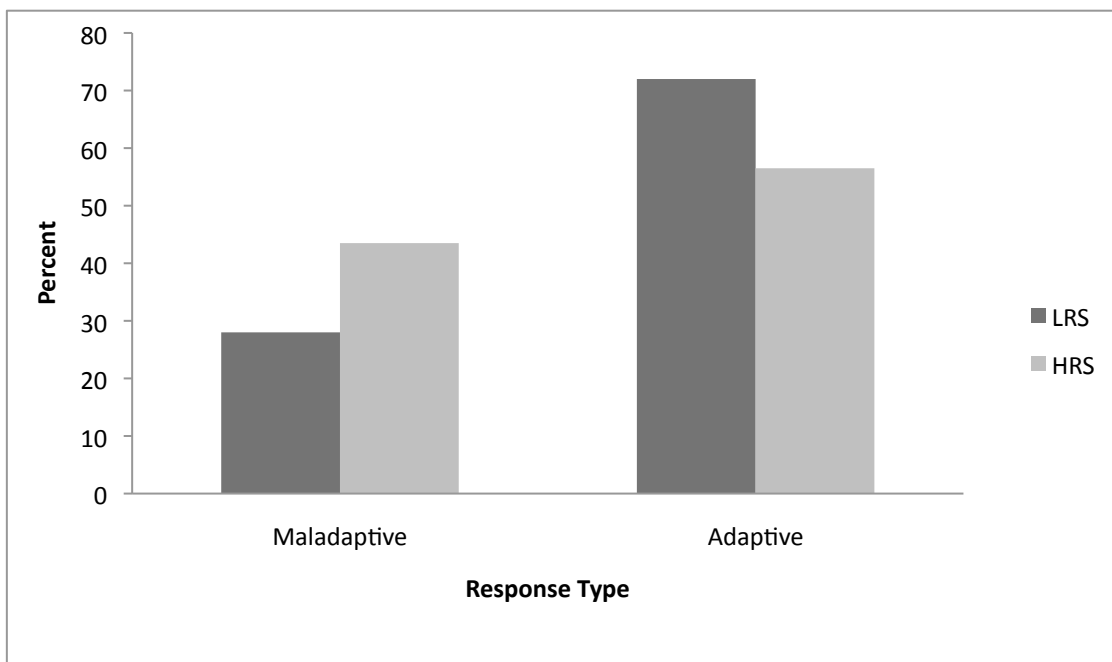


Figure 7. The interaction between maladaptive and adaptive response types and high and low rejection sensitivity. LRS = Low rejection sensitivity group; HRS = High rejection sensitivity group

Although the loglinear analyses indicated the type of response enacted was significantly affected by the type of rejection scenario, a crosstabs analysis assessing the consistency in response type was conducted to provide an additional account of how participants were responding across the four scenarios. The cross-tabulation is displayed in Table 10. As highlighted by the aforementioned results, few participants responded consistently across the scenarios. Altogether, 45 participants displayed cross-situational stability in their reactions to rejection. Of these participants, 40 consistently responded in an adaptive manner. Thirty two of these participants were categorised as low rejection sensitive, and eight were categorised as high rejection sensitive. Five participants consistently responded in a maladaptive manner. Four of the five participants who consistently responded in a maladaptive manner were categorised as high rejection sensitive.

Table 10

*Crosstabulation of the Association between the Consistency of Response Style and Rejection Sensitivity*

Response Consistency		LRS	HRS	Total
Consistent	Count	32	13	45
	Expected	22.6	22.4	45
Inconsistent	Count	71	89	160
	Expected	80.4	79.6	160
Total	Count	103	102	205
	Expected	103	102	205

*Note.* LRS = Low rejection sensitivity group. HRS = high rejection sensitivity group

## Discussion

### Summary of Findings

In general, the results of the current study lend support to the view that rejection sensitivity is associated with maladaptive behavioural reactions following the experience of rejection. As anticipated, participants' descriptive responses to the rejection scenarios were able to be categorised into the hypothesised behavioural response types: adaptive, fight (maladaptive), and flight (maladaptive) responses. Using these categories, the findings were consistent with the hypothesis that high rejection sensitive individuals would be more likely to respond to rejection in a maladaptive manner, when compared with low rejection sensitive individuals. High rejection sensitive individuals were shown to exhibit both fight and flight behaviours. With reference to the cross-situational stability of these behavioural responses and the specificity of the *if...then* dynamic, contrary to previous research, the results seemingly suggest that high rejection sensitive individuals do not necessarily respond to rejection in a maladaptive manner across all rejection situations. It is speculated that, the types of responses elicited may be dependent upon the *source* of the rejection. These findings will be discussed in turn below.

The current study provides support for the large body of previous research which has shown that the rejection sensitivity dynamic encompasses maladaptive behavioural reactions to rejection (e.g., Ayduk et al., 2000; Ayduk et al., 2002; Downey et al., 2004; London et al., 2007). The findings demonstrate that for high rejection sensitive individuals, perceptions of rejection are likely to elicit fight or flight reactions, such as immediately behaving aggressively or withdrawing from the situation. The more sensitive to rejection an individual is, the more likely he or she is to exhibit such behaviour. The current study may therefore provide support for the conceptual and empirical association between rejection sensitivity and the hot-cool self-regulatory framework (Ayduk et al., 2000; Metcalfe & Mischel, 1999). In accordance with this framework, demonstrations of fight or flight reactions are considered

indicative of the activation of the emotional, reflexive, hot system (Ayduk et al., 2002; Downey et al., 2004). The hot system enables quick emotional processing of threatening stimuli and initiates the deployment of defensive, or fight-flight behaviours (Ayduk et al., 2002; Metcalfe & Mischel, 1999). From this perspective, it appears that through the activation of rejection expectations, individuals encode environmental and internal cues as threatening, subsequently resulting in the automatic enactment of defensive behaviours designed to protect the individual with higher rejection sensitivity from further harm. These behaviours are considered maladaptive in circumstances such as these, as the opportunity to respond reflectively and strategically is undermined, and thus the goals of social acceptance and relationship maintenance are compromised (Ayduk et al., 2002). In accordance with Downey and colleagues (1999), it may be argued that these behaviours are employed in the belief that rejection is inevitable and/or has already occurred and is out of an individual's control. In contrast to high rejection sensitive individuals, it may be surmised that individuals with lower levels of sensitivity to rejection are more likely to react to rejection in a manner consistent with the cognitively mediated, reflective, cool system (Ayduk et al., 2002; Metcalfe & Mischel, 1999). These individuals are more likely to describe engaging in behaviours aimed at relationship maintenance and social acceptance. For example, an adaptive response to the romantic partner scenario was, "I would want to discuss with them why this was and whether or not this would impact on our future together, rather than getting upset I would want to see if we could resolve this issue and discuss whether or not we could stay together as a couple or there were reasons for such a response". Reactions such as these may be viewed as the more reflective, thoughtful, and instrumental, responses which characterise the cool system (Ayduk, et al., 1999; Ayduk et al., 2002).

In addition to demonstrating that rejection sensitivity is associated with maladaptive behavioural responses in general, the current findings suggest that rejection sensitivity is associated with both fight and flight type responses. Prior empirical studies have



predominantly examined fight reactions (e.g., Ayduk et al., 1999; Ayduk et al., 2008; Downey et al., 2000; Downey, Freitas, et al., 1998). As indicated by the frequency analyses, individuals with higher levels of rejection sensitivity described reacting to rejection in ways representative of fight *and* flight behaviours. Mean difference analyses could not be conducted (as a function of lower than required cell sizes), thus whether the frequencies of fight and flight responses were statistically significantly different cannot be ascertained. However, the results indeed suggest that high rejection sensitive individuals are responding to rejection by fleeing as well as fighting. Moreover, across the four different scenarios, a greater number, of individuals classified as high rejection sensitive responded to rejection by engaging in flight behaviours, in comparison with engaging in fight behaviours (32.84 % of respondents engaged in flight responses, whereas 7.11% engaged in fight behaviors).

Importantly, the findings question the notion that the *if...then* signature of the highly rejection sensitive individual is to react aggressively when faced with rejection, as proposed by Ayduk and Gyurak (2008). Although there is an abundance of research which attests to the association between rejection sensitivity and aggressive or hostile reactions to rejection (as previously outlined), the current research suggests that high rejection sensitive individuals may not necessarily respond to rejection in this manner. The results therefore point to the relevance of further examination of the specific enactment of "flight" like reactions within the rejection sensitivity model. Thus far, only a few studies that have highlighted this association between rejection sensitivity and flight type behaviours. For example, as discussed previously Ayduk and colleagues (2003) indicated that for high rejection sensitive individuals with a rejection prevention focus conflicts with partners induced withdrawal type responses (such as withdrawing love), rather than overt and direct acts of aggression and hostility. It was speculated that overt acts of hostility may put a high rejection sensitive individual at risk for further rejection and thus these behaviours are likely to be avoided. In addition London et al. (2007) demonstrated that rejection sensitivity predicted social withdrawal over time in an

adolescent sample. In summary, the current results indicate that high rejection sensitive individuals may respond to rejection by engaging in fight *or* flight behaviours.

Prior to further discussing the research question regarding the cross-situational stability of the behaviours of rejection sensitive individuals, in light of the current findings, it is necessary to discuss how people *in general* react to rejection from different significant others. The results showed that the type of response elicited, whether adaptive or maladaptive, was influenced by the rejection scenario. The pattern of results specifically suggests that experiences of rejection from one's romantic partner induce more maladaptive responses when compared to experiences of rejection from alternative significant others. In contrast, it appears that perceiving rejection from one's friend induces more adaptive reactions when compared to perceiving rejection from alternative significant others. These results point to the notion of intra-individual differences in behaviour, and question the general notion of cross-situational stability of behavioural responses. It may be postulated that what differentiates these scenarios and thus accounts for the variability in behavioural reactions to rejection, is the source of the rejection. The source of the rejection is what distinguished each of the hypothetical rejection scenarios that were presented to participants. In other words, an individual's behaviour in response to rejection may depend upon *who* the rejection is coming from. It appears that people in general are unlikely to react in the same way across experiences of rejection from different sources.

As with people in general, the results similarly suggest that high rejection sensitive individuals do not show cross-situational stability in their behavioural reactions. Rejection sensitivity was not associated with the enactment of maladaptive behaviours in all rejection scenarios. Only 12.7% of the rejection sensitivity sample responded consistently across the four rejection scenarios with four different significant others. Although individuals characterised as high rejection sensitive are more likely to respond to rejection in a maladaptive manner compared to individuals characterised as low rejection sensitive, high

rejection sensitive individuals not necessarily appear to respond to all rejection scenarios in this way. These findings bring to question the specificity of the *if...then* profile and thus whether all possible rejection situations do activate the rejection sensitivity dynamic. In accordance with the cognitive-affective processing system (CAPS) framework it has been suggested that in rejection-relevant contexts, the processing dynamics of the rejection sensitivity model are activated, leading to the enactment of fight or flight behavioural reactions (Ayduk & Gyurak, 2008; Mischel & Shoda, 1995). In the current study, as not all rejection scenarios were associated with maladaptive behavioural outcomes, it may be suggested that there is greater specificity in the situations that are perceived as rejection-relevant and thus greater specificity in the situations that set in motion the processing dynamics of the rejection sensitivity, than has been previously theorised. Therefore, it may be argued there is greater specificity in the situations that lead to maladaptive behavioural outcomes. In this sense the findings support the notion that there is variability in the situations that trigger the rejection sensitivity dynamic and lead to maladaptive behavioural reactions, as suggested by Downey and colleagues (1999).

Rejection-relevant contexts have been typically operationalised in terms of potential rejection from significant others. However no differentiation regarding who the significant is, that is, a parent, friend, or romantic partner, has been made, despite these being very different types of relationships (i.e., Downey & Feldman, 1996). Thus whether the potential for rejection from all of these sources equally activates the rejection sensitivity processing dynamics and leads to maladaptive behavioural outcomes has not been thoroughly explored. The current findings may imply that the source of the rejection (i.e., is the significant other a parent, friend, romantic partner?) is a particularly pertinent factor in the conceptualisation of rejection-relevant contexts and the activation of the rejection sensitivity dynamic (as suggested for people in general). Although parents, friends/peers, and partners can all be considered significant others, it is plausible that the possibility of rejection from some of these

sources is more salient or arousing than the possibility of rejection from other sources. In this sense, situations that are encoded as rejection-relevant, and those that thus activate the rejection sensitivity dynamic and lead to maladaptive behaviours, may depend upon *who* the source of the potential rejection is. For example, for some individuals the possibility of rejection from a romantic partner may activate the rejection sensitivity dynamic, while the possibility of rejection from a friend may not. Thus the behavioural consequences of perceiving rejection from one's romantic partner may evoke very different responses from perceiving rejection from one's friend. It may be suggested that the rejection-relevant contexts that activate the rejection sensitivity dynamic are those, which pose a threat to specific relationships. This argument may serve to explain the variability of high rejection sensitive individuals' response styles. It also emphasises the necessity to examine the influence of *who* the source of rejection is within the rejection sensitivity model. Evidently, exploring the source of the rejection as a factor that influences behavioural variability in reactions to rejection is an area which requires further investigation.

By demonstrating that high rejection sensitive individuals exhibit variability in their behavioural reactions to rejection from different significant others, the current research also lends support to the conceptualisation of rejection sensitivity as a situationally activated, information-processing disposition. It therefore further differentiates the model from a personality trait approach, which emphasises cross-situational stability of interpersonal behaviours. Fundamentally, the current study suggests that rejection sensitivity is not characterised by cross-situational stability in behavioural responses to different experiences of rejection. There are intra-individual differences in behaviours enacted across different rejection scenarios, different relationships, and potentially, different specific people.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

There are several limitations of the current study. Although it has been speculated that it is the source of the rejection (whether with a parent, partner, peer, or friend) that determines

the enactment of adaptive or maladaptive behavioural responses, the specific kind of the rejection experience also needs to be taken into consideration. It may be suggested that the significant interaction obtained between the kind of responses elicited and the scenario actually indicates the *form* of the rejection experienced. The current research used the hypothetical scenarios presented in the RSQ to assess behavioural reactions. As previously indicated, the hypothetical scenarios of the RSQ were derived from pilot work which identified pertinent rejection situations in the lives of young adults (Downey & Feldman, 1996). However, the hypothetical situations used in the current study to assess behavioural reactions may not have been equivalent in the messages of rejection that they conveyed to the individual. For example, the rejection scenario involving the romantic partner (*you ask your boyfriend/girlfriend if he/she really loves you and they say no*) may imply active, outright rejection and potentially mean the loss of a relationship, while in contrast, the rejection scenario involving the friend (*you ask a friend to do you and big favour and they say no*) may imply an interpersonal slight rather than active rejection, and therefore may not necessarily threaten the maintenance or existence of that relationship. It may therefore be postulated that the hypothetical rejection scenarios used in the current study represent varying degrees of rejection severity. Thus, it may be argued that the more severe the experience of rejection the more likely an individual will respond maladaptively. This may be the case as more severe experiences of rejection reflect a greater threat to the goals of acceptance and belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Smart Richman & Leary, 2009). Evidently further research is required to examine the relative influence of the source of rejection versus the nature of the rejection experienced and the associated enactment of maladaptive behavioural reactions.

An additional limitation of the current study was the failure to assess or account for the influence of social desirability. The behaviours described by individuals may have been influenced by their perceptions of what is a socially desirable response, i.e., not wanting to appear overly emotional. It is important to note however, that many individuals did provide

behavioural responses to the hypothetical scenarios that were clearly contrary to what may be considered social desirable. In addition, numerous studies have employed this methodology to gain an insight into the nature of behavioural reactions to rejection without appearing to be unduly influenced by participants' unwillingness to appear undesirable (i.e., Ayduk & Downey, 1999, as cited in Downey et al., 2000; Besser & Priel, 2009; Doge, 1980).

Nonetheless, social desirability will be assessed and accounted for in the subsequent study.

Another limitation concerns the use of deductive analysis techniques to interpret the qualitative information obtained from respondents. Within the qualitative literature, data reduction methods have been criticised for issues such as imprecision of measurement, data overload, weak generalisability, and vulnerability to sources of bias (i.e., research interpretation of information) (Huberman & Miles, 1983; Miles & Huberman, 1994). One of the major difficulties associated with data reduction techniques concerns how qualitative data can be reduced without unduly distorting or oversimplifying it (Huberman & Miles, 1983). As discussed by Elo and Kyngäs (2007), the reduction of qualitative data can compromise the integrity of the narrative materials and the richness of information that is provided by the qualitative data becomes lost. This is acknowledged as an inherent limitation associated with the use of such techniques. To address this concern, the subsequent study will provide participants with a forced choice questionnaire, in order to ensure appropriate and accurate interpretation of results.

A related area for future investigation concerns the way in which individuals, in particular, highly rejection sensitive individuals, behave during interpersonal conflicts. Given that conflicts inherently encompass threat to the maintenance of one's relationships, and thus likely activate rejection expectations, the way in which individuals interact during these conflicts may provide further insight into the nature of adaptive and maladaptive behaviours. The following study will attempt to address these concerns, limitations and future directions.

## Conclusions

The current study aimed to investigate how high rejection sensitive individuals react to experiences of rejection. Supporting previous findings, the results indicate that individuals with higher levels of rejection sensitivity are more likely to react to rejection with maladaptive behaviours compared to individuals with lower levels of rejection sensitivity. However, not all rejection scenarios incite maladaptive fight or flight reactions. In some circumstances high rejection sensitive individuals responded to rejection situations using adaptive behaviours. Thus, there appears to be a lack of cross-situational stability in response styles across different rejection scenarios. This finding is contrary to the current conceptualisation of the situations that activate the rejection sensitivity dynamic (rejection-relevant contexts). The findings therefore suggest that there is a relatively high degree of specificity in the situations that activate the rejection sensitivity processing dynamics and elicit maladaptive behavioural reactions for high rejection sensitive individuals. Furthermore, the results show that people in general exhibit variability in their responses to experiences of rejection. Apart from potential methodological issues raised by differences in the form of the rejection scenario, it was surmised that it might be the source of the rejection (i.e., parent, friend, or romantic partner), that influences which situations are viewed as rejection-relevant and thus which situations are associated with the elicitation of maladaptive behaviours.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: STUDY FOUR – REJECTION SENSITIVITY, BEHAVIOURAL REACTIONS TO REJECTION, AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION STYLES**

### **Overview of the Chapter**

As demonstrated in study three, and in line with previous research, rejection sensitivity is associated with an increased risk of reacting to experiences of rejection in a maladaptive manner. However, not all rejection situations appear to elicit maladaptive reactions for high rejection sensitive individuals. Furthermore, being low in rejection sensitivity does not preclude individuals from enacting maladaptive behaviours when faced with rejection. It is evident that some rejection situations are associated with an increased risk of eliciting maladaptive reactions for people in general. The current study explores the relevance of the source of the rejection (i.e., parent, friend, romantic partner), the form of the rejection experienced (i.e., the kind or severity), and conflict resolution styles in an effort to delineate how people in general react to experiences of rejection from different significant others, and specifically how highly rejection sensitive individuals react to these experiences.

In light of the findings obtained in study three and prior to the specific examination of the rejection sensitivity dynamic, it is first necessary to acknowledge that there are many factors which may influence the enactment of maladaptive behavioural reactions to rejection for people in general. Some of these factors may include individual differences in the way in which environmental cues are encoded, an individual's expectations, beliefs, values, goals, competencies, self-regulatory abilities, self esteem, self efficacy, affect, and his or her general social learning history. Given the scope of the present research, the current study focused upon the source of the rejection (romantic partner, friend, family member), and the form of the rejection experienced (i.e., active versus passive rejection) as two factors that may impact the type of response elicited and account for the cross-situational variability in behavioural reactions.



## Source of the Rejection

It may be postulated that the source of the rejection is a determining factor in the kinds of behaviours elicited following experiences of rejection. Fundamentally, the source of the rejection refers to *who* is doing the rejecting. Intrinsic to who the source is, is the nature of the individual's relationship with that person. There are several key features that delineate the nature of an individual's relationship to the source of the rejection. These features may include the perceived (whether actual or potential) importance or value of the relationship with the source, the benefits of the relationship and in turn the cost of its potential loss to the individual, expectations surrounding the likelihood of relational repair following experiences of rejection, and more generally, an individual's history with that specific source (including length of time knowing the source, history of relationship transgressions and expectations developed over time) (Smart Richman & Leary, 2009). Although each of these features is likely to independently and together influence the nature of an individual's relationship with the source of rejection, the focus of the current research is more broadly and simply, *who* the source of the rejection is, and what type of relationship the person has with that source (i.e., is it a stranger, acquaintance, friend, romantic partner, or parent/family member?).

The terms previously used in the rejection literature of stranger, acquaintance, and significant other can be seen as relationship types that are differentiated by degree of familiarity. Familiarity may be defined as "the state of being very friendly or intimate" (Oxford English Dictionary, 1989, p. 705). It may be postulated that an individual's behavioural reactions to rejection differ according to these relationship types and thus differ according to familiarity. That is, it may be contended that experiencing rejection from a stranger or acquaintance evokes different kinds of behavioural responses compared to experiencing rejection from a significant other. Direct comparisons between degree of familiarity or relationship type and *behavioural* reactions to experiences of rejection have not yet been made. However examination of the literature which has investigated differential

*affective* reactions to rejection, may provide support for the assertion that an individual's behavioural reactions to rejection differ as a function of *who* is doing the rejecting.

Fundamentally, the research suggests that the more familiar the source of rejection, the greater the negative affective reaction. Accordingly, in their review of the literature on interpersonal rejection, Leary and colleagues (2006) surmised that rejection from intimate others is likely to elicit greater emotional reactions in general, including sadness, anxiety, desperation, and anger, compared to when rejection is perpetrated by strangers or acquaintances. Furthermore, in a study assessing the causes of hurt feelings, 39% and 32% of participants recalled instances involving close friends and dating partners respectively, in comparison to 12% of participants who recalled instances involving acquaintances. Moreover, only one of 168 participants recalled an instance of being emotionally hurt by a stranger (Leary, Springer, Negel, Ansell, & Evans, 1998). Similarly, in pilot work conducted by Rosen, Mickler, and Collins (1987), participants who had their offers for help rejected reported a greater intensity of negative affective responses when the rejection involved friends rather than strangers. On the basis of such research, it may be concluded that individuals are more vulnerable to experiencing greater levels of affective distress when the source of the rejection is a significant other rather than when it is a stranger or an acquaintance.

There are numerous reasons as to why rejection from significant others is associated with greater levels of distress. Various researchers have noted that as an individual's closeness and interdependence with another person grows, the psychological cost of rejection increases (e.g., Leary & Baumeister, 2000; Murray, Holmes & Collins, 2006). Accordingly, being rejected from one's spouse (wherein closeness and interdependence may be considered at its peak) may hold far greater implications for one's psychological health when compared to an experience of rejection from a stranger or an acquaintance (Murray et al., 2006).

Although a discussion of the reasons as to why an individual's emotional responses may vary,

the focus of the current study was first to explore whether individuals *behave* differently when the source of the rejection is different.

**The association between emotional and behavioural responses to rejection.**

On the basis that perceiving rejection from close others may evoke stronger emotional reactions compared with less close others, it may be equally surmised that relationship type or familiarity also plays a pivotal role in determining the enactment of subsequent maladaptive behavioural reactions to rejection. This may be particularly the case when conceptualised from the perspective that aversive or painful feelings trigger the enactment of maladaptive behavioural reactions (i.e., Linehan, 1993; Metcalfe & Mischel, 1999). Focusing momentarily upon the enactment of aggressive/hostile reactions to rejection, Berkowitz (1989) explains that the occurrence of aggression is largely a function of negative affect. Leary et al. (2006) also argue that the emotionally aversive nature of rejection automatically induces aggressive behaviour. If it may be presumed that experiencing rejection from significant others produces greater emotional distress than experiencing rejection from less familiar others, posited within the context of a CAPS framework, the activation of the emotionally mediated, hot system, appears more likely in circumstances involving rejection from significant others. The activation of this system is subsequently likely to result in self-regulatory difficulties and ultimately, the automatic deployment of reflexive fight or flight reactions. Past research thus indicates that experiences of rejection may undermine self-regulatory processes, or one's self-control during interpersonal interactions. Across a series of six experiments, Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco, and Twenge (2004) reported that rejection led to a decrease in one's self-regulatory capacities, with rejected participants consistently performing worse on self-regulation tasks. Similarly, Twenge, Catanese, and Baumeister (2002) found that participants who had been rejected were more likely to make self-defeating choices, including making risky lottery choices, selecting fewer health enhancing foods, and procrastinating more instead of practicing for an impending test. Smart Richman and Leary (2009) surmised that

immediate antisocial responses to rejection are spontaneous, and may be a function of hurt, frustration or anger, dysregulation, or poorly managed efforts to avoid rejection. Although there exists relatively little research that has specifically investigated how relationship type or familiarity influences behavioural reactions to rejection, it might be suggested that because rejection from significant others is likely to evoke stronger emotional reactions compared to rejection from less familiar others, there is a greater likelihood of seeing the enactment of impulsive, emotionally mediated behavioural reactions (manifested in terms of fight or flight actions). Thus, relationship familiarity may be considered an influential factor in the types of behaviours exhibited in the face of rejection.

Although there exists a general paucity of research examining differences in responses to rejection according to relationship familiarity, examination of the literature indicates even less consideration as to whether responses differ according specifically to who the significant other is (i.e., romantic partner, family member or friend). On the basis of the results obtained in study three, it appears that responses may vary *within* the category of significant other. Various questions may thus be raised concerning whether all significant others are associated with same kinds of behavioural reactions. Although the complexities surrounding the nature of an individual's relationship with any given significant other (i.e., perceived relational importance, relationship history with the specific significant other) may contribute to the explanation as to why individuals respond to rejection from different sources in different ways, it is beyond scope of the current research to thoroughly examine all aspects. The current research will limit its investigation to exploring whether individuals indeed react differently when rejection is perpetrated by different significant others.

### **Form of the Rejection Experience**

An additional factor that requires examination when exploring the nature of behavioural reactions to rejection is the form or kind of rejection. As outlined in Chapter One, common to all kinds of rejection experiences is the threat of relational devaluation and

the undermining of belongingness needs (e.g., Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Leary, 2001, 2005). However, several researchers have suggested that the specific form of the rejection experienced may result in varied behavioural reactions (Molden et al., 2009). That is, not all rejection experiences are the same. According to Molden et al. (2009), and as previously discussed, the literature has documented a range of differing responses to rejection, including aggression, emotional withdrawal, and renewed interest in social re-engagement, and thus it is plausible that these differences in reactions are explained by different instances and experiences of rejection. Molden et al. (2009) differentiated experiences of rejection in terms of being actively rejected in comparison to being passively ignored. They described being actively rejected in terms of receiving explicit and direct communication from others that one's social standing within that relationship is poor or lower than desired. In contrast, being passively ignored involves receiving implicit and indirect communication of one's poor social standing or lack of social connection (Molden et al., 2009). It has been proposed that differences in communications of rejection lead to differential behavioural outcomes. Accordingly, being actively rejected encompasses clear communication of *negative* feedback, serving to discourage continued social contact. As a result, individuals are vulnerable to feeling a loss of social connection and a sense of diminishing relational value within that existing relationship. Being passively ignored however encompasses a lack of *positive* feedback, and while also not encouraging continued social contact, conveys to the individual that his or her standing within a relationship has stalled or cannot further develop. On the basis of these distinctions, Molden and colleagues (2009) postulated that experiences of loss, as a function of being actively rejected, should induce different responses compared to experiences of non-gain as a function of being ignored. Across a series of studies assessing the differences between being actively rejected and passively ignored, Molden et al. (2009) indicated that experiences of active rejection were associated with stronger motivations to withdraw from social contact, increased focus upon the actions one should not have taken that

may have led to rejection, and greater feelings of agitation and anxiety. In contrast, experiences of being passively ignored were associated with greater motivation for social re-engagement, increased focus upon the actions one should have taken that may have prevented rejection, and greater feelings of dejection and sadness. Such findings suggest that the specific nature of the rejection experienced has significant implications for both behavioural and emotional outcomes. Although few studies have examined specific differences in rejection experiences, it might be expected that receiving explicit, active rejection from one's romantic partner is likely to result in very different kinds of behavioural reactions in comparison to being passively ignored by one's romantic partner. In the former circumstance, the loss of one's relationship may be considered highly probable, while in contrast, in the latter circumstance, the threat to the maintenance of the relationship is less clear.

In a meta-analysis of studies examining rejection and social exclusion, Blackhart, Nelson, Knowles and Baumeister (2009) identified that not all rejection experiences are the same, coding studies according to the type or severity of rejection used, such as explicit rejection and implied rejection. They suggested that explicit experiences of rejection should produce a stronger effect on self-esteem and emotion when compared to experiences of implied rejection. Results of the meta-analysis supported these assumptions with experiences of explicit rejection having a greater negative effect on one's self esteem when compared with experiences of implied rejection. The authors concluded that direct and explicit rejection experiences are more difficult to defend psychologically against, resulting in a decrease in self-esteem, compared to indirect and implied experiences of rejection. Similarly, in a study assessing ostracism using an online virtual ball tossing game, Williams, Cheung, and Choi (2000) found that experiences of outright ostracism had a greater impact on mood, feelings of control, and sense of belongingness, when compared to participants who partially ostracised only. In conjunction with the aforementioned research it may reasonably be argued that that different forms of rejection may lead to different affective and behavioural outcomes.

However, according to Buckley, Winkel, and Leary (2004), the form of the rejection (or indeed acceptance) experienced may have little influence upon immediate affective and behavioural outcomes. In their study, 188 undergraduates were recruited to participate in an experimental design developed to explore the effects of the level and sequence of relational evaluation on affective and behavioural reactions to acceptance and rejection. Participants were informed that they would be partaking in research assessing managerial decision-making. They were required to complete a questionnaire designed to get them to disclose information about themselves. Following completion of the questionnaire, each participant was given a completed questionnaire from another participant. However, the other participant did not exist in real life and the information on the questionnaire given to the real participant was prepared in advance. On the basis of the information divulged on the questionnaire of the bogus participant, real participants were then required to rate how much they wanted to work with the other participant. At the completion of this task, real participants were then informed about how the “other” participant had evaluated them. Real participants were given one of five types of evaluative feedback that reflected varying levels of rejection or acceptance. Extreme rejection was reflected by the statement, “I definitely do not want to work with this person”, moderate rejection reflected by the statement “I somewhat do not want to work with this person”, neutral feedback was reflected by the statement “Neutral”, moderate acceptance was reflected by the statement “I somewhat want to work with this person”), and extreme acceptance was reflected by the statement “I definitely want to work with this person”.

(Buckley et al., 2004, p. 16). Participants were subsequently required to rate how they felt (from a list of 20 adjectives describing five different emotions) at that moment, how accepted or rejected they felt, and how they rated their level of self-esteem. The results indicated that there was no difference in affective reactions between moderate and extreme rejection experiences. While rejection experiences overall led to an increase in negative emotions and aggression, there were no differences in these outcomes according to the level of rejection

experienced. Buckley et al. (2004) thus concluded that people do not react to varying degrees of rejection (or acceptance) differently. Consistent with this notion, Leary et al. (1998) demonstrated that experiences of extreme vs. moderate rejection do not influence the kind of reaction elicited. They suggested that once an individual's perceived relational value declines to a point just below indifference, the outcome is the same as if the rejection is explicit and undeniable. The literature presents conflicting views surrounding the impact of the form of rejection experienced on one's reactions to rejection. Moreover, in general, research examining both the form of the rejection experienced and the source of the rejection, is limited. In addition, the research that does exist appears to be inconclusive and has primarily examined affective rather than behavioural reactions to rejection. It is thus apparent that further research is required to clarify the relevance of the form of the rejection experienced and the type of relationship with the source, in influencing behavioural reactions to rejection.

### **Rejection Sensitivity and Reactions to Rejection**

Past research has often conceptualised rejection sensitivity as a moderating variable in the link between rejection and maladaptive behavioural outcomes (e.g., Leary et al., 2006). As demonstrated in study three, individual differences in rejection sensitivity evidently increase the likelihood of reacting to experiences of rejection in a maladaptive manner. However, contrary to previous research, it appears that not all rejection situations elicit maladaptive reactions. Functioning as an *if...then* system, the theory assumes the activation of rejection expectations sets in motion a series of cognitive-affective processes, which ultimately leads to maladaptive behavioural outcomes. The contexts which activate rejection expectations and the sequence of cognitive-affective processes, have been broadly operationalised as those that encompass the possibility of rejection (Ayduk & Gyurak, 2008; Downey et al., 1996; Levy et al., 2001). These are considered rejection-relevant contexts. Interestingly, the results obtained in study three suggest there is specificity in the situations that elicit maladaptive reactions. On the basis that behavioural reactions to rejection may be



influenced by the source of the rejection, and the form of the rejection experienced for people in general, it may similarly be suggested that the behavioural reactions of high rejection sensitive individuals are also influenced by these factors. Although the contexts that have been conceptualised as rejection-relevant involve interactions with significant others (rather than stranger or acquaintances), it could be suggested that interactions with some significant others are more likely to activate the rejection sensitivity dynamic than others.

In addition to the source of the rejection, perceiving explicit, active rejection may not evoke the same responses compared with perceiving implicit, passive rejection. While minimal research has been conducted assessing how the rejection source and the form of the rejection experience influence the rejection sensitivity dynamic, as outlined in study three, Downey et al. (1999), suggested that the specific situations that activate defensive expectations of rejection and subsequently elicit maladaptive reactions, are reflective of individual differences in the history of how parents and peers have communicated a rejecting intent. Evidently, further research is required to ascertain the relevance of these factors within the rejection sensitivity model and to understand the situations that are perceived as rejection-relevant, and thus activate the rejection sensitivity dynamic and lead to maladaptive behavioural outcomes.

### **Rejection sensitivity and conflict resolution styles.**

In understanding the rejection sensitivity dynamic and its relationship to maladaptive behaviours it may be necessary to examine conflict resolution styles. In order to conceptualise how conflict resolution styles relate to the behaviours displayed by high rejection sensitive individuals, it is first necessary to define conflict resolution styles, as described within the marital conflict and communication literature. On the basis of the behavioural observations of Gottman and Krokoff (1989), who identified several key problem-solving styles employed by individuals during conflicts with their partners, Kurdek (1994) developed the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory to assess four distinct conflict resolution styles. Conceptualised

from the perspective that the maintenance of one's relationship is contingent upon each partner's style of conflict resolution (Boyd & Roach, 1977; Gottman & Krokoff, 1989), the four styles include: positive problem solving, conflict engagement, withdrawal, and compliance. The positive problem solving style is characterised by compromise and negotiation, and encompasses a desire to understand the other person's position. It primarily involves the use of tactics which are constructive and therefore relationship promoting. The conflict engagement style involves personal attacks and a sense of loss of control. It is typically characterised by behaviour which is verbally abusive, angry, and/or defensive. The withdrawal style of resolving conflict encompasses a refusal to discuss the issue or conflict any further and tuning the other person out. It involves avoidance of the problem, avoidance of communication with the other person and becoming distant. The compliance scale involves giving in to the demands or wishes of the other person and a failure to defend one's position (Kurdek, 1994; Van Doorn, Branje, & Meeus, 2007). Like the maladaptive behaviours associated with rejection sensitivity, these conflict resolution styles are important because they are linked to changes in relationship satisfaction and relationship dissolution (Gottman, 1994; Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; Kurdek, 1994). Conflict engagement, withdrawal, and compliance resolution styles may be considered the more maladaptive or dysfunctional tactics used by individuals and are accordingly most frequently linked with poorer relationship outcomes (Gottman, 1994; Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; Kurdek, 1994).

Conflicts with significant others are important contexts to consider when attempting to understand the rejection sensitivity dynamic, because they inherently encompass the possibility of rejection. Downey and Feldman (1996) suggested that conflict situations are likely to be perceived by high rejection sensitive individuals as opportunities to be rejected by their partner (or significant other) instead of opportunities to advance their relationship through the act of working through the issue and problem solving to a successful resolution of any difficulties. On the basis that conflict situations involve such threat to one's relational

value and belongingness needs for the highly rejection sensitive individual, he or she may automatically trigger rejection expectations and the rejection sensitivity processing dynamics. Within the rejection sensitivity literature, rejection-relevant contexts have often been operationalised as conflict situations (e.g., Ayduk, et al., 2003; Downey et al., 2000; Downey et al., 2004; Downey & Feldman, 1996; Downey, Freitas et al., 1998). In other words, conflict functions as the situational feature which activates the rejection sensitivity dynamic. An exploration of conflict resolution styles may complement the findings obtained in study three and add another dimension to the understanding of the ways in which high rejection sensitive individuals react to rejection, particularly when occurring during interpersonal conflicts.

Gaining an understanding of how high rejection sensitive individuals resolve conflict is also important, because maladaptive conflict resolution styles have been shown to erode relationship satisfaction and ultimately lead to relationship dissolution. As previously outlined, Downey and Feldman (1996, study 4) indicated that the behaviours exhibited by high rejection sensitive individuals during conflicts leads to relationship dissatisfaction, both for the rejection sensitive individual and his or her partner. They postulated that high rejection sensitive individuals' anxieties about rejection, in conjunction with their susceptibility to overreactions to rejection, increase the likelihood of enacting behaviours that compromise successful conflict resolution. For high rejection sensitive males, this was demonstrated in terms of jealous and controlling behaviours, while for high rejection sensitive females, this was demonstrated in terms of hostile and emotionally unsupportive behaviours. The potential outcome of such behaviour is non-resolution of the conflict or issue, and greater subsequent distress as well as relationship dissatisfaction. Accordingly, the presence of these types of feelings is likely to prompt further opportunities for rejection and increase the likelihood relationship dissolution (Downey & Feldman, 1996). Downey, Freitas et al. (1998) also explored the relevance of conflict situations for high rejection sensitive individuals.

Employing a daily diary methodology using couples, they attempted to elucidate the process by which rejection sensitivity compromises one's romantic relationships. Partner responses were indexed by relationship dissatisfaction and thoughts about leaving the relationship. The results indicated that naturally occurring conflicts functioned to activate rejection expectations and elicit maladaptive behaviours. The maladaptive behaviours, in essence, led to partners' rejecting responses. The authors concluded that conflicts are integral to understanding the processes that lead to rejection and thus the fulfillment of one's rejection expectations (Downey, Freitas et al., 1998).

Although past research has often examined the behaviours exhibited by high rejection sensitive individuals during interpersonal conflicts, very little research exists that has focused upon these behaviours specifically in terms of differing conflict resolution styles. Downey et al. (2000) however did explore the nature of violent and aggressive responses to experiences of rejection for high rejection sensitive males using the Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, 1979), a tool designed to assess the kind and frequency of tactics used to resolve conflict. Results showed that high rejection sensitive males with a high relationship investment were more likely to behave aggressively upon perceiving rejection, in this case, precipitated by conflicts with their romantic partner. However, while this scale was used as an index of aggressive behaviours, alternative behaviours or conflict resolution styles were not examined. While the maladaptive behaviours associated rejection sensitivity have not been directly linked with conflict resolution styles, it is apparent that they parallel each other. For example, the conflict engagement strategy could alternatively be conceptualised as fight reactions, while the withdrawal and compliance strategies could alternatively be conceptualised as flight reactions. In addition to the literature outlined in the previous studies highlighting the association between rejection sensitivity and aggressive/hostile and withdrawing reactions to rejection, past research further demonstrates an association between rejection sensitivity and self-silencing, which encompasses both avoidance and compliance strategies (Ayduk et al., 2003).

Thus, in conjunction with the notion that high rejection sensitive individuals are more prone to reacting to rejection in a maladaptive way, it is similarly likely that they will be more prone to using maladaptive conflict resolution styles. Clearly, research is required to integrate concepts of behavioural reactions to rejection and conflict resolution styles especially for individuals high in rejection sensitivity.

### **Study Aims and Hypotheses**

Informed by previous research and the findings of study three, several aims were developed for the current study. The first aim was to extend the findings of study three by ascertaining how people in general react to rejection from different significant others (i.e., romantic partner, family member, and friend). Given the literature reviewed regarding the potential influence of the form or severity of the rejection that is experienced, the hypothetical scenarios used in the current study (unlike in study three), were modified in an attempt to control for the form of the rejection experience. In this way it was hoped that the unique influence of relationship type could be examined. It was expected that experiencing rejection from different significant others, friend, family versus intimate partner, would evoke different responses.

