

Factors associated with responses to potential rejection by specific others

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Abstract

The present study is an extension of our prior work (Jones et al., 2016) and explored two specific goals. The primary goal examined the predictive ability of target-specific, rejection-relevant individual difference measures on participants' anticipated emotional and behavioral responses to ambiguous social situations involving specific potential rejectors (i.e., significant others, friends, acquaintances). The secondary goal explored differences in participants' anticipated emotional and behavioral responses to perceived rejection by the same potential rejectors. Concerning the primary goal, correlations revealed that previous experience with and/or sensitivity to being rejected by any individual is associated with heightened anticipated emotional responses which, in turn, is associated with different anticipated behavioral responses. However, path analyses revealed that the target-specific, rejection-relevant individual difference variables used in the current study were uniquely predictive of participants' anticipated responses to ambiguous social situations involving similar potential rejectors, but only for those who read about potentially being rejected by a friend (results of the path analyses for those who read about potential rejection by significant others or acquaintances were uninterpretable). Concerning the secondary goal, analyses revealed that the intensity of the emotional responses as well as the type of behavioral response were dependent on the role of the potential rejector. Taken together, the present findings provide insight into the individual differences associated with our tendency to feel and behave as if we have been rejected within ambiguous social situations and help to shed additional light on the dyadic nature of interpersonal rejection.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Humans have always been motivated to establish and maintain meaningful social relationships. Indeed, because we are a social species, some theorists (e.g., Baumeister & Leary, 1995; de Waal, 2005) contend that humans are driven to establish such relationships and possess a fundamental need to belong that instills in us a desire to be accepted by others. In arguing that this need to belong is, in fact, a fundamental need, Baumeister and Leary (1995) contend that possessing a strong desire to establish and maintain social bonds likely had significant implications for our ancestors' survival. Specifically, our ancestors who desired acceptance and were able to join social communities were also afforded basic resources necessary for survival such as better protection from rival tribes, more access to food sources, and significantly better odds of finding a mate than those who were left to fend for themselves (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Buss, 1990).

Still consistent with the evolutionary psychology perspective, individuals who did not desire group membership, were unable to be accepted into larger groups, or had been excluded from their existing group would most likely not have had adequate access to these resources, thus decreasing their overall odds of survival. Therefore, those who valued positive social interactions and sought out group membership were not only more likely to have access to these basic resources necessary for survival (e.g., protection from others, better access to food), they were also more likely to pass these values onto future generations, thus perpetuating the belief that social acceptance is necessary for survival (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Indeed, threats to our ancestors' survival and reproductive opportunities by means of rejection and exclusion may help to explain why we have developed a general fear of being rejected (e.g., Buss, 1990; de Waal, 2005).

Still adopting an evolutionary perspective, several researchers argue that as a social species we have evolved detection systems that are sensitive and focused on what others think about us and can accurately detect when we are being rejected (e.g., Gilbert, 2007; Kerr & Levine, 2008; Pickett, Gardner, & Knowles, 2004; Wesselmann, Nairne, & Williams, 2012). This tendency for us to focus on our social standing within a given group helps to explain why interpersonal rejection is a highly aversive (Leary, 2001; Nezlek, Kowalski, Leary, Blevins, & Holgate, 1997) and painful experience, both physiologically (Eisenberger, Lieberman, & Williams, 2003) and socially (MacDonald & Leary, 2005). Despite our aversion to being rejected, we are still likely to encounter rejection at some point in our lives due to our fundamental need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) which, consequently, motivates us to seek out new and meaningful relationships. Although our pursuit for acceptance has the potential to yield significant interpersonal relations with others, it can also place us at risk of being rejected. It is also important to recognize that specific individuals, rather than entire groups, are often the ones doing the rejecting (Buss, 1990) and being rejected by these individuals can prompt a variety of emotional and behavioral responses toward the perceived rejector (Leary, 2001; Leary, Twenge, & Quinlivan, 2006; Williams & Zadro, 2001).

Emotional Responses to Rejection

When we get rejected, we are likely to experience a variety of emotional responses. For instance, interpersonal situations in which there is a general absence of active communication between the rejector and the target are likely to prompt an increased state of emotional arousal within the target (Gerber & Wheeler, 2009; Williams, 2007). Furthermore, common emotional responses to rejection include feelings of irritation, anger, sadness, anxiety, loneliness, anguish, and shame (Kelly, 2001; Leary, Koch, & Hechenbleikner, 2001; Mendes, Major, McCoy, &

Blascovich, 2008). Put simply, when we experience rejection we are likely to experience heightened emotional arousal as well as heightened emotional distress.¹ However, there may be considerable variability in the extent to which rejected individuals experience each of these emotions. For instance, Leary (2001; 2005) discusses rejection in terms of one's relational devaluation which is the perception that one is no longer valued within a given relationship, thus resulting in heightened feelings of rejection and/or lower self-esteem. According to Leary (2001), this sense of relational devaluation also exists on a continuum ranging from simply being ignored to explicitly being rejected, abandoned, or banished. Indeed, individuals who experience extreme devaluation within a given relationship may have a more intense emotional response (e.g., heightened feelings of emotional arousal and/or emotional distress) than those who experience relatively little relational devaluation (see Leary, 2001). Furthermore, and again adopting an evolutionary perspective, our negative emotional responses to rejection may be adaptive in that they help to warn us that our social status is in danger and, subsequently, prompt us to take action to gain (or regain) a social connection with others (Leary et al., 2001).

Behavioral Responses to Rejection

Although our emotional responses to rejection tend to be rather straightforward (i.e., emotional arousal and/or emotional distress), our subsequent behavioral responses appear to be relatively complex. Specifically, Williams and Zadro (2005) contend that when we experience rejection, either real or imaginary, our common behavioral responses include (a) avoiding, (b) responding antisocially (e.g., retaliating, complaining), or (c) responding prosocially (e.g., acting friendly) toward the rejector.

Avoidant Responses

As previously discussed, interpersonal rejection is an aversive experience that is typically associated with physiological and social pain. More specifically, research has shown that the social pain experienced when rejection occurs is based on the belief that one is no longer valued within a given relationship (MacDonald & Leary, 2005). Therefore, it is understandable why some individuals may be motivated to respond to actual or perceived rejection by avoiding the situation and/or the rejector. Furthermore, MacDonald and Leary (2005) argue that chronically rejected individuals tend to be acutely aware of the social cues associated with rejection (e.g., the negative emotions associated with heightened feelings of relational devaluation) and are likely to employ an avoidant behavioral response when these cues are detected in order to diminish the negative effects (i.e., pain) of rejection.

In a similar vein, stigmatized individuals are likely to avoid others in order to diminish the negative consequences of being devalued (Miller & Kaiser, 2001). Indeed, Miller and Kaiser (2001) contend that stigmatized individuals may attempt to avoid physical or social contact with a potential stigmatizer in an attempt to minimize further stigmatization. Considering the commonalities shared between rejection and stigmatization, such as a sense of relational devaluation (Leary, 2001) and threatened belonging (Smart Richman & Leary, 2009), it is reasonable to assume that rejected individuals may also attempt to avoid physical or social contact with a potential rejector in order to reduce the threat of further rejection. For example, an individual who perceives that he or she has been rejected by another person may respond by choosing to ignore the rejection and/or *temporarily* avoiding the potential rejector in an attempt to keep the interpersonal relation from deteriorating further. However, we do not always respond

to rejection by avoiding the rejector. Instead, we may display an antisocial behavioral response to being rejected.

Antisocial Responses

A considerable amount of research has focused on the tendency for individuals to respond antisocially to interpersonal rejection (e.g., Ayduk, Gyurak, & Luerksen, 2008; Twenge, 2005; Twenge, Baumeister, Tice, & Stucke, 2001). Investigations into this topic have found that rejected individuals tend to display heightened antisocial behavioral responses (e.g., retaliation) toward the person who rejected them (see Twenge, 2005 for a review). For example, Ayduk et al. (2008) conducted a study in which participants were told that they would be working with another person on a given task after they provided some personal information. However, after providing their information, the participants were informed that they would not be able to work with the other person in the study for one of two reasons. Specifically, the participants' inability to work with the other person was attributable to (a) the other's rejection of the participant (i.e., after reading the personal information provided by the participant, the other decided not to work with the participant, purportedly choosing to work alone) or (b) factors beyond the other's control (i.e., technical difficulties). Participants were then asked if they would be willing to help the experimenter run the next study by preparing a sample of hot sauce to ostensibly be consumed by the person they were initially supposed to work with in order to assess "how specific personality variables correlated with taste preferences for different kinds of foods (e.g., spicy, salty, sweet)" while also being informed that the other person especially dislikes spicy food (Ayduk et al., 2008, p. 778). According to Ayduk et al. (2008), those who were forced to work alone because they were rejected were more likely to aggress toward the perceived source

of rejection by allocating significantly more hot sauce to be ostensibly consumed by the other participant than those who were forced to work alone because of technical difficulties.

Research involving children and adolescents has revealed a similar pattern of results. For example, Crick and Grotpeter (1995) found that children who have been rejected by their peers are more likely to engage in relationally aggressive behaviors in an attempt to potentially damage the rejector's relationship with others. According to Crick and Grotpeter (1995), such relational aggression may be a form of retaliation wherein the rejected child is trying to compensate for his or her lack of inclusion by trying to damage the rejector's own social status. Put simply, research (e.g., Ayduk et al., 2018; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Thompson & Richardson, 1983; Twenge, 2005) has frequently demonstrated the tendency for rejected individuals to retaliate against their perceived rejectors.

Unfortunately, in the extreme, this tendency for retaliation in the wake of rejection can sometimes turn fatal. For instance, investigators (e.g., Leary, Kowalski, Smith, & Phillips, 2003; Wike & Fraser, 2009) have noted that a majority of perpetrators of school shootings are chronic victims of rejection from peers, and their horrendous actions appear to be retaliation against those who they perceived as having rejected them. In one relevant investigation, Leary et al. (2003) conducted case studies of the 15 U.S. school shootings that occurred between 1995 and 2001, and found that the perpetrators had experienced acute or chronic rejection in all but two of these tragic events. Indeed, one theory on the occurrence of school shootings is that the perpetrators respond in such a violent manner to send a message to those who had excluded them that they still exist (Williams & Nida, 2011). Such a theory is consistent with Pinker's (1997) coverage of the "amok" phenomenon wherein individuals who have experienced some form of social rejection or loss (e.g., loss of love) go on homicidal "sprees" as a "means of deliverance

from an unbearable situation” (p. 364). Although, fortunately, not all who experience rejection respond in such a lethal manner, these patterns of behavior from both children and adults provide insight into the extent to which some people will retaliate when they experience rejection.

Our antisocial behavioral response to rejection may not always be as extreme as retaliation. For instance, some individuals tend to respond antisocially by simply complaining about being rejected. In a study by Williams et al. (2002), participants were introduced to two confederates and told that they would all be communicating within an online chat room. Participants in the rejection condition were initially included in the online conversation but were eventually excluded when the two confederates began to only acknowledge each other and ignore the participants’ comments and opinions. In response to being rejected, some participants in this study vocalized their concern about being rejected and complained to the confederates. According to Williams et al. (2002), one such participant complained about being rejected by saying, “...come on talk to me! I feel like a nigel” (i.e., Australian slang for a person without friends; p. 73). Although these findings suggest that we may respond to rejection with an antisocial behavioral response (i.e., retaliating against and/or complaining to the rejector), research (e.g., Williams & Govan, 2005) also suggests that there is the potential for rejection to elicit a prosocial response.

Prosocial Responses

Despite the potential for rejection to elicit avoidant or antisocial responses, some rejected individuals may be motivated to respond prosocially in an attempt to reestablish and repair their relationship status (Maner, DeWall, Baumeister, & Schaller, 2007). Similarly, in their review of the various prosocial responses to rejection, Williams and Govan (2005) argue how responding prosocially when rejected may help to boost one’s “inclusionary status” (p. 48). Indeed,

previous research on rejection in the workplace has revealed that some rejected individuals tend to work harder on tasks assigned to them in an attempt to demonstrate their importance to the group and to increase their inclusionary status (Williams & Sommer, 1997). In addition, a study by Gardner, Pickett, and Brewer (2000) revealed that individuals who were rejected by a peer via an online chatroom and subsequently were asked to read personal information (i.e., a diary) relevant to the rejector tended to remember significantly more information about the peer-rejector than the participants who had been accepted. According to Gardner et al. (2000), some rejected individuals may be highly motivated to remember personal information about their rejector because this information could help them to be more successful in future social interactions with that person.

Similarly, Derfler-Rozin, Pillutla, and Thau (2010) found that when some individuals were at risk of being rejected by a peer (i.e., the social cues associated with rejection were present but the rejector's intent was unknown), they acted in a prosocial manner (i.e., they were especially trusting of others and reciprocated others' behaviors) in an attempt to reconnect with the potential rejector and to prevent being actually rejected. Additional research on this topic has found that individuals who have been rejected are also especially likely to mimic another's behavior (i.e., engage in a subtle behavioral change that may help individuals overcome rejection; Lakin, Chartrand, & Arkin, 2008) and obediently follow others' directions (Riva, Williams, Torstrick, & Montali, 2014) in an attempt to preserve, or even repair, their inclusionary status.

Concluding Comments Concerning Emotional and Behavioral Responses to Rejection

As the preceding brief literature review suggests, there are numerous emotional and behavior responses to actual or perceived rejection. However, the apparent variability in these responses hints at the existence of individual differences that may ultimately influence the nature and intensity of our responses. Indeed, prior research (e.g., Ayduk et al., 2008) has shown that there are individual differences in our tendencies to perceive (and misperceive) ourselves as being rejected in various situations. For example, in a situation in which one individual feels as if he or she has been harshly rejected, another individual may perceive nothing more than an innocent social interaction or an unintentional slight. Individual differences in the tendency to perceive oneself as being rejected are especially likely to occur in social situations in which the intent of the other is ambiguous (Downey, Lebolt, Rincón, & Freitas, 1998). Furthermore, an individual who mistakenly concludes that he or she has been rejected within an ambiguous social situation may respond to the presumed rejector in a negative manner (e.g., retaliation) which, in turn, could prompt a negative counter-response from the presumed rejector, further perpetuating the individual's misguided belief that he or she is, indeed, being rejected (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Additional research is needed to better understand the interpersonal factors and individual difference variables that may contribute to our tendency to feel and act as if we have been rejected in ambiguous social situations.

Individual Difference Variables

One individual difference variable that has been shown to heighten some individuals' perception of being rejected in ambiguous social situations is rejection sensitivity. Rejection sensitivity refers to an individual's tendency to anxiously anticipate, easily perceive, and

generally overreact to experiences of social rejection (Ayduk et al., 2000; Downey & Feldman, 1996; Downey et al., 1998). In a relevant investigation, Downey et al. (1998) found that heightened scores on rejection sensitivity were associated with individuals' interpersonal attributions and expectations, resulting in the perception of rejection when rejection cues were either ambiguous or nonexistent. Furthermore, Zimmer-Gembeck and Nesdale (2013) found that individuals with relatively high rejection sensitivity scores were likely to react negatively (i.e., seek retribution against the other) when rejection cues were ambiguous. Similarly, individuals who are highly sensitive to the possibility of being rejected may engage in certain behaviors that ultimately result in them being rejected by others (i.e., their expectancy about being rejected results in a self-fulfilling prophecy; Downey, Freitas, Michaelis, & Khouri, 1998).

Another factor that may be associated with differences in individuals' tendencies to perceive rejection in ambiguous social situations is their prior experience with rejection. For example, research on social information processing (e.g., Dodge et al., 2003) has demonstrated that individuals who have experienced a heightened level of rejection from peers during early childhood tend to develop a distorted perception of later social encounters and, as a result, may react in an aggressive manner toward presumed rejectors without clear provocation. Stated differently, children who have experienced chronic rejection are likely to develop a negative mental model of interpersonal relationships that is likely to negatively impact their relationships later in life (Miller & Kaiser, 2001). Such mental models can become the foundation of one's tendency to communicate with and relate to others in a particular manner (Miller & Kaiser, 2001). For example, possessing a negative mental model of social encounters is likely to have a deleterious effect on how one interacts with others as well as negatively affect how one interprets ambiguous social interactions. Thus, individuals who have considerable experience with being

rejected, like those with heightened rejection sensitivity, may be especially likely to feel and act as if they have been rejected, even when the actual intent of the other is unclear.