The present study concurrently aimed to explore the nature of behavioural responses to rejection as exhibited specifically by individuals with higher levels of rejection sensitivity. Given that the previous study indicated that not all rejection situations elicit maladaptive responses from highly rejection sensitive individuals, it is important to identify the specific circumstances or situational features that do elicit maladaptive reactions. In an effort to do so, the current research aimed to examine whether rejection sensitive individuals react to rejection from different significant others in the same way. While it was hypothesised that individuals high in rejection sensitivity would react to rejection in a more maladaptive manner when compared to individuals low in rejection sensitivity, based on the results of the previous

study, it was also hypothesised that they would not consistently respond in this manner across experiences of rejection from different sources.

Finally, the current study aimed to explore the relationship between rejection sensitivity and conflict resolution styles. On the basis that high rejection sensitive individuals are more susceptible to engaging in maladaptive behaviours following rejection, it was hypothesised that the more rejection sensitive an individual the more likely he or she would utilise the more maladaptive conflict resolution styles of conflict engagement, compliance, and withdrawal.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Data were gathered from 223 participants, of which 118 were female (52.91%) and 105 male. The mean age was 20.46 ( $SD = 3.59$ ), and ranged between 18 and 43 years. Three participants did not indicate their age. Participants were recruited via online advertisements placed on social utility networking sites. The advertisements specifically sought participants who were currently studying. The rationale for excluding respondents who were not currently studying was twofold: (a) to provide accurate comparisons with studies one, two, and three and (b) on the basis that the RSQ assesses rejection sensitivity using student specific hypothetical scenarios. Demographic information showed that 82.9% of the sample were single, 3.1% married and 6.3% were in a defacto relationship. For respondents who indicated they were currently in a relationship, the median length of the relationship was 10 months. Twenty-four point six, six percent of the sample identified their country of birth as Britain, 21.97% as Australia, 21.52% as Canadian, 10.76% as the United States of America, and 4.93% as New Zealand. Thirty six point three per cent of the sample reported that they had previously sought counseling. Participation in the current study was voluntary, with informed consent inferred through participation.

## **Materials**

All participants were provided with an information letter, which was accessed online. The information letter outlined the requirements of participation and the aims of the current research (see Appendix J). The online questionnaire package that followed the information letter consisted of measures which assessed rejection sensitivity, social desirability, conflict resolution styles, and behavioural reactions to rejection (see Appendix K). With the exception of questions assessing behavioural reactions to rejection, the questionnaires included in the package were derived from standardised published psychological scales. Questions regarding gender, age, country of birth, relationship status, current living situation, and previous psychiatric treatment history were further sought through a demographic information form. A description of the measures utilised in the questionnaire packaged is provided.

### **Measures.**

As in studies one, two, and three, rejection sensitivity was measured using the RSQ (Downey & Feldman, 1996). A detailed description of the measure is found in study one in the method section of Chapter Two. Cronbach's alpha for the current study was .74.

### ***Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale – Form C.***

Social desirability was measured using the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale – Form C (MC-C; Reynolds, 1982). The 13 item short form assesses respondents' tendencies toward positive self-presentation. Drawing from the original 33 item scale, the MC-C utilises a true-false response format. A total score is obtained by adding the items keyed in the direction of socially desirable responding. Higher scores are reflective of bias toward socially desirable responding. Possible scores range between zero and 13. Example items include “*I am sometimes irritated by people who ask favours of me*” and “*No matter who I'm talking to, I'm always a good listener*”. The measure has been used extensively and has shown to be reliable and valid measure of social desirability. Internal consistency estimates have been reported between .62 and .76 (Ballard, 1992; Loo, & Loewen, 2004; Loo & Thorpe, 2000;

Reynolds, 1982; Zook & Sipps, 1985). The current study obtained a KR-20 coefficient of .61 demonstrating an acceptable level of reliability.

### ***Behavioural responses to rejection.***

Behavioural responses to experiences of rejection were assessed via three hypothetical rejection scenarios. On the basis of results found in study three, the scenarios reflected rejection experiences operationalised specifically in terms of exclusion from three sources; friends, partners, and family. Utilising the three prominent behavioural response styles demonstrated in study three, participants were required to indicate which style (of the three available styles) would most likely characterise their response to the scenario. The first scenario involved being denied an invitation to a best friend's party, the second involved a partner planning a holiday without you, and the third involved being excluded from a sibling's bridal party despite having had them in your bridal party (see appendix K). Response style one was described in terms of flight behaviours (i.e., withdrawing, avoiding acting cold or distant, giving the silent treatment). Response style two was described in terms of fight behaviours (i.e., physical or verbal aggression, use a hostile tone of voice). Response style three was described in terms of adaptive behaviours (i.e., openly discuss the issue, try to understand/negotiate).

### ***Conflict Resolution Style Inventory.***

As an adjunct to the information obtained from the hypothetical rejection scenarios, response styles were further assessed utilising the Conflict Resolution Style Inventory (CRSI; Kurdek, 1994). The 16-item self-report scale measures four distinct resolution styles generated from Gottman and Krokoff's (1989) conceptualisation of how couples deal with arguments and disagreements. The strategies include conflict engagement, positive problem solving, withdrawal, and compliance. The conflict engagement style encompasses personal attacks and a loss of control, such as "*throwing insults and digs*". The positive problem solving style encompasses compromise and negotiation and exemplified by the following



item; “sitting down and discussing differences constructively”. The withdrawal strategy is defined in terms of a refusal to discuss the issue further and tuning the other person out (i.e., “*remaining silent for long periods of time*”). The compliance strategy refers to individuals giving in or not defending one’s position such as “*not being willing to stick up for myself*”. Respondents are required to rate the frequency with which they use each respective resolution style on a five point Likert-type scale ranging from (*never*) to 5 (*always*). Scores for each resolution style are obtained by summing items reflective of each factor. Scores range between 4 and 20 for each style. The scale was initially developed as an instrument to assess couple conflict resolution styles, however, the scale has been employed in the investigation of other kinds of dyads (e.g., Selfhout, Branje, & Meeus, 2009; Van Doorn et al., 2007). Whilst typically used in conjunction with reciprocal partner or “others” reports, the current study focused only on self-reports of conflict resolution strategies given that several types of dyads are being examined. The scale has demonstrated sound psychometric properties with Cronbach’s alpha ranging between .65 and .90 (Kurdek, 1994). The conflict engagement, positive problem solving, withdrawal, and compliance scales received reliability coefficients of .81, .81, .74, and .70 respectively for the current study.

### **Procedure**

Following ethical research guidelines, permission to undertake the present study was sought and approved from the Australian Catholic University Human Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix L). Advertisements were placed online inviting participants to partake in research on rejection. Interested participants clicked on the URL link provided in the advertisement, and were directed to an online information letter and the questionnaire package. Software program Psychdata was utilised to collect and store the data.

## Results

### Data Screening and Cleaning

The data screening procedures conducted in studies one and two were similarly employed for the current study. Prior to the analyses, the data were screened and statistical assumptions tested following the procedures suggested by Tabachnick and Fidel (2007). Means and standard deviations, coefficients of variation, value ranges, and univariate outliers were first investigated. No out of range values or inappropriately entered data were found, and means and standard deviations were considered plausible. Bivariate correlations appeared honest.

### Missing data.

Five hundred and thirty one participants responded to the online advertisement. The exclusion criteria for the study required participants to be over 18 and to be currently studying. Twenty five participants were excluded as they were not 18 or older. A further 281 cases excluded from analyses as a result of incomplete data. Missing data for all these cases exceeded five per cent of the items on one or more of the scale (Tabachnick & Fidel, 2007). The final sample comprised 223 participants constituting 42 % of the original 531. No missing data were identified in the final sample.

### Outliers.

Testing for outliers was administered by obtaining standardised z-scores for all variables. Z-scores in excess of  $\pm 3.29$  ( $p < .001$ , two tailed test) were considered potential outliers. Utilising this criterion, two univariate outliers were identified on the RSQ. Following the appropriate procedures for assessing and dealing with outliers (Tabachnick & Fidel, 2007), Mahalanobis distances were calculated for all cases to detect the presence of multivariate outliers. Employing the  $\chi^2$  critical value of 34.53 with a criterion of  $p < .001$ , two multivariate outliers were identified. These cases were examined to determine how they were impacting the data. Both multivariate outliers were determined to not reflect the target

population as a result of an unusual combination in scores. These cases were thus deleted. The two univariate outliers whilst deviating from the normal distribution, were deemed to be obtained from the target population and thus were manually transformed. The outlying scores were assigned a value one unit larger than the next most extreme score in the distribution (Tabachnick & Fidel, 2007). Upon transformation, tests were re-run to determine whether new outliers had emerged following deletion and transformation. No further multivariate outliers were identified however three univariate outliers emerged on the RSQ. Following the aforementioned procedures, these were similarly manually transformed. The data were again re-assessed and no further outliers were identified.

#### **Normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity.**

In order to assess normality, skewness and kurtosis values were examined and z-scores were computed to compare against known values for the normal distribution. Values in excess of 3.29 were considered to deviate significantly from normality using of a criterion of  $p < .001$  (Tabachnick & Fidel, 2007). The RSQ and the Conflict Engagement scale of the CRSI displayed significant, positive skewness and significant kurtosis. Shapiro-wilk tests further indicated that the scores obtained on RSQ, SDS, and the scales of the CRSI deviated significantly from normality. Although the sample size is large and significant results may be a function of only minor deviations from normality, examination of the normality plots indicated transformation of data was warranted (Field, 2005; Tabachnick & Fidel, 2007). Both logarithm and square root transformations was employed and contrasted. Following transformation however, in some circumstances, both logarithm and square root methods produced greater violations of the assumption of normality with skewness and kurtosis values increasing and statistical tests producing significant results. Given that the statistical evaluation of the distribution was either worsened or similar following transformation, untransformed data were utilised in all subsequent analyses.

Bivariate scatterplots were examined to determine whether the assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity were met (Tabachnick & Fidel, 2007). All plots showed a linear relationship between the variables and were generally of roughly the same width all over. The RSQ and the Conflict Engagement scale displayed some skewness violating the assumption of homoscedasticity and reiterating the aforementioned normality results. Tabachnick and Fidel (2007) however indicate that violation of this assumption is not crucial to analyses. As transformation of variables fails to yield normality and thus cannot be performed to address heteroscedasticity, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices were further assessed as a function of the multivariate analysis of variances required for hypothesis testing.

In order to assess multicollinearity and singularity, tolerance statistics and variance inflation factor (VIF) values were examined (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Tolerance statistics were acceptable with values above .20 for all predictors (Menard, 1995). VIF values were less than three for all predictors. Inspection of bivariate correlations showed correlations did not exceed .70 further suggesting the assumptions of multicollinearity and singularity were not violated (Tabachnick & Fidel, 2007).

### **Demographic Characteristics and Descriptive Statistics**

Descriptive statistics were obtained for all scales. The means and standard deviations for the respective scales are exhibited in Table 11. RSQ scores for the current study ranged between 2.72 and 23.83 out of a possible range of 1 to 36. The range of scores appears consistent with the ranges reported in studies one (2.18 to 22) and two (2.72 to 23.17). Similarly, the RSQ mean score is comparable with the RSQ mean scores obtained in studies one and two (9.84 and 10.48 respectively). Scores obtained on SDS ranged between zero and 12, from a possible range of zero to 13. As the range included zero, the value of one was added to each participant's total score in order to avoid violating the assumptions of the prospective analyses. The subsequent range obtained for SDS scores was one to 13 out of a

possible range of one to 14. The CRSI measures four conflict resolution styles, conflict engagement which obtained scores between four and 18, positive problem solving ranging between five and 20, withdrawal ranging between four and 20, and compliance with scores obtained between four and 20 with possible ranges for all scales between four and 20.

### **Gender differences.**

In order to assess gender differences in the mean scores obtained on the scales, an independent samples *t*-test was conducted. Levene's test showed no significant difference in the variances for the measures. The equal variances *t*-test was utilised for these mean comparisons. Males and females did not differ significantly in their responses to rejection sensitivity, males  $M = 10.47$ ,  $SD = 3.98$ , females  $M = 11.00$ ,  $SD = 4.02$ ,  $t(221) = 0.99$ ,  $p = .32$ , social desirability, males  $M = 6.78$ ,  $SD = 2.64$ , females  $M = 6.36$ ,  $SD = 2.58$ ,  $t(221) = -1.19$ ,  $p = .24$ , and the compliance conflict resolution style, males  $M = 10.24$ ,  $SD = 3.88$ , females  $M = 9.81$ ,  $SD = 3.77$ ,  $t(221) = -0.85$ ,  $p = .40$ . However, males scored significantly higher than females on the measure of positive problem solving, males,  $M = 15.07$ ,  $SD = 2.93$ , females  $M = 14.11$ ,  $SD = 2.95$ ,  $t(221) = -2.42$ ,  $p = .02$ , exhibiting a small to medium effect size,  $d = -.33$ . In contrast, females scored significantly higher than males on the Conflict Engagement scale, males  $M = 7.88$ ,  $SD = 2.96$ , females  $M = 9.07$ ,  $SD = 3.38$ ,  $t(221) = 2.78$ ,  $p = .01$ , exhibiting a small to medium effect size,  $d = .37$ , and the withdrawal scale, males  $M = 9.26$ ,  $SD = 3.11$ , females  $M = 10.79$ ,  $SD = 3.63$ ,  $t(221) = 3.36$ ,  $p = .00$ , also exhibiting a small to medium effect size,  $d = .45$ .

Table 11

*Means and Standard Deviations for Rejection Sensitivity, Social Desirability, and the Conflict Resolutions Styles of Conflict Engagement, Positive Problem Solving, Withdrawal, and Compliance.*

Scale	Total ( $N = 223$ )		Female ( $n = 118$ )		Male ( $n = 105$ )	
	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Rejection Sensitivity	10.75	4.00	11.00	4.02	10.47	3.98
Social Desirability	6.56	2.61	6.36	2.58	6.78	2.64
Conflict Engagement	5.51	3.24	9.07	3.38	7.88	2.96
Positive Problem Solving	14.56	2.98	14.11	2.95	15.07	2.94
Withdrawal	10.07	3.48	10.79	3.63	9.26	3.11
Compliance	10.01	3.82	9.81	3.77	10.24	3.88

### **Correlations**

In order to assess the directions and the strength of the relationship between the variables, Pearson's product moment correlation coefficients were obtained. The correlations are displayed in Table 12. Twenty three significant correlations were obtained of which 12 were negative and 11 were positive. The correlations varied in strength from weak to strong with values ranging between  $-.03$  and  $-.61$ . The association between the compliance and the conflict engagement conflict strategies exhibited the strongest relationship. Of important note was the significant negative correlation found between the RSQ and social desirability, and the significant positive correlation between the RSQ and age. As a function of these significant correlations, both age and social desirability were controlled for. No significant relationship between the RSQ and gender was identified.

Table 12

*Pearson's Correlations between Rejection Sensitivity, Social Desirability, and the Conflict Resolutions Styles of Conflict Engagement, Positive Problem Solving, Withdrawal, and Compliance.*

Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Rejection Sensitivity	-						
2. Age	.27**	-					
3. Gender	-.07	.03	-				
4. Social Desirability	-.24**	-.14*	.08	-			
5. Conflict Engagement	.12	.23**	-.18**	-.40**	-		
6. Positive Problem Solving	-.22**	-.18**	.16**	.30**	-.37**	-	
7. Withdrawal	.27**	.24**	-.22**	-.32**	.41**	-.44**	-
8. Compliance	.27**	.13**	.13**	-.03	-.61*	-.23**	.23**

Note.  $N = 223$

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$

### Rejection Sensitivity and Conflict Resolution Styles

Multiple regression analyses were conducted in order to assess the relationship between rejection sensitivity and the conflict resolutions styles of conflict engagement, positive problem solving, withdrawal, and compliance. In order to account for the effects of age and social desirability identified in the correlation table, a hierarchical regression analysis was conducted. The current study was exploratory in nature, and aimed to determine how best to characterise rejection sensitivity, thus, after entering social desirability and age in the first step of the analysis, the remaining variables were entered together in the second step of the analysis. These results are displayed in Table 13.

At the first stage of the hierarchical analysis when social desirability and age were entered as the predictor variables, the model explains 12% ( $R^2 = .12$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .12$ ) of the variance in rejection sensitivity,  $F(2, 217) = 15.17$ ,  $p < .001$ . At the second stage of the

analysis, controlling for social desirability and age, the model explained an additional 10% ( $\Delta R^2 = .10$ ) of the variation in rejection sensitivity. This is a significant change in prediction,  $F(4, 213) = 6.97, p < .001$ . As demonstrated in Table 13, at step two, three of the six variables significantly contributed to the prediction of rejection sensitivity scores, age,  $t = 3.12, p = .002$ ; social desirability,  $t = -2.42, p = .02$ ; compliance,  $t = 4.31, p < .001$ . Overall, the final model, which reflects the total influence of social desirability, age, and the conflict resolution styles of conflict engagement, positive problem solving, withdrawal, and compliance on rejection sensitivity, was significant,  $F(6, 213) = 10.26, p < .001$ , accounting for 22.4% ( $R^2 = .22$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .20$ ). Although positive problem solving and the withdrawal conflict resolution strategies were significantly correlated with rejection sensitivity, they failed to contribute significantly to the prediction of scores. An investigation of the standardised regression coefficients, demonstrated in Table 13, highlighted the relative importance of each of the predictor variables. The magnitude of the beta coefficients indicated that, controlling for age and social desirability, the compliance conflict resolution style is the most important predictor of rejection sensitivity.



Table 13

*Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression of Social Desirability, Age, and the Conflict Resolutions Styles of Conflict Engagement, Positive Problem Solving, Withdrawal, and Compliance on Rejection Sensitivity*

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta R^2$
Step 1				.12**	
Social Desirability	-.31	.10	-.20**		
Age	.28	.07	.26**		
Step 2				.22**	.10**
Social Desirability	-.25	.10	-.16*		
Age	.22	.07	.20**		
Conflict Engagement	.02	.09	.01		
Positive Problem Solving	-.02	.09	-.02		
Withdrawal	.11	.08	.09		
Compliance	.20	.07	.29**		

Note. *N* = 223.

\**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01

### **Rejection sensitivity and gender analyses.**

Although males and females did not significantly differ in their scores on the RSQ, given that males and females differed on several of the conflict resolution scales, two additional hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to determine whether the model holds for both males and females. The respective analyses are displayed in Table 14. For females, at the first stage of the analysis, with social desirability and age entered as the predictor variables, the model explained 10% ( $R^2 = .10$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .09$ ) of the variance in rejection sensitivity,  $F(2, 112) = 6.49$ ,  $p = .002$ . At the second stage of the analysis,

controlling for social desirability and age, the model explains an additional 7% ( $\Delta R^2 = .07$ ) of the variation in rejection sensitivity, however this was not a significant change in prediction,  $F(4, 108) = 2.12, p = .08$ . The final model was significant,  $F(6, 108) = 3.66, p = .002$ , accounting for 17% of the variance in rejection sensitivity scores ( $R^2 = .17$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .12$ ). In contrast to the first model, age did not contribute significantly to the prediction of rejection sensitivity scores for females at either the first or the second stage of analysis. Social desirability however significantly contributed to the prediction of scores at both stages of the analysis (stage one,  $t = -2.90, p = .004$ ; stage two,  $t = -3.07, p = .003$ ). As demonstrated by the standardised regression coefficients, after social desirability, the compliance conflict resolution style was the most important contributor to rejection sensitivity ( $t = 2.19, p = .03$ ).

For males, at the first stage of the analysis, with social desirability and age entered as the predictor variables, the model explained 17% ( $R^2 = .17$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .15$ ) of the variance in rejection sensitivity,  $F(2, 102) = 10.23, p < .001$ . At the second stage of the analysis, controlling for social desirability and age, the model explained an additional 20% ( $\Delta R^2 = .20$ ) of the variation in rejection sensitivity, which was a significant change in prediction,  $F(4, 98) = 7.60, p < .001$ . The final model was significant,  $F(6, 98) = 9.36, p < .001$ , accounting for 36% of the variance in rejection sensitivity scores ( $R^2 = .36$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .33$ ). In contrast to the female sample, age significantly contributed to the prediction of rejection sensitivity scores at both the first and the second stage of analysis (stage one,  $t = 4.05, p < .001$ , stage two,  $t = 3.03, p = .003$ ) for males. Social desirability however failed to significantly contribute to the prediction of scores at either stage of the analysis. With the exception of age, two of the predictor variables, withdrawal and compliance conflict resolution styles, significantly contributed to the variation in rejection sensitivity scores. The compliance conflict resolution style was found to be the most important predictor for males ( $t = 3.84, p < .001$ ).

Table 14

*Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses of Social Desirability, Age, and the Conflict Resolutions Styles of Conflict Engagement, Positive Problem Solving, Withdrawal, and Compliance on Rejection Sensitivity between Males and Females.*

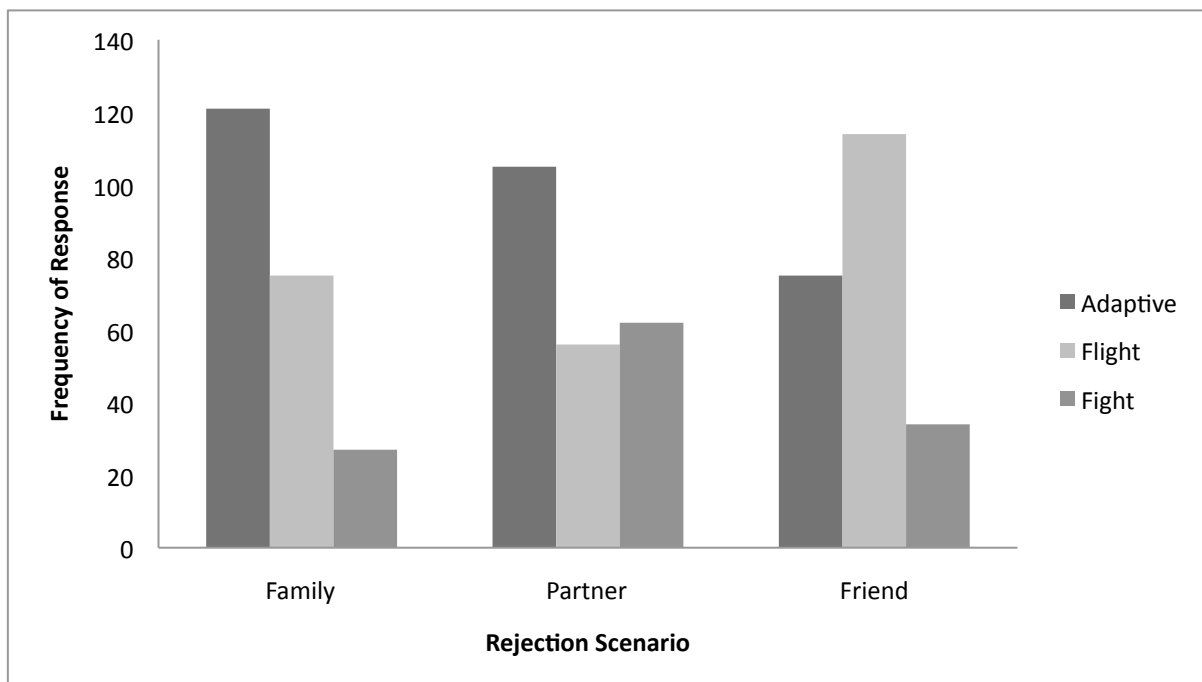
Scale	Female ( <i>n</i> = 118)					Male ( <i>n</i> = 105)				
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta R^2$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta R^2$
Step One				.10**					.17**	
Social Desirability	-.41	.14	-.27			-.22	.14	-.15		
Age	.16	.11	.13			.38	.09	.37**		
Step Two				.17**	.07				.36**	.20**
Social Desirability	-.47	.15	-.31**			.04	.14	-.03		
Age	.11	.11	.09			.27	.09	.26**		
Conflict Engagement	-.12	.13	-.10			.10	.12	.08		
Positive Problem Solving	-.80	.14	-.06			-.03	.13	-.02		
Withdrawal	.01	.11	.01			.27	.12	.21*		
Compliance	.23	.11	.22*			.35	.09	.34**		

*Note.* *N* = 223. \**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01

## Reactions to Rejection

### Descriptive and frequency analysis.

As outlined in the method section, reactions to rejection were assessed using three hypothetical rejection scenarios (family, partner, and friend). Participants were required to choose the response style (flight, fight, or adaptive), which would most characterise their likely behaviour. The frequency of response types for each scenario is displayed in Figure 8. As exhibited in Figure 8, in both the family and partner rejection scenarios, the adaptive category was the most frequently occurring response type. In response to rejection from a friend, the flight category was the most frequently occurring response type.



*Figure 8.* Frequency of response types across three rejection scenarios

### Loglinear analysis of behavioural responses to rejection.

In order to replicate and extend the findings obtained in study three, a three-way loglinear analysis was employed. The aim of the analysis was to delineate patterns amongst the variables and to examine whether an individual's reaction to rejection is influenced by both his or her level of rejection sensitivity and the type of rejection experienced. Although

cell sample sizes were greater than five for all categories and thus satisfied the requirements for conducting loglinear analyses (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007), sample sizes did differ greatly amongst the groups. Thus, in order to obtain greater equality in group sizes and conduct more robust analyses the cells were collapsed across the two maladaptive response types to form one maladaptive response category. A 3 x 2 x 2 contingency table was then constructed which exhibits the observed and expected frequencies of the relationship between the rejection scenarios (family vs. partner vs. friend), the response type (adaptive vs. maladaptive), and level of rejection sensitivity (low versus high). This is displayed in Table 15.

Table 15

*Crosstabulation of the Association between Response Style, Scenario, and Rejection Sensitivity*

Scenario		Response Style					
		Adaptive		Maladaptive		Total	
		LRS	HRS	LRS	HRS	LRS	HRS
Family	Count	43	51	70	59	113	110
	Expected	52	39.3	61	70.7	113	110
Partner	Count	67	38	46	72	113	110
	Expected	61	39.3	52	70.7	113	110
Friend	Count	46	29	67	81	113	110
	Expected	61	39.3	52	70.7	113	110
Total	Count	183	118	156	212	339	330
	Expected	183	118	156	212	339	330

*Note.*  $N = 223$

LRS = Low rejection sensitivity group. HRS = High rejection sensitivity group

Following initial crosstabulation analyses the loglinear analysis was conducted. Examination of goodness of fit statistics first indicated that the model was a good fit of the data,  $\chi^2 (4) = 0, p = 1$ , with observed and expected frequencies not significantly different. Investigation of the  $k$ -way and higher-order effects statistics indicated that following the removal of the three-way effect of scenario x response x rejection sensitivity level, the fit of the model was not significantly affected,  $\chi^2 (2) = 1.21, p = .55$ . Removal of the two way interactions (scenario x response, response x rejection sensitivity, scenario x rejection sensitivity) however, significantly affect the fit of the model,  $\chi^2 (7) = 43.66, p < .001$ . These findings are reiterated by the results of the backward elimination of simple effects. This procedure was implemented with the aim of determining the best fitting model for the data set. The process of conducting and interpreting the backward elimination is outlined in the results section of the study three (Chapter Four). Consistent with the aforementioned findings, the results show that the model is not significantly affected when the three-way interaction term is removed. Replicating the results identified in study three, the separate removal of the two, two-way interaction terms however significantly affects the fit of the model. The final model thus retained two two-way interaction effects, the interaction of response type x scenario, and the interaction of response type x rejection sensitivity level. The final two-way model is a good fit to the data ( $\chi^2 (4) = 0, p = 1$ ). Table 16 summarises the backward elimination steps and statistics.

The interaction between scenario and response type (displayed in Figure 9) suggests that the type of response enacted is significantly influenced by the type of rejection scenario. Specifically, participants were more likely to respond in an adaptive manner when faced with rejection from family and partners. In contrast, participants were more likely to respond in a maladaptive manner when faced with rejection from friends. Odds ratios were calculated and demonstrate that within the context of rejection from friends, the odds of responding in a maladaptive manner were 2.35 times greater than in the family scenario, and 1.76 times

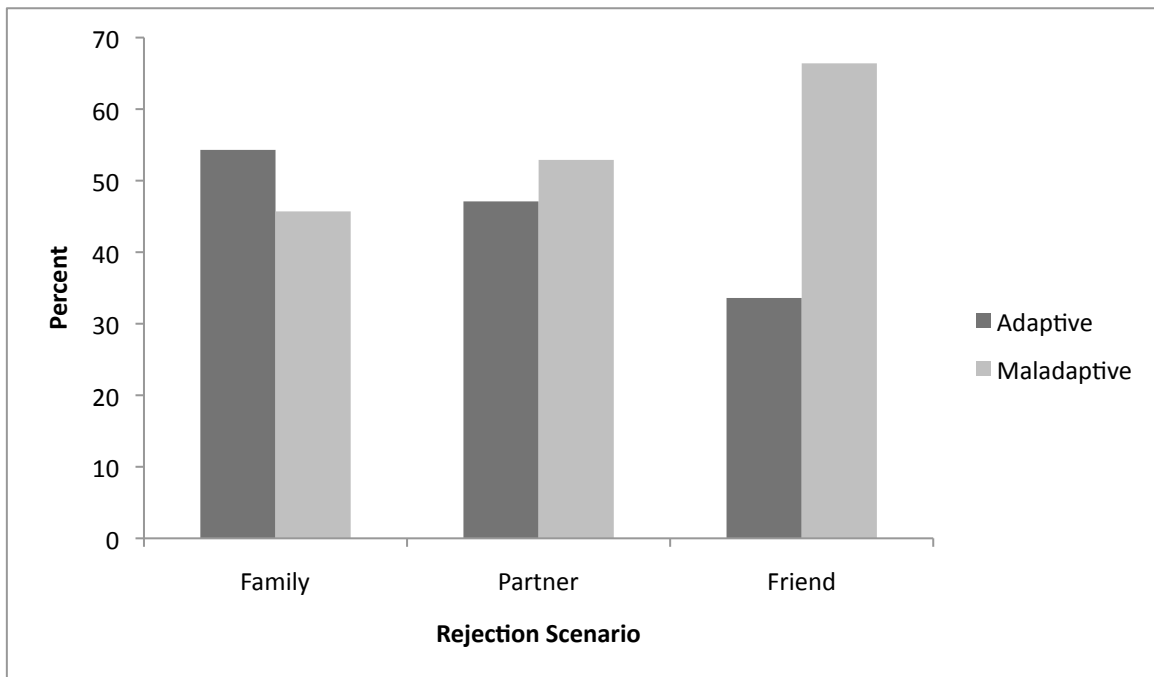
greater than in the partner scenario. The odds of responding in a maladaptive manner within the context of partner rejection were 1.33 times greater than the odds of responding in a maladaptive manner within the context of family rejection.

Table 16

*Summary of the Backward Elimination*

Step	Model	Effect	If Effect Removed		
			$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
0	Generating class	Scenario*Response*RS	0.00	0	-INF
	Deleted Effect 1	Scenario*Response*RS	1.21	2	.55
1	Generating class	Scenario*Response, Scenario*RS, Response*RS	1.21	2	.55
	Deleted Effect 1	Scenario*Response	0.70	2	.70
	Deleted Effect 2	Scenario*RS	20.71	2	.01
	Deleted Effect 3	Response*RS	23.29	1	.01
2	Generating Class	Scenario*Response, Response*RS	1.92	4	.75
	Deleted Effect 1	Scenario*Response	20.00	2	.01
	Deleted Effect 2	Response*RS	22.58	1	.01
3	Generating Class	Scenario*Response, Response*RS	1.92	4	.75

*Note.* RS = Rejection sensitivity level



*Figure 9.* The interaction between adaptive and maladaptive response types and rejection scenario.

As shown in Figure 10, the significant interaction between response type and rejection sensitivity level suggests that the type of response enacted is significantly impacted by an individual's level of rejection sensitivity. More specifically, high rejection sensitive respondents were more likely to respond to rejection in a maladaptive manner when compared to low rejection sensitive respondents. The odds of a maladaptive response was 2.11 times greater for participants categorised as high rejection sensitive than for participants categorised as low rejection sensitive.

A crosstabs analysis assessing the level of consistent responding across the three rejection scenarios was conducted to provide additional descriptive information. As highlighted in table 17, 174 participants did not exhibit cross-situational stability in their response style. Only 49 participants responded consistently across the three scenarios. Twenty seven participants responded consistently in an adaptive manner, of which 17 were categorised as low rejection sensitive. Of the 22 participants who consistently responded in a maladaptive manner, 14 were categorised as high rejection sensitive.



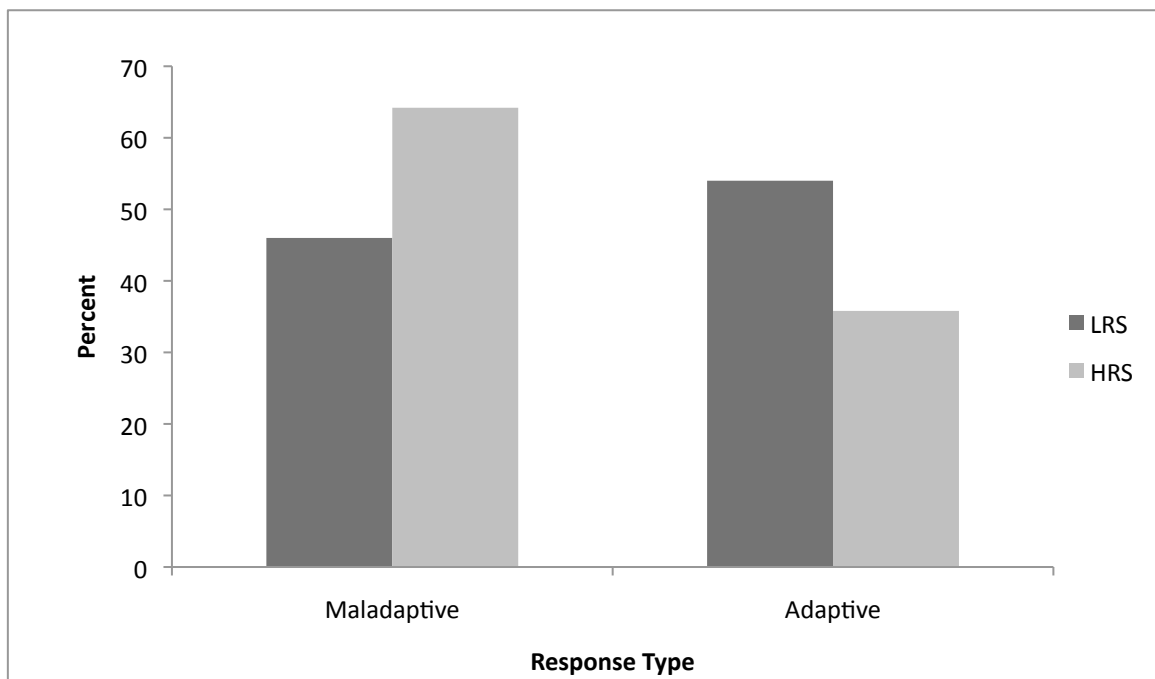


Figure 10. The interaction between maladaptive and adaptive response types and high and low rejection sensitivity.

Table 17

*Crosstabulation of the Association between the Consistency of Response Style and Rejection Sensitivity*

Response Consistency		LRS	HRS	Total
Consistent	Count	25	24	49
	Expected	24.8	24.2	49
Inconsistent	Count	88	86	174
	Expected	88.2	85.8	174
Total	Count	113	110	223
	Expected	113	110	223

Note. LRS = Low rejection sensitivity group. HRS = High rejection sensitivity group

## Discussion

### Summary of Findings and Implications

Overall, the results of the current study suggest that people in general do not exhibit cross-situational stability in their reactions to rejection. Consistent with the results of study three and the hypotheses, the findings indicate that even when the form of the rejection experience is similar, there is intra-individual variability in behavioural reactions. This variability may be attributable to who the source of the rejection is and/or the form of the rejection experience. The results demonstrated that individuals react differently to rejection from different significant others. In addition to the findings concerning people in general, the results also reinforce the notion that higher levels of rejection sensitivity are associated with an increased likelihood of reacting to rejection maladaptively. Consistent with prior research and replicating the findings obtained in the previous study, individuals with higher rejection sensitivity were more likely to respond to rejection in a maladaptive manner when compared to less rejection sensitive individuals. Further highlighting the association between rejection sensitivity and dysfunctional interpersonal behaviours, as hypothesised, high levels of rejection sensitivity were associated with the use of maladaptive conflict resolution styles. It is important to note however that like people in general, individuals with higher levels of rejection sensitivity do not exhibit cross-situational stability in their behavioural responses to rejection. That is, not all rejection scenarios elicit maladaptive reactions for rejection sensitive individuals. These findings and their implications will be explored in turn below.

The findings of the current study suggest that people in general do not react to experiences of rejection consistently. The results indicate that even when the form of the rejection experience is similar (i.e., passive versus active rejection), individuals display variability in their response types across experiences of rejection from different sources. It may be suggested that the type of behavioural response enacted is thus influenced by the rejection source (i.e., romantic partner, family member, or friend). The results demonstrate

that perceiving rejection from certain significant others increase the probability of reacting maladaptively in comparison to perceiving rejection from alternative significant others. Evidently, there is something about the interaction with the particular rejection source and the nature and meaning of that relationship to the individual, which may account for intra-individual differences in response types. In general, these findings are consistent with prior research, which has emphasised the notion of intra-individual variability (e.g., Mischel & Shoda, 1995; Smart Richman & Leary, 2009). Furthermore, the finding that there is variability in reactions to rejection across different sources remains consistent with the findings obtained in study three.

An integral outcome of the current study is identified when the specific results are compared with those of study three. While both studies showed that people in general display cross-situational variability in their reactions to rejection, the current results differ from those obtained in study three an important way. In the current study, the pattern of results suggest that when rejection is manifest in terms of passive exclusion, perceiving rejection from a *friend* was associated with the highest probability of responding *maladaptively*. The probability of responding *adaptively* was increased when the rejection was perpetrated by one's family member. Contrary to these findings, in study three, perceiving rejection from one's *romantic partner* was associated with the highest probability of responding *maladaptively* in comparison to other sources. Moreover, in study three, perceiving rejection from one's *friend* was associated with the highest probability of responding *adaptively*. While the results of the current study reinforce the importance of investigating the concept of intra-individual differences in behaviour and the factors which may inform such differences in behaviour, the findings of the current study are essentially the reverse of those obtained in study three. Without having measured additional influencing factors (i.e., relationship history, importance of the relationship to the individual, perceived cost of rejection from that specific source), it is difficult to speculate as to why these results are contrary to those

obtained in study three, however the most obvious explanation concerns the differences in methodology between studies. One of the changes made for the current study was the modification of the hypothetical scenarios used so that they would be equivalent in the form (i.e., passive versus active) of the rejection conveyed to the individual. It was presumed that the potential influence of the form of the rejection experience (i.e., passive versus active) was accounted for in the sense that the rejection scenarios were of a similar form. As such the differences in the findings of the two studies may suggest that the specific form of the rejection experience interacts with who is doing the rejecting, or the source of the rejection. For example, in some circumstances, an individual may react maladaptively when experiencing rejection from his or her romantic partner, but in other circumstances may react adaptively when experiencing rejection from the same person. It may be this interaction of situational factors that produces variability in behaviour across relationship type and the form of the rejection experience. The notion of relationship type and the form of the rejection experience interacting together may be supported by the principles of the cognitive-affective processing system (CAPS) framework. Although this theory has been employed to explain the rejection sensitivity model, its guiding principles may similarly be applied for people in general. Accordingly, this theory outlines that different situations trigger the activation of different cognitive-affective processes, which in turn are linked with different behavioural outcomes. As outlined in Chapter One, the CAPS framework specifies that there are intra-individual differences in how the features of a situation are encoded, and how these encodings activate and interact with preexisting cognitions and affects (Mischel, 1973; Mischel & Shoda, 1995). These cognitions and affects encompass the encoding of the self, other people, events, and situations, and also, an individual's expectancies and beliefs, emotional reactions, goals and values, and competencies and self-regulatory plans. Importantly, an individual's social learning history informs the organisation of these cognitions and affects (Mischel & Shoda, 1995). Thus, it may be surmised that the differences in the results obtained in the

current study as compared to study three may be a function of the different interactions with the situational features presented in each of the hypothetical scenarios. In conjunction with assessing the aforementioned cognitive and affective variables, consideration of other variables, such as an individual's history with the *specific* source of the rejection (i.e., previous occurrences of rejection, history of relationship transgressions), the gender and age of the source of the rejection, as well as relationship specific implicit and explicit relational rules, are important. Given that one's social history and relationship expectations are not just related to a specific type of relationship but are also unique for each person, the responses to rejection may differ depending on, for example, whether it is one's mother or one's father, one friend versus another friend, and one partner as compared to another. Overall, the current study demonstrates the necessity to examine the factors which contribute to the nature of behavioural reactions to rejection for people in general. Most importantly, the current study has shown that people in general, do not react to experiences of rejection from different significant others in a consistent manner.