To examine these contentions, our prior research (Jones, Barnett, Wadian, & Sonnentag, 2016) sought to investigate various individual difference variables concerning rejection-relevant attitudes and experiences that may influence the extent to which some individuals feel and act as if they have been rejected in ambiguous social situations. Indeed, the current investigation is an extension of the Jones et al. (2016) study, and was designed to address some of the shortcomings of this prior research.

Prior Research and Foundation for the Present Study²

In our prior study (Jones et al., 2016), we sought to investigate individual difference variables concerning rejection-relevant attitudes (i.e., rejection sensitivity and hostile attribution bias) and experiences that may influence the extent to which individuals feel and act as if they have been rejected in ambiguous social situations.³ This previous investigation was developed as an adaptation of our research on children's and adolescents' anticipated responses to ambiguous teases (i.e., teases that are devoid of relationship, facial, and verbal cues; Barnett, Barlett, Livengood, Murphy, & Brewton, 2010; Barnett, Nichols, Sonnentag, & Wadian, 2013; Sonnentag, Barnett, Wadian, & Nichols, 2016). These topics are similar in that being on the receiving end of an ambiguous social encounter or an ambiguous tease are both common interpersonal experiences wherein the misinterpretation of the other's intent could lead to a series of negative counter-responses that are likely to damage one's interpersonal relations.

In the Barnett et al. (2013) study, adolescents' negative attitudes toward teases and their negative experiences with teases significantly predicted a negative emotional response to ambiguous teases posted on simulated Facebook pages which, in turn, significantly predicted

negative behavioral responses toward the individuals who posted the ambiguous teases. Similar to these findings concerning ambiguous teases, the Jones et al. (2016) study predicted that participants' rejection-relevant attitudes (i.e., rejection sensitivity and hostile attribution bias) and experiences would predict a negative anticipated emotional response which, in turn, would predict negative anticipated behavioral responses to the other individual in the ambiguous social situations.

Method and Materials for the Jones et al. (2016) Study

Undergraduate participants were asked to complete a series of questionnaires designed to assess their general experiences with and attitudes relevant to being rejected (i.e., rejection sensitivity, hostile attribution bias). Consistent with Barnett et al. (2013), participants' ratings of (a) their experience with being rejected by various individuals and (b) their responses concerning their tendency to attribute hostile intent when another individual's actual intent is unknown were aggregated to create an overall experience with rejection score ($\alpha = .67$) and a hostile attribution bias (HAB) score ($\alpha = .72$). Following completion of the HAB, participants in the Jones et al. (2016) study were administered the Adult Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire (A-RSQ, Berenson et al., 2009). The A-RSQ is a modified version of the original Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire (Downey & Feldman, 1996) and consists of nine interpersonal situations involving various individuals (e.g., family members, friends, employers). Participants' responses to these items were combined in such a manner (see the Method section of the current investigation for a detailed description of how rejection sensitivity is scored) that relatively high average scores on this measure reflected a heightened sensitivity about being rejected by various others ($\alpha = .69$). Participants were then given six interpersonal scenarios (i.e., two significant other, two friend, two acquaintance scenarios), one at a time, that described hypothetical situations in which

another individual's behavior has an uncertain intent and could be interpreted as rejection. Following each scenario, the extent of the participants' anticipated negative emotional and behavioral responses was assessed. Specifically, participants' anticipated emotional responses to a given scenario were assessed by asking them to rate how much they would feel seven different emotions (e.g., upset, angry) if they were to experience this situation. Consistent with the procedure used by Barnett et al. (2013) to assess negative emotional responses to teases, participants' ratings of the seven anticipated emotional responses were averaged across all six scenarios to create a single Negative Emotional Response (NER) score ($\alpha = .86$). As in the Barnett et al. (2013) study, a relatively high average score on the aggregate measure indicated that a participant would anticipate responding to these ambiguous situations with a heightened negative emotional response.

Still consistent with Barnett et al. (2013), participants' anticipated behavioral responses in the Jones et al. (2016) study were assessed by asking them to rate how likely they would be to respond to each rejector by engaging in various behaviors (i.e., avoiding, retaliating against, complaining to, and not acting friendly toward the rejector; see Williams & Zadro, 2005). Participants' ratings for each of these four potential behavioral responses were averaged across all six scenarios to create a single aggregate score for Avoid ($\alpha = .74$), Complain ($\alpha = .83$), Retaliate ($\alpha = .76$) and Not Act Friendly ($\alpha = .83$). For each of these potential behavioral responses, a relatively high average score indicated that a participant anticipated responding to the rejector within these ambiguous situations with a heightened negative behavioral response.

Summary of Results of the Jones et al. (2016) Study

As an adaptation of Barnett et al.'s (2013) prior work on ambiguous teases, the main purpose of the Jones et al. (2016) study was to assess the relationship between participants'

rejection-relevant attitudes and experiences and their anticipated emotional and behavioral responses to hypothetical social situations in which rejection might be inferred. Again consistent with Barnett et al. (2013), a series of correlational and path analyses were conducted. Correlational analyses revealed that participants' scores on each of the individual difference variables (i.e., experience with rejection, hostile attribution bias, rejection sensitivity) were positively correlated with their negative emotional response scores (see the bolded bottom row of Table 1). Correlational analyses also revealed that the more negative participants anticipated their emotional response would be to the hypothetical social situations, the more likely they indicated they would be to avoid, complain to, and retaliate against the potential rejector (see the bolded bottom row of Table 2).

In addition, path analyses modeled after those used by Barnett et al. (2013) were conducted to examine the pattern of relationships among scores on the individual difference variables and participants' anticipated emotional and behavioral responses.⁴ Specifically, four separate path analyses, one for each of the four anticipated behavioral responses, were conducted using IBM SPSS Amos 18 (Arbuckle, 2010). For each model, the participants' experiences with rejection and rejection-relevant attitudes were used as predictors of a negative emotional response to the ambiguous social situations which, in turn, was used as a predictor of each of the four potential behavioral responses. As presented in Figure 1, the analyses revealed that the participants' experiences with rejection was the only significant predictor of their negative emotional response in each of the four models tested which, in turn, was a significant predictor of three of the four anticipated behavioral responses. Furthermore, the chi-squares assessing model fit, as well as other commonly used fit indices (i.e., NFI, CFI, and RMSEA), provided additional information indicating that the models for Avoid and Complain fit the data well,

whereas the models for Retaliate and Not Act Friendly fit the data poorly (see Jones et al., 2016 for more information).⁵

Discussion of the Jones et al. (2016) Study

The focus of the Jones et al. (2016) study was to expand upon Barnett et al.'s (2013) investigation of adolescents' responses to ambiguous teases by exploring whether participants' experiences with and attitudes relevant to rejection would be associated with their anticipated emotional and behavioral responses to ambiguous social situations in which rejection might be inferred. In sum, the pattern of results from the path analyses in the Jones et al. (2016) was consistent with the pattern of results reported by Barnett et al. (2013) with one exception. Whereas Barnett et al. (2013) found that negative experiences with *and* negative attitudes toward teases significantly predicted a negative anticipated emotional response to the ambiguous teases, the rejection-relevant attitudinal measures (i.e., hostile attribution bias and rejection sensitivity) in the Jones et al. (2016) study did not independently predict participants' negative anticipated emotional response to the ambiguous situations (see Figure 1). The inability of rejection-relevant attitudes to independently predict participants' negative emotional response, as well as the finding that only two of the four potential negative behavioral responses (i.e., Avoid and Complain) were predicted by the participants' negative emotional response in the path analyses, reflect limitations of the Jones et al. (2016) study that provided the foundation for the current investigation.

Specifically, all of the individual difference measures (i.e., experience with rejection, hostile attribution bias, rejection sensitivity), the aggregate measure of the participants' negative emotional response to ambiguous social situations, and the aggregate measure of the participants' negative behavioral responses to the other individual in those situations used in the Jones et al.

(2016) were designed to assess participants' *general* experiences, attitudes, and responses associated with interpersonal rejection. By using general rejection-relevant measures that collapsed across various potential rejectors (i.e., significant others, friends, acquaintances), more subtle and rejector-specific patterns of results may have been obscured. Additional rejector-specific patterns of results may have been obscured due to the fact that the ambiguous social situations used in the Jones et al. (2013) study were unique for each potential rejector. More specifically, each scenario was written to reflect an ambiguous social situation with a specific potential rejector. Therefore, it was not possible to determine if participants were responding to a particular situation *or* a particular rejector and, because of this confound, the results of any analyses assessing emotional and behavioral responses to specific potential rejectors could not be interpreted with confidence. The current study was designed with these limitations in mind.

Current Study

Although a considerable amount of time and energy has gone into investigating causes and consequences of interpersonal rejection (Baumeister & DeWall, 2005; Derfler-Rozin et al., 2010; Downey et al., 1996, 1998; Gonsalkorale & Williams, 2007; Lakin et al., 2008; Maner et al., 2007; Riva et al., 2014; Twenge, 2005; Twenge et al., 2001; Twenge, Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco, & Bartels, 2007; Williams & Govan, 2005; Williams & Zadro, 2005), relatively little attention has focused on the interaction between the source of rejection (i.e., the rejector) and the target of rejection (see Jones et al., 2016). However, recent work by Freedman, Williams, and Beer (2016) contends that interpersonal rejection does not solely involve a single individual, but is more accurately conceptualized as “an interactive process between the source and the target” (p. 2). Consistent with this conceptualization, Freedman et al. (2016) developed the Responsive Theory of Social Exclusion which provides a theoretical framework for research on the topic of

rejection that focuses on the dyadic nature of rejection (i.e., both the rejector and the target of rejection are considered) and the impact of everyday occurrences of rejection such as ostracism (i.e., an overall absence of active communication between the rejector and target), explicit rejection (i.e., obvious communication indicating that rejection has, in fact, occurred), and ambiguous rejection (i.e., general confusion as to whether or not rejection has occurred; see Figure 2). Most relevant to the current investigation, the Responsive Theory of Social Exclusion's describes ambiguous rejection as a social situation in which the potential target of rejection may be relatively uncertain about whether or not he or she is (or is not) actually being rejected by another person. Indeed, this uncertainty has the potential to cause confusion and elicit emotional arousal and/or emotional distress (Freedman et al., 2016) which may, in turn, prompt various behavioral responses (e.g., avoidant, antisocial, and/or prosocial responses).

Although the Responsive Theory of Social Exclusion provides a general theoretical foundation for research on the dyadic nature of interpersonal, and potentially ambiguous rejection, Freedman et al. (2016) also contend that individual differences (e.g., rejection sensitivity) and the type of relationship between the rejector and target may also impact how ambiguous rejection plays out (i.e., how the target responds both emotionally and/or behaviorally). However, research has yet to systematically explore these contentions. As such, Freedman et al. (2016) argue that additional research is needed to examine how rejection-relevant individual differences and relationship variables (i.e., type of relationship between target and rejector) may “impact the effect of various forms of exclusion” (p. 13) including ambiguous rejection. Taken together, the limitations of our prior research (Jones et al., 2016) and the suggestions for future research by Freedman et al. (2016) provided the motivation and theoretical foundation for the current study.

Experiences with and Sensitivity to Being Rejected by Specific Individuals

As previously discussed, results from the Jones et al. (2016) revealed that participants' prior experience with rejection may be especially important when predicting the extent to which they feel and behave as if they have been rejected in ambiguous social situations. However, it is unclear whether the use of (a) general rejection-relevant individual difference measures, rather than target-specific individual difference measures, and (b) aggregated measures of responses to interpersonal scenarios, rather than target-specific responses, may have obscured more subtle patterns of results. Therefore, the primary goal of the current investigation was to assess participants' experiences with and sensitivity to being rejected by *specific* individuals (i.e., significant others, friends, acquaintances) and determine if these target-specific individual difference measures can predict anticipated emotional and behavioral responses to ambiguous social situations involving specific potential rejectors (i.e., significant others, friends, acquaintances). Indeed, an individual's experiences with and sensitivity to rejection by significant others may predict intense anticipated emotional and behavioral (e.g., retaliation) responses that emerge in interpersonal situations in which the intention of a significant other (but not a friend or acquaintance) is ambiguous. In contrast, an individual's experiences with and sensitivity to rejection by acquaintances may predict less intense anticipated emotional and behavioral (e.g., avoid) responses in social situations in which the intention of an acquaintance (but not a friend or significant other) is ambiguous. Stated simply, target-specific, rejection-relevant individual differences may influence our interpretations of specific others' intent within ambiguous social situations and may also predict our anticipated emotional responses to these situations and our anticipated behavioral responses to these specific potential rejectors.

At a general level, research has demonstrated that an individual's interpretation of a given action by a peer is a strong predictor of his or her reaction to that peer (e.g., Berkowitz, 1977; Porath & Pearson, 2012). Furthermore, it is often an individual's interpretation of a peer's intent, rather than the peer's actual intent, that determines whether an individual will respond antisocially toward the peer (Dodge, Murphy, & Buschsbaum, 1984). Indeed, the interpretation of another person's intent and the subsequent emotional and behavioral responses based on this interpretation are consistent with Dodge and Coie's (1987) social information processing model. This model outlines the steps necessary for the display of socially competent behaviors in given situations (e.g., responding to the potentially ambiguous intent of others). Specifically, these steps include (1) encoding relevant social cues, (2) interpreting these cues, (3) determining the appropriate response to these cues, (4) evaluating the potential effectiveness and/or outcomes of this response, and (5) enacting and subsequently evaluating the response (Dodge & Coie, 1987). Given the potentially ambiguous nature of many of our social situations, this model may be especially helpful in guiding our emotional and behavioral responses when another's intent is unclear and rejection might be inferred. For instance, Dodge and Coie (1987) contend that the first step within this model is the encoding of relevant social cues and it is reasonable to believe that the role of the other person (i.e., significant other, friend, acquaintance) may be an especially salient social cue. Therefore, we may be likely to encode ambiguous social situations differently depending on the role of the other person involved which, in turn, would influence the subsequent steps within this model and, ultimately, our final anticipated emotional and behavioral responses.

Although the social information processing model outlines how we interpret and respond to social situations, individual differences (e.g., prior experiences) may also influence this

process. For instance, Dodge and Coie (1987) suggest that individual differences and prior experiences may alter our information processing such that we are likely to encode and respond to social situations in a manner that is congruent with past experiences. Furthermore, prior experiences with rejection may also facilitate the development of a negative mental model (Johnson-Laird, 1983) which, in turn, may impact the manner in which an individual communicates with and relates to another person. Consistent with this belief, prior research by Cozzarelli, Hoekstra, and Bylsma (2000) has demonstrated that person-specific mental models (i.e., mental models related to significant others) tend to be more strongly related to relationship-specific outcomes than generalized mental models. As such, an individual who has experienced rejection by a specific individual may develop a person-specific mental model consistent with this experience which is likely to influence the extent to which he or she feels and acts rejected in ambiguous social situations involving similar individuals.

It is important to clarify that individuals with a negative mental model of being rejected by a specific person are not expected to be hyper-sensitive to ambiguous rejection in every social interaction. Instead, these individuals may be predisposed to have a heightened emotional and behavioral response to specific situations wherein there is the potential to be rejected by that person (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). According to Weiss and Cropanzano's (1996) affective events theory, social events (e.g., rejection) tend to produce intense emotional responses which, in turn, have the potential to stimulate emotionally charged behaviors. Furthermore, this theory proposes that individual differences play an important role in the interpretation of and subsequent emotional and behavioral responses to specific social situations. Therefore, participants in the current study with relatively more experience with and sensitivity to being rejected by specific individuals (e.g., significant others) should have heightened anticipated

emotional and behavioral response to ambiguous social situations involving similar individuals (e.g., significant others) as potential rejectors, but should be relatively unaffected by ambiguous social situations involving dissimilar individuals (e.g., friends, acquaintances) as potential rejectors.