Turning to discussion of high rejection sensitive individuals, the results of the current study reinforce the notion that the rejection sensitivity dynamic increases the likelihood of reacting to experiences of rejection with maladaptive behaviours. Compared with low rejection sensitive individuals, high rejection sensitive individuals appear more vulnerable to engaging in maladaptive behaviours following rejection. These results parallel those obtained in study three and provide support for the literature which has consistently demonstrated a relationship between rejection sensitivity and the implementations of maladaptive behaviours (Ayduk et al., 2000; Ayduk et al., 2002; Downey et al., 2004; London et al., 2007). Similarly consistent with study three however, not all rejection situations appear to elicit maladaptive reactions for high rejection sensitive individuals. Specifically, only 14 of 110 high rejection sensitive individuals consistently responded to rejection with maladaptive behaviours. Accordingly, it is evident that in some circumstances rejection sensitive individuals appear to

react to rejection in an adaptive manner. Although the results concerning people's reactions to rejection in general highlight the difficulties associated with determining the factors that influence the enactment of maladaptive reactions, the consistency of the results across the current and previous studies specifically concerning rejection sensitive individuals has important implications. Two related arguments may be proposed. First, as outlined in study three, the results may suggest that there is greater complexity in the conceptualisation of the contexts which trigger the activation of the rejection sensitivity dynamic, than currently thought. According to past research, rejection-relevant contexts (the situations that trigger the rejection sensitivity dynamic), have been conceptualised as those which simply afford the possibility of rejection from significant others (Ayduk & Gyurak, 2008; Downey & Feldman, 1996; Levy et al., 2001). The rejection sensitivity dynamic is theorised to function in an *if...then* manner, such that if rejection-relevant contexts are encountered then a series of cognitive-affective and behavioural processes unfold in a systematic and predictable way (Mischel & Shoda, 1995). Therefore, in situations that encompass the possibility of rejection, a rejection sensitive individual should be likely to exhibit maladaptive interpersonal behaviours. However, in light of the current results, which showed that not all rejection scenarios involving significant others elicited maladaptive reactions (even when controlling for the form of the rejection), it may be suggested that there is greater specificity in the conceptualisation of the contexts which are triggering the activation of the rejection sensitivity dynamic and result in the unfolding of dysfunctional cognitive-affective and behavioural responses. Thus the notion that all situations that encompass the possibility of rejection activate the rejection sensitivity processing dynamics, may be questioned. To some extent, this perspective also reiterates the views of Downey et al. (1999) who suggested that the specific situations which activate the rejection sensitivity dynamic are influenced by an individual's unique social history and individual differences in the ways in which rejection has been communicated in the past. The influence of alternative factors, such as those

identified for people in general, may similarly be relevant or perhaps more profound for high rejection sensitive individuals.

Alternatively, the current results may suggest that there isn't necessarily greater specificity in the conceptualisation of rejection-relevant contexts, but rather, those that result only in the elicitation of maladaptive behaviours. It may be that any situation that affords the possibility of rejection from significant others does indeed activate the rejection sensitivity dynamic, however, not all of these situations lead to maladaptive behavioural reactions. It may be that other factors are involved which protect an individual from behaving in a maladaptive way, even in the presence of rejection cues and distressing cognitive-affective outcomes. Accordingly, Ayduk and colleagues (2000) indicated that for high rejection sensitive individuals, effective self-regulation protects against the enactment of aggressive behaviours, interpersonal difficulties, and low self-esteem. In reviewing the literature, Ayduk and colleagues (2000) outlined that effective self-regulation is contingent upon an individual's capacity to alleviate the distress associated with stressful social encounters by turning his or her attention away from the emotion-arousing features of threatening environmental and intrapersonal stimuli. In order for individuals to prevent the enactment of reflexive fight or flight responses, attention needs to be strategically and flexibly deployed (Ayduk et al., 2000). Indicatively, Ayduk et al. (2002) reported that the deployment of attention cooling strategies, such as distancing and distraction from the emotion-arousing features associated with perceiving rejection, serves to attenuate hostile reactions. Within the context of the current research, it may be proposed that in some circumstances, individuals are more readily able to employ effective self-regulatory skills, leading to the deployment of adaptive responses to experiences of rejection. However, because the findings indicated that rejection sensitivity was still associated with the enactment of maladaptive behavioural reactions, it appears that the ability to use effective self-regulatory skills is, in certain circumstances, impaired.

In sum, irrespective of either related argument regarding the present findings, the current study highlights the necessity for a more comprehensive investigation into the situations that qualify as rejection relevant, and/or those that elicit maladaptive reactions for rejection sensitive individuals. The theoretical and methodological implications of these arguments will be discussed in greater depth in the final chapter.

Providing support for the dysfunctional nature of the rejection sensitivity dynamic and the deployment of maladaptive interpersonal behaviours, the current study also identified that rejection sensitivity is associated with maladaptive conflict resolution styles. The results showed that rejection sensitivity was positively associated with the use of compliance and withdrawal conflict strategies, and negatively associated with positive problem solving strategies. The use of compliance and withdrawal strategies may be considered representative of the flight behaviours typically displayed by high rejection sensitive individuals. This suggests that during conflicts, high rejection sensitive individuals may show a tendency toward withdrawing, a refusal to discuss the issue further, tuning out from the other person, and becoming cold and distant. Alternatively, they may show a heightened tendency to concede to the wishes or demands of the other person, and a lowered desire to defend one's position. Further inspection of the results indicates that of the four conflict resolution styles, the compliance strategy was largest predictor of rejection sensitivity. Although gender differences were identified with reference to the association between rejection sensitivity and conflict resolution styles, the differences do not appear to influence the general understanding of how high rejection sensitive individuals may negotiate conflict situations. For both males and females, the compliance strategy was the most important predictor of rejection sensitivity. It appears that males may also be likely to use the withdrawal strategy during conflicts however their use of the compliance strategy was more closely associated with rejection sensitivity.



An unexpected finding was the lack of association between rejection sensitivity and conflict engagement strategies. Conflict engagement strategies involve behaviour characterised as abusive, aggressive, hostile, and/or defensive (Kurdek, 1994). This result appears contrary to the documented relationship between rejection sensitivity and aggressive and hostile behaviours (Ayduk, Gyurak, & Luerssen, 2008; Downey & Feldman, 1996; Downey et al., 2000; Downey, Freitas et al., 1998). It may be speculated that the implementation of compliance strategies during conflicts actually represents an individual's attempts to avoid the escalation of conflict and importantly, avoid rejection. Therefore, if cues of rejection are not perceived as a function of this prevention strategy, the automatic implementation of fight reactions is thus unlikely. This notion is supported by previous research outlined in Chapter One, which specifically conceptualises compliance tactics as an intimacy-seeking coping strategy employed under the misperception that rejection can be avoided if one complies with the wishes of the partner (Downey et al., 1999). Past research has thus demonstrated an association between rejection sensitivity and self-silencing (Ayduk et al., 2003), and furthermore shown that some individuals will do anything to maintain their romantic relationships and avoid rejection (Purdie & Downey, 2000). It may be postulated that conflicts activate rejection expectations and the rejection sensitivity processing dynamics to the extent that efforts to prevent rejection (i.e., compliance strategies) have failed. In this sense, the findings highlight the salience of conflict situations as important contexts for investigating the interpersonal behaviours employed both to prevent rejection and to cope with rejection. Although little research has utilised conflict resolution styles to examine the behaviours exhibited by these individuals, in light of the current findings, they provide a useful addition to the extant literature and the previous studies. The association between rejection sensitivity and maladaptive interpersonal behaviours has important implications for the functioning of one's relationships and moreover, one's psychological wellbeing. These implications will be further discussed in Chapter Six.

Another aspect of interpersonal behavior that may be of relevance in the discussion of the highly rejection sensitive individual, is impression management or self-presentation. Rejection sensitivity was found to be negatively correlated with social desirability. Although it was anticipated that socially desirable responding may be related to rejection sensitivity, it was not anticipated that this relationship would be negative. Rather than exhibiting a tendency to distort self-presentation in the direction of a socially desirable bias, it appears that rejection sensitive individuals are doing the opposite. This finding may be indicative of tendency toward a self-critical focus, than a tendency toward creating a desirable impression, as in study one, it may reflect the association between rejection sensitivity and depressive symptomatology. Although the direction of the association appears unexpected, it remains consistent with previous research that has identified a relationship between reports of interpersonal vulnerabilities and lower levels of socially desirable responding (i.e., Zuroff, Moskowitz, Wielgus, Powers, & Franko, 1983). It is important to note that while a relationship between rejection sensitivity and social desirability was identified and controlled for, the relationship can only be considered modest at best. The impact of social desirability across the series of current studies will be discussed further in the final chapter.

An additional interesting finding regarding rejection sensitivity is the apparent association with age. The results of this study found that rejection sensitivity was positively associated with age, such that as individuals gets older their sensitivity to rejection may increase. As outlined in Chapter One, previous research does not identify age as a factor that influences the rejection sensitivity dynamic. However, posited within the context of Erikson's (1963) psychosocial theory of development, it may be postulated that during some developmental periods, the rejection sensitivity dynamic and its associated intrapersonal and interpersonal outcomes become particularly salient. For example, during young adulthood the central developmental task concerns achievement of intimacy and avoidance of isolation. If the self-fulfilling nature of the rejection sensitivity dynamic has comprised the successful

resolution of this developmental task, presumably the need for intimate relationships becomes stronger as times goes on. Difficulties achieving intimacy and preventing isolation may potentially make an individual increasingly anxious about rejection and increasingly vigilant for rejection related cues. In this sense the rejection sensitivity dynamic may become more pervasive. As highlighted in Chapter One, the rejection sensitivity dynamic is strengthened and perpetuated with additional experiences of rejection. Such suggestions may explain the relationship between age and rejection sensitivity that has been identified. However, similar to the relative influence of social desirability, the association was modest, and therefore, its impact although important, may be considered minimal. Evidently, this may be considered an avenue for future research.

### **Limitations**

Prior to conducting further research based on the findings of the current study, it is important to take into consideration the study's methodological and conceptual limitations. In regards to methodology, in particular, the hypothetical rejection scenarios, due to time constraints, pilot work was not conducted to ascertain the validity or reliability of these hypothetical scenarios. Furthermore, although equivalency in terms of the nature of the rejection was attempted, this equivalency has not been empirically tested. As such the related results do need to be interpreted with caution. Future related research should undertake pilot work to equalise the types of rejection scenarios employed in order to then assess more accurately the role of the specific nature of the rejection experience. With further reference to the hypothetical scenarios, it may have been helpful to include a series of rejection scenarios assessing different kinds of rejection experiences across different sources. For example, comparing reactions to experiences of active rejection from significant others with experiences of passive rejection from the same significant others. Clearly, there is immense scope for investigating the nature of rejection-relevant contexts both for people in general and specifically for rejection sensitive individuals. If the aforementioned concerns can adequately

be addressed, the high rejection sensitive individual and the specific circumstances that activate the dynamic may be better understood.

### **Conclusions**

In summary, the current study aimed to explore how people in general, and high rejection sensitive individuals in particular, react to experiences of rejection. The findings demonstrate that people do not exhibit cross-situational stability in their behavioural reactions to rejection. The findings overall suggest intra-individual variability in behavioural reactions across rejection experiences with different sources. Although the current study was not designed to understand why it is that individuals may react differently, the findings importantly highlight the necessity to explore alternative factors that may contribute to the intra-individual differences in behavioural reactions. With regards to rejection sensitivity, the results demonstrate that it is associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in maladaptive behaviours and utilising maladaptive conflict resolution styles. It is evident however that not all rejection scenarios elicit maladaptive behaviours for high rejection sensitive individuals, reiterating the findings regarding people in general. There appears to be greater complexity in the situations that are associated with maladaptive behavioural reactions than has been previously documented. The results emphasise the need for consideration of additional factors which influence the behaviours enacted by people in general. Moreover, the results support the notion that rejection sensitivity is a highly situationally specific dynamic that requires further investigation.

## CHAPTER SIX: GENERAL DISCUSSION

### Overview of the Chapter

Rejection sensitivity has been viewed as a dynamic that serves to undermine adaptive interpersonal and intrapersonal functioning (Ayduk et al., 2001; Downey & Feldman 1996; Downey, 2000; Downey et al., 1998). Exploration of the rejection sensitivity dynamic and its association with maladaptive outcomes is important, particularly because of its potential to compromise an individual's psychological wellbeing. Within the context of a cognitive-affective processing system framework, rejection sensitivity was defined as a disposition toward anxiously expecting, readily perceiving, and overreacting to rejection (Downey & Feldman, 1996; Downey et al., 1994; Feldman & Downey, 1994; Mischel & Shoda, 1995). In accordance with the model developed by Downey and Feldman (1996) and elaborated upon by numerous researchers, four studies were undertaken with the aim of developing a more comprehensive understanding of the rejection sensitivity model. Specifically, the aims of the present research were threefold: to confirm that rejection sensitivity is associated with poorer psychological outcomes; to understand how high rejection sensitive individuals relate to and interact with those around them; and to examine whether the ways in which individuals who are more sensitive to rejection think about and behave in their relationships is different from less sensitive individuals. This final chapter will summarise and review the aims, major findings and conclusions of the current research. The theoretical and practical implications of these findings will be explored, and the limitations and directions for future research will also be discussed.

### Overview of Findings

Grounded in a large body of previous research, the preceding four studies were undertaken with the goal of understanding how rejection sensitivity is associated with, and increases an individual's vulnerability to experiencing maladaptive intrapersonal and

interpersonal outcomes. The four studies will be reviewed first separately and then integrated and discussed within the context of the extant literature.

To support the notion that the rejection sensitivity dynamic does compromise psychological wellbeing, study one aimed to explore why rejection sensitivity is associated with an increased risk of experiencing depressive symptoms. Previous research has identified that the maladaptive nature of the rejection sensitivity dynamic leads to the onset of depressive symptoms (i.e., Ayduk et al., 2001). However, the processes and mechanisms by which this may occur have not yet been examined. As a preliminary investigation into the reasons as to why rejection sensitivity may be associated with depressive symptoms, this study aimed specifically to explore the combined and relative influence of social anxiety and loneliness. Notwithstanding the limitations of cross-sectional designs, the findings suggested that the association between rejection sensitivity and depressive symptoms may be a function of social anxiety and loneliness. Combined and separately, social anxiety and loneliness mediated the relationship between rejection sensitivity and depressive symptoms. It was postulated that the maladaptive nature of rejection sensitivity facilitates the onset of more globalised social fears, manifest in terms of social anxiety symptoms. In addition, the interpersonal dysfunction associated with the rejection sensitivity dynamic was proposed to increase the likelihood of experiencing interpersonal loss, need, or deficiency (Joiner, 1997), and result in the emotionally aversive experience of loneliness. The findings implied that it is not the rejection sensitivity dynamic itself that leads to depressive symptoms, but rather the associated experiences of social anxiety and loneliness that increase an individual's susceptibility to depressive symptoms.

The findings of study one fundamentally emphasise the importance of understanding the processes that lead to maladaptive outcomes, and specifically to internalising symptoms for high rejection sensitive individuals. On the basis that social anxiety and loneliness are two very interpersonally focused factors, a principal question that arose from study one concerned

how it is that high rejection sensitive individuals think about and relate to those around them. In endeavoring to understand how interpersonal functioning contributes to the maladaptive nature of the rejection sensitivity dynamic, study two therefore aimed to examine whether there is a discernable pattern with which rejection sensitive individuals relate to others. The study concentrated on delineating how high rejection sensitive individuals relate to people in general, and also how they relate to close others. It set out to identify how rejection sensitivity is associated with insecure adult attachment styles and the personality dispositions, sociotropy and autonomy. The findings showed that rejection sensitivity is characterised by interpersonal dysfunction, as exhibited through its relationship with anxious and avoidant attachment styles, and higher levels of sociotropy and autonomy. Individuals with higher levels of rejection sensitivity were differentiated from less rejection sensitive individuals on the basis of these dimensions. Given that being highly sociotropic or highly autonomous has been theorised to increase vulnerability to depressive symptoms (Beck, 1983), the results also reinforced the notion that rejection sensitivity is associated with depressive symptomatology.

With reference to specific interpersonal patterns, the results suggested that high rejection sensitive individuals demonstrate a discernable pattern of relating in their close relationships, but exhibit variability in how they think about and interact with people more generally. Rejection sensitivity was shown to be more closely associated with an anxious attachment style than an avoidant attachment style, suggesting that high rejection sensitive individuals are more likely to seek out relationships than to avoid them. While intuitively the desire to seek out relationships may be considered adaptive, within the context of an anxious pattern of attachment, the desire to seek out relationships becomes more problematic. This style of relating serves to compromise interpersonal functioning and is associated with significant psychological distress (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Accordingly, within their close relationships, high rejection sensitive individuals are likely to show an intense and pervasive need to be close to others, requiring constant reassurance of acceptance and support (Shaver

& Mikulincer, 2002). In addition, high rejection sensitive individuals are likely to possess a chronic fear of abandonment and neglect, and thus may be prone to using intimacy-seeking strategies to prevent the occurrence of rejection (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002; Hazan & Shaver, 1994). Contrary to previous research, which has demonstrated that rejection sensitivity is also associated with avoidant attachment styles (i.e., Ayduk et al., 2001; Downey & Feldman, 1996; Feldman & Downey, 1994), the findings implied that high rejection sensitive individuals are less likely to be fearful of and uncomfortable with close relationships, and may be less prone to using intimacy-avoidant strategies to prevent the occurrence of rejection.

On the other hand, in their interactions with people in general (as opposed to their interactions with significant others), individuals who are more sensitive to rejection exhibit intra-individual variability. On the basis of this finding, and in light of the identification of a more distinctive pattern of relating to close others, there appeared greater heuristic value in further investigating how rejection sensitive individuals relate to and negotiate their *close* interpersonal relationships. Fundamentally the findings of study two suggested that rejection sensitive individuals may be more prone to *moving toward others* rather than *moving away* from them. Study three thus aimed to extend these findings by attempting to understand what happens when a highly rejection sensitive individual's attempts to secure intimacy and acceptance fail, and he or she experiences rejection. The goal of study three was to therefore to elucidate how high rejection sensitive individuals react behaviourally to rejection. Using hypothetical rejection scenarios, several key findings emerged. The findings lent support to the extant literature by demonstrating that rejection sensitivity is associated with maladaptive behavioural reactions to rejection. However, contrary to previous research which has suggested that high rejection sensitive individuals more typically react to rejection by engaging in primarily aggressive, hostile, fight type behaviours, study three found that high rejection sensitive individuals are also likely to employ withdrawing, flight type behaviours



when faced with rejection. More importantly, one of the major findings of this study was the finding that not *all* rejection situations elicit maladaptive behavioural reactions for high rejection sensitive individuals. Accordingly, it was contended that not all rejection situations are associated with the activation of the rejection sensitivity processing dynamics and the elicitation of maladaptive interpersonal behaviours. Specifically, the results suggested that the source of the rejection, whether a parent, friend or romantic partner, and/or the specific form of the rejection experience, may be crucial factors in determining the enactment of maladaptive behavioural reactions to rejection. Further to demonstrating a lack of cross-situational stability in behavioural reactions for high rejection sensitive individuals, results also demonstrated that people in general exhibit variability in their reactions to rejection.

To gain a more comprehensive understanding of how both people in general and high rejection sensitive individuals in particular react to rejection, study four aimed to replicate and extend the findings of study three. Study four thus focused upon the influence of the rejection source and the form of the rejection experience, aiming to examine whether individuals respond to rejection from different significant others, such as romantic partner, friend, and family member in a consistent or varying manner. As an adjunct to the information obtained regarding behavioural reactions to rejection, study four further aimed to investigate the relationship between rejection sensitivity and conflict resolution styles. The findings replicated those obtained in study three showing that people in general do not exhibit cross-situational stability in their behavioural responses, thus re-emphasising the concept of intra-individual variance in behaviour. Specifically, individuals reacted differently to rejection from different significant others. Therefore the nature of the relationship with the specific significant other may account for the cross-situational variance. That is, different relationships may hold different meanings for the individual, thus when rejection occurs, the kinds of behaviours elicited are likely to be dependent upon the nature of relationship between the individual and the specific source of rejection. A similar interpretation may be made for high

rejection sensitive individuals. The results indicated that rejection sensitivity was associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in maladaptive behaviours following rejection as well as associated with the use of maladaptive conflict resolution styles. However, the results reiterated those of study three by showing that not all rejection situations elicit such maladaptive behaviours. These findings provide additional support for the argument that there is greater specificity in the kinds situations that trigger the activation of the rejection sensitivity processing dynamics and/or are associated with the elicitation of maladaptive behaviours.

Although the findings of study four may suggest that the relationship type (i.e., romantic partner, friend, or family member) and the nature of this relationship appear to account for differential behavioural reactions, in light of the findings of study three, interpretation of these findings may be considered more complex. The specific pattern of findings across studies three and four differed, such that the rejection scenario involving the friend was associated with the most frequent use of adaptive behaviours in study three, and the most frequent use of maladaptive behaviours in study four. Given that one of the key differences between the two studies was the lack of equivalence in the specific form of the rejection presented across the different hypothetical scenarios, it was speculated that there might be an interaction that occurs between the relationship type and the form of rejection. It may be this interaction that produces the variability in behavioural reactions to rejection. Such a proposition finds support from the principles of the cognitive-affective processing system theoretical framework, which fundamentally suggests that different situations are differentially linked to the activation of different cognitive-affective processes. These different cognitive-affective processes are subsequently associated with different behavioural reactions (Mischel, 1973; Mischel & Shoda, 1995). Therefore, it seemed likely that it is not just the nature of the relationship with the source of the rejection that accounts for different behavioural reactions, but also how the form of the rejection is associated with various

cognitive-affective processes. Moreover it is conceivable that it is how these two factors interact with additional factors (such as previous occurrences of rejection, history of relationship transgressions, the gender and age of the source of the rejection, relationship specific implicit and explicit relational rules) that contribute to behavioural variance. The findings of studies three and four highlighted the importance of investigating these alternative factors, in an effort to further account for intra-individual differences in behaviour for people with varying degrees of sensitivity to rejection.

Taken together, the four studies depict the rejection sensitivity dynamic as one, which is highly complex and profoundly influenced by situational features. It is apparent that the dynamic increases an individual's vulnerability to internalising symptoms and is associated with significant interpersonal dysfunction.

### **Theoretical Implications**

There are several implications that may be derived from the current research. Upon integrating the information ascertained from each of the respective studies, it is apparent that high rejection sensitive individuals are particularly vulnerable. It may be contended that there are two important aspects of the rejection sensitivity dynamic: maladaptive interpersonal beliefs and behaviours, as well as a susceptibility toward internalising symptoms and psychological distress. The current research has thus served to reinforce the theoretical and clinical relevance of the rejection sensitivity construct as a function of its association with these two important features.

#### **Interpersonal beliefs and behaviours associated with rejection sensitivity.**

Although there is variability in how the high rejection sensitive individual generally interacts with and relates to those around himself or herself, specific patterns begin to emerge within the context of close relationships. The developing picture of high rejection sensitive individuals is one that emphasises a desire and intense need for intimacy and closeness with others. This notion is specifically highlighted by the association of rejection sensitivity with

attachment anxiety, and the use of compliance conflict resolution strategies. However, as indicated by the current findings, the interpersonal behaviours that high rejection sensitive individuals exhibit, particularly the fight or flight behaviours as well as maladaptive conflict resolution styles, appear incompatible with the attainment and maintenance of close and mutually satisfying relationships. It may be further considered that the highly rejection sensitive individual's inability to achieve these profound desires for interpersonal closeness subsequently accounts for the development of internalising symptoms, such as social anxiety, loneliness, and depression. While largely the notion that high rejection sensitive individuals are intimacy seeking is supported by empirical findings, previous research has also suggested that some rejection sensitive individuals can be characterised as intimacy avoidant, tending to avoid developing and maintaining close relationships (i.e., Brookings et al., 2003). The research conducted by Brookings et al. (2003), appears to directly contradict the findings of the current research. Using Horney's (1937, as cited in Levy et al., 2001) conceptualisation of maladaptive styles of coping, they surmised that high rejection sensitive individuals possess a tendency to *move away* from others, rather than a tendency to *move toward* them. It may be speculated however, that the *moving away*, is actually a reaction to perceived rejection cues, manifest in terms of flight type behaviours, rather than a reflection of intimacy avoidant tendencies or a general reluctance to seek out and develop close relationships. Importantly, this study used sociotropy and autonomy as variables representative of intimacy avoidant or intimacy seeking tendencies. As discussed in the current research, these variables may be conceptualised as representing an individual's general beliefs about and behaviours within the social world, and might not necessarily reflect an individual's beliefs about and behaviours specifically within close interpersonal relationships. The current research suggests that while high rejection sensitive individuals may display withdrawing or avoidance (flight) behaviours in response to experiences of rejection, in light of the association with attachment anxiety and

the compliance conflict resolution style, the findings appear to imply that high rejection sensitive individuals are more intimacy seeking than intimacy avoidant.

The current research also provided evidence to show that high rejection sensitive individuals are prone to displaying flight behaviours (i.e., withdrawal and avoidance) as well as fight behaviours (i.e., aggression and hostility), when they do encounter rejection cues. The implications of these findings include a need to reconsider previous research that suggested that the *if...then* signature of the highly rejection sensitive individual is one that primarily encompasses aggressive/hostile behaviours in response to rejection (Ayduk & Gyruak, 2008). Also brought into question is the restriction of prior research examining behavioural reactions to rejection on aggressive/hostile reactions (i.e., Ayduk et al., 1999; Ayduk et al., 2008; Downey et al., 2000; Downey, Freitas, et al., 1998). The findings of the current research thus emphasise the importance of examining the use of flight reactions as well, and provide support for the few studies that have demonstrated the relevance of these kinds of behaviours for rejection sensitive individuals (Ayduk et al., 2003; London et al., 2007).

#### **Specificity of the rejection sensitivity dynamic.**

Although the current study did not initially set out to investigate the specificity of the *if...then* processes within the rejection sensitivity model, one of the main outcomes and perhaps the most unique and significant contribution of the current research, is the implication that there may be greater complexity in the conceptualisation of situations that trigger the rejection sensitivity dynamic. Previous research has proposed that situations that afford the possibility of rejection from significant others activate the rejection sensitive processing dynamics. This stable network of processes is suggested to reliably link expectations of rejection, perceptions and attributions of rejection, and overreactions to rejection (Ayduk & Gyurak, 2008). The CAPS framework postulates that, while there is intra-individual variability across situations, there is a stable and predictable pattern to this variability

(Mischel & Shoda, 1995). That is, if certain situational features are perceived, then certain patterns of processes and reactions will result. The current research does not refute this notion, however, it does suggest that in the case of rejection sensitivity, there may be a high degree of specificity in the situations that are perceived and encoded as rejection-relevant, and thus trigger the rejection sensitivity dynamic. Therefore, only very specific situations involving particular people, communicating rejection in a particular manner, will predictably result in the elicitation of maladaptive behavioural reactions.

In light of this variance in behavioural reactions exhibited across experiences of rejection with different significant others (demonstrated in studies three and four), it appears that not *all* rejection situations with significant others are perceived as rejection-relevant thus activating the rejection sensitivity dynamic. As an example, the perception of rejection cues from a highly valued source, which comes in the form of overt, explicit rejection, and conveys a message of relationship termination, may often result in the enactment of aggressive reactions. However, perceiving rejection cues from the same person, but without the possibility of relationship termination, may result different kinds of behavioural reactions. Similarly perceiving rejection cues from one friend may not necessarily result in the same kinds of behaviours as perceiving rejection from another friend. As previously outlined, for each individual there are numerous factors that are going to influence or determine which situations are rejection-relevant, and thus which specific situations are going activate the rejection sensitivity dynamic. Therefore, the *if...then* dynamic may be considered stable, to the extent that if a particular situation is encountered, then a reliable set of cognitive-affective and behavioural processes that are specific to each individual, will result. However, there appears there may be a greater degree of specificity in the situations that activate this process than has been suggested in the literature to date. It is not necessarily that high rejection sensitive individuals are reacting to rejection inconsistently across different rejection scenarios, it may be that the situations that they are encountering are not always rejection-

relevant from their personal point of view with their unique history of relationships. Future research is required to identify the situations that are perceived by high rejection sensitive individuals as rejection-relevant.

As an alternative argument, it may be speculated that that many situations do activate the cognitive-affective processes characteristic of the rejection sensitivity dynamic, however, they are not all associated with the elicitation of maladaptive behavioural reactions. In this way, it is not the conceptualisation of the rejection-relevant contexts that requires further investigation, but investigation of the situations that are specifically associated with the enactment of maladaptive interpersonal behaviours. As previously outlined Ayduk and colleagues (2000) showed that effective self-regulatory skills protects against the enactment of aggressive behaviours, interpersonal difficulties, and low self-esteem for high rejection sensitive individuals. Possessing effective self regulatory skills involves the ability to reduce the distress which accompanies anxiety provoking interpersonal situations, through a process of shifting one's attention away from the emotion-arousing stimuli of the interpersonal and intrapersonal environment (Ayduk et al., 2000). Such strategies prevent the automatic deployment of reflexive fight or flight reactions, allowing the individual to respond in a more reflective and thus adaptive manner. The current research may suggest that in some rejection contexts, rejection sensitive individuals are able to employ effective self-regulatory skills, given that not all rejection situations were associated with maladaptive reactions. Importantly however, as rejection sensitivity was associated with a high probability of engaging in maladaptive behaviours following experiences of rejection, it appears that in specific situations, the ability to employ effective self-regulatory skills remains impaired. Irrespective of whether it is that all rejection situations that activate the rejection sensitivity dynamic (but only some that lead to maladaptive behavioural reactions), or whether there is considerable complexity in the situations that constitute rejection-relevant contexts, it is apparent that there is greater specificity in the situations that elicit maladaptive behavioural reactions, than has

been previously theorised.

### **Theoretical conceptualisation of rejection sensitivity.**

An additional theoretical implication of the current research concerns the overall conceptualisation of the rejection sensitivity construct. As initially delineated, there are two main schools of thought with regards to its conceptualisation. The current research has taken the perspective that rejection sensitivity is a situationally activated, cognitive-affective processing dynamic. The alternative conceptualisation views rejection sensitivity as an element of a broader personality trait, such as neuroticism (Boyce & Parker, 1989). Pertinent to this latter conceptualisation is the notion that behaviour is stable across both situations and the lifespan, and thus remains relatively uninfluenced by situational factors (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2007; McCrae & Costa, 1990; Tellegen, 1991). The current research has provided substantial support for the former conceptualisation of rejection sensitivity. Study two demonstrated that no discernable pattern of how rejection sensitive individuals think about and relate to people in general could be identified. Although high rejection sensitive individuals were differentiated from low rejection sensitive individuals on the basis of higher levels of both sociotropy and autonomy, rejection sensitivity was not more closely associated with one particular disposition, thus suggesting that there is no particular way in which high rejection sensitive individuals relate to people in general. Similarly, the results of studies three and four profoundly highlight the relevance of situational factors in determining behavioural outcomes. High rejection sensitive individuals did not exhibit cross-situational stability in their behavioural reactions to rejection from different significant others. Thus, the current research has served to provide further evidence that rejection sensitivity is more accurately conceptualised as a cognitive-affective processing disposition rather than as a facet of a stable personality trait.



## **Practical Implications**

One of the overall aims of the current research was to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the rejection sensitivity dynamic, with the eventual goal of understanding how best to facilitate adaptive interpersonal functioning and promote the successful resolution of the intimacy versus isolation stage of development. Paradoxically, in doing so, the current research has identified that there is greater complexity to the construct than perhaps has previously been thought. It is evident that the lack of clarity surrounding what constitutes a rejection-relevant context or those which elicit maladaptive reactions, makes it very difficult to theorise about appropriate interventions and treatments for highly rejection sensitive individuals. As each individual possesses a unique social learning history, and unique expectancies and beliefs, affective reactions, goals and values, and competencies and self-regulatory plans, presumably the situations that elicit the rejection sensitivity dynamic and/or result in maladaptive behaviours are likely to be specific to each individual. At this stage, it is clear that further investigation is required to adequately understand when and how the rejection sensitivity dynamic is activated and which situations are associated with the enactment of maladaptive behaviours. Furthermore, given the many factors that are likely to determine which situations are rejection-relevant and/or lead to maladaptive behaviours for each individual, the generalisability of interventions is similarly questionable.

In the absence of acquiring a greater understanding of the rejection sensitivity dynamic, it may be proposed that the only generic interventions that may be beneficial are ones which focus upon the facilitation of adaptive interpersonal functioning. On the basis of the findings of the four preceding studies, there are seemingly several key areas that would require attention. By identifying and addressing patterns of relating with close others, styles of coping with rejection and interpersonal conflict, the quality and general level of an individual's interpersonal relationships can be assessed and improved thereby simultaneously reducing an individual's vulnerability to internalising symptoms. As it has been hypothesised

that the internalising symptoms associated with the rejection sensitivity dynamic, in particular loneliness and social anxiety, may be a function of an individual's difficulties developing and maintaining interpersonal relationships, improving interpersonal functioning may be considered the focal point for reducing vulnerability.

Previous research has found that the therapeutic relationship, otherwise known as the therapeutic alliance, is an integral component of treatment and one important context for developing more adaptive interpersonal behaviours (Horvath & Symonds, 1991). As discussed by Rogers (2007), a therapeutic relationship that is characterised by the necessary features of unconditional positive regard, empathy, and genuineness through the therapeutic alliance, is by itself, sufficient to elicit change. The therapeutic relationship has been shown to be a crucial and necessary factor, particularly in the treatment of complex trauma and early childhood experiences of rejection, abuse, and maltreatment (i.e., Briere, 1992, 1996). On the basis that high rejection sensitive individuals have become sensitised to the possibility of rejection as a result of a history of rejecting experiences (Downey & Feldman, 1996), the therapeutic relationship may be considered a context that can provide a secure base from which high rejection sensitive individuals may explore his or her internal and interpersonal environment (Briere, 2002). The stability, safety, and predictability of the therapeutic relationship can assist in altering rejection expectations and anxieties, and provide individuals with an opportunity to experience a non-rejecting relationship. Moreover, the therapeutic relationship may provide the individual with an accepting and supportive environment in which to challenge and change the processes that may be maintaining the rejection sensitivity dynamic and leading to maladaptive interpersonal and intrapersonal outcomes. Using a treatment intervention such as cognitive re-structuring within this context may similarly be useful for high rejection sensitive individuals. In particular, the identification and alteration of dysfunctional beliefs surrounding the availability of significant others may be pivotal to increasing a sense of social connectedness. Modifying and challenging existing cognitions

with regards to hypervigilance for threatening environmental cues, readiness to perceive rejection, and attributions of hurtful intent in the behaviour of others, may also be a key component in enabling adaptive interpersonal functioning. Given the possible specificity of rejection-relevant contexts, an additional goal of therapy would be to identify the specific situations that elicit the enactment of the rejection sensitivity dynamic and result in the enactment of maladaptive behaviours. Upon the identification of the situations that are most salient to the individual, treatment may then attempt to address the cognitive, affective, and behavioural components of the rejection sensitivity dynamic.

Relationship maintenance strategies, such as effective conflict resolution and communication skills, would be a critical component of improving interpersonal skills and an individual's capacity to develop and maintain close interpersonal relationships. In addition, given the empirical findings regarding the value of improving self-regulatory skills for high rejection sensitive individuals (i.e., Ayduk et al., 2002; Ayduk et al., 2000), this may similarly be an important focus of treatment. In general, however, the findings of the current research highlight the necessity to better understand the rejection sensitivity dynamic, before more specific treatment interventions can be conceptualised and implemented. Once a more comprehensive picture of the rejection sensitivity dynamic is acquired, the most direct and effective way to treat it and reduce an individual's vulnerability toward internalising symptoms and maladaptive interpersonal functioning will better understood.

### **Limitations and Implications for Future Research**

There are several limitations of the current research, which necessitate comment and discussion. These limitations will be divided according to methodological and theoretical factors. Avenues for future research based upon these limitations will also be addressed.

#### **Methodological limitations.**

One limitation concerns the use of a cross-sectional research design for the four studies that comprise the current research. As identified in study one, the use of cross-

sectional designs precludes directional conclusions being drawn regarding the association between the variables. In order to test and assess the predictive qualities of any variable, longitudinal designs are required. Specifically it is apparent that to provide a sufficient understanding of the causal links between the variables of interest within the current research, longitudinal data spanning several developmental periods would be required. For example, determining whether rejection sensitivity predicts the onset of internalising symptoms, would first require assessment during childhood in order to get a baseline, and then at several points during adolescence, when the desire for mutually satisfying interpersonal relationships starts to become particularly salient. Subsequent assessments would be required during early to mid adulthood where the effects of compromised interpersonal functioning become increasingly apparent. This may similarly be the case when examining attachment styles. As adult attachment styles have been conceptualised as an extension of the patterns of attachment formed during infancy and childhood (Bowlby, 1979; Bowlby, 1988; Hazan & Shaver, 1987), longitudinal data would assist in determining both the nature of the rejection sensitive individual's early interactions with their caregiver, and also how these interactions translate into patterns of interpersonal beliefs and behaviours in adulthood. Conducting this kind of research is beyond the scope of the current thesis. However, establishing causal, as opposed to simply correlational, links between these variables by employing longitudinal designs is an important avenue for future research. It is not only relevant for the conceptualisation of the rejection sensitivity dynamic but also for the prevention and treatment of maladaptive outcomes. Although there are inherent limitations associated with the use of cross-sectional designs, it must be emphasised that this methodology has been consistently utilised within both the rejection sensitivity and general rejection literature, and still serves to provide valuable information (i.e., Downey et al., 2000; Feldman & Downey, 1994; Tragesser, Lippman, Trull, & Barrett, 2008).

A related limitation of the current study is its reliance on the use of self-report measures. Self-report measures intrinsically predispose data to shared method variance. However, as indicated by satisfactory multi-collinearity statistics and a lack of excessively high correlations between the variables across all four studies, it may be suggested that measures are not assessing overlapping constructs. One additional problem associated with the use of self-reports is the possible confounding influence of impression management, and the potential to inaccurately represent or predict one's most likely response. By accounting for socially desirable responding in study four, this limitation may have been partly addressed. However the concerns associated with the accuracy of predicting responses are not entirely addressed through control of social desirability. Concurrently obtaining observational data within the context of an experimental design can in the future be used to bolster support for the findings acquired through the use of self-reports. Such designs may be particularly beneficial with regards to the exploration of behavioural reactions to rejection. Moreover, future research may be able to provide the capacity for comparison between self reported or imagined responses with actual and observable responses.

Another limitation concerns the reliability and validity of using hypothetical scenarios to assess predicted behavioural reactions to rejection. As the research required participants to indicate how they would *most likely* react to the imagined scenario, there is the potential for a discrepancy to exist between what individuals may imagine they are likely to do and how they actually respond in real life contexts. On the other hand, retrospective studies that inquire about behaviors that occurred following an actual event are equally fraught with response biases and inaccuracies due to one's selective memories. As previously indicated, the particular area of research has commonly used scenario methodology to gain an insight into the nature of behavioural reactions to rejection (i.e., Ayduk & Downey, 1999, as cited in Downey et al., 2000; Doge, 1980; Besser & Priel, 2009). Moreover, as indicated by Blackhart et al. (2009), the practice of using hypothetical or imagined rejection scenarios has

become increasingly common in recent years and has been found to yield strong effects.

However, the use of real rejection situations across scenarios with different significant others may provide a more accurate depiction of the nature of a rejection sensitive individual's reactions to rejection. Furthermore, it would likely provide additional insights into the situational features that function to elicit maladaptive reactions.

A limitation, which also requires comment, is the use of the median split procedure to determine high and low rejection sensitivity. This methodology can be viewed as problematic. Considerable research has highlighted the disadvantages of employing this procedure (e.g., Babyak, 2004; Irwin & McClelland, 2003; MacCallum, Zhang, Preacher, & Rucker, 2002). Loss of information, and loss of power and effect size are the predominant causes for concern (MacCallum et al., 2002). However, notwithstanding these limitations, this methodology was chosen to provide appropriate comparison with the large body of previous research upon which the current research was based. As indicated by Levy et al. (2001), the majority of empirical studies assessing rejection sensitivity have employed this procedure to identify high and low rejection sensitive individuals. Moreover, the use of non-dichotomised variables in the regression analyses provides support for the strength of the findings demonstrated in the MANOVA, given that similar results were obtained.

A final methodological limitation concerns the sampling procedures and sample demographics. First, given that the majority of research participants were recruited via online advertisements, it may be speculated that there was some self-selection bias. One could speculate that there may be certain characteristics of an individual that make he or she more inclined to participate in research that is investigating interpersonal rejection and interpersonal behaviours. These individuals may be persons who are more motivated to invest in and focus upon interpersonal relationships. It is possible that such a research topic would be particularly salient for these individuals. Moreover, the advertisements were placed on social networking sites, inherently suggesting that the respondents have, at least on some level, an interest in

social connectedness and desire for social interaction. This potential selection bias may account for the demonstrated tendency for the more rejection sensitive individuals in these samples to be more intimacy seeking than intimacy avoidant. However, all the scales used in the current study were shown to be normally distributed, including the measures of autonomy and sociotropy which are representative of the tendency to invest in and focus upon either oneself or one's interpersonal relationships respectively. This suggests that the samples used in the current research may be considered relatively representative of the normal population and not biased in the direction of holding a greater interest in topics concerning interpersonal functioning.

With reference to the sample demographics, it is evident that there are various participant characteristics which were not taken into account that may have unduly influenced the current findings. For example, as a function of online advertising and data collection, the samples were recruited internationally. Although the sample was mostly derived from Western countries, it is possible that differences in cultural norms even within this category, may produce variations in the kinds of interpersonal beliefs and behaviours typically exhibited. As indicated by Kirmayer (2001), the compositions of the family, maternal-infant interaction, and child rearing practices vary as a function of culture. Future research may indeed focus upon exploring differences in how sensitivity to rejection from others manifests across cultures. In addition to the cultural composition of the sample, socio-economic status is also a factor that requires consideration. Given that a computer and access to the Internet was necessary for participation, it is evident that various portions of the population would have been excluded from investigation. It may be thus assumed that the current sample is not generalisable to individuals of all socio-economic statuses. Similarly, the current research can only be considered representative of student populations and not generalisable to the greater population. The current research specifically sought respondents who identified themselves as students, to ensure that the items in the RSQ were applicable and relevant to the respondents.

However, in doing so, a large proportion of the population was excluded from participation. In general, as a result of these sampling procedures, the generalisability of the current research is limited. Future research is required to address these concerns.

### **Theoretical limitations.**

A limitation relating to the underlying theoretical nature of the current research surrounds the conceptualisation of intimacy seeking and intimacy avoidant ways of relating. The two maladaptive approaches to interpersonal relationships were captured by the two dimensions of adult attachment, attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance, respectively. One of the problems associated with making conclusions regarding the tendency toward either intimacy seeking or intimacy avoidance is that it was inferred from the measure of attachment. Whilst previous research has made parallels between attachment styles and intimacy seeking and intimacy avoidance (i.e., Downey et al., 2000; Feldman & Downey, 1994), it may be argued that to make definitive statements regarding the interpersonal tendencies of the rejection sensitive individual, a specific measure of intimacy seeking and intimacy avoidance is required. Examining the conceptual and empirical association between the respective constructs styles may be a critical for understanding how high rejection sensitive individuals think about, approach, and cope with interpersonal relationships.

Although one of the major findings of the current research was its support for the conceptualisation of rejection sensitivity as a situationally activated, cognitive-affective processing disposition, a limitation to that contention is the omission of a scale to assess and control for the personality trait neuroticism. The rationale for not including a measure of neuroticism was based upon the evidence from previous research that demonstrated that rejection sensitivity has unique predictive ability and is thus distinct from neuroticism (Ayduk et al., 2008; Downey & Feldman, 1996). Whilst the current research did not assess neuroticism nor attempt to control for its effects, a focus for future research may be to



integrate the two theoretical approaches to in order to understand more comprehensively their both association and their distinctions.

## **Conclusions**

The current research aimed to explore the maladaptive nature of the rejection sensitivity dynamic. The research has found support for the literature by demonstrating that rejection sensitivity is associated with maladaptive intrapersonal and interpersonal outcomes. Furthermore it has reinforced the relevance of the conceptualisation of the construct as a cognitive-affective processing disposition. The findings show that high rejection sensitive individuals are susceptible to experiencing internalising symptoms, are likely to think about and relate to significant others in a manner which is consistent with an anxious attachment style, are at an increased risk of employing maladaptive conflict resolution strategies and reacting to experiences of rejection in a maladaptive manner. The findings further highlight that given certain circumstances, people in general are likely to react to experiences of rejection maladaptively.

The current research provides a unique contribution to the literature by highlighting the complexity of the rejection sensitivity dynamic. Fundamentally the findings suggest that there may be a considerable degree of specificity in the situations that are perceived and encoded as rejection-relevant, that activate the rejection sensitivity dynamic, and/or those that elicit maladaptive behavioural outcomes. That is, although some individuals are highly sensitive to rejection, it appears that they are not highly sensitive, or at least do not *behave* highly sensitively, in all situations. The current research thus suggests that the conceptualisation of rejection sensitivity may be considered more complex than has been previously theorised. It is a disposition that appears greatly influenced by individual differences and key situational features. Future research that focuses upon the delineation of the situational features that elicit the rejection sensitivity dynamic and lead to maladaptive reactions is of considerable conceptual and practical interest. In conclusion, the current

research emphasises that rejection sensitivity is a construct that is important and worthy of continued attention and investigation.

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## Appendix A

### Information Letter to Participants

TITLE OF PROJECT: Social anxiety, depression and relating to others

RESEARCHER: Dr Terry Bowles

STUDENT RESEARCHERS: Ms Emily Musgrove, Ms Kimberly O'Keefe.

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in research on social anxiety. The research will be conducted by PhD student Emily Musgrove, and Honours student Kimberly O'Keefe, supervised by Dr Terry Bowles from the School of Psychology at the Australian Catholic University. The purpose of this study is to investigate factors, which contribute and are involved in the experience of social phobia. You are asked to complete a survey, which will provide information on anxiety, depression and how you relate to others. This will take approximately 30 minutes.

By volunteering to complete the provided survey your consent to participate will be inferred. As no identifiable information is required you will remain anonymous to researchers. As such, please do not disclose any identifiable information such as your name on the survey. The results of this research will be kept confidential and will form part of the PhD/Hons theses of the student investigators and ongoing research. The results from the study may also be presented at conferences and be published. All reports will be about average (group) findings and no individuals will be identifiable. Public record standards require that we store data for at least 5 years following completion of the project. All information obtained from you will be securely stored in the store room of the School of Psychology located on the university campus.

You are free to withdraw from the study at any stage prior to submission of the survey without supplying a reason. Questions regarding this project should be directed to **Dr Terry Bowles, on (03) 9953 3117 in the School of Psychology, St. Patrick's Campus, Locked Bag 4115, Fitzroy VIC 3065, t.bowles@patrick.acu.edu.au.**

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the Australian Catholic University. We anticipate that the majority of respondents will be reassured by reflecting upon their feelings and how they relate to others through completing the survey. However, if you feel distressed as a result of this reflection, please contact Dr Lisa Eisen on 9953 3119 for independent advice about how you can seek counselling regarding improving your situation. Additionally, in the event that you have any complaint or concern about the way you have been treated during the study, or if you have any query that the researcher and student researchers have not been able to satisfy, you may write to **The Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee, c/o Research Services, Australian Catholic University, Melbourne Campus, Locked Bag 4115, Fitzroy VIC 3065 (telephone 043 9953 3157, fax 03 9953 3305). Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. The participant will be informed of the outcome.**

Should you choose to participate in the project your support will be most appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Terry Bowles

Emily Musgrove

Kimberly O'Keefe

## Appendix B

### Questionnaire Package

Please complete the following information and questionnaires carefully. Participation is voluntary and inferred by your completion of the below questionnaires. As this study is anonymous, please do not include any identifying information such as your name. There are no right or wrong answers, don't consider your response too long. Your first response is often the best. Thank you.

Gender: Male / Female  
 Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Birth Order Position: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Siblings (number): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Country of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Marital Status: Single / Married / Defacto / Divorced / Widowed / Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Length of Relationship (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Dependents: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Current Living Arrangements: On Own / Sharing / With Parents / Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Have you ever received counselling for any of the following: public speaking, speech therapy, shyness, social anxiety, depression? YES/NO  
 If yes please indicate for what \_\_\_\_\_

Please read each sentence carefully. For each statement, check the column that best corresponds to how often you have felt that way during the past two weeks.

Statement	A little of the time	Some of the time	Good part of the time	Most of the time
1. I feel down-hearted and blue	1	2	3	4
2. Morning is when I feel the best	1	2	3	4
3. I have crying spells or feel like it	1	2	3	4
4. I have trouble sleeping at night	1	2	3	4
5. I eat as much as I used to	1	2	3	4
6. I still enjoy sex	1	2	3	4
7. I notice that I am losing weight	1	2	3	4
8. I have trouble with constipation	1	2	3	4
9. My heart beats faster than usual	1	2	3	4
10. I get tired for no reason	1	2	3	4
11. My mind is as clear as it used to be	1	2	3	4
12. I find it easy to do the things I used to	1	2	3	4
13. I am restless and can't keep still	1	2	3	4
14. I feel hopeful about the future	1	2	3	4
15. I am more irritable than usual	1	2	3	4
16. I find it easy to make decisions	1	2	3	4
17. I feel that I am useful and needed	1	2	3	4
18. My life is pretty full	1	2	3	4
19. I feel that others would be better off if I were dead	1	2	3	4

20. I still enjoy the things I used to do 1 2 3 4

---

The following statements describe how people sometimes feel. For each statement, please indicate how often you feel the way described by writing a number in the space provided. Here is an example:

How often do you feel happy?

If you never felt happy, you would respond “never”; if you always feel happy, you would respond “always”.

**NEVER**                      **RARELY**                      **SOMETIMES**                      **ALWAYS**  
**1**                                      **2**                                      **3**                                      **4**

1.	How often do you feel that you are “in tune” with the people around you?	_____
2.	How often do you feel you lack companionship?	_____
3.	How often do you feel that there is no one you can turn to?	_____
4.	How often do you feel do you feel alone?	_____
5.	How often do you feel part of a group of friends?	_____
6.	How often do you feel that you have a lot in common with the people around you?	_____
7.	How often do you feel that you are no longer close to anyone?	_____
8.	How often do you feel that your interests and ideas are not shared by those around you?	_____
9.	How often do you feel outgoing and friendly?	_____
10.	How often do you feel close to people?	_____
11.	How often do you feel left out?	_____
12.	How often do you feel that your relationships with others are not meaningful?	_____
13.	How often do you feel that no one really knows you well?	_____
14.	How often do you feel isolated from others?	_____
15.	How often do you feel you can find companionship when you want it?	_____
16.	How often do you feel that there are people who really understand you?	_____
17.	How often do you feel shy?	_____
18.	How often do you feel that people are around you but not with you?	_____
19.	How often do you feel that there are people you can talk to?	_____
20.	How often do you feel that there are people you can turn to?	_____

1. In social situations where it is possible that you will be noticed or evaluated by other people, do you feel excessively nervous, fearful or uncomfortable?                      Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

2. Do you tend to be *overly* worried that you may act in a way that might embarrass or humiliate yourself in front of other people, or that others may not think well of you? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

3. Do you try to avoid social situations? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

Below is a list of some situations that are fear provoking for some people. Rate the severity of your anxiety and avoidance on the following scales:

	Fear Rating					Avoidance Rating				
	0 = No fear 1 = Mild fear 2 = Moderate fear 3 = Severe fear 4 = Very Severe fear					0 = No avoid 1 = Rarely avoid 2 = Sometimes avoid 3 = Often avoid 4 = Always avoid				
	(a) Fear					(b) Avoidance				
4. Parties	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
5. Meetings	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
6. Becoming the focus of attention	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
7. Dating circumstances	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
8. Meeting people in authority	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
9. Speaking with people in authority	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
10. Saying 'no' to unreasonable requests	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
11. A first date	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
12. Asking others to do something differently	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
13. Being introduced	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
14. Initiating a conversation	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
15. Keeping a conversation going	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
16. Giving a speech	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
17. Others judging you	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
18. Being under observation by others	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
19. Being teased	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4

20. Do you tend to experience fear each time you are in feared social situations? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

21. Does the fear come on as soon as you encounter feared social situations? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

22. Would you say that your social fear is excessive or unreasonable? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

23. Circle the degree to which your social fear interferes with your life, work, social activities, family, etc ?

0	1	2	3	4
No interference	Mild	Moderate	Severe	Very severe/Disabling

24. How distressing do you find your social fear? (Circle one)

0	1	2	3	4
Not Distressing	Mildly	Moderately	Severely	Very severely

25. Has what you have been able to achieve in your job or in school been negatively effected by your social fear? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Each of the items below describes things university students sometimes ask of other people. Please **imagine** that you are in each situation. You will be asked to answer the following questions:

1) How **concerned or anxious** would you be about how the other person would respond?

2) How do you think the **other person** would be **likely to respond**?

**1. You ask someone in class if you can borrow his/her notes.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not the person would want to lend you his/her notes?

Very Unconcerned						Very Concerned
1	2	3	4	5	6	

I would expect that the person would willingly give me his/her notes.

Very Unlikely						Very Likely
1	2	3	4	5	6	

**2. You ask your boyfriend/girlfriend to move in with you.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not the person would want to move in with you?

Very Unconcerned						Very Concerned
1	2	3	4	5	6	

I would expect that he/she would want to move in with me.

Very Unlikely						Very Likely
1	2	3	4	5	6	

**3. You ask your parents for help in deciding what programs/courses to apply to.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your parents would want to help you?

Very Unconcerned						Very Concerned
1	2	3	4	5	6	

I would expect that they would want to help me.

Very Unlikely						Very Likely
1	2	3	4	5	6	

**4. You ask someone you don't know well out on a date.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not the person would want to go out with you?

Very Unconcerned						Very Concerned
1	2	3	4	5	6	

I would expect that the person would want to go out with me.

Very Unlikely						Very Likely
1	2	3	4	5	6	

**5. Your boyfriend/girlfriend has plans to go out with friends tonight, but you really want to spend the evening with him/her, and you tell him/her so.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your boyfriend/girlfriend would decide to stay in?

Very Unconcerned						Very Concerned
1	2	3	4	5	6	

I would expect that the person would willingly choose to stay in.

Very Unlikely						Very Likely
1	2	3	4	5	6	

**6. You ask your parents for extra money to cover living expenses.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your parents would help you out?

Very Unconcerned						Very Concerned
1	2	3	4	5	6	

I would expect that my parents would not mind helping me out.

Very Unlikely						Very Likely
1	2	3	4	5	6	

**7. After class, you tell your lecturer/tutor that you have been having some trouble with a section of the course and ask if he/she can give you some extra help.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your lecturer/tutor would want to help you out?

Very Unconcerned						Very Concerned
1	2	3	4	5	6	

I would expect that my lecturer/tutor would want to help me out.

Very Unlikely						Very Likely
1	2	3	4	5	6	

**8. You approach a close friend to talk after doing or saying something that seriously upset him/her.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your friend would want to talk with you?

Very Unconcerned						Very Concerned
1	2	3	4	5	6	

I would expect that he/she would want to talk with me to try to work things out.

Very Unlikely						Very Likely
1	2	3	4	5	6	

**9. You ask someone in one of your classes to coffee.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not the person would want to go?

Very Unconcerned						Very Concerned
1	2	3	4	5	6	

I would expect that the person would want to go with me.

Very Unlikely						Very Likely
1	2	3	4	5	6	

**10. After graduation, you can't find a job and ask your parents if you can live at home for a while.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your parents would want you to come home?

Very Unconcerned						Very Concerned
1	2	3	4	5	6	

I would expect I would be welcome at home.

Very Unlikely						Very Likely
1	2	3	4	5	6	



**11. You ask your friend to go on a vacation with you over semester break.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your friend would want to go with you?

Very Unconcerned	Very Concerned
1    2    3    4    5    6	

I would expect that he/she would want to go with me.

Very Unlikely	Very Likely
1    2    3    4    5    6	

**12. You call your boyfriend/girlfriend after a bitter argument and tell him/her you want to see him/her.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your boyfriend/girlfriend would want to see you?

Very Unconcerned	Very Concerned
1    2    3    4    5    6	

I would expect that he/she would want to see me.

Very Unlikely	Very Likely
1    2    3    4    5    6	

**13. You ask a friend if you can borrow something of his/hers.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your friend would want to loan it to you?

Very Unconcerned	Very Concerned
1    2    3    4    5    6	

I would expect that he/she would willingly loan me it.

Very Unlikely	Very Likely
1    2    3    4    5    6	

**14. You ask your parents to come to an occasion important to you.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your parents would want to come?

Very Unconcerned	Very Concerned
1    2    3    4    5    6	

I would expect that my parents would want to come.

Very Unlikely	Very Likely
1    2    3    4    5    6	

**15. You ask a friend to do you a big favour.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your friend would do this favour?

Very Unconcerned	Very Concerned
1    2    3    4    5    6	

I would expect that he/she would willingly do this favour for me.

Very Unlikely	Very Likely
1    2    3    4    5    6	

**16. You ask your boyfriend/girlfriend if he/she really loves you.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your boyfriend/girlfriend would say yes?

Very Unconcerned	Very Concerned
1    2    3    4    5    6	

I would expect that he/she would answer yes sincerely.

Very Unlikely	Very Likely
1    2    3    4    5    6	

**17. You go to a party and notice someone on the other side of the room and then you ask them to dance.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not the person would want to dance with you?

Very Unconcerned	Very Concerned
1    2    3    4    5    6	

I would expect that he/she would want to dance with me.

Very Unlikely	Very Likely
1    2    3    4    5    6	

**18. You ask your boyfriend/girlfriend to come home to meet your parents.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your boyfriend/girlfriend would want to meet your parents?

Very Unconcerned

Very Concerned

1      2      3      4      5      6

I would expect that he/she would want to meet my parents.

Very Unlikely

Very Likely

1      2      3      4      5      6

Thank you for your participation it is greatly appreciated.

## Appendix C

### Australian Catholic University Human Research Ethics Committee Approval

Australian Catholic University  
Brisbane Sydney Canberra Ballarat Melbourne



Human Research Ethics Committee

Committee Approval Form

**Principal Investigator/Supervisor:** Dr Terry Bowles **Melbourne Campus**

**Co-Investigators:**

**Student Researcher:** Emily Musgrove, Kimberly O'Keefe **Melbourne Campus**

**Ethics approval has been granted for the following project:**

Social phobia, depression, and relating to others

**for the period:** 08.02.2008 to 15.01.2009

**Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) Register Number:** V200708 33

**The following standard conditions as stipulated in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans (2007)* apply:**

- (i) that Principal Investigators / Supervisors provide, on the form supplied by the Human Research Ethics Committee, annual reports on matters such as:
  - security of records
  - compliance with approved consent procedures and documentation
  - compliance with special conditions, and
- (ii) that researchers report to the HREC immediately any matter that might affect the ethical acceptability of the protocol, such as:
  - proposed changes to the protocol
  - unforeseen circumstances or events
  - adverse effects on participants

The HREC will conduct an audit each year of all projects deemed to be of more than low risk. There will also be random audits of a sample of projects considered to be of negligible risk and low risk on all campuses each year.

Within one month of the conclusion of the project, researchers are required to complete a *Final Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer.

If the project continues for more than one year, researchers are required to complete an *Annual Progress Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer within one month of the anniversary date of the ethics approval.

Signed: .....

(Research Services Officer, Melbourne Campus)

Date: .....

## Appendix D

### Preacher and Hayes (2008) SPSS Macro for Bootstrapping

```

/* This macro estimates total indirect and specific indirect effects, */.
/* and bootstrap confidence intervals in single-step mediator models. The syntax is */.
/* */.
/* INDIRECT y = dv/x = iv/m = mlist covlist/c = cov/boot = z/conf = ci/normal =
n/contrast = t/percent = p/bc = b/bca = d */.
/* */.
/* where dv is the dependent variable, iv is the independent variable, and mlist is a */.
/* list of one or more mediator variables through which the IV's effect is presumably
transmitted to the */.
/* dv, covlist is a list of covariates, cov is the number of covariates in covlist, z is the
number of bootstrap */.
/* resamples desired in increments of 1000, ci is the desired confidence for confidence
intervals (1 to 99), */.
/* n is set to 1 to print normal theory standard errors for indirect effects, */.
/* t is set to 1 to do all possible pairwise contrasts between indirect effects, */.
/* p is set to 1 to print percentile confidence intervals, b is set to 1 for bias-corrected
confidence */.
/* intervals, and d is set to 0 to disable printing of bias-corrected and adjusted confidence
intervals */.
/* cov defaults to 0 (meaning covlist is a null string), t defaults to 0, z defaults to 1000, ci
default to 95, n defaults to 0 */.
/* Bias-corrected and accelerated confidence intervals are printed by default. bc and bca
confidence intervals */.
/* are not printed by default. Anything after mlist in the syntax is optional */.
/* The macro assumes missing values are represented in the data with a period or are
defined by the user */.
/* Missing data will be deleted listwise prior to analysis */.
/* If dv is dichotomous then c, c', and the paths from mediators to the outcome are
estimated with */.
/* logistic regression. Otherwise, OLS is used. The macro assumes the mediators are all
quantitative, */.
/* and all paths from the iv to the mediators are estimated using OLS. Do not use this
macro with categorical mediators */.
/* Normal theory tests are not available for models with covariates or models with a
dichotomous dv */.
/* */.
/* Macro written by Andrew F. Hayes, School of Communication, The Ohio State
University, hayes.338@osu.edu */.
/* version 4, March 27, 2009 */.

```

```

DEFINE INDIRECT (y = !charend(')/x = !charend(')/m = !charend(')/c=!charend(')
!default(0)/
boot = !charend(') !default(1000)/conf = !charend(') !default(95)/percent = !charend(')
!default(0)/bc = !charend(')
!default(0)/bca = !charend(') !default(1)/normal = !charend(') !default(0)/contrast =
!charend(') !default(0)/iterate = !charend(') !default(10000)/converge =

```

```

!charend("/") !default(.0000001)).
PRESERVE.
SET LENGTH = NONE.
SET MXLOOPS = 10000001.
SET SEED = RANDOM.
MATRIX.
get dd/variables = !y !x !m/names = nm/MISSING = OMIT.
compute ovals = ncol(design(dd(:,1))).
do if (ovals = 2).
  compute omx = cmax(dd(:,1)).
  compute omn = cmin(dd(:,1)).
  compute dd(:,1) = (dd(:,1) = omx).
  compute rcd = {omn, 0; omx, 1}.
end if.
compute nm = t(nm).
compute outv = t(nm(1,1)).
compute n = nrow(dd).
compute nv = ncol(dd).
compute nc = !c.
compute con = make(n,1,1).
compute dat2 = dd.
compute dat = dd.
compute bzx = make(nv-2-nc,1,0).
compute bzxse = make(nv-2-nc,1,0).
compute b=make((nv-1-nc),(nv-1-nc),0).
compute resid = make(n,(nv-nc),0).
compute info = make((2*(nv-nc-2)+1),(2*(nv-nc-2)+1),0).
compute imat = make(ncol(info),4,1).
compute imat(1:(nv-nc-2),1)=t({2:(nv-nc-1):1}).
compute imat(1:(nv-nc-2),3)=t({2:(nv-nc-1):1}).
compute imat((nv-nc-1):(ncol(info)-1),2)=t({2:(nv-nc-1):1}).
compute imat((nv-nc-1):(ncol(info)-1),4)=t({2:(nv-nc-1):1}).
compute imat((nv-nc-1):(ncol(info)-1),1)=make((nv-nc-2),1,(nv-nc)).
compute imat((nv-nc-1):(ncol(info)-1),3)=make((nv-nc-2),1,(nv-nc)).
compute imat(ncol(info),:)= {(nv-nc),1,(nv-nc),1}.
compute
cname={"C1";"C2";"C3";"C4";"C5";"C6";"C7";"C8";"C9";"C10";"C11";"C12";"C13";"C14"
;"C15";"C16";"C17"}.
compute
cname={cname;"C18";"C19";"C20";"C21";"C22";"C23";"C24";"C25";"C26";"C27";"C28";"
C29";"C30";"C31"}.
compute
cname={cname;"C32";"C33";"C34";"C35";"C36";"C37";"C38";"C39";"C40";"C41";"C42";"
C43";"C44";"C45"}.
compute p0=-.322232431088.
compute p1 = -1.
compute p2 = -.342242088547.
compute p3 = -.0204231210245.
compute p4 = -.0000453642210148.
compute q0 = .0993484626060.
compute q1 = .588581570495.
compute q2 = .531103462366.

```

```

compute q3 = .103537752850.
compute q4 = .0038560700634.
compute conf = rnd(!conf).
compute lowalp = 0.5*(1-(conf/100)).
compute upalp = 0.5*(1+(conf/100)).
compute zbca = {lowalp; upalp}.
do if (!boot > 999).
  compute btn = trunc(!boot/1000)*1000.
  compute lpmax = n+1+btn.
  else.
  compute btn = 1.
  compute lpmax = 1.
end if.
compute blowp = trunc(lowalp*btn).
do if (blowp < 1).
  compute blowp = 1.
end if.
compute bhighp = trunc((upalp*btn)+1).
do if (bhighp > btn).
  compute bhighp = btn.
end if.
compute indeff = make(n+1+btn,nv-1-nc,-9999).
compute bdbp = 0.

loop #d = 1 to lpmax.
  do if (#d = (n+2)).
    compute dat = dat2.
    compute con = make(n,1,1).
  end if.
  do if (#d > 1 and #d < (n+2)).
    do if (#d = 2).
      compute con = make((n-1),1,1).
      compute dat = dat2(2:n,:).
    else if (#d = (n+1)).
      compute dat = dat2(1:(n-1),:).
    else.
      compute dat = {dat2(1:(#d-2),:);dat2((#d:n),:)}.
    end if.
  end if.
  do if (#d > (n+1)).
    loop.
      compute v=trunc(uniform(n,1)*n)+1.
      compute dat(:,1:nv) = dat2(v,1:nv).
      compute dat3 = {con,dat(:,2:ncol(dat))}.
      compute rk = (rank(dat3)=ncol(dat3)).
      compute bdbp = bdbp+(1-rk).
    end loop if (rk = 1).
  end if.
  compute x = dat(:,2).
  compute m = dat(:,3:(nv-nc)).
  compute y = dat(:,1).
  compute xz = dat(:,2:nv).

```

```

compute xo = {con,x}.
do if (nc > 0).
  compute c = dat(:,(nv-nc+1):nv).
  compute xo = {xo, c}.
end if.
loop #k = 3 to (nv-nc).
  compute ytmp = dat(:,#k).
  compute bzxt = inv(t(xo)*xo)*t(xo)*ytmp.
  compute bzx((#k-2),1)=bzxt(2,1).
  do if (#d = 1).
    compute resid(:,#k-1) = ytmp-(xo*bzxt).
    compute mse=csum((ytmp-(xo*bzxt))&**2)/(n-2-nc).
    compute olscm=(mse*inv((t(xo)*xo))).
    compute bzxse((#k-2),1)=sqrt(olscm(2,2)).
  end if.
end loop.
do if (#d = 1).
  do if (nc > 0).
    compute cnt = dd(:,(nv-(nc-1)):nv).
    compute xo = {con,x,cnt}.
  else.
    compute xo = {con,x}.
  end if.
do if (ovals = 2).
compute pt2 = make(nrow(y),1,(csum(y)/nrow(y))).
compute pt1 = make(nrow(y),1,0.5).
compute bt1 = make(ncol(xo),1,0).
compute LL1 = 0.
loop jjj = 1 to !iterate.
  compute vt1 = mdiag(pt1&*(1-pt1)).
  compute byx = bt1+inv(t(xo)*vt1*xo)*t(xo)*(y-pt1).
  compute pt1 = 1/(1+exp(-(xo*byx))).
  compute itprob = csum((pt1 < .000000000000001) or (pt1 > .999999999999999)).
  do if (itprob = 0).
    compute LL = y&*ln(pt1)+(1-y)&*ln(1-pt1).
    compute LL2 = -2*csum(ll).
  end if.
  do if (abs(LL1-LL2) < !converge).
    compute vt1 = mdiag(pt1&*(1-pt1)).
    compute varb = inv(t(xo)*vt1*xo).
    compute olscm = diag(varb).
    break.
  end if.
  compute bt1 = byx.
  compute LL1 = LL2.
end loop.
compute byx = byx(2,1).
compute byxse = sqrt(olscm(2,1)).
do if (jjj > !iterate).
  compute itprob = 2.
end if.
end if.

```

```

do if (ovals <> 2).
  compute byx = inv(t(xo)*xo)*t(xo)*y.
  compute mse=csum((y-(xo*byx))&**2)/(n-2-nc).
  compute olscm=(mse*inv((t(xo)*xo))).
  compute byxse = sqrt(olscm(2,2)).
  compute byx = byx(2,1).
end if.
end if.
compute xzo = {con,xz}.
do if (ovals = 2).
  compute pt2 = make(nrow(y),1,(csum(y)/nrow(y))).
  compute LL3 = y&*ln(pt2)+(1-y)&*ln(1-pt2).
  compute LL3 = -2*csum(LL3).
  compute pt1 = make(nrow(y),1,0.5).
  compute bt1 = make(ncol(xzo),1,0).
  compute LL1 = 0.
  loop jjj = 1 to !iterate.
    compute vt1 = mdiag(pt1&*(1-pt1)).
    compute byzx = bt1+inv(t(xzo)*vt1*xzo)*t(xzo)*(y-pt1).
    compute pt1 = 1/(1+exp(-(xzo*byzx))).
    compute itprob = csum((pt1 < .000000000000001) or (pt1 > .999999999999999)).
    do if (itprob = 0).
      compute LL = y&*ln(pt1)+(1-y)&*ln(1-pt1).
      compute LL2 = -2*csum(LL).
    end if.
    do if (abs(LL1-LL2) < !converge).
      compute vt1 = mdiag(pt1&*(1-pt1)).
      compute varb = inv(t(xzo)*vt1*xzo).
      compute olscm = diag(varb).
      break.
    end if.
    compute bt1 = byzx.
    compute LL1 = LL2.
  end loop.
  compute byzx2 = byzx(3:(nv-nc),1).
  do if (nc > 0).
    compute bcon = byzx((nv-nc+1):nv,1).
    compute bconse = sqrt(olscm((nv-nc+1):nv,1)).
  end if.
  compute cprime = byzx(2,1).
  compute cprime = sqrt(olscm(2,1)).
  compute byzx2se = sqrt(olscm(3:(nv-nc),1)).
  do if (#d = 1).
    compute pi = (exp(xzo*byzx)/(1+exp(xzo*byzx))).
    compute resid(:,ncol(resid))=((y-pt1)/abs(y-pt1))&*sqrt(-2*(LL)).
  end if.
do if (jjj > !iterate).
  compute itprob = 2.
end if.
end if.
do if (ovals <> 2).
  compute byzx = inv(t(xzo)*xzo)*t(xzo)*y.

```



```

compute byzx2 = byzx(3:(nv-nc),1).
do if (#d = 1).
  compute mse=csum((y-(xzo*byzx))&**2)/(n-nv).
  compute resid(:,ncol(resid))=y-(xzo*byzx).
  compute covmat=mse*inv(t(xzo)*xzo).
  compute olscm=diag(covmat).
  compute sse = mse*(n-nv).
  compute sst = csum((y-(csum(y)/n))&**2).
  compute r2 = 1-(sse/sst).
  compute ar2 = 1-(mse/(sst/(n-1))).
  compute fr = ((n-nv)*r2)/((1-r2)*ncol(xz)).
  compute pfr = 1-fcdf(fr,ncol(xz),(n-nv)).
  do if (nc > 0).
    compute bcon = byzx((nv-nc+1):nv,1).
    compute bconse = sqrt(olscm((nv-nc+1):nv,1)).
  end if.
  compute byzx2se = sqrt(olscm(3:(nv-nc),1)).
  compute cprime = byzx(2,1).
  compute cprimese = sqrt(olscm(2,1)).
end if.
end if.
compute indeff2 = (bzx&*byzx2).
compute zs = (bzx&/bzxse)&*(byzx2&/byzx2se).
compute temp = t({csum(indeff2); indeff2}).
compute indeff(#d,:) = temp.
do if (#d = 1).
  compute vs = nm(1:(nv-nc),1).
  print/title =
  "*****"
  print/title = "Preacher and Hayes (2008) SPSS Macro for Multiple Mediation".
  print/title = "Written by Andrew F. Hayes, The Ohio State University".
  print/title = "http://www.comm.ohio-state.edu/ahayes/".
  print/title = "For details, see Preacher, K. J., & Hayes, A. F. (2008). Asymptotic".
  print/title = "and resampling strategies for assessing and comparing indirecct effects".
  print/title = "in multiple mediator models. Behavior Research Methods, 40, 879-891.".
  print/title =
  "*****"
  print vs/title = "Dependent, Independent, and Proposed Mediator Variables:"/rlabels =
  "DV =" "IV =" "MEDS =" /format a8.

  do if (nc > 0).
    compute vs = nm((nv-nc+1):nv,1).
    print vs/title = "Statistical Controls:"/rlabels = "CONTROL=" /format a8.
  end if.
  print n/title = "Sample size"/format F10.0.
  do if (ovals = 2).
    compute nmsd = {outv, "Analysis"}.
    print red/title = "Coding of binary DV for analysis:"/cnames = nmsd/format = F9.2.
  end if.
  compute nms = nm(3:(nv-nc),1).
  compute te = bzx&/bzxse.
  compute df = n-2-nc.

```

```

compute p = 2*(1-tcdf(abs(te), df)).
compute bzxmat = {bzx, bzxse, te, p}.
compute b(2:(nv-1-nc),1)=bzx.
compute se2 = bzxse&*bzxse.
print bzxmat/title = "IV to Mediators (a paths)"/rnames = nms/clabels "Coeff" "se" "t"
"p"/format f9.4.
compute te = byzx2&/byzx2se.
compute df = n-nv.
do if (ovals <> 2).
compute p = 2*(1-tcdf(abs(te), df)).
compute byzx2mat={byzx2, byzx2se, te, p}.
print byzx2mat/title = "Direct Effects of Mediators on DV (b paths)"/rnames =
nms/clabels "Coeff" "se" "t" "p"/format f9.4.
end if.
do if (ovals = 2).
compute wald = te&*te.
compute p = 2*(1-cdfnorm(abs(te))).
compute byzx2mat={byzx2, byzx2se, te, p, Wald}.
print byzx2mat/title = "Direct Effects of Mediators on DV (b paths)"/rnames =
nms/clabels "Coeff" "se" "Z" "p" "Wald"/format f9.4.
end if.
compute te = byx&/byxse.
compute df = n-2-nc.
compute xnm = nm(2,1).
do if (ovals <> 2).
compute p = 2*(1-tcdf(abs(te), df)).
compute byxmat = {byx, byxse, te, p}.
print byxmat/title = "Total Effect of IV on DV (c path)"/rnames = xnm/clabels "Coeff"
"se" "t" "p"/format f9.4.
end if.
do if (ovals = 2).
compute wald = te&*te.
compute p = 2*(1-cdfnorm(abs(te))).
compute byxmat = {byx, byxse, te, p, Wald}.
print byxmat/title = "Total Effect of IV on DV (c path)"/rnames = xnm/clabels "Coeff"
"se" "Z" "p" "Wald"/format f9.4.
end if.
compute te = cprime&/cprimese.
compute df = n-nv.
do if (ovals <> 2).
compute p = 2*(1-tcdf(abs(te), df)).
compute cprimmat = {cprime, cprimese, te, p}.
print cprimmat/title = "Direct Effect of IV on DV (c' path)"/rnames = xnm/clabels
"Coeff" "se" "t" "p"/format f9.4.
end if.
do if (ovals = 2).
compute wald = te&*te.
compute p = 2*(1-cdfnorm(abs(te))).
compute cprimmat = {cprime, cprimese, te, p, Wald}.
print cprimmat/title = "Direct Effect of IV on DV (c' path)"/rnames = xnm/clabels
"Coeff" "se" "Z" "p" "Wald"/format f9.4.
end if.

```

```

do if (nc > 0).
  compute df = n-nv.
  compute nms = nm((nv-!c+1):nv,1).
  compute te = bcon&/bconse.
  do if (ovals <> 2).
    compute p = 2*(1-tcdf(abs(te), df)).
    compute bconmat = {bcon, bconse,te,p}.
    print bconmat/title = "Partial Effect of Control Variables on DV"/rnames =
nms/clabels "Coeff" "se" "t" "p"/format f9.4.
  end if.
  do if (ovals = 2).
    compute wald = te&*te.
    compute p = 2*(1-cdfnorm(abs(te))).
    compute bconmat = {bcon, bconse,te,p, Wald}.
    print bconmat/title = "Partial Effect of Control Variables on DV"/rnames =
nms/clabels "Coeff" "se" "Z" "p" "Wald"/format f9.4.
  end if.
end if.
do if (ovals <> 2).
  compute dvms = {r2, ar2, fr, ncol(xz), (n-nv), pfr}.
  print dvms/title = "Model Summary for DV Model"/clabels "R-sq" "Adj R-sq" "F"
"df1" "df2" "p"/format F9.4.
end if.
do if (ovals = 2).
  compute LLdiff = LL3-LL2.
  compute mcF = LLdiff/LL3.
  compute cox = 1-exp(-LLdiff/n).
  compute nagel = cox/(1-exp(-(LL3)/n)).
  compute pf = {LL2, LLdiff, mcF, cox, nagel, n}.
  print pf/title = "Logistic Regression Summary for DV Model"/clabels = "-2LL" "Model
LL" "McFadden" "CoxSnell" "Nagelkrk" "n"/format F10.4.
end if.
do if (!normal <> 0 and !c = 0 and ovals <> 2).
  compute bmat = make((nv-nc),(nv-nc),0).
  compute bmat(2:(nv-nc-1),1) = bzx.
  compute bmat((nv-nc),2:(nv-nc-1))=t(bzxx2).
  compute bmat((nv-nc),1) = cprime.
  compute imbinv = inv(ident(ncol(bmat))-bmat).
  compute imbtinv=inv(ident(ncol(bmat))-t(bmat)).
  compute resid(:,1)=x-(csum(x)/(n)).
  compute psi = sscp(resid)/(n).
  compute invpsi = inv(psi).
  compute ibpsiib = imbinv*psi*imbtinv.
  loop ic = 1 to ncol(info).
  loop ic2 = 1 to ncol(info).
  compute info(ic,ic2)=(n-
1)*((imbinv(imat(ic2,4),imat(ic,1))*imbinv(imat(ic,2),imat(ic2,3)))+(ibpsiib(imat(ic2,4),imat(
ic,2))*invpsi(imat(ic,1),imat(ic2,3)))).
  end loop.
end loop.
compute varcov = inv(info).
compute varcov = varcov(1:(2*(nv-nc-2)),1:(2*(nv-nc-2))).