This expected pattern of results (i.e., a pronounced anticipated emotional and behavioral response to some stimuli but not others) has been demonstrated in other areas of psychological research. For example, in the classic “Little Albert” study, Watson and Rayner (1920) demonstrated that a fear response could be conditioned in a very young child. More specifically, they conditioned a young child (i.e., Albert) to fear a white rat by pairing the presentation of the rat to Albert with the sudden, sharp noise of a steel bar being struck by a hammer. After several pairings, Albert eventually came to fear the rat and would become emotionally distraught and try to physically move away from the rat when he was exposed to it. Interestingly, Albert also displayed a fear of similar stimuli (e.g., a white rabbit, cotton balls, white fur coat), a phenomenon later labeled as stimulus generalization (e.g., Guttman & Kalish, 1956). However, his emotional and behavioral responses to similar stimuli were found to be less intense than the emotional and behavioral responses to the rat (Watson & Rayner, 1920). Similarly, more recent research has found that our fears can easily generalize across conceptually related stimuli (Vervoort, Vervliet, Bennett, & Baeyens, 2014). More specifically, Vervoort et al. (2014) found that participants’ conditioned fear response to arbitrary stimuli that had been presented with an aversive shock generalized to conceptually similar stimuli such that participants would demonstrate a fear response (i.e., heightened skin conductance and increased shock-expectancy) for conceptually related stimuli even though they had not been previously paired with an aversive shock. With regards to the current study, the idea of stimulus generalization would

suggest that experiencing rejection or being sensitive to the idea of being rejected by a specific person would generalize such that an individual would display heightened emotional and behavioral responses to the possibility of being rejected by anyone. However, the *intensity* of these emotional and behavioral responses would differ such that one's responses to an ambiguous social situation would be more intense when the potential rejector is perceived as similar, rather than dissimilar, to those with whom he or she has a history of being rejected.

While we anticipate that participants' experience with and sensitivity to being rejected by specific individuals will be predictive of anticipated emotional and behavioral responses to hypothetical situations in which there is the potential to be rejected by a similar individual, prior research suggests alternative expectations. For instance, Baumeister and Leary's (1995) Need-to-Belong hypothesis argues that we tend to experience considerable anxiety when our status within *any* social group and/or relationship is at risk. This argument suggests that our anticipated responses to perceived rejection would be consistent across every social interaction, regardless of our relationship with the other person involved. This argument is exemplified in a study by Gonsalkorale and Williams (2007) wherein they investigated the extent to which individuals feel as if they have been rejected by individuals from specific groups. Despite their participants being rejected by members of their ingroup, a rival outgroup, or a despised outgroup (i.e., members of the Ku Klux Klan), the extent to which their participants felt rejected was equal across all three groups (Gonsalkorale & Williams, 2007). Therefore, an alternative prediction for the current study was that participants' experiences with and sensitivity to being rejected by *any* individual may predict anticipated emotional and behavioral responses to ambiguous social situations regardless of the role of the potential rejector.

In sum, the primary purpose of the current study was to assess participants' experiences with and sensitivity to being rejected by *specific* individuals (i.e. significant others, friends, acquaintances) as well as determine if these target-specific, rejection-relevant individual difference can predict their anticipated emotional and behavioral responses to ambiguous social situations involving similar specific potential rejectors. Results from related research (e.g., Cozzarelli et al., 2000; Dodge & Coie, 1987; Johnson-Laird, 1983; Watson & Rayner, 1920; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) as well as our own prior research (i.e., Jones et al., 2016) support the notion that rejection-relevant individual differences (i.e., experience with rejection) will predict anticipated emotional and behavioral responses to ambiguous social situations in which there is the potential for rejection.

Interestingly, relatively little research, to my knowledge, has focused on target-specific individual differences (e.g., experiences with rejection from significant others) as they relate to predicting anticipated emotional and behavioral responses to ambiguous social situations in which there is the potential to be rejected by specific individuals. Instead, research on the subject of rejection has focused on generalized individual difference measures (e.g., Downey & Feldman, 1996) and their association with one's emotional (e.g., Leary et al., 2001) or behavioral (e.g., Ayduk et al., 2008) responses to rejection. Perhaps by focusing on target-specific individual difference measures, more nuanced patterns of results will be revealed allowing for further insight into the factors associated with our tendency to feel and behave as if we have been rejected when a specific other's (i.e., significant other's, friend's, acquaintance's) actual intent is unknown.

Differences in Emotional and Behavioral Responses to Specific Potential Rejectors

The design of the current investigation also allowed me to address another issue that has not been usually considered in prior studies of rejection. Specifically, the design of the current study allowed for the possible differences in individuals' anticipated emotional and behavioral response to specific potential rejectors to be thoroughly and systematically assessed. As previously discussed, in the Jones et al. (2016) study, unique ambiguous social situations were written for each potential rejector (i.e., significant other, friend, acquaintance). Because of this confound, it was not possible to determine if participants were responding to a particular situation *or* a particular rejector. However, the design of the current investigation (i.e., the use of ambiguous social situations wherein only the role of the potential rejector was manipulated) allowed for such analyses to be conducted. Therefore, the secondary goal of the current investigation was to assess any differences in participants' anticipated emotional and behavioral responses to perceived rejection by specific others (i.e., significant others, friends, acquaintances) whose actual intent is unknown.

Although there has been an abundance of research focusing on the emotional and behavioral consequences of rejection in general (e.g., Ayduk et al., 2008; Derfler-Rozin et al., 2010; DeWall, Twenge, Gitter, & Baumeister, 2009; Leary et al., 2001; MacDonald & Leary, 2005; Twenge et al., 2007), there is a paucity of research focusing specifically on differences in emotional and behavioral responses to interpersonal rejection as a function of the source of rejection (i.e., a significant other, friend, acquaintance). Indeed, many of the manipulations used to induce feelings of rejection have relied on the use of strangers or new acquaintances. For example, the commonly used Get-Acquainted (e.g., Baumeister & DeWall, 2005; Nezlek et al., 1997), Future-Alone (e.g., DeWall et al., 2009; Twenge et al., 2001), and Cyberball (e.g.,

Williams & Jarvis, 2006; Williams, Cheung, & Choi, 2000) manipulations have all tended to induce feelings of rejection from strangers or acquaintances.⁶ Studies using these manipulations have provided valuable insight into the construct of rejection and have made significant contributions to the social psychological literature (e.g., Eisenberger et al., 2003). However, it is naïve to believe that we only experience rejection by strangers or acquaintances. The plethora of social interactions we engage in on a daily basis places us at risk of being rejected by a wide variety of individuals including, but not limited to, significant others, friends, and acquaintances. Given that relatively little research has focused on assessing the emotional and behavioral consequences of rejection from specific sources, the current investigation attempts to address this gap in the literature by (1) manipulating the role of the potential rejector within identical ambiguous social situations in which rejection could be inferred and (2) assessing whether there are differences in participants' anticipated emotional and behavioral responses to specific potential rejectors.

Despite a lack of literature systematically focusing on the consequences of rejection from specific sources, there is reason to believe that participants' anticipated emotional and behavioral responses to ambiguous social situations in the current investigation will differ as function of the role of other person within these social situations. For instance, in their discussion on teasing, Bollmer, Harris, Milich, and Georgesen (2003) argue that because teasing has the potential to be ambiguous, and we all tend to have different experiences with teasing, it is important to take into consideration the relationship between the source of the tease and the target of the tease. Indeed, Bollmer et al. (2003) argue that a tease from someone who is close to us may hurt more than a tease from a stranger because "someone close to us should know better" (p. 599). Furthermore, the extent to which we experience relational devaluation (i.e., the perception that one is no longer

valued within a given relationship; Leary, 2005) and subsequent feelings of rejection may vary depending on the relationship with that person. Similarly, according to Tooby and Cosmides (1996), humans have a finite number of relational niches and tend to associate with those “from whom they will reap the best long-term outcomes” (p. 136) and, as a result, cannot place the same value on all of their relationships. A closer look into the relationship literature also demonstrates that we tend to (a) possess situation-specific schemas of others which can have implications for the emotions we experience in interactions—especially ambiguous interactions—involving specific individuals (see Berscheid, 1994 for a review) and (b) respond to certain situations in a specific manner depending on the role of the other person involved (see Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003 for a review). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that perceiving rejection from individuals with whom we have substantial future investments (e.g., significant others) will elicit more intense anticipated emotional responses and different behavioral responses than those with whom we have relatively little or no perceived future (e.g., acquaintances). This notion is reinforced by research (e.g., Miller, 1997) demonstrating that, when relationships are under stress (e.g., the possibility of rejection and dissolution of the relationship), individuals tend to treat intimate others more harshly than friends or acquaintances.

Furthermore, evolutionary theorists (e.g., Buss, 1990) suggest that reproduction is an inherently powerful motivator and one of the most important benefits of group membership, followed closely by access to other resources necessary for survival. Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that perceptions of being rejected by significant others would elicit more intense anticipated emotional responses and different behavioral responses than perceptions of being rejected by friends or acquaintances. Given the role that friends play within evolutionary theory concerning access to other resources necessary for survival (e.g., food), it is also reasonable to

expect that perceptions of being rejected by friends would elicit more intense anticipated emotional responses and different behavioral responses than perceptions of being rejected by acquaintances. This expectation is consistent with another aspect of Weiss and Cropanzano's (1996) affective events theory which argues that the intensity of our emotional and behavioral responses is influenced by whether or not we are being denied an important goal. Therefore, if being rejected by significant others or friends is also preventing us from achieving specific, important goals (i.e., reproduction and protection from predators, respectively; e.g., Buss, 1990), then being rejected by a significant other is likely to elicit different emotional and behavioral responses than being rejected by a friend (and/or an acquaintance).

Overview of the Current Study and Discussion of Hypotheses

Primary Goal

As previously discussed, the primary goal of the current study was to determine if target-specific, rejection-relevant individual difference measures can predict participants' anticipated emotional and behavioral response to ambiguous social situations involving similar potential rejectors. Similar to the methodology used in the Jones et al. (2016) study, (1) rejection-relevant individual differences (i.e., experience with rejection, rejection sensitivity) among participants were initially assessed, (2) participants were then asked to read scenarios describing an ambiguous social situation in which there is the potential to be rejected, and (3) finally, participants were asked to rate their anticipated emotional and behavioral responses to these ambiguous social situations. However, the current study sought to address the previously discussed limitations of the Jones et al. (2016) study by assessing participants' experience with and sensitivity to being rejected by *specific* individuals and utilizing identical ambiguous social situations wherein the role of the potential rejector could be manipulated, rather than aggregating

across the social situations. Given that that primary goal of the current study was developed as an adaptation of the Jones et al. (2016) study, the model testing general individual difference predictors of emotional and behavioral responses to ambiguous social situations in which rejection *might* be perceived (see Figure 1) was expected to apply to the target-specific, rejection-relevant individual differences used in the current study.

In sum, the previously discussed theories relevant to the primary goal of the current investigation (i.e., Responsive Theory of Social Exclusion [Freedman et al., 2016], Social Information Processing Theory [Dodge & Coie, 1987], Mental Models [e.g., Johnson-Laird, 1983], Affective Events Theory [Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996]) as well as the results of and modifications to the Jones et al. (2016) study all support the primary (i.e., target-specific) hypothesis that experiences with and sensitivity to being rejected by specific individuals (e.g., significant others) will uniquely predict anticipated emotional and behavioral responses to similar individuals (e.g., significant others), but not dissimilar individuals (e.g., friends, acquaintances; see Figure 3 for an example of the model being used in the current study as well as an example of the expected results from this model).

However, it is noteworthy to also consider an alternative (i.e., target-nonspecific) hypothesis. Counter to the primary hypothesis, it is also possible that participants' experiences with and sensitivity to being rejected by *any* individual may predict anticipated emotional and behavioral responses to ambiguous social situations in which there is the potential to be rejected by another person, regardless of the role of the potential rejector. Such a finding would be consistent with Baumeister and Leary's (1995) Need-to-Belong hypothesis and would further exemplify the painful nature of rejection, regardless of the source.

Secondary Goal

A secondary goal of the current study was to assess differences in anticipated emotional and behavioral responses to ambiguous social situations in which the intent of specific others is unknown. Again, because of the manner in which the ambiguous scenarios were constructed in the Jones et al. (2016) study, more fine-grained analyses focusing on anticipated emotional and behavioral responses to specific rejectors could not be interpreted with confidence. Given that the ambiguous social scenarios in the current study have been designed to allow for the role of the potential rejector to be manipulated within the same scenario, the current study also sought to address a question not typically asked in the psychological literature (i.e., Do our emotional and behavioral responses to ambiguous rejection differ depending on the role of the rejector?).

To my knowledge, prior research has yet to systematically investigate whether our emotional and behavioral responses to rejection differ as a function of the role of the potential rejector. As such, this portion of the current study was largely exploratory. However, there are some patterns of results that, based on related research, were reasonable to predict.

Emotional Responses

For instance, prior research has suggested that the extent to which we feel rejected is based on a sense of relational devaluation (Leary, 2005). Therefore, because there is more to lose by being rejected by significant others than friends and/or acquaintances, I predicted that participants' anticipated emotional responses would be more intense when the potential rejector is a significant other than when the potential rejector is a friend or acquaintance. Similarly, I predicted that participants' anticipated emotional responses would also be more intense when the potential rejector is a friend than when the potential rejector is an acquaintance. However, given the painful nature of rejection in general (Eisenberger et al., 2003; MacDonald & Leary, 2005),

an alternative prediction was that participants in the current investigation may anticipate experiencing relatively intense emotional responses in any social situation wherein there is the possibility of being rejected, regardless of the role of the potential rejector.

Behavioral Responses

Concerning anticipated behavioral responses toward potential rejectors within ambiguous social situations, the extent to which we anticipate avoiding, responding antisocially (i.e., retaliating against, complain to), or responding prosocially (i.e., acting friendly) toward a given potential rejector may depend on the specific role of that person (i.e., significant other, friend, or acquaintance).

Avoidant Responses

It is reasonable to expect that participants in the current investigation may be likely to anticipate responding to ambiguous social situations in which there is the potential for rejection by avoiding acquaintances more so than both significant others and friends. As previously discussed, individuals who are at risk of being rejected may, under some circumstances, tend to avoid the situation and/or potential rejector (Watson & Nesdale, 2012; Williams & Zadro, 2005). Given that there is relatively little to lose in being rejected by (or disengaging from) acquaintances, I predicted that participants in the current investigation may be more likely to anticipate avoiding a potential rejector who is an acquaintance than a potential rejector who is a significant other or a friend.

Antisocial Responses

Prior research has demonstrated that individuals tend to treat intimate others more harshly than friends or acquaintances when these relationships are under stress (e.g., the possibility of rejection and dissolution of the relationship is heightened; Miller, 1997). Therefore, I predicted

that participants who perceive being rejected by significant others in the present study may anticipate responding more forcefully/antisocially (i.e., retaliating) toward the potential rejector than those who perceive being rejected by friends or acquaintances. Similarly, another factor that may influence our tendency to respond antisocially to potential rejection from specific other is familiarity. According to Leary et al. (1994), our familiarity with another person has an effect on our impression management such that as familiarity with another person increases, we tend to become less inclined to monitor how we present ourselves to that person. Furthermore, previous research has shown that complaining tends to be perceived in a relatively negative manner such that the more an individual complains, the less favorably others rate their impression of that individual (Kaiser & Miller, 2001). Therefore, given the heightened familiarity with significant others and friends (compared to acquaintances), it was reasonable to also predict that participants may be more likely to anticipate responding by complaining to these individuals than acquaintances about potentially being rejected because they are less concerned about maintaining a favorable impression with significant others and friends than they would be with acquaintances.

Prosocial Responses

Although the research previously described details instances in which individuals are likely to avoid or respond antisocially toward certain potential rejectors, individuals who are at risk of being rejected have also been found to respond prosocially in an attempt to reconnect with their potential rejectors (Derfler-Rozin et al., 2010). Therefore, I hypothesize that participants in the current investigation may be more likely to anticipate responding prosocially (i.e., acting friendly) toward significant others or friends than acquaintances who may be perceived as acting

in a rejecting manner because of the desire to repair the relationship with significant others or friends; in contrast, there may be little or no relationship to repair with an acquaintance.