```

```

compute ses = diag(varcov).
compute avar = ses(1:nrow(bzxse),1).
compute bvar = ses((nrow(bzxse)+1):nrow(ses),1).
do if ((nv-nc-2) > 1 and (!contrast = 1)).
  compute prws=make(((nv-nc-2)*(nv-nc-3)/2),1,0).
  compute prwse=prws.
  compute kk=1.
  loop ic = 1 to (nv-nc-3).
    loop ic2 = (ic+1) to (nv-nc-2).
      compute vf2 = ((byzx2(ic,1)**2)*varcov(ic,ic))-
(2*byzx2(ic,1)*byzx2(ic2,1)*(varcov(ic,ic2))).
      compute vf2=vf2+((byzx2(ic2,1)**2)*varcov(ic2,ic2))+((bzx(ic,1)**2)*(bvar(ic,1))).
      compute vf2=vf2-
(2*bzx(ic,1)*bzx(ic2,1)*covmat((2+ic),(2+ic2)))+((bzx(ic2,1)**2)*(bvar(ic2,1))).
      compute cnt = indeff2(ic,1)-indeff2(ic2,1).
      compute prws(kk,1)=cnt.
      compute prwse(kk,1)=sqrt(vf2).
      compute kk=kk+1.
    end loop.
  end loop.
  compute cnam2 = cname(1:(kk-1),1).
end if.
compute dermat = {byzx2;bzx}.
compute totse = sqrt(t(dermat)*varcov*dermat).
compute specse = sqrt((byzx2&*byzx2)&*(avar)+(bzx&*bzx)&*(bvar)).
compute specse = {totse; specse}.
compute specz = {csum(indeff2);indeff2}&/specse.
compute ind22 = {csum(indeff2);indeff2}.
compute nms = {"TOTAL";nm(3:(nv-nc),1)}.
do if ((nv-nc-2) > 1 and (!contrast = 1)).
  compute ind22 = {ind22;prws}.
  compute specse = {specse;prwse}.
  compute specz = {specz;(prws&/prwse)}.
  compute nms = {nms;cnam2}.
end if.
compute pspec= 2*(1-cdfnorm(abs(specz))).
compute spec = {ind22, specse, specz, pspec}.
print/title =
"*****"
print/title = "      NORMAL THEORY TESTS FOR INDIRECT EFFECTS".
print spec/title = "Indirect Effects of IV on DV through Proposed Mediators (ab
paths)"/rnames = nms/clabels "Effect" "se" "Z" "p"/format = f9.4.
end if.
end if.
end loop.
do if (btn > 1).
  compute nms = {"TOTAL"; nm(3:(nv-nc),1)}.
  do if ((nv-nc-2) > 1 and (!contrast = 1)).
    compute crst = make((n+1+btn),((nv-nc-2)*(nv-nc-3)/2),0).
    compute kk=1.
    loop ic = 2 to (nv-nc-2).
      loop ic2 = (ic+1) to (nv-nc-1).

```

```

    compute crst(:,kk)=indefeff(:,ic)-indefeff(:,ic2).
    compute kk=kk+1.
  end loop.
end loop.
compute indefeff = {indefeff,crst}.
compute cnam2 = cname(1:(kk-1),1).
compute nms = {nms;cnam2}.
end if.
compute lvout = indefeff(2:(n+1),:).
compute tdotm = csum(lvout)/n.
compute tm = (make(n,ncol(lvout),1))*mdiag(tdotm).
compute topa = csum((((n-1)/n)*(tm-lvout))&***3).
compute bota = 6*sqrt((csum((((n-1)/n)*(tm-lvout))&***2)&***3)).
compute ahat = topa&/bota.
compute indsam = t(indefeff(1,:)).
compute boot = indefeff((n+2):nrow(indefeff),:).
compute mnboot = t(csum(boot)/btn).
compute se = (sqrt(((btn*cssq(boot))-(csum(boot)&***2))/((btn-1)*btn))).
save boot/outfile = indirect.sav/names = nms.
compute nnn = make(1,ncol(indefeff),-999).
compute boot = {nnn;boot}.
loop #e = 1 to ncol(indefeff).
  loop #i = 2 to (btn+1).
    compute ix = boot(#i,#e).
    loop #k= #i to 2 by -1.
      compute k = #k.
      do if (boot(#k-1,#e) > ix).
        compute boot(#k,#e)=boot(#k-1,#e).
      else if (boot(#k-1,#e) <= ix).
        BREAK.
      end if.
    end loop.
    compute boot(k,#e)=ix.
  end loop.
end loop.
compute boot = boot(2:(btn+1),:).
compute xp = make((nrow(mnboot)+2),1,0).
loop i = 1 to (nrow(mnboot)+2).
  do if (i <= nrow(mnboot)).
    compute pv = (boot(:,i) < indsam(i,1)).
    compute pv = csum(pv)/btn.
  else.
    compute pv = zbca((i-nrow(mnboot)),1).
  end if.
  compute p = pv.
  do if (pv > .5).
    compute p = 1-pv.
  end if.
  compute y5=sqrt(-2*ln(p)).
  compute
xp(i,1)=y5+((((y5*p4+p3)*y5+p2)*y5+p1)*y5+p0)/((((y5*q4+q3)*y5+q2)*y5+q1)*y5+q0).
  do if (pv <= .5).

```

```

    compute xp(i,1) = -xp(i,1).
  end if.
end loop.
compute bbb = nrow(mnboot).
compute zz = xp(1:bbb,1).
compute zlo = zz + ((zz+xp((bbb+1),1))&/(1-t(ahat)&*(zz+xp((bbb+1),1)))).
compute zup = zz + ((zz+xp((bbb+2),1))&/(1-t(ahat)&*(zz+xp((bbb+2),1)))).
compute ahat = 0.
compute zlobc = zz + ((zz+xp((bbb+1),1))&/(1-t(ahat)&*(zz+xp((bbb+1),1)))).
compute zupbc = zz + ((zz+xp((bbb+2),1))&/(1-t(ahat)&*(zz+xp((bbb+2),1)))).
compute zlo = cdfnorm(zlo).
compute zup = cdfnorm(zup).
compute zlobc = cdfnorm(zlobc).
compute zupbc = cdfnorm(zupbc).
compute blow = trunc(zlo*(btn+1)).
compute bhigh = trunc(zup*(btn+1))+1.
compute blowbc = trunc(zlobc*(btn+1)).
compute bhighbc = trunc(zupbc*(btn+1))+1.
compute lowbca = make(nrow(blow),1,0).
compute upbca = lowbca.
loop i = 1 to nrow(blow).
  do if (blow(i,1) < 1).
    compute blow(i,1) = 1.
  end if.
  compute lowbca(i,1)=boot(blow(i,1),i).
  do if (bhigh(i,1) > btn).
    compute bhigh(i,1) = btn.
  end if.
  compute upbca(i,1)=boot(bhigh(i,1),i).
end loop.
compute lowbc = make(nrow(blow),1,0).
compute upbc = lowbca.
loop i = 1 to nrow(blowbc).
  do if (blowbc(i,1) < 1).
    compute blowbc(i,1) = 1.
  end if.
  compute lowbc(i,1)=boot(blowbc(i,1),i).
  do if (bhighbc(i,1) > btn).
    compute bhighbc(i,1) = btn.
  end if.
  compute upbc(i,1)=boot(bhighbc(i,1),i).
end loop.
print/title =
"*****".
print/title = "      BOOTSTRAP RESULTS FOR INDIRECT EFFECTS".
compute res = {indsam, mnboot,(mnboot-indsam), t(se)}.
print res/title = "Indirect Effects of IV on DV through Proposed Mediators (ab
paths)/rnames = nms/clabels "Data" "Boot" "Bias" "SE"/format f9.4.
compute lowerperc = boot(blowp,:).
compute upperperc = boot(bhighp,:).
compute ci = {lowbca, upbca}.
do if (!bca <> 0).

```

```

    print ci/title = "Bias Corrected and Accelerated Confidence Intervals"/rnames =
nms/clabels "Lower" "Upper"/format F9.4.
  end if.
  do if (!bc <> 0).
    compute ci = {lowbc, upbc}.
    print ci/title = "Bias Corrected Confidence Intervals"/rnames = nms/clabels "Lower"
"Upper"/format F9.4.
  end if.
  do if (!percent <> 0).
    compute ci = {t(lowperc), t(upperc)}.
    print ci/title = "Percentile Confidence Intervals"/rnames = nms/clabels "Lower"
"Upper"/format F9.4.
  end if.
  print/title =
"*****".
  print conf/title = "Level of Confidence for Confidence Intervals:".
  print btn/title = "Number of Bootstrap Resamples:".
  end if.
  do if ((nv-nc-2) > 1 and (!contrast = 1) and ((!normal = 1 and !c = 0) OR btn > 999)).
  print/title =
"*****".
  print/title = " INDIRECT EFFECT CONTRAST DEFINITIONS: Ind_Eff1 MINUS
Ind_Eff2".
  compute kk=1.
  compute prwsv=make(((nv-nc-2)*(nv-nc-3)/2),2,0).
  loop ic = 1 to (nv-nc-3).
    loop ic2 = (ic+1) to (nv-nc-2).
      compute prwsv(kk,1)=nm(ic+2,1).
      compute prwsv(kk,2)=nm(ic2+2,1).
      compute kk=kk+1.
    end loop.
  end loop.
  compute prwsv = {cnam2, prwsv}.
  print prwsv/title = "/clabels = "Contrast" "IndEff_1" "IndEff_2"/format A9.
  end if.
  do if (bdbp > 0).
  print/title =
"*****".
  print/title = "WARNING: SOME BOOTSTRAP MATRICES WERE SINGULAR".
  print/title = "SINGULAR MATRICES WERE REPLACED DURING RESAMPLING".
  print bdbp/title = "Number of singular bootstrap samples replaced:".
  end if.
  do if (ovals = 2).
  print/title =
"*****".
  print/title = "NORMAL THEORY TESTS NOT AVAILABLE FOR MODELS WITH
DICHOTOMOUS OUTCOMES".
  do if (!boot = 0).
  print/title = "To obtain indirect effects, request bootstrapping".
  end if.
  end if.
  do if (!c > 0 and !normal = 1).

```

```
    print/title = "NORMAL THEORY TESTS NOT AVAILABLE IN MODELS WITH  
COVARIATES".  
    do if (!boot = 0).  
    print/title = "To obtain indirect effects, request bootstrapping".  
    end if.  
    end if.  
END MATRIX.  
RESTORE.  
!ENDDFINE.
```



## Appendix E

### Information Letter to Participants

TITLE OF PROJECT: Rejection sensitivity and relating to others

RESEARCHER: Dr Terry Bowles

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Ms Emily Musgrove.

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in research on rejection sensitivity. The research will be conducted by PhD student Emily Musgrove, supervised by Dr Terry Bowles from the School of Psychology at the Australian Catholic University. The purpose of this study is to investigate factors which contribute to and are involved in the experience of rejection sensitivity. You are asked to complete a set of online questionnaires, which will provide information on rejection sensitivity and how you relate to others. This will take approximately 20 minutes.

By volunteering to complete the provided survey your consent to participate will be inferred. As no identifiable information is required you will remain anonymous to researchers. As such, please do not disclose any identifiable information such as your name on the survey. The results of this research will be kept confidential and will form part of the PhD/Hons theses of the student investigators and ongoing research. The results from the study may also be presented at conferences and be published. All reports will be about average (group) findings and no individuals will be identifiable. Public record standards require that we store data for at least 5 years following completion of the project. All information obtained from you will be securely stored in the store room of the School of Psychology located on the university campus.

You are free to withdraw from the study at any stage without supplying a reason. Questions regarding this project should be directed to **Dr Terry Bowles, on (03) 9953 3117 in the School of Psychology, St. Patrick's Campus, Locked Bag 4115, Fitzroy VIC 3065, t.bowles@patrick.acu.edu.au.**

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the Australian Catholic University. We anticipate that the majority of respondents will be reassured by reflecting upon their feelings and how they relate to others through completing the survey. However, if you feel distressed as a result of this reflection, please contact clinical psychologist Dr Lisa Eisen on 9953 3119 for independent advice about how you can seek counselling regarding improving your situation. Additionally, in the event that you have any complaint or concern about the way you have been treated during the study, or if you have any query that the researcher and student researchers have not been able to satisfy, you may write to **The Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee, c/o Research Services, Australian Catholic University, Melbourne Campus, Locked Bag 4115, Fitzroy VIC 3065 (telephone 043 9953 3157, fax 03 9953 3305). Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. The participant will be informed of the outcome.**

Should you choose to participate in the project your support will be most appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Terry Bowles

Emily Musgrove

## Appendix F

### Questionnaire Package

Please complete the following information and questionnaires carefully. Your consent to participate will be indicated by the completion and return of the questionnaire to the researcher. There are no right or wrong answers, don't consider your response too long. Your first response is often the best. Thank you.

Gender:  Male /  Female  
 Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Siblings (number): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Country of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Are you currently studying? YES/NO  
 Marital Status: Single / Married / Defacto / Divorced / Widowed / Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Length of Relationship (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Current Living Arrangements: On Own / Sharing / With Parents / Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Have you ever received counselling? YES/NO If yes please indicate for what \_\_\_\_\_

Each of the items below describes things university students sometimes ask of other people. Please **imagine** that you are in each situation. You will be asked to answer the following questions:

- 1) How **concerned or anxious** would you be about how the other person would respond?
- 2) How do you think the **other person** would be **likely to respond**?

#### 1. You ask someone in class if you can borrow his/her notes.

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not the person would want to lend you his/her notes?

Very Unconcerned Very Concerned  
 1    2    3    4    5    6

I would expect that the person would willingly give me his/her notes.

Very Unlikely Very Likely  
 1    2    3    4    5    6

#### 2. You ask your boyfriend/girlfriend to move in with you.

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not the person would want to move in with you?

Very Unconcerned Very Concerned  
 1    2    3    4    5    6

I would expect that he/she would want to move in with me.

Very Unlikely Very Likely  
 1    2    3    4    5    6

#### 3. You ask your parents for help in deciding what programs/courses to apply to.

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your parents would want to help you?

Very Unconcerned Very Concerned  
 1    2    3    4    5    6

I would expect that they would want to help me.

Very Unlikely Very Likely  
 1    2    3    4    5    6

**4. You ask someone you don't know well out on a date.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not the person would want to go out with you?

Very Unconcerned			Very Concerned		
1	2	3	4	5	6

I would expect that the person would want to go out with me.

Very Unlikely			Very Likely		
1	2	3	4	5	6

**5. Your boyfriend/girlfriend has plans to go out with friends tonight, but you really want to spend the evening with him/her, and you tell him/her so.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your boyfriend/girlfriend would decide to stay in?

Very Unconcerned			Very Concerned		
1	2	3	4	5	6

I would expect that the person would willingly choose to stay in.

Very Unlikely			Very Likely		
1	2	3	4	5	6

**6. You ask your parents for extra money to cover living expenses.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your parents would help you out?

Very Unconcerned			Very Concerned		
1	2	3	4	5	6

I would expect that my parents would not mind helping me out.

Very Unlikely			Very Likely		
1	2	3	4	5	6

**7. After class, you tell your lecturer/tutor that you have been having some trouble with a section of the course and ask if he/she can give you some extra help.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your lecturer/tutor would want to help you out?

Very Unconcerned			Very Concerned		
1	2	3	4	5	6

I would expect that my lecturer/tutor would want to help me out.

Very Unlikely			Very Likely		
1	2	3	4	5	6

**8. You approach a close friend to talk after doing or saying something that seriously upset him/her.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your friend would want to talk with you?

Very Unconcerned			Very Concerned		
1	2	3	4	5	6

I would expect that he/she would want to talk with me to try to work things out.

Very Unlikely			Very Likely		
1	2	3	4	5	6

**9. You ask someone in one of your classes to coffee.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not the person would want to go?

Very Unconcerned			Very Concerned		
1	2	3	4	5	6

I would expect that the person would want to go with me.

Very Unlikely			Very Likely		
1	2	3	4	5	6

**10. After graduation, you can't find a job and ask your parents if you can live at home for a while.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your parents would want you to come home?

Very Unconcerned			Very Concerned		
1	2	3	4	5	6

I would expect I would be welcome at home.

Very Unlikely			Very Likely		
1	2	3	4	5	6

**11. You ask your friend to go on a vacation with you over semester break.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your friend would want to go with you?

Very Unconcerned						Very Concerned
1	2	3	4	5		6

I would expect that he/she would want to go with me.

Very Unlikely						Very Likely
1	2	3	4	5		6

**12. You call your boyfriend/girlfriend after a bitter argument and tell him/her you want to see him/her.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your boyfriend/girlfriend would want to see you?

Very Unconcerned						Very Concerned
1	2	3	4	5		6

I would expect that he/she would want to see me.

Very Unlikely						Very Likely
1	2	3	4	5		6

**13. You ask a friend if you can borrow something of his/hers.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your friend would want to loan it to you?

Very Unconcerned						Very Concerned
1	2	3	4	5		6

I would expect that he/she would willingly loan me it.

Very Unlikely						Very Likely
1	2	3	4	5		6

**14. You ask your parents to come to an occasion important to you.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your parents would want to come?

Very Unconcerned						Very Concerned
1	2	3	4	5		6

I would expect that my parents would want to come.

Very Unlikely						Very Likely
1	2	3	4	5		6

**15. You ask a friend to do you a big favour.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your friend would do this favour?

Very Unconcerned						Very Concerned
1	2	3	4	5		6

I would expect that he/she would willingly do this favour for me.

Very Unlikely						Very Likely
1	2	3	4	5		6

**16. You ask your boyfriend/girlfriend if he/she really loves you.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your boyfriend/girlfriend would say yes?

Very Unconcerned						Very Concerned
1	2	3	4	5		6

I would expect that he/she would answer yes sincerely.

Very Unlikely						Very Likely
1	2	3	4	5		6

**17. You go to a party and notice someone on the other side of the room and then you ask them to dance.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not the person would want to dance with you?

Very Unconcerned						Very Concerned
1	2	3	4	5		6

I would expect that he/she would want to dance with me.

Very Unlikely						Very Likely
1	2	3	4	5		6

**18. You ask your boyfriend/girlfriend to come home to meet your parents.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your boyfriend/girlfriend would want to meet your parents?

	Very Unconcerned		Very Concerned
	1    2    3    4    5    6		
I would expect that he/she would want to meet my parents.			
	Very Unlikely		Very Likely
	1    2    3    4    5    6		

***Now, please imagine....***

**1. You ask someone you don't know well on a date and they decline your request. Describe how you would react to that person in that situation. What would you do?**

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**2. You ask your parents to come to an occasion important to you and they decline your request. Describe how you would react to that person in that situation. What would you do?**

---



---



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**3. You ask a friend to do you and big favour and they decline your request. Describe how you would react to that person in that situation. What would you do?**

---



---



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**4. You ask your boyfriend/girlfriend if he/she really loves you and they say no. Describe how you would react to that person in that situation. What would you do?**

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The statements below concern how you feel in emotionally intimate relationships. Please take a moment to think about your experiences in romantic relationships, including both your **previous and current relationship experiences**. Please answer the following questions with these experiences in mind. Respond to each statement by circling a number to indicate how much you agree or disagree.

	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I'm afraid that I will lose my partner's love.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	I often worry that my partner will not want to stay with me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4	I worry that romantic partners won't care about me as much as I care about them.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5	I often wish that my partner's feelings for me were as strong as my feelings for him or her	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	I worry a lot about my relationships.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7	When my partner is out of sight, I worry that he or she might become interested in someone else.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	When I show my feelings for romantic partners, I'm afraid they will not feel the same about me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9	I rarely worry about my partner leaving me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10	My romantic partner makes me doubt myself	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11	I do not often worry about being abandoned.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12	I find that my partner(s) don't want to get as close as I would like.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13	Sometimes romantic partners change their feelings about me for no apparent reason.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14	My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15	I'm afraid that once a romantic partner gets to	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	know me, he or she won't like who I really am.							
16	It makes me mad that I don't get the affection and support I need from my partner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17	I worry that I won't measure up to other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18	My partner only seems to notice me when I'm angry.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19	I prefer not to show a partner how I feel deep down.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20	I feel comfortable sharing my private thoughts and feelings with my partner	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21	I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on romantic partners	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22	I am very comfortable being close to romantic partners.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23	I don't feel comfortable opening up to romantic partners.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24	I prefer not to be too close to romantic partners.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25	I get uncomfortable when a romantic partner wants to be very close.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26	I find it relatively easy to get close to my partner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27	It's not difficult for me to get close to my partner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28	I usually discuss	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

my problems and concerns with my partner.

29	It helps to turn to my romantic partner in times of need.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30	I tell my partner just about everything.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31	I talk things over with my partner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32	I am nervous when partners get too close to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33	I feel comfortable depending on romantic partners.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
34	I find it easy to depend on romantic partners	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
35	It's easy for me to be affectionate with my partner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
36	My partner really understands me and my needs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Here are a number of statements about general personal characteristics. Please read each one carefully, and indicate whether you agree or disagree, and to what extent, by circling a number.

	<b>Statement</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Slightly Disagree</b>	<b>Slightly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
1	I often put other people's needs before my own.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	I tend to keep other people at a distance.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3	I find it difficult to be separated from people I love.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4	I am easily bothered by other people making demands of me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5	I am very sensitive to the effects I have on the feelings of other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6	I don't like relying on others for help.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	I am very sensitive to criticism by others.	1	2	3	4	5	6



8	It bothers me when I feel that I am only average and ordinary.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9	I worry a lot about hurting or offending other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10	When I'm feeling blue, I don't like to be offered sympathy.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11	It is hard for me to break off a relationship even if it is making me unhappy.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12	In relationships, people are often too demanding of one another.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13	I am easily persuaded by others.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14	I usually view my performance as either a complete success or a complete failure.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15	I try to please other people too much.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16	I don't like people to invade my privacy.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17	I find it difficult if I have to be alone all day.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18	It is hard for me to take instructions from people who have authority over me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19	I often feel responsible for solving other people's problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20	I often handle big decisions without telling anyone else about them.	1	2	3	4	5	6
21	It is very hard for me to get over the feeling of loss when a relationship has ended.	1	2	3	4	5	6
22	It is hard for me to have someone dependent on me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
23	It is very important to me to be liked or admired by others.	1	2	3	4	5	6
24	I feel badly about myself when I am not actively accomplishing things.	1	2	3	4	5	6
25	I feel I have to be nice to other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6
26	It is hard for me to express admiration or affection.	1	2	3	4	5	6
27	I like to be certain that there is somebody close I can contact in case something unpleasant happens to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6

28	It is difficult for me to make a long-term commitment to a relationship.	1	2	3	4	5	6
29	I am too apologetic to other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6
30	It is hard for me to open up and talk about my feelings and other personal things.	1	2	3	4	5	6
31	I am very concerned with how people react to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
32	I have a hard time forgiving myself when I feel I haven't worked up to my potential.	1	2	3	4	5	6
33	I get very uncomfortable when I'm not sure whether or not someone likes me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
34	When making a big decision, I usually feel that advice from others is intrusive.	1	2	3	4	5	6
35	It is hard for me to say "no" to other people's requests.	1	2	3	4	5	6
36	I resent it when people try to direct my behaviour or activities.	1	2	3	4	5	6
37	I become upset when something happens to me and there's nobody around to talk to.	1	2	3	4	5	6
38	Personal questions from others usually feel like an invasion of my privacy.	1	2	3	4	5	6
39	I am most comfortable when I know my behaviour is what others expect of me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
40	I am very upset when other people or circumstances interfere with my plans.	1	2	3	4	5	6
41	I often let people take advantage of me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
42	I rarely trust the advice of others when making a big decision.	1	2	3	4	5	6
43	I become very upset when a friend breaks a date or forgets to call me as planned.	1	2	3	4	5	6
44	I become upset more than most people I know when limits are placed on my personal independence and freedom.	1	2	3	4	5	6

45	I judge myself based on how I think others feel about me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
46	I become upset when others try to influence my thinking on a problem.	1	2	3	4	5	6
47	It is hard for me to let people know when I am angry with them.	1	2	3	4	5	6
48	I feel controlled when others have a say in my plans.	1	2	3	4	5	6

A number of statements are listed below which relate to how you might feel about yourself and other people in your life. Please indicate with a tick in the appropriate place how each one applies to you - i.e., whether it is "very like you", "moderately like you", "moderately unlike you" or "very unlike you". Respond to each statement in terms of how you are GENERALLY and not necessarily just at present. There are no right or wrong answers.

	Statement	Very Unlike	Moderately Unlike	Moderately Like	Very Like
1	I feel insecure when I say goodbye to people	1	2	3	4
2	I worry about the effect I have on other people	1	2	3	4
3	I avoid saying what I think for fear of being rejected	1	2	3	4
4	I feel uneasy meeting new people	1	2	3	4
5	If others knew the real me, they would not like me	1	2	3	4
6	I feel secure when I'm in a close relationship	1	2	3	4
7	I don't get angry with people for fear that I may hurt them	1	2	3	4
8	After a fight with a friend, I feel uncomfortable until I have made peace	1	2	3	4
9	I am always aware of how other people feel	1	2	3	4
10	I worry about being criticised for things I have said or done	1	2	3	4
11	I always notice if someone doesn't respond to me	1	2	3	4
12	I worry about losing someone close to me	1	2	3	4
13	I feel that people generally like me	1	2	3	4
14	I will do something I don't want to do rather than offend or upset someone	1	2	3	4
15	I can only believe that something I have	1	2	3	4

	done is good when someone tells me it is				
16	I will go out of my way to please someone I am close to	1	2	3	4
17	I feel anxious when I say goodbye to people	1	2	3	4
18	I feel happy when someone compliments me	1	2	3	4
19	I fear that my feelings will overwhelm people	1	2	3	4
20	I can make other people feel happy	1	2	3	4
21	I find it hard to get angry with people	1	2	3	4
22	I worry about criticising other people	1	2	3	4
23	If someone is critical of something I do, I feel bad	1	2	3	4
24	If other people knew what I am really like, they would think less of me	1	2	3	4
25	I always expect criticism	1	2	3	4
26	I can never be really sure if someone is pleased with me	1	2	3	4
27	I don't like people to really know me	1	2	3	4
28	If someone upsets me, I am not able to put it easily out of my mind	1	2	3	4
29	I feel others do not understand me	1	2	3	4
30	I worry about what others think of me	1	2	3	4
31	I don't feel happy unless people I know admire me	1	2	3	4
32	I am never rude to anyone	1	2	3	4
33	I worry about hurting the feelings of other people	1	2	3	4
34	I feel hurt when someone is angry with me	1	2	3	4
35	My value as a person depends enormously on what others think of me	1	2	3	4
36	I care about what people feel about me	1	2	3	4

Thank you for your participation it is greatly appreciated.

## Appendix G

### Australian Catholic University Human Research Ethics Committee Approval

Australian Catholic University  
Brisbane Sydney Canberra Ballarat Melbourne



Human Research Ethics Committee

Committee Approval Form

**Principal Investigator/Supervisor: Dr Terry Bowles Melbourne Campus**

**Co-Investigators:**

**Student Researcher: Emily Musgrove Melbourne Campus**

**Ethics approval has been granted for the following project:**

Rejection Sensitivity and Relating to Others.

**for the period:** 07.04.2009 to 07.04.2010

**Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) Register Number:** V2009 03

**The following standard conditions as stipulated in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans (2007)* apply:**

- (i) that Principal Investigators / Supervisors provide, on the form supplied by the Human Research Ethics Committee, annual reports on matters such as:
  - security of records
  - compliance with approved consent procedures and documentation
  - compliance with special conditions, and
  
- (ii) that researchers report to the HREC immediately any matter that might affect the ethical acceptability of the protocol, such as:
  - proposed changes to the protocol
  - unforeseen circumstances or events
  - adverse effects on participants

The HREC will conduct an audit each year of all projects deemed to be of more than low risk. There will also be random audits of a sample of projects considered to be of negligible risk and low risk on all campuses each year.

Within one month of the conclusion of the project, researchers are required to complete a *Final Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer.

If the project continues for more than one year, researchers are required to complete an *Annual Progress Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer within one month of the anniversary date of the ethics approval.

Signed: .....

Date: .....

(Research Services Officer, Melbourne Campus)

## Appendix H

### Uncoded Participant Responses to Rejection Scenarios

<b>RESPONSE – Scenario 1: You ask someone you don't know well on a date and they decline your request. Describe how you would react to that person in that situation. What would you do?</b>	1	2	3	4
I would fake happiness and just pretend that it's totally okay and that I'm not really offended (I would be secretly dying inside though!). I would laugh and be jovial and joking about it with him. This is not really the ideal reaction you want when you are single and wanting to meet a partner!	1	2	3	4
I would probably feel like an idiot for asking in the first place, and I would try to avoid seeing that person again!	1	2	3	4
Hopefully, the asking and the decline would be in such a casual format that a friendship would still be possible and the decline could be easily brushed away	1	2	3	4
I would feel embarrassed, probably tell them I was sorry for bothering them, and walk away. I would feel like I was being laughed at and that I was not good enough.	1	2	3	4
I would feel probably somewhat embarrassed, and unable to maintain eye contact with the person. I would also start to question my own physical attractiveness, which would make me more embarrassed. I would have the desire to get as far away from that person as possible. Once alone, I would very likely cry and feel rejected, ugly, and unlikeable. I would also try to avoid that person in the future until I got over my feelings of embarrassment.	1	2	3	4
Change the topic.	1	2	3	4
I'd be embarrassed that I had asked, but I'd try to act casual and cover up my disappointment and embarrassment. If had I liked them enough to ask them out though, I would have had a good opinion of them	1	2	3	4

as a person, so I'd really hope they still want to be friends. I'd be very sad if I'd messed up a potential friendship by romanticising the situation.				
Treat it as joke. Unconcerned about it since they are so many people in this world	1	2	3	4
I would feel very uncomfortable talking to them again and would probably avoid them after that.	1	2	3	4
I'd just say ok and go on with my life. If we were friends before it would be awkward for a while but we'd stay friends.	1	2	3	4
If I didn't know them well, I would accept the fact and move on and maybe find someone who did want to go on a date with me. I wouldn't be rude to them though.	1	2	3	4
Firstly, I would try to use humour to hide my embarrassment from them and pretend the response didn't worry me. I would probably become withdrawn after the situation and experience a lower self-esteem and confidence. I would take comfort in seeking out my friends explaining the situation and find some assurance in their advice.	1	2	3	4
I would be polite and leave pretty quickly and then probably avoid them for the rest of my life. I would be pretty upset, and doubt my self worth for awhile but would get over it eventually.	1	2	3	4
thats ok, cant win them all!	1	2	3	4
i guess i would just smile and have a bit of a laugh with they then thank them anyway.	1	2	3	4
I would keep a brave face and end the conversation on a funny note. I would not likely speak to them again.	1	2	3	4
I would try again if the circumstances allowed it, or if not, I would try and forget it, by spending some time with friends.	1	2	3	4
I would already be in a very calm relaxed mood to have to do this in the first place, and would probably just say very coolly "nah nah thats cool, you prob have other things to do" (or something similar to give them a	1	2	3	4

2nd chance to quickly reconsider without me re-asking the question) and I would have already other things to talk about to finish the conversation, then would try to get out of that convo quickly as there will likely be an awkward feeling if they declined me. I wouldn't act like I was hurt next time I saw them, as this is normally a turn-off.				
say 'haha, fair enough then. How awkward.'" then try to laugh it off but really I'd be feeling like I want to bang my head against the wall for asking	1	2	3	4
I would try to laugh it off and pretend it was a joke.	1	2	3	4
Probably very awkward both about asking them and afterwards. Most likely I would not do it in the first place.	1	2	3	4
Try to pretend that I hadn't been very serious about it in the first place and shrug it off as though it didn't really mean much to me, then avoid the person as much as I could without it seeming obvious	1	2	3	4
I would be quite nervous asking someone that I did not know well, out on a date, so if they were to decline my request I would be quite taken back and would become withdrawn, I don't think I would know what to say and would want to be as far away as that person as possible to save myself from embarrassment.	1	2	3	4
Play it cool and end the conversation. Then afterwards wonder why.	1	2	3	4
Well I would say that was fair enough and try to change the conversation to something else quickly and not dwell on it. When I got home I would call a friend to talk about it	1	2	3	4
Ummm... I hope this doesn't change anything between us I'm sure we can still be good friends.	1	2	3	4
Smile and accept what they have said to me, not yelling or getting upset in front of them, but after walking away, would get upset.	1	2	3	4
I will ask them firmly if they want to remain friends with me or not. Obviously, they don't like me in a romantic way but a friendship would still be nice enough.	1	2	3	4



I would be very upset. I haven't had many serious relationships so I have always felt a little bit awkward in these situations. I would accept that the person doesn't want to go out with me, mope for a while, and probably go out with girlfriends for cocktails.	1	2	3	4
I would probably proceed to get drunk and yell at them, or cry, or hook up with another person, or many other people. Then I would feel really bad for the next day/weeks to come. Then I would talk to my friends and get over it.	1	2	3	4
alright no worries thanks anyways	1	2	3	4
I would probably feel upset at first but try not to show it. I would try and show them that I'm not concerned about it and probably pursue someone else to show them that their rejection didn't bother me. I would also rationalize their rejection of me by trying to understand why they rejected me, I would focus on their bad points and put it down to personal taste or their own character flaws rather than it having anything to do with me.	1	2	3	4
i would respect their decision as it might not have anything to do with me. i would continue to be polite but not sucky. i would not want to be around them for a while to collect myself but i would not avoid them extensively. i would feel hurt but not forever.	1	2	3	4
I'd try to play it off cool. Like I didn't really care.	1	2	3	4
thats ok if you don't wanna play mini golf with me your not worth dating	1	2	3	4
I dont know them, so I'd just say ok and try and avoid them for the rest of my life and never do something like that again unless I was sure they'd say yes.	1	2	3	4
back down and leave.	1	2	3	4
Make light of the situation	1	2	3	4

I would try to divert the conversation by suggesting we may see each other around sometime, and then avoid communicating with them ever again.	1	2	3	4
feel sad and a little bit worthless. probably go out and get fucked on pills or drunk and hook up with anyone i could to prove my validity or i would work out extra hard at boxing	1	2	3	4
I wouldn't get to upset about it, rejection is a part of life. I would hope that they didn't think any less of me for asking, and I would be happy with myself that I had the initiative to put myself out there. I potentially would distance myself for a few weeks until the dust settled, but after this period I would hope that we could continue to be friends.	1	2	3	4
i would tell them that its fine and that it wasn't important.	1	2	3	4
Fell very embarressed and dissapointed, ask why they decline and and probably avoid further interaction.	1	2	3	4
If they are unkind about it, I would walk away and then probably avoid them for the rest of the night. If they seem surprised and have a legitimate reason, I would shrug and continue talking to them.	1	2	3	4
Would probably ask why, then move on. If i really like the person would probably be disappointed for a period of time, but then get over it.	1	2	3	4
uh ok thanks, and then run away and hide	1	2	3	4
I would thank them for giving me their time, wish them a nice day and walk away.	1	2	3	4
I would hang my head down low, accept the person's final answer as a definate answer and walk away and say nothing.	1	2	3	4
i would stammer for a minute trying to get my bearings, and then i'd shrug it off and act very nonchalant, like i didn't matter at all to me. i'd say "oh, okay, that's cool. i was just wondering..." and then i'd try to excuse myself gracefully.	1	2	3	4

Not take it personally as they don't know me well and probably respect them more for not rushing into a date with somebody they dont know. I would respond politely and remain friends.	1	2	3	4
Depending on how they responded, I may ask why they said no and if they would like to go out a different time. If they responded negatively and harshly, I would say something like "that was really rude. All you needed to say was thanks but no thanks."	1	2	3	4
I would say alright maybe another time, walk away, and not contact them unless they contact me first. But, I'd still remain friendly if I were to run into them somewhere.	1	2	3	4
I would just try to play it off as if it was no big deal and as if it had not affected me at all. I would probably be very dissapointed though and embarassed probably. For that reason, I would act as if it was no big deal.	1	2	3	4
I would say "Oh ok well I'm sorry for bothering you if you change your mind this is how you can get a hold of me." and then give my number and e-mail address.	1	2	3	4
More than likely I would tell them it was no big deal and leave. I would probably avoid them for a while then play it as cool as possible	1	2	3	4
I would accept their decision and feel a little embarrassed. I might think about it for a little while but then I would move on and forget about it. At the time I would probably automatically think why would they say yes but then remind myself that it's their loss. I'd find it very hard to ask someone out on a date - I like to be sure sometimes so I wait for them.	1	2	3	4
Say thats ok and a good answer. Try not to make an idiot out of myself by saying something stupid (no guarantee here) and say goodbye and that I'll see them later. Promptly leave and try to forget about it and then ponder why they said no. Was it bad timing or was it just not to their liking. I'd probably narrow it down depending on the actual dynamics and then plan any further interactions with this person around my	1	2	3	4

conclusion.				
I would try to cover my disappointment up and try to avoid bringing the topic up again. I would then try to stay in contact with them to let them know that I still care but being careful to make sure not to give out signals that suggest a longing for more than a friendship. When I am not with that person I would cry and drink a lot of alcohol whilst reciting the whole situation to some friends.	1	2	3	4
I would be very polite, and would smile. Try to joke and try to make them feel comfortable. I would also try to save whatever relationship we might of had as friends. But I wouldn't think it likely that we would stay friends.	1	2	3	4
graciously leave, let things go for a while and then try to get to know them better as a friend	1	2	3	4
I would say ok, that's cool, and walk away.	1	2	3	4
I would say something like "Oh. Okay." and extract myself from the situation as soon as was socially acceptable, then be a bit upset somewhere else.	1	2	3	4
Probably awkwardly say "Oh, ok... well i'll see you around sometime later then, if you ever do want to do anything just give me a call". Then likely try to ignore them and hardly speak to them again.	1	2	3	4
I guess it would be hard to determine exactly how I would feel or react, but I think mostly that I would understand that the feelings of attractiveness are not always neutral, and I would accept that the other person obviously did not have the same feelings for me as I do for them. Sure it would probably hurt the ego a bit, but in the end, I think I would just accept a respect their decision, and move on.	1	2	3	4
Feel embarassed for asking and disappointed they declined. Probably call a friend to discuss it and then maybe go for a drink/movie with friend instead	1	2	3	4
I would quickly, but politely excuse myself from the situation, and probably go home or get away. I would	1	2	3	4

avoid further contact.				
I gave it a shot, what else can I do for it is her choice. I have to respect her wishes.	1	2	3	4
I would be embarrassed and gutted but I would cop it and move on. It would be their loss not mine and I would obviously feel very rejected, but would realise that i will have more opportunities after that. They might also have a legitimate excuse such as if they are already in a relationship and if this were the case then I would accept it and not take it personally.	1	2	3	4
Tell them okay, stand awkwardly for a while and walk away feeling dejected	1	2	3	4
I would try to change the subject and attempt to exit the conversation with some degree of dignity intact as soon as I could. I'd probably be thinking about it for quite a while afterwards attempting to work out what caused their decision. I would probably internalise it. I would then probably try and think my way out of the rut and attempt to externalise it and attempt to move on. It would be in all likelihood be difficult to do this.	1	2	3	4
I would smile and say, "ok, would you like to try for another time or are you just not interested?" If they decline, I'd say "thanks for letting me know--have a good weekend!" and walk away.	1	2	3	4
Say "Alright" pause, let the conversation end awkwardly, and then leave.	1	2	3	4
still talk to them and wouldnt change the way i was acting towards them to begin with.	1	2	3	4
tell them i was only joking anyway and go away and cry	1	2	3	4
shy away and try to avoid the person.	1	2	3	4
respect his wishes and walk away. i can be upset later, alone.	1	2	3	4
Since I don't know them that well, it wouldn't be as awkward as asking a close friend on a date. It won't change much, because you don't know this person that well, and it is most likely that they're not in your everyday life.	1	2	3	4