Alternative Predictions Concerning Participants' Anticipated Behavioral Responses

Despite the prior research that supports these expected patterns of results, it should be acknowledged that an alternative outcome concerning this portion of the current study also exists. Specifically, participants' anticipated emotional and behavioral responses to the various potential rejectors (i.e., significant others, friends, acquaintances) may *not* differ as a function of the role of the potential rejector. As previously discussed, Baumeister and Leary's (1995) Need-to-belong theory, as well as empirical evidence from Gonsalkorale and Williams (2007), contend that rejection is an unpleasant experience that we tend to be predisposed to easily detect, regardless of the source. When paired with prior research detailing the painful nature of rejection in general (Eisenberger et al., 2003; MacDonald & Leary, 2005), an alternative prediction was that individuals who experience rejection may not be likely to take into consideration any relevant information concerning the source of rejection and, therefore, may be likely to respond to rejection similarly regardless of the role of the potential rejector.

Chapter 2 - Method

Participants

A total of 553 participants were recruited to complete this study online. Of the 553 individuals who participated in this study, 318 consisted of undergraduate students enrolled in General Psychology (i.e., Psych 110) courses and were recruited via the K-State SONA system whereas the remaining 235 consisted of individuals between the ages of 18 and 25 who were recruited via Amazon's Mechanical Turk (i.e., MTurk) survey software.⁷ Participants were recruited from these different populations in order to increase the overall sample size and improve the power of the subsequent analyses. All participants were compensated with either research credit if they were recruited via SONA or a small monetary payment (i.e., \$0.50) if they were recruited via Amazon's MTurk.

Of the 553 participants who were compensated for their time, 26 were removed from the current data set for issues with uniform responding, 23 were removed for missing data, 7 were removed for containing univariate outliers, 13 were removed for containing multivariate outliers, and 3 were removed for completing the current study suspiciously fast (i.e., less than 5 minutes). In sum, data from 481 participants (61.5% female; 76% Caucasian) between the ages of 18-49 years ($M_{\text{age}} = 21.17$ years, $SD_{\text{age}} = 3.07$ years) were included in the subsequent analyses and consisted of those recruited via the K-State SONA system ($n = 274$, 57%) or Amazon's MTurk ($n = 207$, 43%).⁸

Materials

Modified Experience with Rejection Questionnaire

In our prior study (Jones et al., 2016), we assessed participants' frequency of being rejected by seven diverse (but not mutually exclusive) groups of individuals (e.g., friends, males,

females).⁹ However, due to the relatively restricted scope of this prior measure (i.e., participants' scores were aggregated to create a single experience with rejection score), we created and pilot tested a modified and more focused version of this questionnaire for use in the current investigation.¹⁰ The Modified Experience with Rejection Questionnaire is a 40-item measure that has been designed to assess participants' experiences with rejection from various categories of individuals (see Appendix A). Specifically, this modified measure has 10 statements per category designed to assess participants' experiences with being rejected by significant others (e.g., "My significant others have seemed to go out of their way to avoid me."), friends (e.g., "My friends have seemed to go out of their way to avoid me."), acquaintances (e.g., "My acquaintances have seemed to go out of their way to avoid me."), and people in general (e.g., "People have seemed to go out of their way to avoid me."). Participants responded to these statements using a 9-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 9 (*strongly agree*) with higher scores reflecting relatively more experience with being rejected by these categories of individuals. Participants' ratings for each of the four categories of individuals were averaged across the 10 statements to yield a single experience with rejection score for significant others (ER-SO; $\alpha = .90$), friends (ER-FRI; $\alpha = .92$), acquaintances (ER-ACQ; $\alpha = .90$), and people in general (ER-GEN; $\alpha = .90$).

Modified Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire

In order to assess participants' rejection-relevant attitudes, the current investigation used a modified version of Downey and Feldman's (1996) Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire (see Appendix B). Whereas the original Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire consisted of 18 descriptions of interpersonal situations involving various targets, the modified version consists of 24 target-specific descriptions of interpersonal situations with six situations per target (i.e.,

significant others, friends, acquaintances, and various other individuals).¹¹ Consistent with the Modified Experience with Rejection Questionnaire, the descriptions of interpersonal situations involving “various other individuals” were intended to distract participants from the purpose of this measure (i.e., to assess participants rejection sensitivity concerning *specific* individuals) as well as assess their rejection sensitivity concerning people in general. A sample description of an interpersonal situation on this measure is, “You approach a close friend to talk after doing or saying something that seriously upset him/her.” Following each description are two inquiries, one in the form of a question and one in the form of a statement. The question addresses how concerned or anxious a participant would anticipate feeling in the situation (e.g., “How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your friend would want to talk to you?”). Participants responded to this question using a 9-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*very unconcerned*) to 9 (*very concerned*) with higher scores reflecting relatively more concern about the possibility of being rejected. The subsequent statement addresses a participant’s expectation about being rejected in this situation (e.g., “I would expect that he/she would want to talk with me to try and work things out.”). Participants responded to this statement using a 9-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*very unlikely*) to 9 (*very likely*). In line with Downey and Feldman’s (1996) original measure, participants’ responses to the statements were reverse-scored such that lower scores reflect a relatively greater expectation of being rejected in these situations. Scores on this measure (as is true for Downey and Feldman’s [1996] original Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire) were determined by multiplying a participant’s concern about being rejected score in each situation by his/her expectation about being rejected score in each situation and, then, calculating the average of the resulting scores by target category.¹² This approach was used for each of the various targets, thus resulting in a rejection sensitivity score for significant others

(RS-SO; $\alpha = .70$), friends (RS-FRI; $\alpha = .65$), acquaintances (RS-ACQ; $\alpha = .77$), and people in general (RS-GEN; $\alpha = .64$).

Ambiguous Social Situations

In the Jones et al. (2016) study, each participant read six interpersonal scenarios (two significant other scenarios, two friend scenarios, and two acquaintance scenarios) that described various hypothetical situations in which another individual's behavior might be interpreted as rejection. As noted earlier, because of the manner in which the interpersonal scenarios were constructed in the Jones et al. (2016) study (i.e., each scenario was unique and was written about a specific potential rejector), the results of any analyses assessing emotional and behavioral responses to specific potential rejectors were confounded and could not be interpreted with confidence. Therefore, for the current investigation, these critical stimuli were revised and consisted of two interpersonal scenarios in which the potential rejector can be presented to different groups of participants (in a between subjects design) as a significant other, friend, or acquaintance in the same scenario (see Appendix C).

Anticipated Emotional Response Measure

Participants' anticipated emotional responses (i.e., emotional arousal and emotional distress) to the ambiguous social situations were assessed by asking them to complete a modified version of the PANAS (Watson et al., 1988). More specifically, participants were asked to rate on a 9-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 9 (*extremely*), how much they would feel 24 different emotions if this situation happened to them (see Appendix D). Consistent with the procedure used in the Jones et al. (2016) and Barnett et al. (2013) studies, participants' ratings of the potential emotional responses were averaged across the two scenarios in order to yield separate scores for their anticipated (a) emotional **arousal** (i.e., Positive Affect; $\alpha = .94$) and (b)

emotional **distress** (i.e., Negative Affect; $\alpha = .96$). As discussed in Footnote 1, higher average scores on Positive Affect reflect a heightened state of emotional arousal whereas higher average scores on Negative Affect reflect a general state of emotional distress (Watson et al., 1988).

Anticipated Behavioral Response

Participants' anticipated behavioral responses to the ambiguous social situations were assessed by asking them to rate on a 9-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*not likely at all*) to 9 (*very likely*), how likely they would be to react in 12 different ways to the potential rejector (i.e., significant other, friend, acquaintance) in both situations. The 12 potential behavioral responses were written to reflect three examples from each of the four categories of response used in the Jones et al. (2016) and Barnett et al. (2013) investigations: Avoid, Retaliate, Complain, and Act Friendly (see Appendix E). Participants' ratings for each of the four categories of response were averaged across the two scenarios in order to yield a single score for Avoid ($\alpha = .64$), Retaliate ($\alpha = .88$), Complain ($\alpha = .91$), and Act Friendly ($\alpha = .83$). Higher average scores on any one of these measures indicate that a participant anticipated responding to the other individual in these situations with a relatively heightened behavioral response.

Procedure

After providing informed consent (see Appendix F), all participants were provided with a general definition of significant others (i.e., "people with whom you have [or have had] a romantic and intimate relation"), friends (i.e., "people with whom you have [or have had] a close, personal, but non-intimate, relation"), and acquaintances (i.e., "people you know [or have known] casually but do not consider to be friends"). Participants were then asked to complete the Modified Experience with Rejection Questionnaire (see Appendix A) and the Modified Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire (see Appendix B).¹³ Upon completion of these

questionnaires, the participants were randomly assigned to one of three groups (i.e., a significant other group, a friend group, or an acquaintance group) wherein they were asked to read two scenarios involving a significant other, friend, or an acquaintance (see Appendix C). After reading each scenario, the participants completed two brief questionnaires that asked them to rate their anticipated emotional responses to the situation (see Appendix D) and their anticipated behavioral responses to the other individual in each situation (see Appendix E). Following the completion of these two questionnaires for both scenarios, all participants were debriefed and thanked for their time (see Appendix G).

Chapter 3 - Results

The primary goal of the current investigation was to assess participants' experiences with and sensitivity to being rejected by *specific* individuals (i.e., significant others, friends, acquaintances) in order to determine if these target-specific individual difference measures would predict participants' anticipated emotional and behavioral responses to ambiguous social situations involving these specific potential rejectors. The secondary goal of the current investigation was to determine if there are systematic differences in participants' anticipated emotional and behavioral responses to potential rejection by specific others within these ambiguous social situations. Prior to conducting the main analyses addressing these two goals, a series of preliminary analyses were conducted to test for issues with multicollinearity.

More specifically, tests for multicollinearity were conducted by calculating Variance Inflation Factor (VIF; i.e., the extent to which the variance of a given variable is being inflated when related variables are added to the model) scores for each of the predictor variables for the three separate conditions involving specific potential rejectors (i.e., significant others, friends, acquaintances; see Table 4). Although there are no formal cutoff values for VIF scores, a commonly used rule-of-thumb is that VIF scores greater than 5 suggest that a substantial proportion of the variance for one variable is being represented by another variable. According to Craney and Surles (2002), variables that exceed these cutoffs can reasonably be removed from subsequent analyses. Therefore, the experience with rejection by people in general (i.e., ER-GEN) variable was excluded from the subsequent analyses because it had a VIF score greater than 5 within each subsample.¹⁴ Furthermore, in order to be consistent with the parallel structure of the predictor variables used in the current study, the rejection sensitivity to people in general (RS-GEN) variable was also removed from subsequent analyses. After removing the ER-GEN

and RS-GEN variables from the collinearity analyses, VIF scores were recomputed for the remaining variables. As presented in Table 5, there does not appear to be an issue with multicollinearity for the six remaining target-specific predictor variables.

Correlations Among the Participants' Target-Specific Individual Difference Variable Scores and Their Anticipated Emotional Response Scores

Rationale for Conducting These Correlational Analyses

Consistent with the approach used in the Barnett et al. (2013) and Jones et al. (2016) studies, a series of correlations was computed to examine the bivariate correlations among the target-specific, rejection-relevant individual difference measures (i.e., ER-SO, ER-FRI, ER-ACQ, RS-SO, RS-FRI, RS-ACQ) and the participants' anticipated emotional responses (i.e., Positive Affect, Negative Affect) in each of the three conditions (i.e., scenarios describing potential rejection from significant others, friends, or acquaintances). The purpose of computing these correlations was to determine if participants' experience with rejection from a specific type of rejector (e.g., significant others) and sensitivity to rejection by a specific type of rejector (e.g., significant others) would be more strongly associated with their anticipated emotional responses to potential rejection from that specific type of rejector (e.g., a significant other) than their anticipated emotional responses to potential rejection from other types of rejectors (e.g., a friend or acquaintance). Continuing with this example, if the primary (i.e., target-specific) hypothesis is correct, then the correlations between ER-SO, RS-SO, and the participants' anticipated emotional responses would be positive and strong when the potential rejector is described as a significant other, but would be relatively weak when the potential rejector is described as a friend or an acquaintance. In contrast, if the alternative (i.e., target non-specific) hypothesis is correct, then the correlations between ER-SO, RS-SO, and the participants' anticipated emotional

responses would be just as strong when the potential rejector is described as a significant other, a friend, or an acquaintance.

Results for Participants who Read About Potential Rejection by a Significant Other

As presented in Table 6, for participants who read two scenarios involving potential rejection by a significant other, their scores on all six of the target-specific, rejection-relevant individual difference variables (i.e., ER-SO, ER-FRI, ER-ACQ, RS-SO, RS-FRI, RS-ACQ) were significantly and positively correlated with one another and with participants' ratings of their anticipated Negative Affect (i.e., emotional distress). In addition, participants' scores on all three of the target-specific, rejection-relevant individual difference variables involving experience with rejection (i.e., ER-SO, ER-FRI, ER-ACQ) were significantly and positively correlated with the ratings of their anticipated Positive Affect (i.e., emotional arousal).

Results for Participants who Read About Potential Rejection by a Friend

The pattern of correlations for participants who read about potential rejection by a friend was identical with the pattern of correlations for participants who read about potential rejection by a significant other, with one minor exception (see Tables 6 and 7).

Results for Participants who Read About Potential Rejection by an Acquaintance

The pattern of correlations for participants who read about potential rejection by an acquaintance was identical with the pattern of correlations for participants who read about potential rejection from a significant other, with two minor exceptions (see Tables 6 and 8).

Correlations Among the Participants' Anticipated Emotional Response

Scores and Anticipated Behavioral Response Scores

Again, consistent with the approach used in the Barnett et al. (2013) and Jones et al. (2016) studies, a series of correlations was computed to assess the pattern of relations among

participants' anticipated emotional responses and their anticipated behavioral responses for each of the three conditions.

Results for Participants who Read About Potential Rejection by a Significant Other

As presented in Table 9, the more Negative Affect (i.e., emotional distress) participants anticipated feeling in response to the ambiguous social situations involving a significant other, the more likely they anticipated retaliating against and complaining to the potential rejector. In addition, the more Positive Affect (i.e., emotional arousal) participants anticipated feeling in these situations, the more likely they anticipated reacting to the potential rejector with each of the four behavioral responses (i.e., Avoid, Retaliate, Complain, Act Friendly).

Results for Participants who Read About Potential Rejection by a Friend

As presented in Table 10, the more Negative Affect (i.e., emotional distress) participants anticipated feeling in response to the ambiguous social situations involving a friend, the less likely they anticipated avoiding the potential rejector, but the more likely they anticipated retaliating against and complaining to the potential rejector. Identical to the pattern of results reported for a significant other, the more Positive Affect (i.e., emotional arousal) participants anticipated feeling in these situations, the more likely they anticipated reacting to the potential rejector with each of the four behavioral responses (i.e., Avoid, Retaliate, Complain, Act Friendly).

Results for Participants who Read About Potential Rejection by an Acquaintance

As presented in Table 11, the more Negative Affect (i.e., emotional distress) participants anticipated feeling in response to the ambiguous social situations involving an acquaintance, the less likely they anticipated avoiding the potential rejector, but the more likely they anticipated retaliating against, complaining to, or acting friendly toward the potential rejector. The more

Positive Affect (i.e., emotional arousal) participants anticipated feeling in these ambiguous social situations, the more likely they anticipated reacting to the potential rejector with three of the four potential behavioral responses (i.e., Retaliate, Complain, Act Friendly).