Say 'ok, i'll see u later i guess' and walk away.	1	2	3	4
Shrug and say thanks anyway. I would walk away from the situation and maybe be a little bit upset quietly by myself, but if I don't know them well then I imagine I wouldn't have a lot invested in the invitation so I probably wouldn't be too upset.	1	2	3	4
nothing, walk away and get over it. plenty of other people out there to ask on dates.	1	2	3	4
Try to put on a friendly face and be nice. Fake a smile. Say things along the lines of "that's okay, I understand" and walk away.	1	2	3	4
Be very embaressed. Avoid them as much as possible. Pretend it didn't really matter that much. Not tell anyone. Pretend i didn't want to go out with them that much. Think they they think i'm weird. Or think that i'm obsessing about them or something very stupid, but my mind works in annoying uncontrollable ways!	1	2	3	4
I would feel disappointed but given that I don't know them I would move on	1	2	3	4
Be upset. Basically just wonder why they would'nt want to, especially if they were'nt already seeing someone.	1	2	3	4
I'd probably shrug it off like it isn't a big deal... but it would tear me up inside and I'd become depressed and obsess about it for the next 2 weeks.	1	2	3	4
I would probably say that's cool, then after I had finished talking to them get upset about it	1	2	3	4
As a woman I feel less confident asking someone on a date and have never asked a man out of a date. But if they declined, I would be upset if I really had a crush on them, but I feel that I would realize that you cannot force love (I have tried in the past in a relationship that was stagnant) and it was for the best that we went our different ways.	1	2	3	4
Ignore him for the next few days. Will get depressed and anxious thinking about it.	1	2	3	4

Tell them your intentions were purely to get to know them better/become better friends (ie try to play it off that it was just a 'friends' thing... you weren't really asking them on a date)	1	2	3	4
i would act casually, make a joke and laugh it off, or alternatively ask "are u sure??" and then laugh. try to make the situation comfortable as possible. I would then chat for a few minutes longer, before departing. pretend it doesnt matter to me, and only let the situation hit me when i get home.	1	2	3	4
Probably nothing. Smile, say "Okay" maybe roll my eyes or titter and walk away.	1	2	3	4
Well, i would never ask someone on a date, particularly those i don't know well. But if i did and got rejected, i would feel so embarrassed and might be able to say something like ' oh ok, sorry to bother you. hope i don't make you feel uncomfortable' or something like that with a smile and withdraw. But i would be accusing myself of having even tried to ask him out and feel so upset with anger and regret for a very long time. I also would imagine him laughing at me with his friends behing my back and keep avoiding the person from now on.	1	2	3	4
Tell them that cool and remark that you can't hurt in trying. I would be a bit disappointed about the rejection however you can't get your expectations raised a lot over something like that.	1	2	3	4
Very embarressed and awkward but id try and laugh it off and something like "well a girls gotta try" and perhaps say thanks and catcha later. Then try and walk away as quickly as possable. Id just put it down to a learning curve and life experience.	1	2	3	4
I would try to wait and ask them when I have something else to say to them so that I could easily change the topic once they give me their answer. It's not actually that likely that I would ask them face to face, I would more likely get their number and send them a message or something.	1	2	3	4
probs ge a lil upest and disappointed, depending on how much i liked them, would complain to a friend then	1	2	3	4

get over it..				
Make a lighthearted joke on myself so that she doesnt feel bad for saying no, tell her it was a pleasure to meet her, wish her well, and say goodbye.	1	2	3	4
I would sort of stare at them blankly for a second, and then probably try to laugh it off, or say something along the lines of, "Oh well, I tried?". Then try to escape as quick as possible.	1	2	3	4
I would probably blush, look away and say "oh ok, no worries then," then turn around and walk away as fast as I could without appearing to hurry. I would probably then be extremely awkward around them for the next little while.	1	2	3	4
I would be embarrassed, however would act like it was cool and it was just a casual request anyway, no big deal	1	2	3	4
I'd make out like I didn't care and probably say something like 'Oh okay, sure, whatever, I just wondered' and then I'd make some excuse and get away as quickly as possible to nurse my wounds. The important thing would be to try and make sure they thought I didn't really care and then get away from them.	1	2	3	4
I would be embarrassed, and walk away slowly accepting it. Later i would ask again or ask for an explanation.	1	2	3	4
ask him "why not?"	1	2	3	4
knowing myself, I'd ask him with low expectations that he would respond with a "yes". my level of expecting that he would say yes differs, based on the fact of if i felt like he was within my reach or not. so when if he declines, I'd coolly respond that it's not a big deal and say "no worries". I might throw in a few small jokes just to lighten the awkward situation or if I didn't get a chance to leave the conversation at that. but secretly, I'd be disappointed and wonder what was it about me that made him decline. I'm not a person to prod so most likely it would be a question that leave me hanging for quite some time, thus my self-esteem would drop until	1	2	3	4



something happens that can re-gain my self-esteem. Like if someone else said yes when I asked them out, or if someone else asks me out on a date instead.				
I would tell the person not to worry & end the conversation as quickly as possible and leave	1	2	3	4
will act as if it is alright to the person and keep a dissapointed feeling inside	1	2	3	4
I would feel slightly rejected but then brush it off and start up another conversation with the person. There are many reasons why they might have said no.	1	2	3	4
feel very awkward, anxious and embarrassed. say something along the lines of 'oh ok, never mind' and move away from the situation as quickly as possible.	1	2	3	4
Apologise for bothering them and walk away	1	2	3	4
Probably be embarassed, say it didn't matter and leave as fast as possible.	1	2	3	4
Probably try to aleiviate any awkwardness by making a joke about the awkwardness and then quickly getting back to normal conversation - and depending on the atmosphere, ask why not. Probably stew on it for a while though.	1	2	3	4
say ok and go out with my friend.	1	2	3	4
I would look away into the middle distance to show that I needed to be left alone for just a moment. I would use my moment of privacy to ensure that I did not cry or show my real, deeper sadness and disappointment. I would say something very normal and polite and wish them well and leave in a controlled and respectable way. I might cry later, at home.	1	2	3	4
Make a joke, and ask them what their reason was for declining. I would feel embarrassed but would get over it fairly quickly.	1	2	3	4
Move on	1	2	3	4

Masturbate on them	1	2	3	4
That's okay. Maybe another time I would kind of question what's wrong with me/why they would want to at least have coffee with me.	1	2	3	4
Smile and say "Well, maybe next time" and change the topic of conversation.	1	2	3	4
I would be sorry he didn't want to go with me and I would find it hard to realise that there was not the same interest in getting to know me as I have in getting to know him. It would be awkward as the dynamics have not been what I expected and I need to reflect on other people's perceptions of me.	1	2	3	4
I would rationalise it as best I could, find a reason/excuse for why they couldn't come. I.e, they are busy, or like someone else and are too shy to say so.	1	2	3	4
accept their response and walk away from the situation	1	2	3	4
How I would respond to that person? I would try to play it off like it was no big deal and then I would avoid them at all costs for the rest of my life	1	2	3	4
Brush it off, and pretend like it wasn't such a big deal anyway. Possibly get sarcastic about it. Or if the person knew that I really liked them I would be upset and get angry at them.	1	2	3	4
I would use humor to cover my embarrassment and rejection; I'd pretend that I was totally fine with it.	1	2	3	4
i wouldn't ask someone i don't know well on a date but if i did, i'll say 'it's ok' and deal with it quietly	1	2	3	4
I'd say "OK, no problem, maybe some other time", smile and walk away, or change the subject, depending on the situation. I've never had anyone decline but I suppose that's what I would do.	1	2	3	4
Say something light hearted, like never mind or maybe another time and smile, but make sure not to drag the situation on. If it's in a situation where I couldn't physically remove myself I'd go onto another topic, preferably a neutral one. Like about classes or a lecturer.	1	2	3	4

tell them "that's ok, i was just wondering" and then probably avoid them and not speak to them again	1	2	3	4
I would feel very embarrassed more than anything. I would try to act like it didn't bother me, and try to laugh it of by making a joke, hiding that I was really feeling like a total idiot on the inside.	1	2	3	4
i would say " ok, no worries, you seemed interesting so i wanted an opportunity to get to know you, no worries". Much later on i would probably begin to feel stupid, but i will talk myself out of it and reward myself for being brave and say 'some will some wont so what- move on	1	2	3	4
Say ok and leave quickly.	1	2	3	4
I would apologize for asking this. And, most probably overwhelmed by shame, I will burn bridges with that person for a while. I wouldn't want to interact too much with the person for a long moment, as I would be afraid that she sees me as a more threatening person than just an innocent normal friend as she probably used to see me before.	1	2	3	4
move on, say thanks and walk away	1	2	3	4
I will be very upset because she declines my request if I really want to get to know her. But if not, I will be somewhat upset. Nonetheless, I do not know her well and neither does she.	1	2	3	4
I would ask why not. I would then listen to their explanation despite my own emotional wellbeing, and then I would reconsider whether I would ask them again. Otherwise, I would attempt to make a hasty exit.	1	2	3	4
I would say that it is their choice, that i am unable to change their decision. I would say that i respect their decision and ask if we are able to become friends in the not too distant future. I would explain to them that a friendship with them is more important to me than a sexual or intimate relationship.	1	2	3	4
At that moment, I would be upset but I will still try to act confident and say "well, it was worth a shot" while smiling. This way, she might change her mind after seeing the confidence.	1	2	3	4

Accept their response and try to forget about it.	1	2	3	4
I would respond to the person by saying something like, 'that's ok' or 'that's fine.' I would probably then say 'bye' and then leave. I wouldn't want to let them know that I was upset. In reality, I think I would be very upset and feel rejected. I would definitely not get in contact with that person again and feel awkward if I had to see them again.	1	2	3	4
Well, I don't really know them well, so I wouldn't really care. Forget about them, I guess.	1	2	3	4
I would say it's ok, and act normally in front of him. I would not take it too deeply. But if he's actually someone that I'm interested to, I might feel sad , and wonder why he decline my request. Is it because my look or some other aspects which don't interest him much.	1	2	3	4
I would be very embarassed, feel awkward, most likely walk away and avoid them from then on. Wouldn't talk to them again.	1	2	3	4
Would be taken aback but cover my surprise and attempt to coolly discontinue the immediate engagement. Would most likely dwell on the rejection and wonder about why. Consider my attractiveness, my demeanor. Attempt to be ojective about the rejection and not let it descend into questioning my perception of self worth per se. Success would be dependent upon my level of self confidence at the time	1	2	3	4
Pretend to shrug it off as something I was just "throwing out there" and then retreat and sulk, and regret doing it.	1	2	3	4
I would say OK ,and give them a smile. and change the topic. and then get out from there.	1	2	3	4
It would be a bit of a hit, and i'd probably continue thinking that it was a bad idea from the start and something along the lines of 'well of course she'd say no, your not exactly particularly desirable you fool'. Then i'd probably be miserable for the next week or two.	1	2	3	4

walk away, go find somewhere to be alone and cry, possibly cut if i was upset enough	1	2	3	4
I wouldn't ask someone on a date, I believe in traditional values I would perhaps ask someone to come watch a DVD making it seem less meaningful lowering the feelings of pressure of a 'date' and therefore rejection would be less hurtful. Or more sincerely based on the other persons agenda.	1	2	3	4
shrug and say ok. Then probably go home and cry... would avoid them a bit from then on.	1	2	3	4
I would say never mind and pretend as if it wasn't a problem, even if it turned out that I was upset at the result	1	2	3	4
i would feign being very casual (as though it was a very casual offer and could have just been a friendly thing) and say something like 'no worries' or 'maybe another time', then immediately change the topic of conversation or start up a conversation with someone else nearby	1	2	3	4
Move on/get over it.	1	2	3	4
I would say: "Oh, alright. Sorry, I didn't want to offend you." and then we would maybe have some small talk and I would probably go within a few minutes, because I have got to work/ go to the toilet/ whatever.	1	2	3	4
I would say "ok, no worries, maybe some other time" and then probably pretend like it was no big deal even though it probably was a huge deal!	1	2	3	4
Say something along the lines of, "Aww, it would have been fun but hopefully we can catch up another time" then continue the conversation as normal.	1	2	3	4
I would try to act like i don't care, try to be calm, cool and collect. Convince myself they weren't worth my time but feel totally rejected and ugly. Eventually however I'll get over it and that fact won't phase me.	1	2	3	4
Oh, ok. No worries. See you round then. I'd be a bit hurt but would try to get over it and maybe try to avoid them in future.	1	2	3	4

I would initially say to them no problem, I was just wondering, and try to play it down, pretend it wasn't a big deal. But I would turn bright red and be exceptionally embarrassed, would want to get away from that person as quickly as possible, or completely change the subject. then afterwards, I would berate myself constantly for even contemplating asking in the first place and feel pretty down and stupid for considering it to begin with. I'd be very upset, as it would have taken a lot of courage for me to have even asked in the first place.	1	2	3	4
still be friends these things happen, and people need to learn its not the end of the world.	1	2	3	4
I would probably apologise profusley, but briefly, then make my exit. I would go home and kick myself for being such an idiot. I would make sure that I saw that person as little as possible for the next few weeks and would probably be very blunt in any future communications with them.	1	2	3	4
I would feel embarrassed, but probably say stuff so they didn't feel uncomfortable, like no probs we can still be friends.	1	2	3	4
Continue with that relationship as before.	1	2	3	4
Act casual. Since I don't know them well I probably wouldn't be too worried. Tell them it's fine and it was worth a shot.	1	2	3	4
Say Ok. And Walk off then ponder the situation for awhile. I'll probably be over it in a week	1	2	3	4
Nothing. accept that they don't want to have a relationship with me.	1	2	3	4
I would laugh and leave.	1	2	3	4
Unless i foresaw some other form of relationship (i.e. friendship/study buddy/ sports team member) I would let them know I respect their choice and then forget about them, I would think to myself 'they're stupid for not taking chances'. If I really wanted to date them I would pursue friendship with them in the hopes of	1	2	3	4

having another opportunity in the future.				
If they were polite in declining, say "Cheers anyway, see you around" and walk away. If they were rude, grunt "Yeah, f@#\$#% whatever" and walk away.	1	2	3	4
Play it cool, act nonchalant until they were gone then do all that I could do to never bump into them or see them again. Most probably would never put myself in that situation unless I was sure they would say yes. If they did say no, I would act like it was all a joke on my part and nothing important.	1	2	3	4
I wouldn't ask someone out on a "Date" until I knew they would want to go out with me. I'd ask to do something with friends or play video games and do fun stuff. If imagining that I did ask someone (which I have never), and I got the big hell no I'd react depending upon the situation. I'd be upset proportionately to the amount and kind of feelings that I held for that person. If I liked them a lot, I'd be secretly upset but wouldn't make my feelings known to that person at all. If they didn't like you enough to go out on a date then they wouldn't obviously know how you felt about them or they don't reciprocate those feelings, or they don't care. It's better to keep your dignity and pride intact then saying anything else. I'd probably shrug off the situation in public, but would probably tell a friend about it and try to have a good laugh. If someone doesn't want me in the beginning of a relationship, then the outlook for the relationship wouldn't be high anyway.	1	2	3	4
I would thank her for her time and walk away	1	2	3	4
I would just say that's fine, no worries. I have very high self esteem so it wouldn't offend me.	1	2	3	4
I would say "Oh ok" and go away not showing the shame, hurt and stupidity i feel for asking	1	2	3	4
Pretend it wasn't a big deal, even though it was. Act nonchalant.	1	2	3	4
Say something like "no problem", maybe ask why and then, later in private, stress about whether there's	1	2	3	4

something wrong with me or if I'm not their type or if there's another reason. Later, pretend it didn't happen.				
I would tell them that that is fine. Since i don't known them well, if they don't want to go out with me, that is no reflection on me. There may be a number or reasons why they choose to decline.	1	2	3	4
say - ok, sorry and leave very embarassed. Then avoid them for the duration of semester!	1	2	3	4
say ok and walk away	1	2	3	4
Try to pass it off like it doesn't matter, probably with a joke or a smile/laugh saying thank you and that's ok.	1	2	3	4
Try and make them feel less uncomfortable, and remove awkwardness from the situation, by saying things like 'that's okay, I thought I'd ask... I'm sure I'll see you around soon'	1	2	3	4
I'd be cool...plenty more fish in the sea	1	2	3	4
Downplay how serious I was. Never speak to them again.	1	2	3	4
Well it really depends how nice they were about it. If they said 'no, sorry I can't but i am flattered you asked' then i would be a little disappointed but i would have no hard feelings and would thank them for their honesty. if they said 'god no. yuck' or something along those lines then i would be hurt, but i would also think they were a huge wanker. I wouldn't say anything, and would just leave.	1	2	3	4
I'd be relaxed about it. Say something like "Ok sure". Maybe make out that it wasn't a date I was asking them out for but something more casual.	1	2	3	4
i would feel rejected and my feelings towards that person would turn cold.	1	2	3	4
I would say that it was fine, and fair enough if they said no. I would process how i felt about it, for example did i feel rejected, sad, unwanted, angry, inadequate and i would go home and write about it. Write what i meant for me, observe any issues which may also come up whilst writing to discover perhaps hidden or suppressed issues or emotions.	1	2	3	4



blush, make a joke, move on and remain friends	1	2	3	4
I would say "Ok, no worries." Walk away and feel really embarrassed and have quite low self esteem.	1	2	3	4
That would (and is, from prior experiance) be awkward. I would do my best to either make a joke of it, or get out of there as fast as possible, depending upon the specific reaction. I would also attempt to apologise and talk to her at a later stage.	1	2	3	4
I'd probably say something like 'No worries' and the change the subject or find an excuse to leave.	1	2	3	4
I'd try to make sure that I hadn't made the person feel uncomfortable by asking them on a date when I'd clearly misjudged whether they were interested.	1	2	3	4
Act really casuually so they do not feel guilty for letting me down, pretend to not hurt (even though I am) and try to pursue a friendship.	1	2	3	4
I would apologise, then make a very very quick getaway.	1	2	3	4
I would tell them it wasn't a problem and retreat. Very likely I wouldn't make contact with the person again and I would be very upset. Probably I would pick myself up, brush it off and start afresh with in a couple of weeks although it does get difficult as in many situations rejection hurts a great deal especially if I have a lot of feelings for the person concerned.	1	2	3	4
I would probably feel rather stupid, leave as quickly as I could and then avoid them at all costs. I would like to think I would be unconcerned, in fact I would like to be unconcerned but in such situations I find myself very sensitive to rejection. Not because of the rejection itself but because I would obsess about them laughing about it with other people behind my back. I would find it hard to talk to anyone else I know they converse with frequently in case they have joked about it. Sad but true.	1	2	3	4
Laugh, be embarrssed make a joke out of it	1	2	3	4

laugh it off and act unconcerned.	1	2	3	4
I wouldn't be ultimately fussed or disappointed. In the end, I wouldn't have known them that well so it wouldn't have been a loss to my life. Naturally, I'd be slightly disheartened when it happens, but I'd be over it the next day.	1	2	3	4
I would laugh and think i shouldve seen it coming. Then try and hook up with some one else to prove to myself that im capable of doing so.	1	2	3	4
if i was already talking to them i would just talk about something else. if that question was my sole reason for talking to them then i would walk away	1	2	3	4
I would say something funny, and be alittle awkward. I'd probably be alittle upset when I went home that day.	1	2	3	4
say it was fine	1	2	3	4
Have a smoke and a beer. Probably watch some TV and think nothing more of it.	1	2	3	4
It all depends on how long I'd been plucking up the courage for (would take me weeks, even months) but I'd put on a brave face. Feel pretty gutted, but accept it and try not to let it show how disappointed I am. I would try not to do anything that might affect a potential friendship with that person (like storm of in a huff). I'd shrug my shoulders and say, 'no worries' and try to carry on as normal, even if I do feel kind of shitty inside. I would hope that maybe she'll realise I'm a decent guy and change her mind, but I wouldn't count on it. Girls don't seem to go for nice guys. I'd probably feel a bit sorry for myself for a little while, but be thankful I'm still good friends with the girl and try not to over-analyse things too much. (can you tell this has happened recently? ;-))	1	2	3	4

<b>RESPONSE: Scenario 2 - You ask your parents to come to an occasion important to you and they decline your request. Describe how you would react to that person in that situation. What would you do?</b>	1	2	3	4
I would express my disappointment to them and explain that my occasion is really important to me and that it's important to me that they attend. This is an extremely unrealistic scenario in my life though - it wouldn't happen.	1	2	3	4
I would be disappointed that they can't make it but probably wouldn't think too much of it. I would assume that if they didn't come it's because they really couldn't, otherwise they would have been there.	1	2	3	4
i would ask them why they have declined and remind them of the importance of the event for me. however i know they would have a good reason and i would therefore not be concerned	1	2	3	4
I would feel hurt and rejected, but I wouldn't say anything to them, just complain to friends or other members of the family.	1	2	3	4
I'd be very surprised. My mother lives in another country, but if I were to invite her to an important occasion I am very confident that she would do all she could to attend. My father lives with me, and again I would be very confident that he would attend simply to show his support. I would perhaps feel slightly upset, and would question why they would not want to come. But since, ordinarily, my parents are very supportive, if they provided an answer to my satisfaction, I would not hold on to any anxious or upset feelings for very long.	1	2	3	4
Yell and whinge at them.	1	2	3	4
If it was really important to me that they be there I guess I'd try to change their minds by emphasising how important it is to me that they be there.	1	2	3	4
Doesn't matter, I will go alone or with friends or other people	1	2	3	4

I would be very upset with them but wouldn't hold it against them if there was something more important going on.	1	2	3	4
Again, I'd be a bit upset but eventually get over it. My parents are very important to me but I'm not depending on them.	1	2	3	4
I would ask them if they thought what they were doing was more important than coming to see me. I might be a bit upset by it.	1	2	3	4
I would acknowledge their choice and walk away upset that they declined the invitation. I wouldn't rebut their choice.	1	2	3	4
I would be upset with my mother but would probably understand depending on the situation. If it was because she couldn't afford it, that would be okay, but if it was because she was doing something else I would be very upset.	1	2	3	4
be angry, they should want to come.	1	2	3	4
i would be incredibly pissed of and probably start an argument with them.	1	2	3	4
This situation is implausible.	1	2	3	4
nothing unusual, go by myself and have a good time, take lots of photos for them	1	2	3	4
I would ask them frankly why they aren't coming to this situation, and would not hesitate to start a fight over it if they had no good reason.	1	2	3	4
Be a bit annoyed and upset but I'm sure they would have a good reason so I'd get over it	1	2	3	4
I would ask why, and then explain to them that it is important to me that they attend, and ask again.	1	2	3	4
I would hope that they would come, but it would be more like disappointment than rejection. However, I probably would not voice the disappointment to them.	1	2	3	4

Not speak to them for the next little while	1	2	3	4
I would be very upset with my parents in a situation such as this, I would more than likely raise my voice in anger and let them know exactly how I felt and that this upset me very much. I would not want to be neat them and would say what I needed to say to get my feelings across and storm away.	1	2	3	4
I'd be extremely shocked because it would be out of their character, I'd ask them why and request an explanation.	1	2	3	4
That did happen actually, I was in a play and they didnt want to come. I was hurt but I didnt push them into coming, I asked other people who were important to me to come	1	2	3	4
(thinking to myself, 'well this is a little suprising'). I would probably be angry at my parents for declining such a simple and important request but hey what can you do about it they have a life as well. Why can't you come?	1	2	3	4
I would ask them why they don't want to come, as I would be very upset and confused.	1	2	3	4
I'll be definitely upset and may try more to convince them about the importance of the occasion and that their presence would be my best reward.	1	2	3	4
I think that i would not say anything to them but inside feel very upset that they declined. I would like to tell them how important the occasion is to me and that i wish they'd be there, but i honestly don't think I would tell them that.	1	2	3	4
I would understand and accept it because they must have a legitimate reason, otherwise they would definitely attend, because they care about me and what is important to me.	1	2	3	4
are you serious. i cant believe you dont want to come	1	2	3	4
I would ask them why. I would expect that they probably have a justifiable reason for declining but at the	1	2	3	4

same time feel a little disappointed. I would let them know if it really upset me. It probably wouldn't upset me too much as I know my parents are proud of me regardless and the rejection would be more likely to do with logistical issues rather than me. If the occasion was that important to me then I would blame myself for not communicating it well enough, but reflect on this and move on.				
i would remind them how important it was to me and ask them again. if they decline again i would ask why. i would not take it too personally because they have their own problems that could be clouding their judgement. i would still be upset for a while though.	1	2	3	4
Tell them 'fine, you don't have to.'	1	2	3	4
I'm really surprised folks.. you're retired, what else do you have better to do?	1	2	3	4
I would tell them they were neglectful and unloving and were retarding my emotional development with their lack of support	1	2	3	4
ask why, would probably be quietly upset	1	2	3	4
Accept it	1	2	3	4
Think that it's their choice and not worry.	1	2	3	4
i would be upset and a little bit confused. unless they have a good reason i wouldn't be happy. i would talk to them and tell them how i feel.	1	2	3	4
I would be devastated, my parents are very supportive and I can't imagine being anything but very disappointed. I would not deal with this rejection well, and it would really make me question my recent behaviour, anything that may have triggered this response in them. I would also let them know how much this event means to me and how disappointed I am.	1	2	3	4
i would tell them that i would go by myself or ask someone else to come	1	2	3	4

Be very surprised, reprimand them.	1	2	3	4
I would ask them why, and ensure that they knew how important it was to me. If they still decline, and seem to have wanted to come but have a legitimate reason why they can't, I would still be upset but respect their decision.	1	2	3	4
Would be extremely upset unless there was a real reason. I would feel this way because I have come to accept that my parents will be there for every 'big' thing in my life. therefore it would hurt if they declined being a part of a major event in my life. I would feel hurt.	1	2	3	4
fine then, dont come. i couldnt imagine such an event my rents are too involved	1	2	3	4
I would ask them the reasons for their decision. I would want to understand why they wouldn't want to attend an occasion so important to me. If they insisted, I would be extremely dissapointed and hurt but I would respect their decision.	1	2	3	4
If my parents declined to come to a request I would shrug it off. As my parents show little to no interest in any activity I do I would almost expect this reaction from them.	1	2	3	4
i'd ask them why they weren't coming. whatever their answer, i wouldn't be satisfied with it, and i'd probably start getting teary but try to hide how much i care at the same time. in the end i'd submit and say it was okay that they weren't coming, leave, and cry.	1	2	3	4
I would be offended and explain to them how important it was to me. I would be angry at them and decline any requests they asked of me.	1	2	3	4
They wouldn't say no. But if they did I guess I would ask why and try to work it out with them. But truly they would never say no. Both of my parents are willing to drop everything for me and if it was truly important to me they would understand and not decline.	1	2	3	4

I would ask them why, tell them that it is really important to me and I would hope that they could find time to come. I would keep reminding them about it and telling them that I want them to come.	1	2	3	4
I would be stunned. I would be very disappointed but act as if everything was okay. I would try to reason as to why they could not/would not come, they probably had something very important. Overall i would act as if nothing had happened, trying to cover my real emotion of being disapointed. I do not like to impose on others.	1	2	3	4
I would be very angry with them. They have always supported me in everything I do and if they all of a sudden decided not to I would be angry and very hurt.	1	2	3	4
I would brush it off	1	2	3	4
probably get upset with them and angry initially. i can be quite reactive. Then i would let them know it is important to me and that given that I would like them to be there. I would also wonder why they were saying no because this would be a very unlikely response from them. If they still no I would probably continue to be angry with them for a bit and then get over it and move on.	1	2	3	4
Be thankfull. I'd rather them not being there, especially as I don't need their gushing and drama if I was a focal point for a lot of attention. It would be better they said no and it wouldn't bother me.	1	2	3	4
My mother refused to go to an occasion that I considered to be important to me a few years ago and it was very painful. I guess if a situation like this occurs again I don't know if there is much I could DO; I would probably cry to my friends about it and bear a grudge against my parents for it.	1	2	3	4
I would understand that they wanted to come but couldn't because of reasons outside of their control.	1	2	3	4
ok - thier busy too.	1	2	3	4
I would ask them if they were sure they didn't want to come, offer to help them get here, and then if the	1	2	3	4



answer was still no, I'd say ok and change the subject.				
Assume they were busy and go ahead and do it myself.	1	2	3	4
I could not even imagine them declining unless they were busy with other pre-planned things or were far away while I'm at college, but if hypothetically they did I would be fine with it because they already do so much for me.	1	2	3	4
I cannot think of a situation where my parents would decline coming to such an occasion. However, based on this I think I would feel quite hurt. I would try to explain to them exactly how important the occasion is to me and how important it is to have them there. I would try and negotiate a way that could convince them to come.	1	2	3	4
I would be very upset and would probably attempt to reason with them in case I can persuade them to come. If they were still to decline I would be grumpy with them and would probably show anger and distress (possible tears and yelling).... Then I would call a friend to see if they were to come with me instead. Having said this however, it is very unlikely for my mother not to come.	1	2	3	4
I would ask them why, and continue to ask them to come if at all possible. I would probably get very emotional and upset, and I would probably avoid them for a while out of frustration.	1	2	3	4
I would be surprised, but I am sure that they have a good reason for declining. I will probably try to ask for a reason, and maybe even try to convince them, but at the end of the day, what might seem important to me not necessary has to be as important to others.	1	2	3	4
If they had a legitimate reason such as if they had already made plans then I would accept it. However, if it was because they couldn't be bothered or just didn't want to go then I would be fairly upset and talk it over with them. In saying this, it would be very unlikely for my parents to decline my request.	1	2	3	4

I wouldn't say anything, but I'd be pretty sad	1	2	3	4
I would probably ask them why but I wouldn't really be too bothered by it because I know their love is unconditional and constant. I'd move on pretty quickly. Rejection hurts most when it comes from someone my own age, particularly if they are of the opposite sex.	1	2	3	4
I'd know they would have sincerely wanted to come and they'd be apologizing they couldn't make it, so I'd say "it's ok--maybe it'll work out next time" and chat about other things.	1	2	3	4
Tell them they were upsetting me.	1	2	3	4
i would probably get into a massive screaming fight about them not being there for me	1	2	3	4
ask them again until they say yes	1	2	3	4
i would be rather upset, but personally, my parents would not decline because i know they will be happy to go, what is important to me would most likely be important to them	1	2	3	4
get very upset and isolate myself.	1	2	3	4
I would ask why they declined, and if it's a very good reason, then so be it. If it's something trivial, then I'd most likely get upset over it, but for me personally, my family couldn't make it to a lot of important occasions.	1	2	3	4
Firstly, I know my parents would never decline unless they had a very good reason, and I usually don't ask my parents to come to important occasions.. If they do decline it would be completely fine with me.	1	2	3	4
Ask for an explanation and tell them how important the situation is to me. If they again decline then I would probably be quite angry and would walk out of the room or call a friend to complain.	1	2	3	4
i would be extremely angry and upset and tell them so.	1	2	3	4
I don't really care much about my parents so I would just say "that's alright" (really mean it).	1	2	3	4

Probably get frustrated and wonder why they don't care enough to go. Think they don't care about things that are important to me. Get quite mad at them about it.	1	2	3	4
Ask their reason, and tell them how upset I was	1	2	3	4
Be very upset. I would probably feel lonely and like no one cared about me.	1	2	3	4
I'm sure they would only decline if they had something on, but if it was because they didn't WANT to, I would probably ask a friend. Being rejected by my parents doesn't mean that much to me because they don't really mean that much to me; if a friend denied my request I would be more hurt, as my friends are the ones I choose to hang around with (so if they don't want to spend time with me I'd become depressed)	1	2	3	4
Yell at them and get upset, may end up crying	1	2	3	4
It depends on the occasion. If it is my graduation and there is no reason that they cannot come, I would be very upset and plead with them about the importance of the event--- the culmination of all my hard work, something that will only happen once, we don't live that far away, etc. However, if they cannot come due to a family emergency, or if we lived so far away that it would not be economical, I would understand the situation. I would make sure to take pictures and know my parents were supporting me nonetheless.	1	2	3	4
Feel a little sad at first. But will get over it pretty quickly.	1	2	3	4
The only reason my parents wouldn't come to something really important to me is if they had something very very important on that day. So generally I would be very understanding and not worry too much.	1	2	3	4
convince them.	1	2	3	4
I don't know how I would respond. I would probably not do very much. Just leave the situation and probably not talk to them a lot for awhile.	1	2	3	4
I would simply ask why and try to convince them. If they would not change their mind, I would let it slide for a	1	2	3	4

while and try again.				
I would be very disappointed and feel somewhat deflated. I would ask what she is up to instead to make more sense of it.	1	2	3	4
If there was a good reason id at first try and see if i can make it work for both of us or if not just be ok with it. If its not a good reason i'll continue to persuade them untill the last minute.	1	2	3	4
It would depend on the reason they gave, if it was really important to me and I thought that it was a justifiable reason for them to travel to see me then I would explain that to them and tell them that I'm disappointed that I don't have their support. Then I probably wouldn't speak to them for several weeks.	1	2	3	4
i would more than likely get very upset with them and an argument would ensue... id be very upset with them for a while, then get over it but probs use it against them when ever possible lol	1	2	3	4
Understand that they must have a good reason to decline and ask other family members or friends if they would like to come.	1	2	3	4
I would ask them why not, and then stress the importance of the situation. If they still declined and had a good reason to, then I would accept that and move on. If they still declined and had a bad reason, I would probably yell at them and call them bad parents.	1	2	3	4
I would try very hard not to sound disappointed, but probably wouldn't manage it.	1	2	3	4
I would ask them why and try and convince them to come.	1	2	3	4
It would be for a really really good reason and they'd feel bad, so I would tell them I didn't care because there's no point in them feeling worse.	1	2	3	4
I would restate that it is important to me, then ask why not.	1	2	3	4
I would ask for a reason, and if it justifies their refusal to come, I'll move on and invite other members of the	1	2	3	4

family or friends.				
I would ask them why they wouldn't want to come. If they had a good reason, I'd still try my luck by telling them again that the occasion is important to me and I'd like them to be there. The level of my disappointment of them not wanting to come depends on how good was their reason. If it was a really good reason, I'd be mildly disappointed, but I won't worry about it too much. If they gave me a small reason and that's it, that would affect my self-esteem pretty badly.	1	2	3	4
I would feel very upset and angry. I would tell them its not important and then I would end the conversation. I would be reluctant to speak to them for quite a while afterwards	1	2	3	4
Nothing, it is ok	1	2	3	4
I would be extremely suprised and upset. It would be very uncharacteristic of them so I would definitely ask them why they can't make it because it must be something important if they are unable to come.	1	2	3	4
feel upset and potentially a bit angry. reinforce the importance of the occasion to me and tell them how upset it would make me	1	2	3	4
Say that I have been to things that they have asked me to come to. Explain just how important this is to me. Try and negotiate something so that they will come.	1	2	3	4
They live interstate, so would be slightly upset but understand.	1	2	3	4
I would ask why not - or wonder if I had expressed clearly enough that it was important to me - but I would continue to try and encourage them to come.	1	2	3	4
invite my friend.	1	2	3	4
This happened; they didn't come to my undergraduate graduation ceremony, saying "it's only an arts degree" (we can't be bothered)! I held a grudge and punished them 4 years later by saying that they couldn't come to	1	2	3	4

my law graduation.				
I would feel hurt, and would probably not speak to them for awhile. Or not make any effort with them or to do things with them.	1	2	3	4
I would feel hurt	1	2	3	4
Tell them to fuck off.	1	2	3	4
Probably wouldn't care.	1	2	3	4
I would ask them why they couldn't come, probably remind them how important it was to me.	1	2	3	4
I would be disappointed and if further discussion with regard to the importance of their presence did not persuade them to attend I would feel let down and undervalued. The reason for this treatment is something I would have to pursue because their rejection of me and the things I value is not acceptable at any time especially if it is something I would expect them to encourage and support.	1	2	3	4
I'd be very confused and attempt to interpret the situation. I would ask them their reasons for not coming (ie work committments? already committed to another special event with another child or family member?). If reject invitation because they disapprove, I would be very upset and stressed.	1	2	3	4
would get very upset and try to understand why they didnt want to come	1	2	3	4
I would be extremely baffled because my parents are very supportive. I suppose their would be a very good reason or else they would come, so I would be a little disappointed, but it would be fine.	1	2	3	4
I would yell at them, and fight with them about it.	1	2	3	4
I'd ask them why they're not willing to support me in this situation (hard to imagine as I have such supportive parents)	1	2	3	4
Tell them how important the occasion is to me and explain why i would like them to be there - for support	1	2	3	4

etc. Find out why they have declined the request - perhaps they have a good reason.				
My parents are deceased, but I would just accept it without pause because they were not particularly enthusiastic parents, they didn't do much with their own lives and they weren't encouraging in making sure we did something with ours. As a result neither of my brothers have done anything with their lives, and I am an over-achiever, as if to make up for the rest of my family.	1	2	3	4
Ask them to explain why they aren't going to come. Depending on the reason they give me, I might be sympathetic. For example if the reason they declined is out of their control and they want to come but can't I would be dissapointed with them, but wouldn't be offended or dissapointed at them. If they jsut didn't feel like it, I would get quite upset and my dissapointment would be directed at them. I'd possibly argue, which could lead to raised voices and even some crying, depending on how important the event was.	1	2	3	4
i would forgive them, because they would probably have a very good reason for declining.	1	2	3	4
Ask them why on earth they don't want to come! I would feel very confused and a bit taken back. They know it is important to me and they normally support me fully, I would probably start an argument about why they were being slack.	1	2	3	4
Well it would be typical they have never been interested, they have their own problems so i would leave it . if i were younger 20s etc, i would probably feel sad and down.	1	2	3	4
Understand that it was because of something really fucking important and deal.	1	2	3	4
I would tell them I am a bit disappointed, but that I understand that they could have more important things going on. If they don't excuse, I will try and understand why they don't excuse, and how I could have disappointed them earlier without realising it.	1	2	3	4
Ignore them for a week	1	2	3	4

I will be a little upset for declining my request. I am sure they have their own reason for doing that.	1	2	3	4
I would ask why they were unable to attend. If their reason was sound, I would accept it while still feeling sad. If their reason was not sound, I would ask them again. If they still declined, I would be upset, and more than likely avoid speaking with them for a period of time.	1	2	3	4
Tell them and reiterate that it is a special and important occasion to me. That i would enjoy their company were they to attend. However, i would understand if they said no after that, as they have very busy lifestyles similar to mine.	1	2	3	4
I would be annoyed and would want a reason.	1	2	3	4
Get annoyed and wonder what is more important to them than my occasion.	1	2	3	4
I would be very upset. I would probably cry. I would tell them how I feel and that I was angry with their decision.	1	2	3	4
I wouldn't really care about that. They lead busy lives and can always celebrate with me later.	1	2	3	4
upset probably. If their excuses are reasonable, I would be able to understand.	1	2	3	4
I would demand a good reason why and be angry, and let them know that I'm angry.	1	2	3	4
It would only occur with a strong valid reason. Rejection is inconcievable in this context	1	2	3	4
I'd be shocked , and then sulk about it..and feel deeply hurt.	1	2	3	4
I would probably get very angry and would be arguing with them. Which would result in me sulking.	1	2	3	4
Well, knowing my parents they'd have a good reason if they declined, so i wouldn't be too worried and just get on with life.	1	2	3	4
ask why, have a huge fight with them, leave, not tlk to them for a while (few days), maybe cry	1	2	3	4
I doubt they would at all. My parents are very proud of me and love me to pieces. So in the event they did if it	1	2	3	4



wasn't for their health or a very dire situation I would be deeply hurt. Especially if it was in favour of my mom's new partner over me.				
be disappointed and less likely to invite them again	1	2	3	4
I would tell myself that the event wasn't that important anyway and it wasn't really an issue	1	2	3	4
i'd ask them if they were sure they couldn't come, and explain how important it was to me	1	2	3	4
Probably get really annoyed and upset at them, and I would communicate that.	1	2	3	4
Actually, I'm pretty sure they would not do that. If they would, I'd describe to them how important it is for me that they come. But if they have got reasons not to come, of course I would accept that and ask maybe some friends of mine to come to the occasion.	1	2	3	4
I would probably be annoyed but tell them that I understand that they cannot make it.	1	2	3	4
Explain why the occasion is important to me and why I would like them to attend. Try to understand their reasons for not wishing to come. If they are valid reasons, accept them and move on.	1	2	3	4
Act like it wasn't important anyway. Depending on my mood however at the time I may yell at them how they never support me and so why should i support them? Like everything else however I'll get over it fairly quickly anyway	1	2	3	4
I would understand if for financial or work reasons they couldn't come. There aren't many other reasons I can think of for them not to come. If they didn't have any real justification I would feel unloved and probably use the situation as leverage to make them feel guilty in future.	1	2	3	4
I would be surprised but say OK, it's fine, not a big deal. Then I would wonder why they weren't interested and get angry with them for not being interested in my life. I would probably confront them later, most likely after the event, to explain to them how it was a big deal and how I'd felt let down by them.	1	2	3	4

Obviously for my parents to do this, there is a very good reason behind it, feel upset they cant make it but its not their fault that they are unable to attend.	1	2	3	4
Nothing. I may be a little offended, but would probably understand their decision, and would respect it either way.	1	2	3	4
I would probably get very angry at them and want to know why they will not come.	1	2	3	4
Ask someone else special to me to come	1	2	3	4
Pretend it's fine, wouldn't want to make them feel bad as they probably already do.	1	2	3	4
I would proably argue then cry.	1	2	3	4
thats okay - I'd ask someone else.	1	2	3	4
I wouldn't do anything, just attend the important occasion regardless.	1	2	3	4
I'd expect there to be a good reason. If there was then I'd be cool with it and invite some friends instead. If there wasn't, I'd still invite some friends instead but also reduce the amount of effort I am prepared to put into my parents wellbeing.	1	2	3	4
They would only decline for good reasons, so I would say "Fair enough, see you round"	1	2	3	4
I wouldnt really mind, I'm guessing they would have a good reason not to come.	1	2	3	4
I have no expectations where my parents are concerned I haven't seen or spoken to my father in 10 years. However, it has happened before, many times with my mother. Less now as she ages. It's more upsetting the younger you are, but even as a young girl, I never really expected anything as nothing was usually received. In the end, they are missing out on the childs life that they chose to have. If it doesn't bother them enough to come, I wouldn't ask again. I wouldn't say anything to them as I wouldn't even want to change their mind after a knockback. If I have to convince a parent, then there's no point at all. They're either proud	1	2	3	4

or they're not. Nothing I can say to change that.				
I would try to understand why and then i would ask my sibling or close friend to attend it instead	1	2	3	4
I would try and convince them to come but i would be disapointed if they did'nt.	1	2	3	4
i wouldn't do anything as i understand they can't always be there when i want them there	1	2	3	4
I can act more openly & freely with my parents, so I would keep begging them.	1	2	3	4
That would be ok because I know my parents aren't that comfortable in social situations. I tell them I'll send them photos and tell them all about it - they're very supportive no matter what I do.	1	2	3	4
It depends on what their reason is for not coming. If they had something else on, I would tell them that it was fine that they weren't coming. If they didn't have anything else on, I would probably get rather upset that they didn't want to be there for something that was important to me.	1	2	3	4
Ask why, I have a good relationship with my parents, I'd expect them to want to come to something that was important to me unless they had prior engagements. If there was no good excuse... be angry/upset with them.	1	2	3	4
cry. go by myself	1	2	3	4
If it was for a valid reason, then I would fully understand and have no conflict about it. I would tell them that it is ok and not to worry about it at all.	1	2	3	4
This doesn't really happen to me, so it's hard to say what I'd do.	1	2	3	4
I'd be upset and would let them know it	1	2	3	4
I wouldn't really care.	1	2	3	4
I would want to know why they couldn't come. If they already had something on, like an appointment I would explain how important the event is to me and ask them to reconsider. If they still said no, i would be very	1	2	3	4

hurt and confused. If they had something on very important, like were undergoing major surgery the day before the event, or they were leaving on a world trip that had been planned well in advance, i would be a little sad they couldn't be there with me but i would completely understand.				
Depends on what mood I was in and whether I could agree with why they said no. If I thought their reason wasn't very good I would either discuss it with them to let them know how important the occasion is to me, or I would go silent and moody and then at some point have an argument with mum about why her and dad aren't coming. If their reason was good then I would be a little sad but understand it.	1	2	3	4
i would be dissapointed.	1	2	3	4
I would tell them how i felt about that, if i felt anger, i would express that. I would let myself feel and let out whatever i was feeling. I would not yell, but vocalise to them that i felt disappointed or unimportant and sad that they said no.	1	2	3	4
ask ofr a justification, if they did not attend i would expect there wold be an understandable explantiono for the non attendace. for example a prior arranged commitment (spell check does not work !!!!!) how happy am i about this happy () () () () (*) angry	1	2	3	4
I would enquire why they don't want to come and explain that it means a lot to me.	1	2	3	4
Stress how important the event is and repeat request, if they still decline i would persist if viable. if not, make alternative arrangements or get someone else to come along.	1	2	3	4
I probably wouldn't do anything, I'd be quite upset/annoyed and try to ask again but other than that there isn't much I can do.	1	2	3	4
Happens all the time. I play in a band and ask my parents to come to gigs. They don't because my shows are generally too late. I'm not offended. I can't recall any occasion when I had asked my parents to come to	1	2	3	4

something, expecting them to come and they declined.				
I would explain its ok to them, as I would be sure their reason is fair. I would enjoy the occasion without them. Even if I may have enjoyed it more with them.	1	2	3	4
I may try to persuade them, unless they have somewhere else where they can't avoid having to be.	1	2	3	4
Again I would say it wasn't a problem as they are busy however I would be kind of upset & a bit down about it.	1	2	3	4
It very much depends on the reason for them to decline the request. I would be very unlikely to invite my parents to something that was meaningful to me, I prefer to keep my life as separate from them as I can. That sounds quite harsh, but I prefer the independence and dislike involving other people in things I feel passionate about. I would prefer to go alone, especially to important things. So although it is very unlikely I would ask them, if they declined I would be rather glad.	1	2	3	4
very offended not talk to them sad	1	2	3	4
tell them how displeased i am in their lack of interest	1	2	3	4
Firstly I'd ask them why. If they had a valid reason for not being able to come, I'd leave it be. If they were just avoiding it, I'd kick up a fuss and probably not talk to them, but once again, I'd get over it. I don't need my parents there with me forever, I like my independence.	1	2	3	4
Well i would expect it of my father as i havent seen him for a few years but i would exoect a good eplanation from my mother	1	2	3	4
Nothing, they are probably busy. maybe email them a photo of the event	1	2	3	4
I would understand, and probably try and arrange another time to see them.	1	2	3	4
say i was disappointed	1	2	3	4

Respect their decision	1	2	3	4
I would ask them why? If they had a genuine reason, such as work, or other commitments, then of course I wouldn't grumble, but if it sounded like they just couldn't be bothered, or that they didn't want to come, then I would probably try to encourage them.... I'd probably say 'ahh go on, you know you want to' in a joking manner, but inside I'd probably feel quite hurt and wonder why they didn't want to come. I would probably ask my sisters if they knew the real reason, but I wouldn't try to make them come if they'd already decided against it, because I wouldn't want them to turn up simply because I made them feel sorry for me. That would be even worse...	1	2	3	4
<b>RESPONSE: Scenario 3 - You ask a friend to do you and big favour and they decline your request. Describe how you would react to that person in that situation. What would you do?</b>	1	2	3	4
I would express disappointment but let them know that I understand why they have declined. I would be honest about my disappointment with them though.	1	2	3	4
I would be disappointed and I would probably question their friendship for half a minute, before realising that if they have said no it's probably because they really couldn't help me, otherwise they would have, like they have always done.	1	2	3	4
try and understand why they are unable to halep me. and knowing they would have a good reason i would npot be discouraged	1	2	3	4
I would'nt be upset about that they have a choice and I have lots of other friends I could ask.	1	2	3	4

I would go and ask another friend. I would assume that my friend would have a very good reason to decline my request, and I would not take it as a personal insult if they declined.	1	2	3	4
Depending on the ask. But I would probably ignore them for awhile.	1	2	3	4
I wouldn't really say anything I think. I guess if I thought I might be able to convince them, or if I was in a confident mood, then I'd try to change their mind by emphasising how important the favour was and how much I'd appreciate it, and any other positives for them I could think of. But in most situations I'd respect their decision and not bother trying to change their mind.	1	2	3	4
Doesn't matter, ask others for help instead	1	2	3	4
I would be understanding seeing as it was a big favour. I cannot expect them to do it. I would ask another friend.	1	2	3	4
Probably not consider them such friends any more. They should know I really need that.	1	2	3	4
Accept the fact that they are not helping me out and remember it for next time they ask a big favour.	1	2	3	4
I wouldn't be bothered and ask another friend.	1	2	3	4
I wouldn't do much, I think I would understand and be fine with it.	1	2	3	4
try to understand why	1	2	3	4
i would be annoyed with them, because i would have expected it to be reasonable.	1	2	3	4
I would get upset at them, and tell them they let me down. I would forgive them quickly as long as they appeared contrite.	1	2	3	4
i would ask someone else, if applicable, otherwise i would just get on with life	1	2	3	4
I would politely tell them that its ok, and go on with conversation like nothing happened. I have other friends to ask, and as long as the friend didn't refuse rudely to help me (very unlikely), I wouldn't change my opinion	1	2	3	4

of them or be angry at all.				
Id keep in in mind for next time they ask for something (i.e hold it against them and push them away a bit,...unless they had a good reason)	1	2	3	4
I would say that it's ok and I would look for someone else to do me that favour. Hopefully this would guilt-trip them into doing the favour. Or else, I would just really go look for someone else.	1	2	3	4
I doubt that I would ask something from them in the future, and I might close up a bit towards them.	1	2	3	4
Try not to make them feel bad about it and try to create the impression that it wasn't a very big deal	1	2	3	4
I think that I would be a little disappointed if I had asked a friend to help me and they declined my request, but as this was my problem and I was just asking them a favor, I would be more disappointed with myself.	1	2	3	4
I'd accept it because I'm guessing they would have a good reason for saying no but I would probably still feel hurt regardless.	1	2	3	4
Well if it really was a big favour I would understand and try to think of someone else to ask	1	2	3	4
Well mate i was really counting on you but i don't think less of you. I will find a way. (give them the guilt trip)	1	2	3	4
Smile and say that's okay, would not be all that bothered by it.	1	2	3	4
I don't have too many close friends and even if with close friends, I don't expect them to do me a big favour. So in this case, I probably just shrug this thing off and ask someone else who I think may be more willing to help me.	1	2	3	4
Depending on the request, I would probably get annoyed at the friend for a while. I would ignore them if they tried to contact me, and if i saw them in person i would still talk to them but probably not my usual friendly self. If the favour was something that i really needed I would ask another friend, and hopefully they would say yes.	1	2	3	4



I would understand because they would have a legitimate reason, and i respect their decisions. I would possibly ask another friend the favour or re-think the entire thing.	1	2	3	4
ok ill do it myself	1	2	3	4
I would think about all the reasons why they might have declined. I would feel annoyed if I couldn't think of a good reason why they might have declined but I wouldn't speak to them about it. I wouldn't ask they why they have declined because I would expect they might feel uncomfortable telling me why if they knew how important it was to me and I don't see the point in making them feel like that. The way I would rationalize their decision would be to reflect on their character traits rather than my own.	1	2	3	4
i would not take it personally because there are many factors that could be stoping them to say yes and it is none of my business to know why. i would respect their decision.	1	2	3	4
Say 'It's okay', and move on. If they can't do it, they can't do it.	1	2	3	4
really don't know ill have to think about this one	1	2	3	4
im sick of this survey	1	2	3	4
compromise a bit more, or back down,	1	2	3	4
Ask someone else	1	2	3	4
Ignore it	1	2	3	4
if it is a big favour i am probably expecting them not to do it. so i would already be disconnected when i ask them and as such i wouldnt really feel that upset. i would feel nervous still though if i need to find someone to help me still.	1	2	3	4
I would definately need to hear their reason as to why they cannot do me this favor. If they had a good reason i would try to understand, otherwise i would be quite disapointed and potentially distance myself	1	2	3	4

from this friend. i would never ask them for a favor again.				
i would tell them not worry about it and that i would find a way to get the favour done.	1	2	3	4
Be understanding yet annoyed, thank them anyway.	1	2	3	4
Depending on the person; if it is a good friend I would ask them why not; if not a close friend I would simply nod and walk away. However I am unlikely to ask someone for a favour unless I know them really well.	1	2	3	4
If it was a real good friend would most likely be annoyed especially if it is a constant thing. If there is a real reason would probably get over it, as a freind can only expect so much.	1	2	3	4
i would be reluctant to do anything for them in the future	1	2	3	4
I would ask why they wouldn't want to do the favour and accept their decision.	1	2	3	4
Being that this person is my friend I would shrug it off and say no problem. Sometimes a friend can't always help you.	1	2	3	4
i might get indignant, actually. say what the heck, why won't you help me? i thought we were friends. i'd concede in the end, bu i'd be disgruntled about it.	1	2	3	4
I would be upset with them but not too angry. Friends aren't obliged as much as family to help you so i would responded with a simple no worries.	1	2	3	4
It depends on the friend. Some I would be more angry with than others. In general, I would say, "Okay, why can't you do this for me? I have done... for you." If it is a fair and clear reason not to, I would drop it after a couple days and continue being friends with them. If it is not a "good" reason, I would stay mad for longer. I talk to my other friends a lot and so I would bounce the interaction off of them and see what they thought. I value my friends' opinions.	1	2	3	4
I would say that I understand, that it is a lot to ask from someone, but if it weren't so important to me I would	1	2	3	4

have never ask, so I would really hope that they could reconsider. If they say no again, I will let it go with no hard feelings and try to get someone else to help me.				
Depends on who the person was but I would probably tell them how important it was to me and try to understand why they had declined. If i could not understand, i would act as if it was not a big deal in the first place.	1	2	3	4
I wouldn't feel too bad I can always ask someone else or figure something else out. It doesn't hurt too bad if a friend says no they all have their own lives as well.	1	2	3	4
I would talk to them about it. I put myself on the line for my friends everyday and I would want to know why they wouldn't do the same for me.	1	2	3	4
I would ask them why they were refusing - maybe it doesn't work for them or it's not possible. I might be a bit peeved because I often give alot to my friendship. i'd generally open up a discussion about it and see where they're coming from. Talk to them about why I asked them in the first place.	1	2	3	4
I'd only ask a good friend and only if I thought they'd say yes. So saying no would be a shock but I believe I'd be ok without their help. I guess I'd thank them for listening and tell them its alright they said no and that I'd be fine regardless. I'd try and spare them the guilt trip.	1	2	3	4
There's nothing much I could do since I reckon that they would probably have a valid excuse. If not, then I would probably become really frustrated because I do so many favours for my friends and so I could be pushed to the point of yelling at them.	1	2	3	4
I would be incredibly hurt, but be more angry with myself for expecting them to. I would wonder how I got into the situation in which I thought they could provide for me, especially if I always provide for them. I would feel betrayed.	1	2	3	4

find another friend to help out	1	2	3	4
I'd say ok, I understand, and change the subject.	1	2	3	4
Assume they couldn't handle it and deal with it myself.	1	2	3	4
Lie to them and say it's alright and I have someone else to ask anyways. Then try to do them favors in the future to make them feel guilty.	1	2	3	4
I don't think that I would mind this too much, again, I think I would just accept their decision and move on. you never know what might motivate a person to say no, and what other things are going on in their life, I think if any of the friends I had said no then there would probably be good reason for it and I would accept their decision and not hold a grudge towards them.	1	2	3	4
I would be disappointed. I would probably speak quietly and be quite passive. I would say that it was ok and possibly apologise for asking if there was an inconvenience.	1	2	3	4
I would just say "fine" and do it myself or ask someone else. After blowing off some steam, the friendship would probably go back to normal within a few hours tops.	1	2	3	4
Being a friend of mine, where my friends and I share a history of 30 years I am sure that declining is not easy for him too, I am sure he has other commitments, I could feel disappointed but it is his choice.	1	2	3	4
If they had no excuse for why they weren't willing to do me the favor i woul prably ask them why they aren't willing to help and be fairly annoyed at them, but at the same time i would have to accept that I can't force them to do anything they don't want to and place myself in their shoes and view the situation from their perspective. I wouldn't take it to heart too much but I would probably want to know why they weren't willing to do me the favour or try and negotiate a way for them to.	1	2	3	4
Probably overreact because I'd do anything for them. If they had a good reason, I'd deal, but if they didn't, I'd	1	2	3	4

feel rejected and sad for a few days until they notice how important it was				
I'd probably have a winge and attempt to get them to reconsider. If they continued to hold their ground I would be a little hurt and may question our friendship a little but I'd move on pretty quickly. Friends seem to stick by you through alot so one individual incident wouldn't distress me greatly.	1	2	3	4
I'd say, "ok, no problem--do you know anyone else who can help me?" Then I'd look for someone else.	1	2	3	4
Say "Thanks anyway" and ask someone else	1	2	3	4
i would probably give them a bit of attitude considering i was asking them for a favour and thats what friends do for each other.	1	2	3	4
pretend not to care but be secretly hurt and gradually push that person away as i feel let down and rejected	1	2	3	4
i would ask them why? at the same time my mind would be filled with frustration. it all depends on th person i have asked and how much i have done for them.	1	2	3	4
understand that they cannot do it at this point and find another way.	1	2	3	4
If they decline because they disagree with the favour becuase it's something that I shouldn't be doing, then they're looking out for me. So I guess that's fine. But if I'm really desperate and it's something urgent, I would start to feel anxious if I already haven't and go ask another friend.	1	2	3	4
I treat my friends like my family and thus I know if they couldn't do a favour there would be a good reason for it and so I would be fine with it. Maybe ask a different friend.	1	2	3	4
Ask them to explain why they won't do it for me and assuming the answer is half decent I would accept that and try to ask someone else.	1	2	3	4
ask them why they are not willing to help me out, and then probably re-evaluate the friendship.	1	2	3	4
Feel really anxious. Will probably vent any anger if they're really close. Otherwise, again, just pretend it's	1	2	3	4

alright and walk away.				
Proably be very casual and say that its fine, pretend its no big deal at all that i don't really care that they have declined, move on quickly.. change the subject so that they don't think i care very much.	1	2	3	4
Ask them their reason and then work from there. If their reason was fairt enough then I'd accept it, if I didnt think it was a fair reason I would tell them and hope that next time theyd make more of an effort	1	2	3	4
I would be upset. I would ask someone else.	1	2	3	4
I'd be hurt, and probably wouldn't say anything to them but feel really bad inside. I mean if they don't want to do it, that's saying something about the friendship that getting angry wouldn't really help; I'd probably accept their decision and go over in my head anything that I would have done wrong to them and obsess about things so I can find out whats wrong with our friendship.	1	2	3	4
get upset and say something like "Well i did this for you" then go silent	1	2	3	4
If they were not a close friend, I would understand. I also realize that even best friends cannot do everything for each other. You have to learn how to say no. I might be disappointed, but I understand that as much as we'd like to be selfless, we do need to take care of our own needs first, and this is responsibility not selfishness.	1	2	3	4
Feel slightly disappointed at first, but will quickly get over it.	1	2	3	4
I would probably feel a bit let down and unimportant to them, but tell them that its alright and ill figure out a way to do the problem (ie hide the fact that i feel let down)	1	2	3	4
be annoyed. try to undestand where they're coming from, obviously they probably have bigger things to worry about if they're an understanding friend. If not, try to ask them why not, and ask them again if appropriate.	1	2	3	4

I don't know, that would depend on the request and circumstances, whether they could without a lot of trouble helped me etc	1	2	3	4
If the person was my close friend, she/he should have some reasons and i would try to understand them. But could not help feeling a bit upset. If they were to reject me for no reason, i would question the friendship with the person and start thinking if he/she thinks i am his/her friend. I would probably behave in awkward ways a bit.	1	2	3	4
Politely thank them anyway.	1	2	3	4
Id just find someone else, forget the whole idea or just go it alone. Depnding all on what it is. If its an event id not go on my own but if its recreational like going to the park i can do it on my own.	1	2	3	4
When you ask someone to do you a favour you can't expect them to say yes, so I would just do my best to hide my disappointment.	1	2	3	4
i would be disappointed with them but i would more than likely understand their reasons... if they had a crap excuse id let them know how disappointed i was tho...	1	2	3	4
Ask for the reason why they are declining the request, and then see if there is some sort of compromise.	1	2	3	4
I would ask for their reasons, and then I might try asking again, but ultimately I would just say, "Ok, don't worry about it then", and ask someone else.	1	2	3	4
I would be a bit annoyed, but would tell them that it was fine and not to worry.	1	2	3	4
I would be disappointed but would be okay with it if they had good reasons	1	2	3	4
I would be casual, tell them that it wasn't a big deal anyway and that I was sure I could work something else out, then stress about it when I was alone	1	2	3	4
Accept it, but ask why not.	1	2	3	4

acknowledge that it is their right to decline, and ask someone else.	1	2	3	4
i would feel disappointed. i would casually/jokingly ask why he/she would not help me, just to feed my curiosity. if it was a close friend, i'd ask him/her why and try to reason with him/her. i would ask till just before I hit a limit, and then I will drop it. again, I would feel disappointed because I would secretly expect my friend to help out, but then again if the person has a good reason to not want to help me out, I'd feel fine.	1	2	3	4
I would be very upset and I would avoid the friend	1	2	3	4
Nothing, but feeling a bit sad but try to find alternative way	1	2	3	4
I would feel slightly angry because I always go out of my way to help my friends if they need it and expect similar treatment from them. I would tell them how I felt and why. Then I would give them the opportunity to explain why they can't do the favour for me	1	2	3	4
feel upset and depending on the closeness of the friend, tell them i am disappointed and would have done it for them. but maybe that i understand if it is a big favour	1	2	3	4
Apologise. "Sorry it was a pretty big ask, thanks anyway"	1	2	3	4
Would be upset and embarassed but feel I needed to reassure them they made the right decision	1	2	3	4
I would want to know why not, and probably ask if i had given them reason to not want to help me.	1	2	3	4
find another person or try and work it out myself	1	2	3	4
Just carry on as usual. Feel sad.	1	2	3	4
I would accept their response and not ask them for favours in the future.	1	2	3	4
they are free to make there own choices and I may be disappointed, but would respect their choice.	1	2	3	4
Probably just say "No worries" at the time, but would be unlikely to ask them for a favour again.	1	2	3	4
I'd feel a little neglected and next time they ask for something I would hold it agianst them.	1	2	3	4



Allow them to make their excuses and move on.	1	2	3	4
I feel I will have to review the nature of the relationship I have with this friend especially if I know that in the reverse situation I would be willing to help my friend. I would not try to change my friend's mind, but I would question her about the importance of our friendship to her.	1	2	3	4
I would ask why they declined, and see if I can convince them to still help me. Then I would try to understand why, and probably spend a long time thinking about it, possibly quite stressed about our friendship. Finally, I wouldn't probably ask someone else.	1	2	3	4
accept that they dont want to help me	1	2	3	4
I would understand and life would go on.	1	2	3	4
Just say fine, and see if any other friend will help me out with the favour.	1	2	3	4
I'd pretend I was fine and would, again, use humor.	1	2	3	4
Accept the declination. Perhaps it was too big a favour to ask in the first place.	1	2	3	4
I always have a plan B and C, so I would move onto my next solution swiftly, and unless they had a really good reason for declining my request, I would decline any of their future requests for favours, because one, friends give and take, and two, I never ask for help unless I REALLY need it, so it would have been really important to me.	1	2	3	4
Be annoyed, possibly be a bit short with them. That's if they just couldn't be bothered helping me out. If they really couldn't do it, circumstances outside of their control, wouldn't phase me, just say "damn, thanks anyway" or something similar to that effect.	1	2	3	4
tell them that its ok that they didnt help, and then i would probably internally question the strength of our friendship	1	2	3	4

I would ask them again, explaining that it was very important to me and I would appreciate it so much if they helped me, that I would do the same for them etc. Try to reason it out. If they declined again, I would tell them it's ok, and that I understand if they can't help, but would be really pissed off inside but not show it.	1	2	3	4
well it all depends on which friend i ask, if its my two closest friends then i would know its because they have something big they have to sort out or attend or because thy have kids its not possible. If its my friend from childhood, i wouldnt talk to her for a week or more because it would be typical of her not to come unless there is something in it for her, but thats who she is, so i get over it and our friend ship continues . But i actually dont think i ask friends for BIG favours, because i dont want to be disappointed.	1	2	3	4
Be relieved that I wouldn't be asked to pay the favour back at some point.	1	2	3	4
I would be a bit disappointed. But I would tell them it's ok if they have a valid excuse. Otherwise I might rethink how much value I give to the friendship.	1	2	3	4
Nothing, if I asked for something i should expect a yes or a no answer equally	1	2	3	4
If it is a really close friend I would expect him/her to help me out. I would be upset for declining my request but would not treat him/her differently	1	2	3	4
I would ask the friend why they would not do the favour for me. If they give a good reason, I would accept it, and find another way to problem solve. If their reason is not good, I would point this out and ask again. If they still refuse, I would be angry/sad, and avoid the friend for a period of time.	1	2	3	4
Accept that they may not want to put themselves at risk of whatever it may be that I had asked of them. Most if not all of my friends and I have a good understanding of each other, so it would be ok if they said no.	1	2	3	4
I will be fine and would probably ask another friend.	1	2	3	4
Get reasonably upset, but accept their decision.	1	2	3	4

It would depend how close I was to that person. If I wasn't that close I would say something like, 'Oh ok. It's your choice. and perhaps something like, 'That's a shame.' I think if I was a bit closer to them, I would ask them why they chose not to help me out. I might point out that I would help them in a similar situation (if that was reasonable).	1	2	3	4
Probably get annoyed that they declined my request, seeing I would probably do the favour if I was in that situation. Maybe avoid them for a couple of days so I don't create any tension and come back to them when my anger disappears. That doesn't take long though.	1	2	3	4
Take whatever he or she wills to offer and feel grateful about it.	1	2	3	4
I'd be confused, and slightly offended and probably act cold towards my friend for a while.	1	2	3	4
I would only make such a request if I thought it would not unduly compromise them. In the event of a rejection they would almost certainly offer the reason why. If the reason was totally unforeseen by me then I'd recognise it and accept it. No harm done, but rather a better understanding of each other	1	2	3	4
Realize that they weren't much of a good friend anyway, and walk away	1	2	3	4
I would say ok. and then change the topic. I don't want to seem to down.	1	2	3	4
it depends on how much i was relying on them doing it. I'd probably have to start scrambling around for other ways to get it done.	1	2	3	4
thats fine i'll just ask another friend it was their choice	1	2	3	4
Depending on how close the situation was to my heart. If it was truly meaningful I would expect my one best friend to do it and have no objections if she had a thorough excuse, I would understand.	1	2	3	4
be disappointed and probably not want to help them out in the future	1	2	3	4
I would feel a bit put out that my friend wasn't able to help me when I needed them and I would tell them so	1	2	3	4

i'd say 'thats alright' and assure them i didn't mind, but probably with the type of body language that made it clear it was not fine at all. then i'd reassess my options and probably ask someone else	1	2	3	4
Move on.	1	2	3	4
I would try to understand why they said "No". And maybe ask someone else, if it's possible, or: try to solve my problems on my own.	1	2	3	4
I would be angry because it would be a big deal for me to ask someone I trust to do me a big favour. I would probably react by pretending it was no big deal but for the next few weeks put some distance between us as I would be disappointed in them. This is because if the roles were reversed I would do whatever I could to help my friend.	1	2	3	4
Feel a bit disappointed. Try to understand why they are declining the request. If I think there is still scope to negotiate, explain why the favour is important to me, and ask again. If not, accept their answer (particularly if they have a very valid excuse that they are unable to do so)	1	2	3	4
I'd joke around and make fun of them for it. I wouldn't take it to heart though, cause i know i keep really good friends so they must've had a very good reason to not do me that big favour.	1	2	3	4
Come on, I'd do the same for you. I really need your help! It's not like I randomly chose to ask you to do it. I trust you the most and know that I can count on you. But if you really can't do it then I'll just ask someone else. Thanks anyway.	1	2	3	4
If I could ask someone else to help me, it probably wouldn't be such a big deal. If they gave a decent reason for not being able to help, I would accept that. I'd probably wonder why they couldn't if I thought it was a reasonable request, but I probably wouldn't beat myself up over it.	1	2	3	4
Thats fine, they obviously cant do it.	1	2	3	4

I would let them know that I understand their decision, and would thank them for considering my proposal. I would then ask another close friend, or find another way to deal with the situation.	1	2	3	4
I probably be very upset at that person and try to understand why they have declined. Although if it were a big favour I could understand why or why not they have done it.	1	2	3	4
Thank them and ask someone else	1	2	3	4
Wouldn't mind too much. Just tell 'em it's cool and it'll ask someone else.	1	2	3	4
Figure out a way of doing what I wanted them to do and do it myself.	1	2	3	4
depends why they said no, if they didn't think my request was appropriate I would re-evaluate the relationship	1	2	3	4
If I was really desperate, I would ask them again. Otherwise, I would find another friend to help me out.	1	2	3	4
If they have a reason, thats ok. If they don't, they are no longer a friend.	1	2	3	4
Depends on reasons for declining and what I am requesting. No reason and I would re-evaluate the friendship	1	2	3	4
Pretty upset, especially if I have helped them out a lot in the past. Could be bitter for a while.	1	2	3	4
If the favour is big enough then it means that I hold that friend in very high regards and I don't take that lightly. If my friend has a reason for not wanting to do the favour then, that is a choice they have made. They would know me enough to know it's a big favour and have declined then that's their perogative. A favour is not an obligation, it's a request, and requests can be turned down. Just because their choice upsets me, I will have to live with it and move on.	1	2	3	4
i would go look for others for help	1	2	3	4
I would realise that they couldn't help me in this situation and find a way to do it on my own.	1	2	3	4
I wouldn't do anything as they have a right to decline and i have other friends i could ask	1	2	3	4

Say "it's ok" without seeming desperate.	1	2	3	4
Ask them why. Probably trust their reason. It's hard to say without knowing what the request might be. Maybe ask someone else.	1	2	3	4
I would accept that they declined. I may feel a little upset that they wouldn't help me, but everyone is so busy these days and I would understand if they didn't have time.	1	2	3	4
Depends on what it was, I don't tend to ask big favours of my friends. Probably be a bit upset then get over it	1	2	3	4
Figure out another way to do it.	1	2	3	4
First make sure they definitely will not do it, then just tell them ok, thanks, cut my losses and go find a way around that.	1	2	3	4
I'd say 'that's cool, I'm sure I'll find someone' and maybe say something like 'it's not a big deal' then change the subject and ask something like 'what you up to this w/e?'	1	2	3	4
Say 'thats cool' and act as if nothing happened until...they wanted a return favour...paybacks are a bitch	1	2	3	4
If it was really important to me I'd probably argue with them a bit, try to work out why they didn't want to help out.	1	2	3	4
As with my other two written answers, if they had a good excuse I wouldn't care, but if they didn't then I would be upset. I would remind them of all the times I was there for them, helping them out and hopefully that would change their mind.	1	2	3	4
It depends on their reason for declining. I wouldn't ask a friend to do something that is too much trouble for them. If they were to say no for no reason then I probably wouldn't consider them a good friend in the first place.	1	2	3	4
i would ask them and nag them to do it	1	2	3	4

I would ask them why, if i observe that they are making excuses or not being a good friend i would encourage myself to say so. I would ask myself to work up the courage to use my voice and say the truth instead of saying that it was fine, considering that was not how i felt about it.	1	2	3	4
same as parent, but with a lower level of expectation	1	2	3	4
I would be angry at them for being inconsiderate and ask someone else	1	2	3	4
Reason with them, offer to do something for them perhaps, or ask someone else. if it is a big favour, however, you cannot expect that they will definitely comply.	1	2	3	4
If it's understandable that the friend can't carry out the favour, and probably say thanks for letting me know and try and ask someone else.	1	2	3	4
I wouldn't DO anything. I don't feel that my friends are obliged to do anything I ask of them. I might be frustrated if I was asking for something, but I'd get over it. That said, it's not a problem I've had.	1	2	3	4
Tell them its fine if they don't want to, as its my responsibility to get whatever it is done anyway. I am sure they would have a fair reason.	1	2	3	4
If they had a clear reason not to then I would avoid making a big deal of the situation, if not I may make a mental note at the time for next time they want a favour, but will probably calm down later on.	1	2	3	4
I'd say fair enough and accept their decision - I really don't think that this situation would change anything friendshipwise.	1	2	3	4
All of my answers seem quite negative but I would expect my friend not to agree. Only from experience, I have found that even when they do agree I generally get minimal performance. I would rather just do it myself to a better standard. So if for some reason I absolutely needed this friend to help me (the example I am thinking is maybe if I am traveling to an airport and don't want to leave my car there) and they declined I	1	2	3	4

would feel a little silly for having asked. Only a little though and I would quickly forget about it.				
Be fine	1	2	3	4
if that person was a friend they would not decline my request. i don't have fairweather friends.	1	2	3	4
I'd feel like they had no respect. I'm the type of person that does anything for my friends, so I'd only expect they do the same back for me. I'd probably end the friendship with them if it was something major.	1	2	3	4
i would ask why and then understand with reasonable explanation	1	2	3	4
well it was a "big" favor i guess i asked too much of them . i would just deal with the consequences of the favor not being completed myself .	1	2	3	4
I'd tell them it was ok, but maybe become a little passive aggressive. I might say something nasty to them, but nothing too bad. It's not like I'd lose friends over favours.	1	2	3	4
say they are being selfish	1	2	3	4
Not help them out in the future. But would probably not have a falling out	1	2	3	4
It all depends on how important the favour was. But I would like to think my friend would help me out if I needed it. If they declined, I would ask why? and if they had a proper reason I would say 'no worries' and find another solution. But if they didn't have a good reason or seemed like they couldn't be bothered, then I would probably still say 'no worries', but I'd go away feeling kind of hurt. But I would try not to make an issue out of it because I would hate to lose a good friendship (although I'd wonder what kind of friendship it was that they didn't want to help me out).	1	2	3	4
I would ask why they can't do the favour for me, and if I didn't think it was a very good reason then I would try telling them to put themselves in my shoes and understand why I need the favour. If they still say no, I would say nothing more of it and continue on as normal. I would also try to see why they were saying no, try	1	2	3	4



to understand it from their perspective.				
<b>RESPONSE: Scenario 4 – You ask your boyfriend/girlfriend if he/she really loves you and they say no. Describe how you would react to that person in that situation. What would you do?</b>	1	2	3	4
I wouldn't ask them unless I was sure they would say yes. In fact, I probably wouldn't ask them unless they'd previously told me that they loved me. But if it did happen, I would be very upset and would let them know that.	1	2	3	4
I would probably think he's joking and start laughing!	1	2	3	4
well we obviously need to discuss whats going on in the relationship and whether its worth continueing if the feelings are one sided.	1	2	3	4
I would ask them to leave, probably cry heaps, and then examine if I was prepared to stay in a relationship where I was not loved.	1	2	3	4
Cry. Cry a lot, particularly if I felt love for them. I would question why they were with me if they did not love me. (I am assuming that I am asking them if they loved me at an appropriate time in the relationship.) I would actually probably break up with them if their answer was in the negative.	1	2	3	4
Drop the bottom lip and say "Olive Juice you too" (Family Guy Quote- boyfriend would understand I am having a go at him in a sarcastic manner).	1	2	3	4
I don't think I would ask that! I can't imagine asking it. If I did ask it however, it would only be jokingly, or if I was certain the answer was yes. If they said no, I think I'd be pretty shocked. I'm not sure how I'd react.	1	2	3	4

Ask her for the reason and maybe reconsider our relationship	1	2	3	4
I would probably cry and maybe break up with them.	1	2	3	4
Well then, that's serious. If he's not joking, it's time to break up, as hard as that may be.	1	2	3	4
ask if there is any chance they may fall in love with me, and if that answer is still no, then there is not much point staying with them, unless you are not looking for love. I would be very upset if I loved someone and they did not love me back, especially after a long time together.	1	2	3	4
Break up with them	1	2	3	4
I would consider how I truly felt about them, but would consider leaving. I would be very upset and probably wouldn't deal with it well.	1	2	3	4
be hurt, leave, think and stay alone until i understand	1	2	3	4
i would be hurt and probably start an arguement	1	2	3	4
I would collapse. I have no idea what I would do or say to them. Most likely I would still try and see them romantically, but I would show that I was upset. I would be unable to face the world for a few days.	1	2	3	4
I would be quite disappointed and sad, I would probably try and figure out why, by myself and withdraw from them.	1	2	3	4
I would immediatley get upset and ask them "...are you joking?" and then if they actually meant it, I would ask why, and try to get to the bottom of the issue as to why they dont love me anymore, if I did something wrong. I would probably break up with them if they didn't change their mind after the discussion, and would not talk to them for a while after that.	1	2	3	4
depends on the situation. I dont have one so dont know	1	2	3	4
I would cry, and be really inconsolable for a while. Then I would ask him what he was doing lying to me all the	1	2	3	4

while.				
Most likely I would not react too much in the situation, probably reassure them a bit, but would break down later.	1	2	3	4
Try not to make him feel bad about it or pressured in any way in case he felt uncomfortable around me and didn't want to be around me at all, and I'd change the subject and again, act as though it wasn't a big deal.	1	2	3	4
I would want to discuss with them why this was and whether or not this would have an impact on our future together, rather than getting upset I would want to see if we could resolve this issue and discuss whether or not we would stay together as a couple or if there were reasons for such a response.	1	2	3	4
Leave and then cry.	1	2	3	4
Oh my. Well that would be tough since he's been saying that he loves me for 2 years it would be awkward if he stopped... I suppose I'd be hurt and would want to talk about it	1	2	3	4
Depending on how much I liked them would depend on whether I asked them so if I did it would probably mean that I liked them a lot. I would probably be pretty gutted because they hadn't returned my feelings.	1	2	3	4
I would get very angry and upset and ask them why, would be likely to cry.	1	2	3	4
A breakup will definitely be on my card but I may take some time to figure out why he says so. Taking a bit of time out from the relationship is my next step before asking for a breakup if he really doesn't love me.	1	2	3	4
I would probably not be as friendly and chirpy as usual, because inside I am trying to figure out why he doesn't love me.	1	2	3	4
I would no longer see them. I would probably get really depressed and start severely doubting the stability other aspects of my life and choices.	1	2	3	4
turn it into a joke	1	2	3	4

My response would depend on the context, how I feel about them and my motivation in asking. I could be asking them if the response I wanted was 'yes' - whether truthful or not, so I would be surprised that they said no because I only ask when I know what answer I'm going to get. If this were the case I would probably get annoyed at them and wonder why they said that and then think it was stupid of me to have asked but get over it as they probably only said it to annoy me because they knew I was fishing for compliments. If I genuinely wanted to know if they loved me then I would probably feel relieved at their response because I would only genuinely ask that if I didn't love them in return.	1	2	3	4
i would feel hurt and would ask why. i would want to talk about it. if it was temporary (a fight) i would wait for a while before asking again.	1	2	3	4
Be upset and ask why.	1	2	3	4
Why are we dating then? break up with them.. it's not an unsure answer its a No.	1	2	3	4
terminate him/her. Cry lots. After i got home that is. But definitely terminate. Unless I didnt love them, in which case it wouldnt matter	1	2	3	4
back down, probably avoid the subject, avoid eye contact or physical contact, be quietly upset until they left.	1	2	3	4
Discuss it	1	2	3	4
Divert the conversation and then work out whether to continue seeing them when I am alone.	1	2	3	4
feel a little awkward i guess, but it is your girlfriend so all is ok because we get along so well and are really understanding of eachother.	1	2	3	4
If i loved them i'd be very dissapointed, and then begin to consider where this relationship is going. I would probably begin to distance myself from my partner and eventually end it.	1	2	3	4
i would ask them for a reason and walk away.	1	2	3	4