Path Analyses Testing the Target-Specific Hypothesis

To more fully assess the pattern of relations among the target-specific, rejection-relevant individual difference variables, anticipated emotional responses, and anticipated behavioral responses, a series of path analyses modeled after those performed by Barnett et al. (2013) and Jones et al. (2016) were conducted. Prior to presenting the results of these analyses, however, there is an important distinction to note between the analyses used in our prior studies and those currently being used. Whereas analyses in the prior studies consisted of *four* separate path analyses (one for each of the four potential behavioral responses), the current study required 12 path analyses in order to fully test the target-specific hypothesis under investigation (see Figure 3 for an example of the model being tested). More specifically, the path analyses conducted in the current investigation were broken into three different sets such that each set examined the pattern of relations among scores on the target-specific individual difference variables and the participants' anticipated emotional and behavioral responses to the ambiguous social situations involving significant others only (i.e., the first set), friends only (i.e., the second set), or acquaintances only (i.e., the third set).¹⁵

As in the Barnett et al. (2013) and Jones et al. (2016) studies, all models were assessed using IBM SPSS Amos 18 (Arbuckle, 2010) and model fit was determined using chi-square indices as well as normed fit indices (NFI), comparative fit indices (CFI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA; see Footnote 4). Statisticians (e.g., Arbuckle, 2010; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007) recommend that, when interpreting goodness of fit indices, NFI and

CFI values close to 1.00 and RMSEA values less than .08 indicate that the model fits the data well. Therefore, these values served as guidelines for interpreting model fit within the current investigation.

Results for Participants who Read About Potential Rejection by a Significant Other

As presented in Table 12, and counter to the target-specific hypothesis (as well as the target-nonspecific hypothesis), the path analyses revealed that participants' experience with and sensitivity to being rejected by significant others was not a significant predictor of their anticipated emotional responses to potentially being rejected by a significant other. However, the results revealed that the participants' experience with being rejected by friends was a significant predictor of their anticipated Positive Affect (i.e., emotional arousal) response in this condition.

With regard to the second portion of the model, (a) the participants' anticipated Positive Affect (i.e., emotional arousal) was found to be a significant predictor of all four potential anticipated behavioral responses and (b) their anticipated Negative Affect (i.e., emotional distress) was a significant predictor of all the potential anticipated behavioral responses except Act Friendly.

As presented in Table 13, the chi-square assessing model fit for the behavior of Avoid was large relative to degrees of freedom whereas the chi-squares assessing model fit for the behaviors of Retaliate, Complain, and Act Friendly were all small relative to degrees of freedom. When these chi-square results are considered with the other fit indices (i.e., NFI, CFI, RMSEA), the model for Avoid appears to fit the data poorly whereas the models for Retaliate, Complain, and Act Friendly appear to fit the data reasonably well.

Results for Participants who Read About Potential Rejection by a Friend

As presented in Table 14, results from the path analyses for participants in the friend scenarios condition provided *some* support for the target-specific hypothesis. Specifically, participants' experience with being rejected by friends (but not by significant others or acquaintances) was found to be a significant predictor of their anticipated Positive and Negative Affect (i.e., emotional arousal and distress, respectively) to potentially being rejected by a friend. However, contrary to the target-specific hypothesis, (a) participants' sensitivity to being rejected by friends was unrelated to their anticipated emotional responses to potential rejection by a friend and (b) participants' sensitivity to being rejected by acquaintances was a significant predictor of their anticipated Negative Affect (i.e., emotional distress) in this condition.

With regard to the second portion of the model, the pattern of relations in the friend condition were found to be identical to those in the significant other condition. Specifically, (a) the participants' anticipated Positive Affect (i.e., emotional arousal) was found to be a significant predictor of all four potential anticipated behavioral responses and (b) their anticipated Negative Affect (i.e., emotional distress) was a significant predictor of all of the potential anticipated behavioral responses except Act Friendly.

As presented in Table 15, the chi-squares assessing model fit for all four behaviors were large relative to degrees of freedom and, when these chi-square results are considered with the other fit indices, the results indicate that the models for Avoid, Retaliate, Complain, and Act Friendly all fit the data poorly.

Results for Participants who Read About Potential Rejection by an Acquaintance

As presented in Table 16, and counter to the target-specific hypothesis (as well as the target-nonspecific hypothesis), path analyses revealed that the participants' experience with

being rejected by friends was a significant predictor of their anticipated Positive Affect (i.e., emotional arousal) to potentially being rejected by an acquaintance. Although the participants' experience with being rejected by acquaintances was also found to be a significant predictor of their anticipated Positive Affect (i.e., emotional arousal) in this condition, this target-specific relation was, surprisingly, in the negative direction.

With regard to the second portion of the model, the participants' anticipated Positive and Negative Affect (i.e., emotional arousal and distress, respectively) were both significant predictors of three of the four anticipated behavioral responses (all but Avoid for anticipated Positive Affect response and all but Act Friendly for anticipated Negative Affect).

As presented in Table 17, the chi-squares assessing model fit for all four behaviors were large relative to degrees of freedom and, when these chi-square results are considered with the other fit indices, the results indicate that the models for Avoid, Retaliate, Complain, and Act Friendly all fit the data poorly.¹⁶

Differences in Participants' Anticipated Emotional and Behavioral Responses to Specific Potential Rejectors

Anticipated Emotional Responses

To test for potential differences in participants' anticipated emotional responses to ambiguous social situations in which there is the potential to be rejected by significant others, friends, or acquaintances, a 2 (Anticipated Emotional Response: Positive Affect and Negative Affect) \times 3 (Potential Rejector: Significant Other, Friend, Acquaintance) mixed-ANOVA was conducted on participants' anticipated emotional response ratings. Results revealed significant main effects of (a) Anticipated Emotional Response, $F(1, 478) = 128.36, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .21$, and (b) Potential Rejector, $F(2, 478) = 32.73, p < .002, \eta_p^2 = .12$. With regard to the main effect of

Anticipated Emotional Response, the participants anticipated responding to the ambiguous social situations with more Negative Affect (i.e., emotional distress; $M = 4.01$; $SD = 1.73$) than Positive Affect (i.e., emotional arousal; $M = 3.07$; $SD = 1.49$). With regard to the main effect of Potential Rejector, the participants anticipated having a more intense emotional response (i.e., emotional distress plus emotional arousal) when the potential rejector was a significant other ($M = 4.20$; $SD = 1.55$) than when the potential rejector was either a friend ($M = 3.34$; $SD = 1.49$) or an acquaintance ($M = 3.14$; $SD = 1.57$); the means for friend and acquaintance did not differ significantly from one another.

These main effects were qualified by a significant interaction of Anticipated Emotional Response and Potential Rejector, $F(2, 478) = 14.46, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .06$. As presented in Figure 5, simple effects tests using Bonferroni-corrected pairwise comparisons revealed that for both Positive Affect (i.e., emotional arousal), $F(2, 478) = 5.57, p < .01$, and Negative Affect (i.e., emotional distress), $F(2, 478) = 43.54, p < .001$, the participants anticipated having stronger emotional responses when the potential rejector was a significant other than a friend or acquaintance, but the difference was greater for Negative Affect (i.e., emotional distress) than Positive Affect (i.e., emotional arousal).¹⁷

Anticipated Behavioral Responses

To test for potential differences in participants' anticipated behavioral responses to ambiguous social situations in which there is the potential to be rejected by significant others, friends, or acquaintances, a 3 (Potential Rejector: Significant Other, Friend, Acquaintance) \times 4 (Anticipated Behavioral Response: Avoid, Complain, Retaliate, Act Friendly) mixed-ANOVA was conducted on the participants' anticipated behavioral response ratings. Results revealed significant main effects Results revealed significant main effects of (a) Potential Rejector, $F(2,$

478) = 15.73, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$, and (b) Anticipated Behavioral Response, $F(3, 1,424) = 215.81$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .31$ (see the marginal means within Table 20 for more information).

These main effects were qualified by a significant interaction of Potential Rejector and Anticipated Behavioral Response, $F(6, 1,434) = 49.82$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .17$. As presented in Table 20, simple effects tests using Bonferroni-corrected pairwise comparisons revealed that the participants indicated that they would be (1) more likely to anticipate avoiding an acquaintance than a friend, but more likely to anticipate avoiding a friend than a significant other, (2) more likely to retaliate against a significant other than either a friend or acquaintance, (3) more likely to complain to a significant other than a friend, but more likely to complain to a friend than an acquaintance, and (4) more likely to act friendly toward either a significant other or a friend than an acquaintance.

Chapter 4 - Discussion

As an extension of Jones et al.'s (2016) prior work on the rejection-relevant individual differences associated with participants' anticipated emotional and behavioral responses to ambiguous social situations in which rejection may be inferred, the present study had two specific goals. The primary goal of the present study examined the predictive ability of target-specific, rejection-relevant individual difference measures on participants' anticipated emotional and behavioral responses to ambiguous social situations involving specific potential rejectors (i.e., significant others, friends, acquaintances), whereas the secondary goal explored differences in participants' anticipated emotional and behavioral responses to perceived rejection by the same specific potential rejectors. The results associated with the primary goal were relatively complex and were influenced by both the type of analysis performed (i.e., correlational analysis vs. path analysis) and the specific measure of anticipated emotional response used in the path analysis (i.e., PANAS vs. NER). In contrast, the results associated with the secondary goal were generally clearer, easier to interpret, and consistent with my predictions.

Experiences with and Sensitivity to Being Rejected by Specific Individuals

As previously discussed, the primary (i.e., target-specific) hypothesis for this portion of the study argued that participants' experiences with and sensitivity to being rejected by specific individuals (e.g., significant others) would uniquely predict their anticipated emotional responses to the situation which, in turn, would predict their anticipated behavioral responses to similar potential rejectors (e.g., significant others), but not dissimilar others (e.g., friends, acquaintances). Alternatively, the target-nonspecific hypothesis proposed that participants' experience with and sensitivity to being rejected by *any* individual would predict their anticipated emotional and behavioral responses to the ambiguous social situations and rejectors,

respectively, regardless of the role of the other person involved. These two competing hypotheses were tested using correlational analyses and path analyses.

Correlational Analyses

The pattern of correlations presented in Tables 6, 7, and 8 provide no support for the target-specific hypothesis but, instead, appear to support the target-nonspecific hypothesis. First, the finding that scores on all six of the target-specific, rejection-relevant individual difference variables were consistently positively correlated with one another suggests that the participants' evaluations of their experiences with rejection and their sensitivity to being rejected were largely indistinguishable from one another as a function of the target (i.e., significant others, friends, acquaintances). Second, the more strongly participants agreed that they have experience with being rejected by *any* target, the more they anticipated experiencing a heightened level of Negative Affect (i.e., emotional distress) and Positive Affect (i.e., emotional arousal) in response to potential rejection from *any* rejector. Third, the more sensitive participants reported being in response to rejection by *any* target, the more they anticipated experiencing a heightened level of Negative Affect (i.e., emotional distress) in response to potential rejection from *any* rejector.

Concerning the pattern of correlations among participants' anticipated emotional responses and their anticipated behavioral responses, the more participants anticipated experiencing Negative Affect (i.e., emotional distress) or Positive Affect (i.e., emotional arousal) in response to potential rejection from a significant other, friend, or acquaintance, the more likely they were to anticipate responding in an antisocial manner (i.e., Retaliate and Complain) toward that individual (see Tables 9, 10, and 11). Although some significant relations were found among the participants' anticipated emotional responses to potential rejection by a significant other, friend, or acquaintance and their likelihood of avoiding or acting friendly toward that

individual, the relations across these three targets were generally weaker and less consistent than they were for the antisocial responses (i.e., Retaliate and Complain; see Tables 9, 10, and 11).

Although counter to the primary (i.e., target-specific) hypothesis, the results from these correlational analyses are reasonable when considered in the context of some relevant relationship literature, most notably theory and research addressing Bowlby's and Ainsworth's attachment theory (see Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Bretherton, 1992). Bowlby and Ainsworth (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Bowlby, 1973) proposed that (a) infants and young children whose basic attachment needs are met with rejection from caregivers, either covertly or overtly, are likely to develop insecure mental models and (b) children who develop insecure mental models are likely to experience generalized fears and doubts about whether others will accept and support them. To empirically test Bowlby and Ainsworth's notions, some attachment researchers (e.g., Bretherton & Munholland, 2008; Kirkpatrick & Hazan, 1994; Simpson & Rholes, 1998) have sought to examine the link between the quality of individuals' attachments with their parents as infants and their relationships with various others later in life. For example, Allen and Land (1999) demonstrated that adolescents who had secure attachments with their parents as infants tended to have relatively healthy relationships with their peers, whereas adolescents who were insecurely attached to their parents as infants tended to experience a variety of problems within their peer relationships (e.g., having difficulties communicating, having negative expectations regarding interactions with peers, being quick to anger). Similarly, in comparison with college-age individuals who report being securely attached to their parents, insecurely attached college-age individuals have been found (a) to be more distressed and more likely to perceive conflict within relationships involving significant others (Campbell, Simpson, Boldry, & Kashy, 2005), (b) to report lower levels of companionship and relational security as well as

higher level of conflict within relationships involving friends (Saferstein, Neimeyer, & Hagans, 2005), and (c) to be more likely to display negative affect and behaviors (Feeney, Cassidy, & Ramos-Marcuse, 2008) as well as more negative emotional engagement in social situations involving unfamiliar others (i.e., strangers and acquaintances; Roisman, 2006). Overall, these results suggest that an individual's early negative experiences with (and resulting unhealthy mental model and attitudes regarding) attachment are likely to *generalize* to other relationships and negatively impact the way in which he or she interacts with future significant others, friends, and acquaintances. The present correlational findings suggest that a similar pattern of generalization might occur with regard to an individual's early negative experiences with (and associated mental model and attitudes regarding) rejection.¹⁸

Path Analyses

Although results from the correlational analyses supported the target-nonspecific hypothesis, results from the path analyses were generally more complicated and difficult to interpret. In general, for participants who read about potentially being rejected by significant others and acquaintances, the results failed to support either the target-specific or the target-nonspecific hypotheses and were largely uninterpretable. However, when focusing on the data from participants who read about potentially being rejected by friends, there does appear to be at least *some* support for the target-specific hypothesis. More specifically, in the potential rejection from a friend condition, participants' experience with being rejected by friends (but not by significant others or acquaintances) was a predictor of their anticipated Negative Affect (i.e., emotional distress) and Positive Affect (i.e., emotional arousal) which, in turn, were significant predictors of three of four and four of four anticipated behavioral responses, respectively. Although this pattern of findings is consistent with the target-specific hypothesis, the same path

analyses also revealed that participants' sensitivity to being rejected by friends was unrelated to their anticipated emotional responses to potential rejection by a friend, but their sensitivity to being rejected by *acquaintances* was a predictor of their anticipated Negative Affect (i.e., emotional distress) in this same condition. It is unclear why heightened experience with rejection by friends, but not heightened sensitivity to being rejected by friends, provided support for the target-specific hypothesis in this condition.

It is noteworthy that when the 7-item negative emotional response (i.e., NER) measure used in the Jones et al. (2016) study was incorporated into the path models rather than the two subscales of the PANAS, support for the target-specific hypothesis became more consistent for participants in the friend condition (see Table 18 and Footnote 16). Specifically, participants' experience with being rejected by friends (but not significant others or acquaintances) as well as their sensitivity to being rejected by friends (but not significant others or acquaintances) were both found to be unique predictors of participants' anticipated negative emotional response (i.e., NER) which, in turn, was a significant predictor of three of the four anticipated behavioral responses (all except Act Friendly). The finding that the target-specific hypothesis was supported for those who were asked to read about potentially being rejected by friends, especially when using the NER rather than the PANAS, suggests two implications. First, it appears that a more focused approach to assessing anticipated emotional responses allows for more nuanced patterns of results. More specifically, each item of the NER is consistent with the negative emotional responses to rejection that have been commonly described within the rejection literature (e.g., Kelly, 2001; Leary et al., 2001) and also contains an item that directly assesses the extent to which participants actually felt rejected (see Appendix D). As such, the NER may have been especially sensitive in assessing the extent to which participants feel

rejected following the ambiguous social situations than the Negative Affect subscale of the PANAS.