Be very anxious and question them a lot.	1	2	3	4
I would regret having asked them and say "sorry" before quickly trying to move the conversation on before it gets too awkward.	1	2	3	4
Would probably be upset, may try and understand that this doesn't necessarily mean they don't have feelings for me, im just a bit ahead of them. May talk through it and try and understand why.	1	2	3	4
heart broken. i dont think i could be with them if im asking those sorts of questions and getting those sorts of answers. then again Rory and Logan had that situation but i suppose she was comfortable within herself to just be happy to be with him	1	2	3	4
I would pretend to be hurt, knowing deep down that they really do love me.	1	2	3	4
If my girlfriend said no that she doesn't love me, first I would want to make sure that after I received this answer I would be as far away from this person as possible. Rejection hurts, but being lied to hurts even more.	1	2	3	4
i would just sit there, looking at anything but them, trying and failing to hold back tears. i'd get embarrassed and say i was sorry i put them in an awkward position. then i'd run away crying.	1	2	3	4
i would ask them why they were with me then? Most likely would end the relationship if there were no genuine interest in me as a person.	1	2	3	4
Why are we in this relationship? What are you getting out of it? Why don't you love me? What an I not doing? I am very cautious with when I say "I love you" and so by the time I said it I would have a good sense of the relationship. I don't say it all willy-nilly. I am a thinker and so if he denied me then I would be very hurt and probably take that as a reason to end the relationship.	1	2	3	4
I would say that I wish he wouldn't have said it in the first place if it weren't true, that I never thought that he	1	2	3	4

HAD to say it to me. I don't like being lied to and how would I know if any of the other things he had said were true. I would stop saying it to him and wait for him to be ready, if he ever is, to say it again when he really means it.				
Try to evaluate where our relationship really is opposed to where i thought it was. If the relationship was not reciprocal and unhealthy i would try to end it as hard as it would be but it would be overall very disapointing and probably stick with me for a while.	1	2	3	4
I would really be hurt that would be a shot to the gut emotionally. I would probably cry and ask them why not. If we were at my house I would probably tell them to get out of my house, and if we were at his place I would leave. If it were over the phone I would hang up and not answer the phone to his calls for a while.	1	2	3	4
I would say that it was fine. Love takes time and I believe that people come to it at their own time.	1	2	3	4
I would be devastated, especially since we just got engaged! I'd be very hurt and confused given the current relationship I am in. I would probably react with anger too - possibly to protect myself. I'd want them to leave me alone but I wouldn't want to be on my own at the same time. I'd be a overwhelmed. I'd probably want to talk it through and understand why. I may throw a guilt trip their way at some point.	1	2	3	4
I'd probably ask them only if I knew they liked me. I'd have a think about it and give it some time to see if they are changing their mind. If they said no I believe they'd have a reason for, probably to do with timing and self-esteem issues. I think initially I'd be a bit nervous and feel like an idiot for asking, but unless they actually say they didn't like me period, then I'd be fine in an hour or so. If I was staying with them for a while, I'd try and change the topic. Quickly.	1	2	3	4
I would probably be really, really embarrassed. I don't ever want to experience any more one-sided relationships so while I may love and care for that person, if they don't love and care me I would end the	1	2	3	4

relationship to hopefully find someone new.				
Leave.	1	2	3	4
have a serious talk about our relationship	1	2	3	4
I would cry, then I would break up with him because it's not worth my time.	1	2	3	4
If I loved them I would cry. If not, I wouldn't have asked at all!	1	2	3	4
Start crying if I really loved them, and try to change over time to appeal more to them, possibly break up with them before they break up with me.	1	2	3	4
In this situation I would be very hurt and I would want to talk to my boyfriend about the relationship and where he thinks it is headed, especially if he thinks he doesn't love me. I guess I would try to resolve the issue, not in the sense of trying to get him to love me, but in the sense of what to do with the relationship.	1	2	3	4
I would cry and probably leave the venue to privately react to it. Then I would call a friend to discuss it and probably grab a dvd and take away and have a night in with friend instead	1	2	3	4
I would ask how he does feel about me, and ask if there was a possibility that love might still develop. I would start to worry about whether or not he cared about me at all. Depending on his answers, I might speculate about whether or not he was gay. It could be something that would end a relationship depending on his response and description of how he did feel.	1	2	3	4
Having a wife for 6 years and getting a reply such as that after asking if she loves me, puts both of us in a tough spot, I guess we will need to discuss what a waits us, and if this relationship is missing something, maybe it is a stage and can be fixed and maybe it can't be fix and we need to drift away. I am a great believer in love and for me true love is letting go when needed for another to be happy, if I can't provide the love one needs any longer I have to let them go and find it else where. I lost all my family, buried most	1	2	3	4

of my friends in combat; I learned to let go for the price is too high.				
If I felt that they really did love me and didn't expect any other answer from them I would be deeply upset, especially if I was really in love with them. This would be a matter I would have to discuss with them, but at teh same time accept the way they feel and realise maybe they view love differently to the way I do. It would definately hurt me though and leave me feeling upset for a while and would make me question my view on the relationship.	1	2	3	4
I would ask my boyfriend if he ever would and how I could make him love me. If he wouldn't want me to fix it, I'd break up with him	1	2	3	4
I would be a little hurt and may ask them why they feel that way and if they wished to stay in the relationship. The amount of distressed though wouldn't be as bad as it usually would be for a member of the opposite sex though as I know the person must see something that they like in me or we wouldn't be in a relationship in the first place.	1	2	3	4
I would sincerely thank them for their honesty. After that, it would depend on how I perceived her reaction to her own statement. If she seemed amenable to talking about it--we'd chat and find out why and what course of action to take. If she was pretty upset, I'd comfort her or let her be (depending on how upset) and then suggest we talk about it another time.	1	2	3	4
Probably be stunned for a while, and then thank them for being honest, because I'd rather have the truth than what they think I want to hear.	1	2	3	4
mainly would be in shock, would start off with a question about whats changed.	1	2	3	4
cry and break up with them	1	2	3	4
i wouldnt know. cos i am not in a relationship. but probably hurt?	1	2	3	4



shut down emotionally, want very much too talk about it, and cry. a lot.	1	2	3	4
I'd feel really cut, and I would wonder about the relationship. If he has said that he loved me before, I would consider if the relationship is still worth it because it seems that his feelings have changed. Might consider breaking up.	1	2	3	4
I would probably ask them where they believe the relationship is heading. This would also depend on the length of the relationship. If i have been seeing them for a long time then I would probably break-up.	1	2	3	4
Question why they were with me. I would probably get very upset and leave or insist that they leave. I would then probably cry a lot and call some close friends. I would attempt to make things work if I thought it was worth salvaging.	1	2	3	4
i would probably break down and not really know what to do. unless i also didn't love the person, then i would not stress.	1	2	3	4
Will probably try to look strong, say things along the lines of "good. I think we still need time until we can be sure. I don't think I love you yet either".	1	2	3	4
Proably something along the lines of "i knew it!" pretend that its no big deal, change the subject, avoid them, break up with them, pretend i never cared about them in the first place, feel self conscious, feel pretty down	1	2	3	4
I would be shattered. But everyone develops feelings to differing degrees, so I would want to talk about where they thought the relationship was heading.	1	2	3	4
I would be happy they were being honest but I would be sad and upset if it wasnt the answer I wanted to hear	1	2	3	4
If I loved them; I would most likely get very depressed and ask them where the relationship was going, and if	1	2	3	4

it was working for them and just too soon for them to fall in love or if it was never going to get to that stage. In my mind, if I ask that question it starts the relationship on a road to breaking up (even if that probably wouldn't be the case), so I wouldn't ask it out of fear that they don't.				
Get really upset, maybe cry	1	2	3	4
Then I would say, we need to reevaluate our relationship and where we are going / our expectations. In my last relationship of 3.5 years, he said I love you the day before he told me he never wanted to see me again. I was confused. I wished he had been honest with me, talking about how he felt and why he felt that the relationship was falling apart (something that I did not sense). I would be very upset but I would be so glad in the end that we talked about the truth and about how we felt about each other.	1	2	3	4
Shrug it off. It's a very difficult question to answer anyway.	1	2	3	4
I would feel crushed, and very rejected. Would probably not say much and go very quiet and even think about whether the r'ship is worth continuing with. Would tell them that I'm hurt obviously but I'm glad they were honest with me.	1	2	3	4
pretend that was a serious answer, look totally cut then respond - why not? Hope they're joking. Explore deeper concerns, obviously something's there. Encourage him to say why- its important.	1	2	3	4
I don't know what I would do. I'd be very hurt and upset.	1	2	3	4
Definitely feel VERY blue and desperate. But I would try to ask him what kind of feeling he had toward me and if he said there were anything i could do to develop the relationship into a better and more serious one, i would try to do them. I would feel upset but would not lose myself for crying or shouting, rather try to be calm and find 'solutions' to improve the situation.	1	2	3	4
Feel rather gutted, but thank them for their honesty. If I felt able to cope with more details I might ask them	1	2	3	4

to explain it further, however if it was too much I might ask to leave for some space. If I had asked the question before and been lied to I might lose my temper somewhat and demand they explain themselves further.				
Id be cut and then probably figure out if they mean it. If they do then id probably ask if they want to break up or if there are an issues that they feel there is. If they dont then it obviously means they arent ready to say so and that perhaps its too early to talk about such rubbish XD	1	2	3	4
I would only be asking that question if I considered it to be an integral requirement for our relationship to move forward, so I imagine my reaction would be to tell them that I couldn't see them anymore. It's hard to predict though.	1	2	3	4
id be embarrassed, probably upset. more than likely would ask them why, depending on the answer would either work on the relationship or let it go..	1	2	3	4
I wouldn't ask a question like that or tell a girl 'i love you'.	1	2	3	4
I would probably cry. And then, later on, when I have calmed down, break up with them.	1	2	3	4
I would be very hurt, and would probably ask them why they were with me if they didn't really love me.	1	2	3	4
I wouldn't ask the question, but if they answered no, then I would decide that the relationship should end	1	2	3	4
I would probably say 'fine' or 'okay then' in a really cutting way like he was being completely stupid, then I would act cold and distant for the remainder of the time I was with him, step out of the way when he tried to kiss me goodbye so HE felt rejected, then if I was sure he wasn't joking, call and break up with him the next day.	1	2	3	4
Ask if they are joking around. If yes, then playfully punch him, if no then be quite shocked, and demand an explanation.	1	2	3	4

I would initially think he's joking. If he's really serious then I'd ask him why we're together. Continuity of the relationship depends on his answer. And whether I loved him or not.	1	2	3	4
i would suddenly feel very confused because he tells me everyday that he loves me, so I would have expected him to say "yes" every time I ask him if he loves me. I'd ask why didn't he tell me earlier and what happened, and how long had he been lying by saying "yes". then I will reconfirm his feelings, and say that it's unfair to have a one-sided relationship, and decide on a mutual agreement to leave each other. it would have a huge impact on my self-esteem.	1	2	3	4
I would leave	1	2	3	4
ask why. and getting upset about it	1	2	3	4
I would be extremely hurt and confused. I would ask the person to leave and give me some space and then probably cry for a few minutes and try to figure out what had happened. Then I would probably call the person and talk to them about where to go from that point	1	2	3	4
go quiet, feel very upset and distressed. leave the situation	1	2	3	4
In silence... I guess I would be kind of confused but maybe ok. If it is a happy laid back relationship... bringing love into it makes it a little intense. I think I would be ok and love would happen when it needs to. A no answer would not be one sided so it would be ok. Just an "ok" or silence.	1	2	3	4
Would be uncomfortable and probably try to explain they do not need to say anything and try not to freak them out.	1	2	3	4
I would probably sulk.	1	2	3	4
i would brake up with them and try and usderstand why were they with me then.	1	2	3	4
I would never ask a partner this question! But if the issue came up and they said no, I don't think I would	1	2	3	4

want to go out with them anymore.				
I would feel hurt, probably start an argument then discuss whether we should stay together or not. Depending on how strongly I felt about my boyfriend.	1	2	3	4
I would feel very hurt	1	2	3	4
Make them explain themselves, get a nasty argument happening.	1	2	3	4
Break up with them. I don't have time and am worth more than to be with someone who doesn't love me now.	1	2	3	4
Not say I love them.	1	2	3	4
I would be upset and surprised that I had misjudged the feelings of my boyfriend towards me. I would also have to re-evaluate my feelings for him and try to understand what I wanted from the relationship that he didn't want.	1	2	3	4
Stress and be very upset. Then, try to work out a reason for their answer. I.e, do they interpret 'really love' different to me? Is it a 'rebound' relationship for them? This analysis would be done by me, and possibly in conversation between me and close friend. If no satisfactory answer, I would withdraw from relationship and possibly end the relationship	1	2	3	4
say ok and leave the topic alone until they bring it up	1	2	3	4
Cry and ask why not then probably leave the house for a while. Be very confused and convinced that all men are liars. Probably fight with him for a little bit and cry a lot and maybe try to make him feel bad. Move out of the house probably. Not talk to him for at least a while.	1	2	3	4
Cry, be upset. Break up with the boyfriend if he had been lying to me about it.	1	2	3	4
I'd pretend I was ok and try and get away from them and the situation as soon as possible (physically, that is),	1	2	3	4

so that I could get over the hurt.				
Try to understand how they feel about you, perhaps the relationship isn't working and needs to be ended.	1	2	3	4
After 11 years I can't imagine that, but my boyfriend before this one rejected me throughout our relationship and he dumped me 3 times. I was a teenager, and I just kept going back for more, and tried to change into what I thought he wanted. I still feel rejected from that relationship because I'm a petite, pretty blonde with an IQ high enough for MENSA, and he married a tall, obese brunette with a very average IQ, and he says he loves her every day! She rejects him a lot in their relationship, so I suppose that's what he wanted that I didn't give him lol!	1	2	3	4
In my current relationship, that would be a stupid question. It's way too early to even think of getting a positive response to that question. But if I was stupid enough to ask, I'd probably have been in a really down mood and feeling quite vulnerable or very uncertain and my reaction wouldn't be favourable in the least. I'd probably ask them what point was there in me being there then. And then I'd probably leave in a huff. I'd probably have to be really drunk to ask such an inappropriately timed question. If I was drunk, I'd probably cry.	1	2	3	4
I would break up with them, there is no reason staying in a relationship with someone if they don't actually love you.	1	2	3	4
Crushed. Absolutely crushed. I would break down in tears, ask them why not, mainly cry and feel totally rejected and very small. After a few minutes I would start to get angry at them for leading me on, probably start yelling but still crying at the same time.	1	2	3	4
well that has happened to me and for a long time I thought it was because of me, cos I did not have a very stable upbringing. So I tried harder to make them want to love me but it did not work. HOW I respond: angry	1	2	3	4

at me then angry at them then angry at life and who i am and then cry, eat chocolate and read a book for consolation				
Jump for joy.	1	2	3	4
If I really loved them, I would be very deeply hurt, and would probably end the relationship because we aren't working on the same plan. And grieve over it for a while. If I don't really love them either, it would be a good answer, as the relationship could just continue as a friendship "+ extras" without my feeling guilty for not loving them.	1	2	3	4
Rejected, stay quiet and think.	1	2	3	4
I would be very sad and upset for lying to me all this time. Would want to keep the relationship going and see what I could do about it. If there is no possibility of keeping it, better end it, even though I would be very sad. I love him/her very much and he/she actually does not feel the same way.	1	2	3	4
I would ask if they didn't love me yet, or if they could ever love me. If the answer was the former, I would be okay with that, if sad that the relationship was unbalanced. If the answer was the latter, I would consider leaving the relationship.	1	2	3	4
Tell them they are clearly not the right person for me and that i want to break up with them as of this moment. We can still be friends if they wish, but it would take time for me to forgive them for 'leading me along' all this time. (whatever the time frame may be)	1	2	3	4
I will be upset but will not show it. Instead, I will ask them how I can improve myself	1	2	3	4
I'd feel devastated and betrayed. Probably fall into a state of depression.	1	2	3	4
I would react with anger and hurt. I would ask them why they were in a relationship with me if they didn't love me and would say that I did not want to waste my emotional energy in a relationship with a person who	1	2	3	4

did not love me. I would probably tell them to leave (if they were at my house, for example) or leave myself (if we were else where).				
That's happened to me plenty of times. In the past I've cried in front of them. Then after a while I feel like there's something wrong with me, like I'm ugly or some part of my personality is wrong. Plays on my self esteem a bit. Especially when I am in love with them.	1	2	3	4
I would probably ask him to discuss about this further. If he doesn't really love me, then what am I to him, whether or not he wants me to stay around him.	1	2	3	4
I would be extremely embarassed and horrified, and pretend the whole thing never happen and never bring it up again, but get sad about it in private.	1	2	3	4
This is really so far into the hypothetical as to be non-sensical. I'm experienced with relationships and the question of love would not come out until deep emotional ties have been clearly established. In this hypothetical I would be franklly shocked that my perception was so off	1	2	3	4
would be really hurt and then ask why? or say I was just asking, and drop the subject.	1	2	3	4
I would be devastated. and probably be thinking what i did wrong. i would probably be sad for a long time, if i really loved him. and this would end up in a breakup.	1	2	3	4
Actually, that's already happened. it wasn't as bad as you'd expect. We decided we shouldn't really be girlfriend/boyfriend and instead just good friends who occasionally have lots of sex, and so far it's worked out quite well.	1	2	3	4
sit there in shock, start to cry, break it off then go home and think to myself how stupid i was and cut	1	2	3	4
Time to move on he probably is not all that good for me anyway.	1	2	3	4
cry. Ask why. Probably break up with them then regret it and try to get them back. Just generally make a big	1	2	3	4



mess of it				
I'd feel a bit upset but then focus more on the fact they are still my partner and therefore may be able to say it truthfully in the future	1	2	3	4
I'd probably be crushed, but I'd be honest in return. then I'd try to crack a joke or make the atmosphere a little lighter. much later, when I'm alone, I'd probably over-analyse it in my head and have a good cry	1	2	3	4
Give him space, if he wanted it. Re-consider where I am at in the relationship and if we're at the same place.	1	2	3	4
I wouldn't ask, honestly. That's something you just don't ask. Either they say it, or not, you can't force them to say it. But if thi would happen, I would be probably pretty sad and try harder to pleasure him.	1	2	3	4
I would cry! I would be very upset and the relationship would be severely damaged.	1	2	3	4
I probably would never ask a question like that, no matter how long I've been with them. But if I did (and was expecting yes), I'd probably feel hurt, tell them so and see if I can understand why.	1	2	3	4
I'd cry. I'd want to stay away from them. Maybe after a little I'll crawl back to them and try to deal with their and my issues. I'm a sucker for punishment.	1	2	3	4
I'd be silent and probably not talk to them for a while afterwards. I would want to know if they were ever in love with me or thought that they would be if we'd been together longer. Unless they explained themselves, it would most likely end the relationship.	1	2	3	4
My heart would fall out of my body, I'd feel ill and shocked and extremely nervous, anxious and unhappy. I'd try to ask why they felt that way, to see if it was a temporary consideration or if it was a genuine proper feeling that they didn't think was going to change, so that I could have a sense of where I stood. Overall, I would feel exceptionally angry, frustrated, miserable and overwhelmed with self-doubt and hurtfulness, I'd probably not be able to cope very well for some time.	1	2	3	4

Obviously feel hurt and upset. but depending on the situation. whether you have been together for ages, or a few weeks. love is a very intense emotion and id understand if he didnt if it was only a new relationship	1	2	3	4
Dump them. Probably feel a little betrayed and bitter, but would thank them for being honest. I would probably spend the next few weeks/months feeling pretty cynical about life and human relationships in general, but would eventually come to terms with the situation by recalling how liberating being single could be.	1	2	3	4
Break up with them	1	2	3	4
Cry and try to find out whether the relationship is going to work	1	2	3	4
Depends how long we'd been together for. If they'd have previously been in love with me it'd probably resolve in a big fight/break up. If it was only a new relationship I'd be pretty cut but you can't rush people.	1	2	3	4
Cry, then probably get out of the relationship	1	2	3	4
dump him	1	2	3	4
Ask them why they felt that way. I would try to talk things over in more depth.	1	2	3	4
Would attempt to find out what has changed then fix the situation. If 'no' persists then a trip to pub with mates would be on the cards.	1	2	3	4
Leave. Crash car into lightpost/tree on way home.	1	2	3	4
Ummmmmm haha no idea	1	2	3	4
I would see it as a prelude to a relationship end. You shouldn't be in a relationship when the other person doesn't love you. No love, means no respect. Of course my feelings would be hurt badly, especially if I loved that person and it wasn't reciprocated. Sometimes hurt feelings can cause irrational behaviour, especially where love is concerned. I'd be very upset that I actually had to ask the person the question, rather than	1	2	3	4

upfront honesty. I wouldn't respect a person that I was seeing as a partner, that kept that hidden as it's a major part of a relationship ( love and honesty)				
i would ask her whether is she joking. If No, then i would want to know the reason why and try to work things out.	1	2	3	4
I would be really upset and feel as though i'd been rejected. i would'nt know what to do i would probably go home and cry.	1	2	3	4
i would cry, i would probably distance myself for a while to reevaluate the relationship	1	2	3	4
Dump him.	1	2	3	4
After 5 years of saying yes I would assume it's a joke. If it was serious I would cry alot, probably become hysterical. Maybe break up - I'd be devastated.	1	2	3	4
I would get extremely upset. I would question the relationship and everything that had happened within it. I would feel as if I wasn't good enough.	1	2	3	4
Ask them why the hell they were dating me then, then break up with them, then leave.	1	2	3	4
Find out why, probably have a meltdown.	1	2	3	4
(FYI - this pretty much just happened to me 3 nights ago - after over three years together she told me she has fallen out of love with me and we broke up). I first responded with saying it is ok, but it gradually progressed into immense sadness and feeling physically ill. I made 100% sure that this was definitely it and tried hard to understand why. After grieving, I made sure that I would move on.	1	2	3	4
depends on the stage of the relationship and their reaction, if it was new and they said no, without an expression of to much worry, I'd say something like 'that's okay, just wanted you to know...' or something, OR i'd confront the issue and work out weather we should stay together or not.	1	2	3	4

If I loved them I would be devastated...if I didn't love them then I would just move on	1	2	3	4
If I'd expected him to say yes, I'd be embarrassed and upset. I'd probably cry!	1	2	3	4
I would leave them. Why waste the pretty?	1	2	3	4
It depends on the circumstances - if they had said they love me before, how long we had been going out, whether the relationship had been good or not. I can't answer this because there are so many other influential factors.	1	2	3	4
i would feel saddened and probably become closed up and quiet.	1	2	3	4
I would see how it made me feel, if sad, i would say so but i would think and process why i felt sad at a deeper level. I would allow the emotion to be released, cry. I would tell my boyfriend about it, i would say i felt sad, undeserving, rejected,etc, but also tell him why. I would not ask him why he did not love me, i would not encourage feelings of inadequacy in myself.	1	2	3	4
dcline to discuss, this is a personal relationship, but there may be prior history involved. i would understand that there is a emotional and special kind of bond being nurtured other she would be therein the first place leave the topic alone, and expect she may be feel the same thing but unable to prject these feelings yet	1	2	3	4
I would be heartbroken. And probably angry at myself for asking them as it would appear needy	1	2	3	4
That would be difficult, possibly talk about why not and if problems are evident break off the relationship. otherwise work at the relationship to improve things (unlikely).	1	2	3	4
I'd probably think about how I felt to see if it matches, if not, I'd ask if it could match. If the answer is still no, I'd probably break things off.	1	2	3	4
It would depend on the circumstances. It might cause me to evaluate the relationship if I was in love and my partner was not.	1	2	3	4

If I loved her, but she said no, I would be devastated. If the relationship had been going a while, I would probably ruin the relationship by going on about it, and eventually move on.	1	2	3	4
That would be awkward.... not sure.	1	2	3	4
Two words: Walk Away! I have been in this situation several times and my solution is to walk away to avoid prolonging the situation - It hurts extremely badly initially but as feelings for the person fade with time I find that I can eventually move on. It's in a sense a case of being cruel to myself to be kind to the other party; I could never bring myself to try and hang on to one who didn't want me as that would just be selfish and hurtful of me and I'm not that type of person.	1	2	3	4
This one is hard to judge. From experience I find that in relationships I tend to fall in love quickly and get bored almost as fast. So it really depends on how long. In all of my previous relationships I have got bored after about 12 months, so at this point it would probably provide me the opportunity I had been looking for to end things. A little earlier, say 8-10 months I would likely be rather depressed, still break up with them, mope for a week or two and then move on with my life.	1	2	3	4
Really hurt	1	2	3	4
finish the relationship on the spot.	1	2	3	4
Simple. I'd break up with them. No point in wasting my time being with someone who doesn't feel the same.	1	2	3	4
i would be pretty upset but wouldnt show it at the time, would just say "oh" and be sad about it later on	1	2	3	4
If i loved them i would feel a little rejected however i would be happy that they could be so bluntly honest with me most people would just lie i know i have . and since they are still dating me if all goes to plan we will eventually love each other.	1	2	3	4
I wouldn't be very nice about it at all, I might say something like "Good, I've never liked you anyway". Then I'd	1	2	3	4

get really upset, and break up with them, call them back and demand they come back to me.				
say thanks for being honest	1	2	3	4
Find someone else	1	2	3	4
Again, this is dependent on several factors... how long have I been with this person? If it was for quite a long time, then I think I would expect them to say 'yes'... would would I DO if they said no? I have no idea, but I'd be pretty confused. The fact that I asked the question suggests that my answer would be 'yes', and I wouldn't ask it unless I expected a positive answer, so if she said 'no' then I'd ask her why? I'd want to make sure the feeling is mutual, and if it wasn't then I'd have to reconsider the relationship.	1	2	3	4
I would be devastated and I would probably start crying and ask why they didn't love me anymore and when they stopped loving me. Then I would ask if they think they will fall back in love with me. Then I would take some time to think alone about what to do in the relationship.	1	2	3	4

## Appendix I

### Instructions for Coding Adaptive and Maladaptive Behavioural Reactions

Please read the highlighted sections in the article attached to provide you with a brief overview of the different maladaptive behaviours associated with rejection. You are then required to categorise the following responses according to how participants react to experiences of rejection. There are three main types of behavioural responses with which to categorise; an adaptive response and two maladaptive responses. I have asked participants how they would immediately respond in a situation in which they experience a rejection. If the response can be categorized into more than one response type, choose the most **dominant** reaction or the most immediate. Affective responses (i.e., hurt, sadness, distress) are not being examined and thus are not to be categorised as a response type. **Choose “other” for a response which doesn’t fit any category.** Fundamentally, I’m asking what people immediately do (i.e., how they react) to cope with rejection experiences.

#### **ADAPTIVE = CODE 1**

- Discuss/negotiate/Understand/attempt to understand
- Neutral response
- Calm expression of feelings and request for explanation
- Open and respectful discussion of the issue
- A relationship promoting response whereby the goal is to maintain or regain acceptance

#### **FLIGHT BEHAVIOURAL (PASSIVE & PASSIVE/AGGRESSIVE) = CODE 2**

- **Passive, indirect and avoidant behaviours**
- Physically leave the situation
- Withdraw socially or psychologically while remaining physically present
- Less responsive in conversation
- Lowered desire to communicate in future/dread of future interaction
- Withdrawal of love, affection
- Avoid confronting the issue or discussing differences with the other person
- Acting cold and distant, give the silent treatment
- Suppressing one’s true feelings
- Holding a grudge/remembering

#### **FIGHT BEHAVIOURAL RESPONSE (AGGRESSIVE) = CODE 3**

- **Direct, explicit expressions of one’s thoughts and feelings in a confrontational style**
- Verbal and/or physical aggression
- Violence
- Anger
- Lowered empathy
- More negative behaviours such as using a hostile or negative tone of voice, demeaning or mocking

#### **OTHER = CODE 4**

## Appendix J

### Information Letter to Participants

TITLE OF PROJECT: Rejection sensitivity and relating to others

RESEARCHER: Dr Terry Bowles

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Ms Emily Musgrove.

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in research on rejection sensitivity. The research will be conducted by PhD student Emily Musgrove, supervised by Dr Terry Bowles from the School of Psychology at the Australian Catholic University. The purpose of this study is to investigate factors which contribute to and are involved in the experience of rejection sensitivity. You are asked to complete a set of online questionnaires, which will provide information on rejection sensitivity and how you relate to others. This will take approximately 30 minutes.

By volunteering to complete the provided survey your consent to participate will be inferred. As no identifiable information is required you will remain anonymous to researchers. As such, please do not disclose any identifiable information such as your name on the survey. Given that the study is anonymous, withdrawal of the questionnaire data is not possible once it is submitted to the researcher. The results of this research will be kept confidential and will form part of the PhD thesis of the student investigator and ongoing research. The results from the study may also be presented at conferences and be published. All reports will be about average (group) findings and no individuals will be identifiable. Public record standards require that we store data for at least 5 years following completion of the project. All information obtained from you will be securely stored in the store room of the School of Psychology located on the university campus.

You are free to withdraw from the study at any stage without supplying a reason. Questions regarding this project should be directed to **Dr Terry Bowles, on (03) 9953 3117 in the School of Psychology, St. Patrick's Campus, Locked Bag 4115, Fitzroy VIC 3065, t.bowles@patrick.acu.edu.au.**

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the Australian Catholic University. We anticipate that the majority of respondents will be reassured by reflecting upon their feelings and how they relate to others through completing the survey. However, if you feel distressed as a result of this reflection, please contact clinical psychologist Dr Lisa Eisen on 9953 3119 for independent advice about how you can seek counselling regarding improving your situation. Additionally, in the event that you have any complaint or concern about the way you have been treated during the study, or if you have any query that the researcher and student researchers have not been able to satisfy, you may write to **The Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee, c/o Research Services, Australian Catholic University, Melbourne Campus, Locked Bag 4115, Fitzroy VIC 3065 (telephone 043 9953 3157, fax 03 9953 3305). Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. The participant will be informed of the outcome.**

Should you choose to participate in the project your support will be most appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Terry Bowles

Emily Musgrove



## Appendix K

### Questionnaire Package

Please complete the following information and questionnaires carefully. Your consent to participate will be indicated by the completion and submission of the questionnaire. There are no right or wrong answers, don't consider your response too long. Your first response is often the best. Thank you.

Gender: Male / Female  
 Age: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Siblings (number): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Country of birth: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Are you currently studying? YES/NO  
 Marital Status: Single / Married / Defacto / Divorced / Widowed / Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Length of relationship (if applicable) in years and months: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Current living arrangements: On Own / With partner/Sharing / With Parents / Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Have you ever received counselling? YES/NO  
 If yes please indicate for what \_\_\_\_\_ Approximately how many sessions? \_\_\_\_\_

Each of the items below describes things university students sometimes ask of other people. Please **imagine** that you are in each situation. You will be asked to answer the following questions:

- 1) How **concerned or anxious** would you be about how the other person would respond?
- 2) How do you think the **other person** would be **likely to respond**?

**1. You ask someone in class if you can borrow his/her notes.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not the person would want to lend you his/her notes?

Very Unconcerned	Very Concerned
1    2    3    4    5	6
I would expect that the person would willingly give me his/her notes.	
Very Unlikely	Very Likely
1    2    3    4    5	6

**2. You ask your boyfriend/girlfriend to move in with you.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not the person would want to move in with you?

Very Unconcerned	Very Concerned
1    2    3    4    5	6
I would expect that he/she would want to move in with me.	
Very Unlikely	Very Likely
1    2    3    4    5	6

**3. You ask your parents for help in deciding what programs/courses to apply to.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your parents would want to help you?

Very Unconcerned	Very Concerned
1    2    3    4    5	6
I would expect that they would want to help me.	
Very Unlikely	Very Likely
1    2    3    4    5	6

**4. You ask someone you don't know well out on a date.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not the person would want to go out with you?

Very Unconcerned Very Concerned

1      2      3      4      5      6

I would expect that the person would want to go out with me.

Very Unlikely Very Likely

1      2      3      4      5      6

**5. Your boyfriend/girlfriend has plans to go out with friends tonight, but you really want to spend the evening with him/her, and you tell him/her so.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your boyfriend/girlfriend would decide to stay in?

Very Unconcerned Very Concerned

1      2      3      4      5      6

I would expect that the person would willingly choose to stay in.

Very Unlikely Very Likely

1      2      3      4      5      6

**6. You ask your parents for extra money to cover living expenses.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your parents would help you out?

Very Unconcerned Very Concerned

1      2      3      4      5      6

I would expect that my parents would not mind helping me out.

Very Unlikely Very Likely

1      2      3      4      5      6

**7. After class, you tell your lecturer/tutor that you have been having some trouble with a section of the course and ask if he/she can give you some extra help.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your lecturer/tutor would want to help you out?

Very Unconcerned Very Concerned

1      2      3      4      5      6

I would expect that my lecturer/tutor would want to help me out.

Very Unlikely Very Likely

1      2      3      4      5      6

**8. You approach a close friend to talk after doing or saying something that seriously upset him/her.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your friend would want to talk with you?

Very Unconcerned Very Concerned

1      2      3      4      5      6

I would expect that he/she would want to talk with me to try to work things out.

Very Unlikely Very Likely

1      2      3      4      5      6

**9. You ask someone in one of your classes to coffee.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not the person would want to go?

Very Unconcerned Very Concerned

1      2      3      4      5      6

I would expect that the person would want to go with me.

Very Unlikely Very Likely

1      2      3      4      5      6

**10. After graduation, you can't find a job and ask your parents if you can live at home for a while.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your parents would want you to come home?

Very Unconcerned Very Concerned1      2      3      4      5      6  
I would expect I would be welcome at home.Very Unlikely Very Likely

1      2      3      4      5      6

**11. You ask your friend to go on a vacation with you over semester break.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your friend would want to go with you?

Very Unconcerned Very Concerned1      2      3      4      5      6  
I would expect that he/she would want to go with me.Very Unlikely Very Likely

1      2      3      4      5      6

**12. You call your boyfriend/girlfriend after a bitter argument and tell him/her you want to see him/her.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your boyfriend/girlfriend would want to see you?

Very Unconcerned Very Concerned1      2      3      4      5      6  
I would expect that he/she would want to see me.Very Unlikely Very Likely

1      2      3      4      5      6

**13. You ask a friend if you can borrow something of his/hers.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your friend would want to loan it to you?

Very Unconcerned Very Concerned1      2      3      4      5      6  
I would expect that he/she would willingly loan me it.Very Unlikely Very Likely

1      2      3      4      5      6

**14. You ask your parents to come to an occasion important to you.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your parents would want to come?

Very Unconcerned Very Concerned1      2      3      4      5      6  
I would expect that my parents would want to come.Very Unlikely Very Likely

1      2      3      4      5      6

**15. You ask a friend to do you a big favour.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your friend would do this favour?

Very Unconcerned Very Concerned1      2      3      4      5      6  
I would expect that he/she would willingly do this favour for me.Very Unlikely Very Likely

1      2      3      4      5      6

**16. You ask your boyfriend/girlfriend if he/she really loves you.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your boyfriend/girlfriend would say yes?

Very Unconcerned					Very Concerned
1	2	3	4	5	6
I would expect that he/she would answer yes sincerely.					
Very Unlikely					Very Likely
1	2	3	4	5	6

**17. You go to a party and notice someone on the other side of the room and then you ask them to dance.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not the person would want to dance with you?

Very Unconcerned					Very Concerned
1	2	3	4	5	6
I would expect that he/she would want to dance with me.					
Very Unlikely					Very Likely
1	2	3	4	5	6

**18. You ask your boyfriend/girlfriend to come home to meet your parents.**

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your boyfriend/girlfriend would want to meet your parents?

Very Unconcerned					Very Concerned
1	2	3	4	5	6
I would expect that he/she would want to meet my parents.					
Very Unlikely					Very Likely
1	2	3	4	5	6

***Now, please imagine you are in the following situations. For each scenario please indicate how you would most likely respond using the categories below.***

**Response style 1**

- Withdraw from the situation
- Avoid discussing the issue or bringing it up
- Pretend like it didn't happen
- Act cold or distant toward that person/Give the silent treatment
- Hold a grudge/remember

**Response style 2**

- You would get angry/aggressive, say something rude
- Use hostile or negative tone of voice
- Directly express yourself in a confrontational manner

**Response style 3**

- Calmly express your feelings and ask for an explanation
- Openly discuss the issue
- Try to understand/negotiate

1	You find out your best friend/mate is having a party and hasn't invited you. Upon finding out, how do you react?	1	2	3
2	You and your boyfriend/girlfriend/partner have been discussing going on a holiday together. You find out however he/she has decided to go somewhere with his/her friends instead and you're not invited. Upon finding out, how do you react?	1	2	3
3	Your sister/brother is getting married and informs you that you won't be a bridesmaid/groomsman despite you having had them in your bridal party. Upon finding out, how do you react?	1	2	3

Listed below are a number of statements concerning personal attitudes and traits. Read each item and decide whether the statement is *true* or *false* as it pertains to you personally.

	Statement	True	False
1	It is sometimes hard for me to go on with my work if I am not encouraged.	True	False
2	I sometimes feel resentful when I don't get my way.	True	False
3	On a few occasions, I have given up doing something because I thought too little of my ability.	True	False
4	There have been times when I felt like rebelling against people in authority even though I knew they were right.	True	False
5	No matter who I'm talking to, I'm always a good listener.	True	False
6	There have been occasions when I took advantage of someone.	True	False
7	I'm always willing to admit it when I make a mistake.	True	False
8	I sometimes try to get even rather than forgive and forget.	True	False
9	I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable.	True	False
10	I have never been irked when people expressed ideas very different from my own.	True	False
11	There have been times when I was quite jealous of the good fortune of others.	True	False
12	I am sometimes irritated by people who ask favours of me.	True	False
13	I have never deliberately said something that hurt someone's feelings.	True	False

Using the scale 1 = Never and 5 = Always, rate how frequently you use each of the following styles to deal with arguments or disagreements with your partner. If you are **not** currently in an intimate relationship, please indicate how frequently used each of the following styles in **your previous intimate relationships**.

	Statement	Never	Hardly ever	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	Launching personal attacks	1	2	3	4	5
2	Focusing on the problem at hand	1	2	3	4	5
3	Remaining silent for long periods of time	1	2	3	4	5
4	Not being willing to stick up for myself	1	2	3	4	5
5	Exploding and getting out of control	1	2	3	4	5
6	Sitting down and discussing differences constructively	1	2	3	4	5
7	Reaching a limit, "shutting down," and refusing to talk any further	1	2	3	4	5

8	Being too compliant.	1	2	3	4	5
9	Getting carried away and saying things that aren't meant.	1	2	3	4	5
10	Finding alternatives that are acceptable to each of us	1	2	3	4	5
11	Tuning the other person out	1	2	3	4	5
12	Not defending my position.	1	2	3	4	5
13	Throwing insults and digs.	1	2	3	4	5
14	Negotiating and compromising	1	2	3	4	5
15	Withdrawing, acting distant and not interested	1	2	3	4	5
16	Giving in with little attempt to present my side of the issue	1	2	3	4	5

Thank you for your participation it is greatly appreciated.

## Appendix L

### Australian Catholic University Human Research Ethics Committee Approval

Australian Catholic University  
Brisbane Sydney Canberra Ballarat Melbourne



Human Research Ethics Committee

Committee Approval Form

**Principal Investigator/Supervisor:** Dr Terry Bowles **Melbourne Campus**

**Co-Investigators:** Dr Lisa Eisen **Melbourne Campus**

**Student Researcher:** Emily Musgrove **Melbourne Campus**

**Ethics approval has been granted for the following project:**

Rejection Sensitivity and Relating to Others

**for the period:** 18.08.2009 to 06.07.2010

**Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) Register Number:** V2009 71

**The following standard conditions as stipulated in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans* (2007) apply:**

- (i) that Principal Investigators / Supervisors provide, on the form supplied by the Human Research Ethics Committee, annual reports on matters such as:
  - security of records
  - compliance with approved consent procedures and documentation
  - compliance with special conditions, and
- (ii) that researchers report to the HREC immediately any matter that might affect the ethical acceptability of the protocol, such as:
  - proposed changes to the protocol
  - unforeseen circumstances or events
  - adverse effects on participants

The HREC will conduct an audit each year of all projects deemed to be of more than low risk. There will also be random audits of a sample of projects considered to be of negligible risk and low risk on all campuses each year.

Within one month of the conclusion of the project, researchers are required to complete a *Final Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer.

If the project continues for more than one year, researchers are required to complete an *Annual Progress Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer within one month of the anniversary date of the ethics approval.

Signed: .....

(Research Services Officer, Melbourne Campus)

Date: .....