Second, there appears to be something special about the individual difference variables specific to participants' experiences with and sensitivity to being rejected by friends as well as their ability to predict participants' anticipated emotional responses to potential rejection by a friend. However, it is intriguing as to why some support for the target-specific hypothesis was only found for the special relationship with friends. One possible reason why the path analyses only appeared to support the target-specific hypothesis for participants in the friend condition (especially when NER was used in the model) may be associated with the relative quantity (i.e., the number of specific relationships we have) and quality (i.e., overall value we place in a given relationship) of our various relationships. For example, if we consider the quantity as well as the quality of the three targets considered in the present study on a continuum ranging from high to low, it is reasonable to conclude that throughout our lifetimes, we are likely to have relatively few significant others (i.e., low quantity; high quality), a relatively large number of friends (i.e., high quantity; high quality), and a relatively large number of casual acquaintances (i.e., high quantity; low quality). Perhaps the uniqueness of friends in the current study is because of the potential for our friendships to be high in both quantity and quality.

Indeed, research has shown that our relationships with friends become increasingly important as we progress through adolescence with our close friends surpassing our parents as our primary source of social support (Buote et al., 2007; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992). Further, high quality relationships with friends can have considerable influence on the quality of our other relationships. For instance, adolescents who have close friends are less likely to experience dating anxiety (La Greca & Mackey, 2007), and adolescents' mental models related to close

friendships tend to shape their expectations regarding romantic relationships (Furman, Simon, Shaffer, & Bouchev, 2002). Put simply, when the value we place in our relationships with friends (i.e., high quality) is paired with the probability that we are likely to have many friends throughout our lifetime (i.e., high quantity), it is reasonable to believe that the quantity by quality interaction would be the most extreme for recalled experiences with and sensitivity to being rejected by friends. Given that the present study did not assess participants' perceptions of the relative quantity and quality of relationships with friends, significant others, and acquaintances, the proposed quantity by quality interaction explanation for finding some support for the target-specific hypothesis only in the friend condition must be considered speculative.

Differences in Emotional and Behavioral Responses to Specific Potential

Rejectors

As noted in the Introduction, relatively little research has examined potential differences in the extent to which participants anticipate experiencing different emotional and behavioral responses to ambiguous rejection by significant others, friends, and acquaintances. As such, the secondary goal of the current study was to systematically explore this issue.

Emotional Responses

The results of the analyses assessing the main effect of Anticipated Emotional Response (i.e., participants anticipated responding to the ambiguous social situations with more emotional distress than emotional arousal) and the interaction between Anticipated Emotional Response and Potential Rejector (i.e., the participants anticipated having stronger emotional responses when the potential rejector was a significant other than a friend or acquaintance, but the difference was greater for Negative Affect than Positive Affect) were unsurprising. Indeed, it is reasonable to believe that we would respond to potential rejection from various others (but

especially significant others) with more emotional distress than emotional arousal, which is also generally consistent with the extant literature on rejection (e.g., Kelly, 2001; Leary et al., 2001). However, the main effect of Potential Rejector found for both the PANAS (involving intensity of emotional response) and NER (involving negative emotional response only, see Footnote 17) revealed highly similar patterns of results (i.e., Significant Other > Friend = Acquaintance) that merit further discussion.

As previously discussed, research has shown that the extent to which we feel rejected is related to the extent to which we no longer feel valued within a given relationship (i.e., relational devaluation; Leary, 2005). Related to the notion of relational devaluation, I predicted that participants would anticipate responding to ambiguous social situations wherein there was the potential to be rejected by a significant other with more intense anticipated emotional responses (i.e., heightened emotional arousal [Positive Affect] *plus* emotional distress [Negative Affect] scores) than ambiguous social situations involving friends which, in turn, would prompt more intense anticipated emotional responses than ambiguous social situations involving acquaintances. These predictions were only partially supported in the current study.

The analyses revealed that the participants anticipated experiencing more intense emotional responses to the ambiguous social situations in which there was the potential to be rejected by a significant other than the social situations in which there was the potential to be rejected by either a friend or an acquaintance. Contrary to prediction, however, there was no significant difference in the intensity of participants' anticipated emotional responses between those who were asked to read about potentially being rejected by a friend and those who were asked to read about potentially being rejected by an acquaintance. Although the participants' heightened anticipated emotional responses to potential rejection by a significant other is

consistent with prior research (e.g., Baumeister & Dhavale, 2001), as well as my predictions, the failure to find a significant difference between the friend and acquaintance conditions is surprising given the assumption that participants would experience more relational devaluation (and, consequently, feel more rejected) when the potential rejector was a friend than when the potential rejector was an acquaintance. Despite being contrary to my predictions, the pattern of results concerning the participants' intensity of emotional reactions in response to ambiguous rejection from specific targets (i.e., significant other > friend = acquaintance) is, however, consistent with evolutionary theory.

As previously discussed, some evolutionary theorists (e.g., Buss, 1990) have argued that reproduction is an inherently powerful motivator and one of the most important benefits of group membership. Given this proposition, it seems reasonable that participants in the current study anticipated experiencing more emotional arousal and emotional distress to perceived rejection by a significant other than perceived rejection by either a friend or an acquaintance. Potentially being rejected by a significant other directly threatens one's reproductive opportunities and such an obstacle to one of our most basic motivations is likely to prompt especially intense emotional responses (for a related observation, see Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996). The notion of denied reproductive opportunity may also help to explain why participants did not anticipate responding differently to potential rejectors who were either friends or acquaintances. Given that the reproductive opportunities with friends and acquaintance are more distant and uncertain than those with (opposite-sex) significant others, perhaps participants in the current study did not anticipate experiencing as intense of emotional responses to potential rejection by friends or acquaintances as potential rejection by significant others because rejection by friends or acquaintances does not directly impact reproductive possibilities. Furthermore, we *typically*

have only one significant other at a time, whereas we are likely to have multiple friends and acquaintances at any given time. Because we typically have other friends and acquaintances (but not significant others) to fall back on following rejection, being rejected by a friend or an acquaintance may elicit similar levels of emotional intensity, but less emotional intensity than being rejected by a significant other.

Behavioral Responses

Although the participants in the current study anticipated experiencing a more intense emotional response when the potential rejector was a significant other than when the potential rejector was either a friend or an acquaintance, their anticipated behavioral responses were, as expected, relatively more complex. Despite their complexity, each of the following patterns of results were consistent with the previously discussed predictions.

Avoidant Responses

Prior research (Watson & Nesdale, 2012; Williams & Zadro, 2005) has shown that individuals who are at risk of being rejected may choose to avoid the situation and/or rejector in order to minimize or ignore the consequences of rejection. However, because it may not be feasible (or wise) to avoid individuals with whom we have a relationship that we are in jeopardy of losing, I predicted that participants would be more likely to anticipate avoiding ambiguous rejectors who are acquaintances than ambiguous rejectors who are significant others or friends. The results were generally consistent with this prediction, with one minor exception. Although, as expected, participants reported being more likely to avoid potential rejectors who are acquaintances than potential rejectors who are significant others or friends, they reported being *more* likely to avoid potential rejectors who are friends than potential rejectors who are significant others. In general, this pattern of results is consistent with the notion that an

individual's likelihood of avoiding an ambiguous rejector is *negatively* associated with the extent to which the individual is familiar with the potential rejector and has a close relation with him or her.

Antisocial Responses

As predicted, the results revealed that participants who read about potentially being rejected by a significant other were more likely to retaliate against that individual than those who read about potentially being rejected by either a friend or an acquaintance (see Table 20). This finding is consistent with prior research (e.g., Miller, 1997) demonstrating that when relationships are under stress, as in the case with potential rejection, individuals tend to treat intimate others more harshly than either friends or acquaintances. It should be noted, however, that the participants' overall mean rating of their likelihood of retaliating against an ambiguous rejector ($M = 2.49$ on a 9-point scale) was the lowest of the four behavioral options considered in this study (see Table 20).

Concerning the participants' likelihood of complaining to a potential rejector, I predicted that they would anticipate complaining more to significant others or friends than acquaintances because of their heightened familiarity and reduced need to self-monitor their impressions with significant others or friends (see Kaiser & Miller, 2001; Leary et al., 1994). The results were generally consistent with this prediction with one minor exception. Although, as expected, participants reported being more likely to complain to potential rejectors who are significant others or friends than potential rejectors who are acquaintances, they reported being *more* likely to complain to potential rejectors who are significant others than potential rejectors who are friends (see Table 20). In general, this pattern of results is consistent with the notion that an individual's likelihood of complaining to an ambiguous rejector is *positively* associated with the

extent to which the individual is familiar with the ambiguous rejector and has a close relation with him or her.

Prosocial Responses

As noted in the Introduction, when people are at risk of being rejected, they may try to protect the relationship by responding in a prosocial manner (Derfler-Rozin et al., 2010). In the context of the present study, I argued that there is more to lose (and, thus, more to protect) when potentially being rejected by a significant other or a friend than when potentially being rejected by an acquaintance. As predicted, the results revealed that participants reported being more likely to anticipate responding prosocially (i.e., acting friendly) to potential rejectors who are significant others or friends than potential rejectors who are acquaintances (see Table 20). It should be noted that, in general, the participants anticipated being more likely to respond prosocially (i.e., Act Friendly) to ambiguous rejectors than antisocially (i.e., Retaliate or Complain; see Table 20).

Summary of Results and Strengths of the Current Study

In sum, the analyses associated with the primary goal of the current study yielded mixed results such that the results from the correlations generally provided support for the alternative (i.e., target-nonspecific) hypothesis, whereas the results from the path analyses were relatively more difficult to interpret. More specifically, the correlations revealed that previous experience with and/or sensitivity to being rejected by *any* individual were associated with heightened anticipated emotional responses which, in turn, were associated with different anticipated behavioral responses. However, results from the path analyses revealed that the target-specific, rejection-relevant individual difference variables used in the current study were uniquely predictive of participants' anticipated responses to ambiguous social situations involving similar

potential rejectors, but only for those who read about potentially being rejected by a friend (results for those who read about potential rejection by significant others or acquaintances were uninterpretable).

Concerning the secondary goal of the current study, the analyses revealed that the intensity of the emotional responses as well as the type of behavioral response were dependent on the role of the potential rejector. Such findings help to provide additional insight into the dyadic nature of interpersonal rejection and suggest that not all rejection is created equal. More specifically, experiencing rejection by an acquaintance, although unpleasant and associated with a heightened anticipated emotional and specific behavioral responses, does not elicit the same anticipated emotional and behavioral responses as being rejected by either friends or significant others. Given the fact that humans are a social species and interact with various individuals on a daily basis, it is important to better understand the dyadic nature of rejection, especially as a function of the rejector-target relationship. Indeed, a substantial strength of the current study was the manipulation of the role of the potential rejectors. Most paradigms that have been used within the social psychological literature to manipulate rejection have tended to have participants experience rejection (either real or imaginary) by primarily strangers or acquaintances. By systematically investigating the role of the potential rejector on subsequent anticipated emotional and behavioral responses, the current study is, to my knowledge, among the first to further delineate the importance of a given potential rejector's role. The current study is an important first step and will provide the foundation for future investigations that will more directly assess how the role of the rejector ultimately influences the extent to which we react (i.e., emotionally and/or behaviorally) to rejection.

Limitations and Future Directions

A general limitation of the current study is the fact that the participants came from two different samples. As stated in the methods section, approximately half of the participants were recruited from the K-State SONA system whereas the other half was recruited via Amazon's MTurk. Although not ideal, participants were recruited from these two populations in order to better guarantee that the overall sample size would be large enough to appropriately compute the analyses reported above, confidently draw conclusions based on the results of this study, combat against multicollinearity, and help to make sure that these data could be collected in a timely fashion.

An additional limitation of recruiting from two separate populations is that the participants recruited from Amazon's MTurk were informed that only participants between the ages of 18 and 25 would be eligible to participate in the current study. While this restriction was implemented in order to try and make the participants from the two samples as similar as possible, there was no way of confirming the accuracy of participants' volunteered information concerning their age. However, this limitation is not unique to the current study. Prior investigations (e.g., Saucier, Miller, Martens, O'Dea, & Jones, 2018) have used similar methods in which eligibility requirements were overtly listed, but the accuracy of said requirements could not be guaranteed. This is a concerning issue for research conducted via online crowd sourcing tools such as Amazon's MTurk because research has shown that overtly listing such eligibility requirements (e.g., participants' age) can have negative effects of the integrity of the data set (Siegel, Navarro, & Thomson, 2015). To try and combat this issue, Peer, Samat, Brandimarte, and Acquisti (2015) argue that more interactive means of online data collection should be considered. In line with these recommendations, as well as those suggested by Saucier et al.

(2018), future research should strive to control for such issues associated with online data collection by adding interactive manipulation checks in order to increase the overall quality of data collected via online crowdsourcing services. For example, perhaps by asking participants to report their age using several different questions (e.g., age, birth year) at random intervals during data collection, the integrity of the data could be better guaranteed.

Concerning the primary goal, the cross-sectional nature of this portion of the study did not allow me to causally examine whether prior experiences with rejection and rejection sensitivity actually cause people to have more intense emotional responses to potential rejection which, in turn, causes different behavioral responses to specific rejectors. Instead, I can conclude that participants' experience with rejection and rejection sensitivity concerning specific individuals are related to their anticipated emotional responses to ambiguous rejection which, in turn, are related to their anticipated behavioral responses. Although it would be beneficial to experimentally test these effects in order to draw more concrete conclusions about causality, there are potential ethical (as well as practical) limitations associated with experimentally manipulating participants' experiences with rejection as well as their rejection sensitivity concerning specific individuals. Still relevant to the predictor variables, although VIF scores did not suggest potential concerns with multicollinearity among the target-specific predictor variables, especially after the ER-GEN and RS-GEN predictors were removed, the highly correlated nature of these variables (as seen in Tables 6, 7, and 8) is cause for concern and may help to explain the relatively limited support for the target-specific hypothesis. Such high correlations may be suggesting that the current target-specific variables are not necessarily target-specific, meaning that they may be tapping into the same rejection-relevant experiences and attitudes regardless of the role of the other person involved. As seen in Appendix A, the

items assessing participants' experiences with being rejected by significant others, friends, and acquaintances were similar except for the fact that the role of the rejector was varied for each item. Although this design allowed for direct comparisons among these items, it may have limited my ability to confidently say that the items measuring participants' experiences with being rejected by significant others are fundamentally different from the items measuring participants' experiences with being rejected by friends or acquaintances. However, it is important to also note that experience with rejection from friends (ER-FRI) was found to predict participants' anticipated emotional responses (whereas ER-SO and ER-ACQ did not) and rejection sensitivity concerning friends (RS-FRI) was found to predict participants' negative emotional responses (whereas RS-SO and RS-ACQ did not) for those in the friend condition. These results suggest that the participants were able to distinguish among the individual difference subscales, at least to some extent. Regardless, future research should seek to further differentiate among experiences with and sensitivity to being rejected by specific individuals.

Still relevant to the primary goal of the current study, it is concerning that the correlational analyses yielded a different pattern of results than the path analyses. Specifically, the correlations revealed that, in general, the target-specific, rejection-relevant individual difference measures were significantly and positively correlated with each other as well as with the participants' anticipated emotional responses for each of the three conditions (i.e., participants who read about potentially being rejected by significant others, friends, or acquaintances). Conversely, the path analyses yielded only a handful of target-specific, rejection-relevant individual difference measures that were unique predictors of participants' anticipated emotional responses. It is currently unclear as to why the correlational findings yielded no support for the target-specific hypothesis when, in contrast, the path analyses yielded

some support for this hypothesis for participants in the friend condition only, especially when NER was used rather than the PANAS. Indeed, the surprising incongruity among the correlational and path analyses presents another limitation of the current study.

Even more specific to the path analyses, an additional limitation could be the fact that almost none of the models tested fit the data well. Given that the current study was designed as a replication and extension of the Jones et al. (2016) investigation, which was an extension of the Barnett et al. (2013) investigation, this study was only interested in testing the model used in these prior studies (i.e., attitudes predict emotions which, in turn, predict behaviors). Although the conceptual foundation for these models is based on Weiner's (1980; 1995) model of motivated behavior, it is possible that different models could yield a better fit. For example, a series of studies conducted by Twenge et al. (2007) provide evidence that behavioral responses to rejection do not necessarily depend on emotional distress as an antecedent. Therefore, it is possible that participants in the current study may have (a) anticipated experiencing different behavioral responses to the ambiguous social situations involving significant others, friends, and acquaintances, but (b) these anticipated behavioral responses may not have been caused by anticipated emotional responses—a subtle, but important, distinction that was not considered in the current model. As such, future research testing multiple theoretically driven models is recommended in order to allow for better fitting models to emerge.

Concerning the overall design of the current study, there are two noteworthy limitations that could have also affected the data. First, the definitions of significant others, friends, and acquaintances that were used in the current study describe a person with whom the participants have (or have had) some form of connection. This is a nontrivial issue as being rejected by an ex-significant other or an ex-friend may be qualitatively different from being rejected by a

current significant other or friend. Unfortunately, because of how the individual difference measures were designed in the current study, it is impossible to know exactly when the participants have experienced rejection from significant others, friends, or acquaintances. Perhaps by thinking about former relationships, rather than current relationships, the participants' experiences with and attitudes relevant to rejection were not as salient as would have been preferred, thus potentially explaining why the correlational analyses revealed that participants' experiences with and sensitivity to being rejected by anyone was associated with anticipated emotional and behavioral responses to ambiguous social situations involving *any* potential rejector. However, research has shown that, unlike physical pain, social pain can be repeatedly relived whenever a given experience (e.g., interpersonal rejection) is recalled (Chen, William, Fitness, & Newton, 2008). Regardless, future research should seek to be more rigorous and explicitly state whether participants should recall prior social situations in which rejection occurred, or if they should simply write about (in considerable detail) a particularly hurtful rejection they have experienced or are currently experiencing involving a specific rejector.

A second limitation specific to the design of the present study is that the critical stimuli used to describe ambiguous rejection (see Appendix C) may reflect instances of potential *ostracism* rather than potential *rejection*. Although a seemingly trivial distinction, the concepts of ostracism and ambiguous rejection are distinct from one another. Specifically, ostracism is generally defined as either ignoring, or being ignored by, another person and “occurs without excessive explanation or explicit negative attention” (Williams, 2007, p. 429) whereas ambiguous rejection can occur when there are conflicting messages or the intent of the potential rejector is perceived as unclear by the target (e.g., agreeing to a lunch request but failing to schedule a time; Freedman et al., 2016; see Figure 2 for more information). The critical stimuli

in the present study may have blurred this distinction between ostracism and ambiguous rejection given that the scenarios described ambiguous social situations in which there was virtually no communication between the participants and the other individual described in the scenario. Framing the critical stimuli without any form of active communication between the participant and the potential rejector may have tempered the current pattern of results. Participants' anticipated emotional and behavioral responses may be more marked within hypothetical social situations in which there is active communication between the participant and the rejector prior to perceived rejection than hypothetical social situations in which there is no communication between these individuals (i.e., perceived ostracism) because there would potentially be more to misinterpret or get lost in translation when there is active communication than when there is only silence. Further distinguishing participants' anticipated emotional and behavioral responses to hypothetical social situations in which there is the potential for rejection (either explicit or ambiguous) or ostracism as a function of the other person involved (i.e., significant other, friend, acquaintance) provides an interesting direction for future research.

Although only limited support for the target-specific hypothesis found in the current study (i.e., only the path analyses for the friend condition supported the target-specific hypothesis, especially when NER was used as the measure of anticipated emotional response), future research should continue to explore the dyadic nature of interpersonal rejection. This notion is consistent with Freedman et al.'s (2016) recommendation that more research on interpersonal rejection is needed in order to better understand the individual and dyadic difference (e.g., attachment styles, relationship with rejector) variables that may be impacting the different forms of interpersonal rejection. For example, perhaps by using different target-specific, rejection-relevant variables such as attachment (either in general or concerning specific

relationships), or more fine grained variables assessing participants' experience with rejection from significant others, friends, or even family members (e.g., Intimate Partner Acceptance-Rejection/Control Questionnaire, Best Friend Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire, Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire, respectively; Rohner, 2018) , we may be able to discover more nuanced findings concerning the extent to which people feel and act as if they have been rejected within ambiguous social situations. As a further extension of the current study, and still consistent with Freedman et al.'s (2016) recommendations, future research should test to see if participants' anticipated emotional and behavioral responses not only vary as a function of the role of the other person involved (as has been demonstrated in the current study), but also as a result of how the social situation is framed (i.e., containing explicit rejection, ambiguous rejection, or ostracism).

Similarly, although the current study demonstrated that the participants anticipated responding (i.e., emotionally and behaviorally) to the ambiguous social situations as a function of the other person involved, it included a relatively limited number of categories of potential rejectors. While we are likely to experience rejection by significant others, friends, and acquaintances at any given point in our lives, we are also likely to experience rejection by various family members. Such kin rejection may be likely to prompt even more intense emotional responses and different types of behavioral responses than those observed in the current investigation, but the extent to which we respond to kin rejection may be tempered by our degree of relatedness (i.e., genetic similarity). For example, an individual may anticipate responding with a more intense emotional and/or different type of behavioral response if potentially rejected by a parent or sibling than if he or she were potentially rejected by a grandparent or distant cousin. Although such a pattern of results is consistent with prior research

concerning other forms of interpersonal behavior (e.g., kin altruism; Ben-Ner & Kramer, 2011; Curry, Roberts, & Dunbar, 2012; Hamilton, 1964; Lu & Chang, 2016), future research should seek to more thoroughly address this idea of kin rejection as well as the extent to which we feel and act as if we have been rejected in social situations involving specific kinships.

Up to this point, several directions for future research have been proposed in order to address some of the limitations of the current study. However, the results from this study also provide the foundation for a potentially fruitful program of research. For instance, given the fact that the only support for the target-specific hypothesis was found for the friend condition, further research on perceived rejection by friends merits serious consideration. Indeed, future research could seek to assess the number of friends an individual has as well as assess his/her rating of the overall importance of these friends. Such ratings would allow for a direct test on the quantity by quality notion that was previously discussed and determine if the number of quality friendships (or lack thereof) can affect an individual's reactions to perceived rejection by a friend.

In addition, future research could also seek to explore individuals' reactions to perceived rejection by different types of friends. We are likely to have several friends throughout our lifetimes, but the type of friendships we have are also likely to vary. For instance, we may have only a few best friends (i.e., individuals with whom we actively try to stay connected with), but we may also have dozens of casual friends (i.e., individuals we are currently friends with, but may not remain connected with forever). Similar to the differences in anticipated emotional/behavioral responses to potential rejectors who were significant others, friends, or acquaintances that were observed in the current study, it would be reasonable to expect that the intensity of our emotional responses and/or the type of our behavioral responses to perceived rejection by a friend would vary as a function of the type of friend who may be rejecting us.

Finally, future research should also seek to further delineate our anticipated emotional and/or behavioral responses to perceived rejection by friends that is either explicit *or* ambiguous. As suggested by Freedman et al.'s (2016) Responsive Theory of Social Exclusion, explicit rejection involves the obvious communication between the rejector and target indicating that rejection has, in fact occurred, whereas ambiguous rejection is marked by general confusion as to whether or not rejection has occurred due to a lack of clarity in the (potential) rejector's intent. Borrowing again from Leary's (2001; 2005) theory on relational devaluation, it is reasonable that experiencing explicit rejection from a friend (especially a best friend) would elicit intense emotional responses and/or different behavioral responses (e.g., antisocial behaviors) because of the apparent lack of value being placed in the friendship by the rejector. Similarly, experiencing ambiguous rejection by a friend may elicit less intense emotional and/or different behavioral responses (e.g., prosocial behaviors) because there is the possibility that rejection has not occurred and the relationship can yet be salvaged.

Closing Statement

In conclusion, the present findings not only provide the foundation for future research, they also provide insight into the individual differences associated with our tendency to feel and behave as if we have been rejected within ambiguous social situations and help to shed additional light on the dyadic nature of interpersonal rejection. Such findings have the potential to make an immediate contribution to the interpersonal rejection literature, especially with regard to the relative importance of the role of the potential rejector.

Table 1 – Correlations Among Scores on Experiences with Rejection (ER), Hostile Attribution Bias (HAB), Rejection Sensitivity (RS), and Negative Emotional Response (NER) From the Jones et al. (2016) Study

	1	2	3
1. ER	--		
2. HAB	.31***	--	
3. RS	.44***	.31***	--
4. NER	.28***	.15*	.19**

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 2 - Correlations Among Scores on Negative Emotional Response (NER) and Four Potential Behavioral Responses From the Jones et al. (2016) Study

	1	2	3	4
1. Avoid	--			
2. Complain	.33***	--		
3. Retaliate	.42***	.60***	--	
4. Not Act Friendly	.17*	-.02	.11	--
5. NER	.39***	.45***	.33***	.04

Note. * $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$

Table 3 - Independent Samples *t*-tests Between Participants who were Recruited via SONA

(n = 274) and Participants who were Recruited via Amazon's MTurk (n = 207) for each of the

Current Study's Critical Variables

Variable	Group	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
ER-SO	SONA	3.12	1.37	-1.06	.29
	MTurk	3.27	1.68		
ER-FRI	SONA	2.61	1.18	-3.96	<.001
	MTurk	3.11	1.58		
ER-ACQ	SONA	3.46	1.20	-0.72	.47
	MTurk	3.56	1.56		
RS-SO	SONA	18.25	8.07	-0.08	.94
	MTurk	18.31	9.08		
RS-FRI	SONA	21.32	8.27	-2.66	.008
	MTurk	23.44	9.17		
RS-ACQ	SONA	19.09	8.63	-.73	.47
	MTurk	19.71	9.72		
Positive Affect	SONA	2.73	1.14	-5.88	<.001
	MTurk	3.51	1.77		
Negative Affect	SONA	4.05	1.69	.53	.60
	MTurk	3.96	1.79		
Avoid	SONA	4.28	1.49	-1.95	.05
	MTurk	4.55	1.51		
Retaliate	SONA	2.14	1.31	-5.44	<.001
	MTurk	2.95	1.94		
Complain	SONA	2.76	1.76	-3.20	.001
	MTurk	3.34	2.20		
Act Friendly	SONA	4.64	1.78	2.52	.01
	MTurk	4.22	1.78		

Note. ER = Experience with Rejection; RS = Rejection Sensitivity; SO = Significant Other; FRI = Friend; ACQ = Acquaintance.

Table 4 - Variance Inflation Factor (i.e., VIF) scores for ER-GEN, RS-GEN, and Each of the Target-Specific Individual Difference Variables

Significant Other Condition (<i>n</i> = 150)	
	VIF
ER-SO	2.67
ER-FRI	3.28
ER-ACQ	4.82
ER-GEN	6.39
RS-SO	2.28
RS-FRI	1.95
RS-ACQ	1.82
RS-GEN	1.72
Friend Condition (<i>n</i> = 170)	
	VIF
ER-SO	2.31
ER-FRI	3.21
ER-ACQ	4.35
ER-GEN	5.12
RS-SO	2.05
RS-FRI	2.01
RS-ACQ	2.08
RS-GEN	1.78
Acquaintance Condition (<i>n</i> = 161)	
	VIF
ER-SO	2.99
ER-FRI	3.86
ER-ACQ	5.26
ER-GEN	6.45
RS-SO	1.61
RS-FRI	1.89
RS-ACQ	1.77
RS-GEN	1.50

Note. ER = Experience with Rejection; RS = Rejection Sensitivity; SO = Significant Other; FRI = Friend; ACQ = Acquaintance; GEN = People in General.

Table 5 - Variance Inflation Factor (i.e., VIF) scores for Each of the Target-Specific Individual Difference Variables with ER-GEN and RS-GEN Removed

Significant Other Condition (<i>n</i> = 150)	
	VIF
ER-SO	2.46
ER-FRI	2.45
ER-ACQ	3.38
RS-SO	2.14
RS-FRI	1.87
RS-ACQ	1.72
Friend Condition (<i>n</i> = 170)	
	VIF
ER-SO	2.23
ER-FRI	2.85
ER-ACQ	2.85
RS-SO	1.93
RS-FRI	1.92
RS-ACQ	1.96
Acquaintance Condition (<i>n</i> = 161)	
	VIF
ER-SO	2.93
ER-FRI	3.21
ER-ACQ	3.25
RS-SO	1.59
RS-FRI	1.66
RS-ACQ	1.70

Note. ER = Experience with Rejection; RS = Rejection Sensitivity; SO = Significant Other; FRI = Friend; ACQ = Acquaintance; GEN = People in General.

Table 6 - Correlations Among Participants' Scores on the Various Rejection-Relevant Individual Difference Measures and Anticipated Emotional Responses for Those who Read About Potential Rejection by a Significant Other (n = 150)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. ER-SO	--						
2. ER-FRI	.61***	--					
3. ER-ACQ	.73***	.75***	--				
4. RS-SO	.56***	.47***	.54***	--			
5. RS-FRI	.22**	.33***	.28***	.56***	--		
6. RS- ACQ	.35***	.39***	.45***	.49***	.56***	--	
7. Positive Affect	.20*	.41***	.31***	.15	.06	.11	--
8. Negative Affect	.18*	.16*	.17*	.20*	.18*	.18*	.22**

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; ER = Experience with Rejection; RS = Rejection Sensitivity; SO = Significant Other; FRI = Friend; ACQ = Acquaintance.

Table 7 - Correlations Among Participants' Scores on the Various Rejection-Relevant Individual Difference Measures and Anticipated Emotional Responses for Those who Read About Potential Rejection by a Friend (n = 170)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. ER-SO	--						
2. ER-FRI	.66***	--					
3. ER-ACQ	.65***	.77***	--				
4. RS-SO	.46***	.45***	.43***	--			
5. RS-FRI	.11	.28***	.27***	.55***	--		
6. RS- ACQ	.36***	.39***	.47***	.55***	.59***	--	
7. Positive Affect	.24**	.35***	.25**	.06	-.01	.14	--
8. Negative Affect	.21**	.33***	.26**	.31***	.33***	.36***	.33***

Note. ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; ER = Experience with Rejection; RS = Rejection Sensitivity; SO = Significant Other; FRI = Friend; ACQ = Acquaintance.

Table 8 - Correlations Among Participants' Scores on the Various Rejection-Relevant Individual Difference Measures and Anticipated Emotional Responses for Those who Read About Potential Rejection by an Acquaintance (n = 161)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. ER-SO	--						
2. ER-FRI	.72***	--					
3. ER-ACQ	.70***	.79***	--				
4. RS-SO	.47***	.30***	.25**	--			
5. RS-FRI	.16*	.29***	.31***	.40***	--		
6. RS- ACQ	.37***	.44***	.47***	.35***	.54***	--	
7. Positive Affect	.22**	.29***	.13	.04	-.06	.03	--
8. Negative Affect	.33***	.29***	.29***	.19*	.14	.17*	.26**

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; ER = Experience with Rejection; RS = Rejection Sensitivity; SO = Significant Other; FRI = Friend; ACQ = Acquaintance.

Table 9 - Correlations Among Scores on Participants' Anticipated Emotional and Behavioral Responses for Participants who Read About Potential Rejection by a Significant Other (n = 150)

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Positive Affect	--				
2. Negative Affect	.22**	--			
3. Avoid	.27**	-.15	--		
4. Retaliate	.46***	.39***	.19*	--	
5. Complain	.36***	.53***	-.10	.76***	--
6. Act Friendly	.27**	.10	.22**	-.10	-.01

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 10 - Correlations Among Scores on Participants' Anticipated Emotional and Behavioral Responses for Participants who Read About Potential Rejection by a Friend (n = 170)

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Positive Affect	--				
2. Negative Affect	.33***	--			
3. Avoid	.18*	-.19*	--		
4. Retaliate	.58***	.48***	.08	--	
5. Complain	.47***	.53***	-.11	.78***	--
6. Act Friendly	.25**	.07	.12	.07	.22**

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 11 - Correlations Among Scores on Participants' Anticipated Emotional and Behavioral Responses for Participants who Read About Potential Rejection by an Acquaintance (n = 161)

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Positive Affect	--				
2. Negative Affect	.26**	--			
3. Avoid	-.02	-.16*	--		
4. Retaliate	.68***	.39***	-.06	--	
5. Complain	.64***	.42***	-.09	.92***	--
6. Act Friendly	.32***	.20*	-.04	.34***	.39***

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 12 - Results of Path Analyses Examining the Relationships Among Participants' Scores on Experience with Rejection and Rejection Sensitivity, Anticipated Affective Responses, and Anticipated Behavioral Responses for Participants who Read About Potential Rejection by a Significant Other

Path	Standardized Estimate (β)	Standard Error	<i>p</i>
ER-SO → Positive Affect	-.13	.11	.28
ER-FRI → Positive Affect	.45	.12	< .001
ER-ACQ → Positive Affect	.08	.15	.54
ER-SO → Negative Affect	.09	.14	.49
ER-FRI → Negative Affect	.05	.15	.71
ER-ACQ → Negative Affect	-.02	.19	.91
RS-SO → Positive Affect	.03	.02	.77
RS-FRI → Positive Affect	-.09	.02	.37
RS-ACQ → Positive Affect	-.02	.02	.84
RS-SO → Negative Affect	.07	.02	.58
RS-FRI → Negative Affect	.08	.02	.46
RS-ACQ → Negative Affect	.06	.02	.58
Positive Affect → Avoid	.31	.08	< .001
Positive Affect → Retaliate	.40	.09	< .001
Positive Affect → Complain	.27	.10	< .001
Positive Affect → Act Friendly	.27	.10	< .001
Negative Affect → Avoid	-.22	.06	.005
Negative Affect → Retaliate	.31	.07	< .001
Negative Affect → Complain	.49	.08	< .001
Negative Affect → Act Friendly	.04	.08	.59

Note. ER = Experience with Rejection; RS = Rejection Sensitivity; SO = Significant Other; FRI = Friend; ACQ = Acquaintance.

Table 13 - Fit Indices for the Models Testing the Anticipated Behaviors of Avoid, Retaliate, Complain, and Act Friendly for Participants who Read About Potential Rejection by a Significant Other

Model Tested	df	χ^2	<i>p</i>	NFI	CFI	RMSEA
Avoid	7	26.43	< .001	.95	.96	.14
Retaliate	7	12.70	.08	.98	.99	.07
Complain	7	13.65	.06	.98	.99	.08
Act Friendly	7	10.25	.18	.98	.99	.06

Note. NFI = Normed Fit Index; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation.

Table 14 - Results of Path Analyses Examining the Relationships Among Participants' Scores on Experience with Rejection, Rejection Sensitivity, Anticipated Affective Responses, and Anticipated Behavioral Responses for Participants who Read About Potential Rejection by a Friend

Path	Standardized Estimate (β)	Standard Error	<i>p</i>
ER-SO → Positive Affect	.02	.10	.83
ER-FRI → Positive Affect	.42	.13	< .001
ER-ACQ → Positive Affect	-.07	.12	.58
ER-SO → Negative Affect	-.02	.11	.83
ER-FRI → Negative Affect	.27	.14	.02
ER-ACQ → Negative Affect	-.08	.14	.51
RS-SO → Positive Affect	-.12	.02	.21
RS-FRI → Positive Affect	-.12	.02	.22
RS-ACQ → Positive Affect	.13	.02	.19
RS-SO → Negative Affect	.05	.02	.58
RS-FRI → Negative Affect	.13	.02	.18
RS-ACQ → Negative Affect	.20	.02	.04
Positive Affect → Avoid	.27	.07	< .001
Positive Affect → Retaliate	.50	.06	< .001
Positive Affect → Complain	.34	.08	< .001
Positive Affect → Act Friendly	.25	.10	< .001
Negative Affect → Avoid	-.27	.06	< .001
Negative Affect → Retaliate	.34	.05	< .001
Negative Affect → Complain	.44	.07	< .001
Negative Affect → Act Friendly	.01	.09	.90

Note. ER = Experience with Rejection; RS = Rejection Sensitivity; SO = Significant Other; FRI = Friend; ACQ = Acquaintance.

Table 15 - Fit Indices for the Models Testing the Anticipated Behaviors of Avoid, Retaliate, Complain, and Act Friendly for Participants who Read About Potential Rejection by a Friend

Model Tested	df	χ^2	<i>p</i>	NFI	CFI	RMSEA
Avoid	7	34.07	< .001	.95	.95	.15
Retaliate	7	38.05	< .001	.95	.95	.16
Complain	7	28.38	< .001	.96	.97	.13
Act Friendly	7	31.28	< .001	.95	.96	.14

Note. NFI = Normed Fit Index; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation.

Table 16 - Results of Path Analyses Examining the Relationships Among Participants' Scores on Experience with Rejection, Rejection Sensitivity, Anticipated Affective Responses, and Anticipated Behavioral Responses for Participants who Read About Potential Rejection by an Acquaintance

Path	Standardized Estimate (β)	Standard Error	<i>p</i>
ER-SO → Positive Affect	.09	.13	.49
ER-FRI → Positive Affect	.50	.15	< .001
ER-ACQ → Positive Affect	-.28	.15	.04
ER-SO → Negative Affect	.22	.12	.08
ER-FRI → Negative Affect	.04	.14	.77
ER-ACQ → Negative Affect	.08	.14	.54
RS-SO → Positive Affect	-.03	.02	.75
RS-FRI → Positive Affect	-.11	.02	.25
RS-ACQ → Positive Affect	-.02	.02	.85
RS-SO → Negative Affect	.03	.02	.77
RS-FRI → Negative Affect	.07	.02	.45
RS-ACQ → Negative Affect	-.02	.02	.85
Positive Affect → Avoid	.03	.07	.73
Positive Affect → Retaliate	.64	.05	< .001
Positive Affect → Complain	.59	.05	< .001
Positive Affect → Act Friendly	.29	.08	< .001
Negative Affect → Avoid	-.17	.07	.03
Negative Affect → Retaliate	.24	.06	< .001
Negative Affect → Complain	.27	.06	< .001
Negative Affect → Act Friendly	.12	.08	.11

Note. ER = Experience with Rejection; RS = Rejection Sensitivity; SO = Significant Other; FRI = Friend; ACQ = Acquaintance.

Table 17 - Fit Indices for the Models Testing the Anticipated Behaviors of Avoid, Retaliate, Complain, and Act Friendly for Participants who Read About Potential Rejection by an Acquaintance

Model Tested	df	χ^2	<i>p</i>	NFI	CFI	RMSEA
Avoid	7	18.11	.01	.97	.98	.10
Retaliate	7	37.08	< .001	.94	.95	.16
Complain	7	29.68	< .001	.95	.96	.14
Act Friendly	7	24.32	.001	.96	.97	.12

Note. NFI = Normed Fit Index; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation.

Table 18 - Results of Path Analyses Examining the Relationships Among Participants' Scores on Experience with Rejection, Rejection Sensitivity, Anticipated Negative Emotional Response (NER), and Anticipated Behavioral Responses for Participants who Read About Potential Rejection by a Friend

Path	Standardized Estimate (β)	Standard Error	<i>p</i>
ER-SO → NER	.07	.11	.54
ER-FRI → NER	.27	.14	.02
ER-ACQ → NER	-.14	.14	.24
RS-SO → NER	.002	.02	.99
RS-FRI → NER	.20	.02	.04
RS-ACQ → NER	.12	.02	.22
NER → Avoid	-.20	.07	.01
NER → Retaliate	.53	.06	< .001
NER → Complain	.59	.07	< .001
NER → Act Friendly	.08	.09	.30

Note. ER = Experience with Rejection; RS = Rejection Sensitivity; SO = Significant Other; FRI = Friend; ACQ = Acquaintance; NER = Negative Emotional Response.

Table 19 - Fit Indices for the Models Testing the Anticipated Behaviors of Avoid, Retaliate, Complain, and Act Friendly for Participants who Read About Potential Rejection by a Friend with NER as the Measure of Their Anticipated Negative Emotional Response

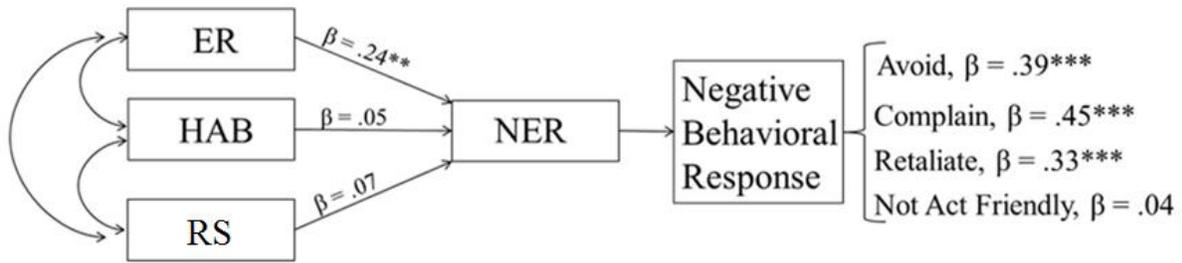
Model Tested	df	χ^2	<i>p</i>	NFI	CFI	RMSEA
Avoid	6	16.32	.01	.97	.98	.10
Retaliate	6	35.74	< .001	.94	.95	.17
Complain	6	20.95	.002	.97	.98	.12
Act Friendly	6	13.58	.04	.98	.99	.09

Note. NFI = Normed Fit Index; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation.

Table 20 - Simple Effects Tests: Means (and Standard Deviations) Across the Three Potential Rejectors for Each of the Four Anticipated Behavioral Responses

	Potential Rejector			F(2, 478)	Marginal Means
	Significant Other	Friend	Acquaintance		
Avoid				49.86***	
Mean	3.58 ^a	4.40 ^b	5.14 ^c		4.39 ^c
(SD)	(1.39)	(1.37)	(1.35)		(1.50)
Retaliate				26.05***	
Mean	3.23 ^b	2.32 ^a	1.98 ^a		2.49 ^a
(SD)	(1.78)	(1.45)	(1.50)		(1.66)
Complain				64.65***	
Mean	4.26 ^c	2.87 ^b	2.00 ^a		3.01 ^b
(SD)	(2.01)	(1.73)	(1.52)		(1.98)
Act Friendly				7.35***	
Mean	4.69 ^b	4.67 ^b	4.03 ^a		4.46 ^c
(SD)	(1.68)	(1.90)	(1.69)		(1.79)
Marginal Means	3.94 ^c	3.56 ^b	3.28 ^a		
	(1.72)	(1.61)	(1.51)		

Note. *** $p < .001$. Post hoc comparisons were made using Bonferroni-corrected pairwise comparisons. Means in the same row with different superscripts differ significantly at $p < .05$. Means in the Marginal Means column with different superscripts differ significantly at $p < .05$.



Note. $^{**}p < .01$; $^{***}p < .001$

Figure 1 - Results of the path analyses in the Jones et al. (2016) study examining the predicted relationships among the participants' scores on Experiences with Rejection (ER), Hostile Attribution Bias (HAB), Rejection Sensitivity (RS), Negative Emotional Response (NER), and the four potential Negative Behavioral Responses. Note that while the path from NER to Retaliate is significant, fit indices suggest that the model for Retaliate fit the data poorly (see Jones et al. [2016] for additional information).

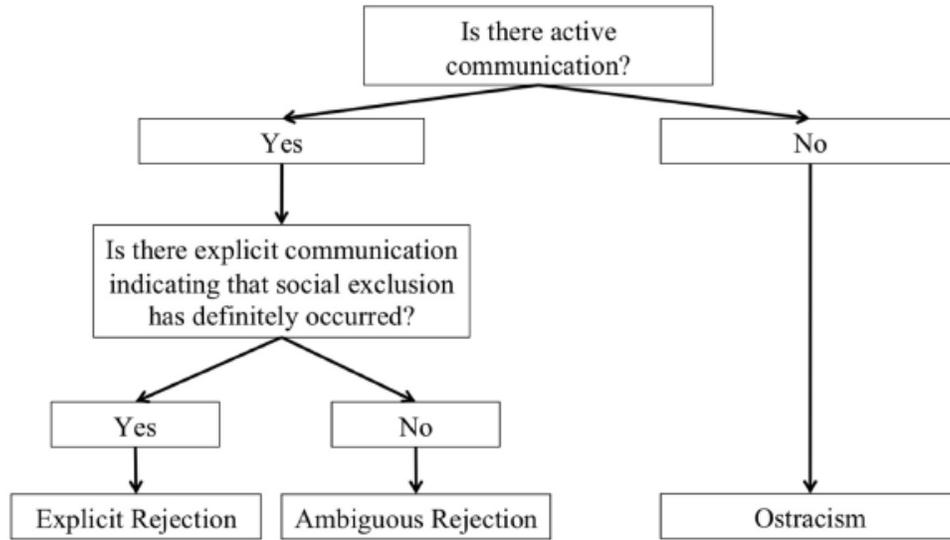


Figure 2 - The different forms of social exclusion described by Freedman et al.'s (2016) Theory of Social Exclusion. Please note that this image has been used with the author's permission.

Predicted Model for Significant Others

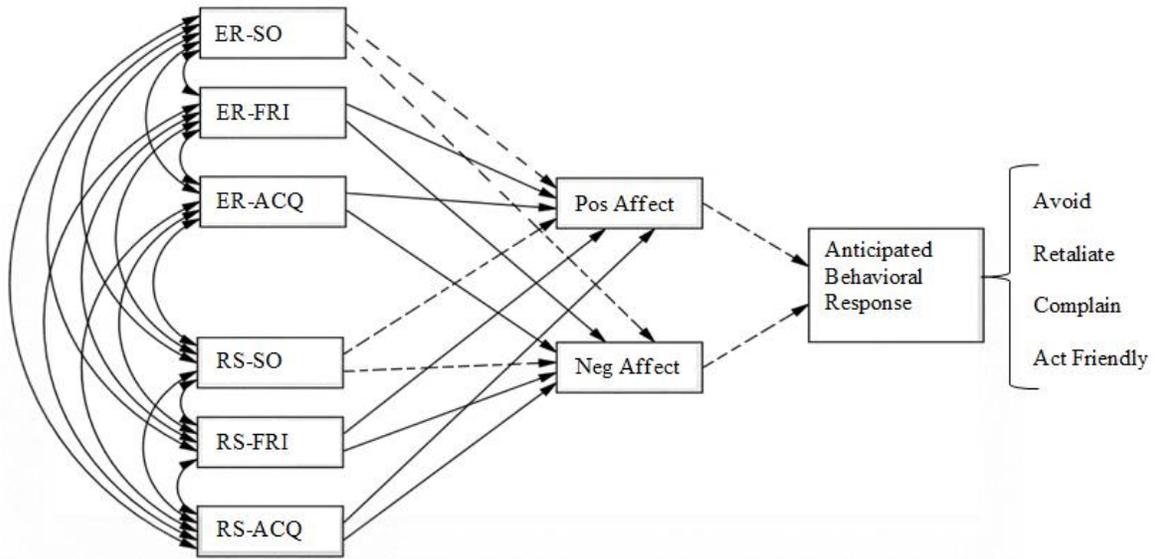


Figure 3 - Model testing the target-specific hypothesis for significant others, with the expected pattern of results highlighted with dashed arrows. As noted in the text, the pattern of results for these analyses is expected to reveal that ER-SO and RS-SO (but not ER-FRI, ER-ACQ, RS-FRI, RS-ACQ) are the unique predictors of participants' anticipated emotional responses to these ambiguous situations involving significant others which, in turn, is a predictor of participants' anticipated behavioral responses to significant others whose rejection is ambiguous.

Predicted Model for Significant Others



Figure 4 – Model testing the target-specific hypothesis for significant others, with the expected pattern of results highlighted with dashed arrows. The expected pattern of results for these analyses is expected to reveal that ER-SO and RS-SO (but not ER-FRI, ER- ACQ, RS-FRI, RS-ACQ) will uniquely predict participants' anticipated negative emotional response (i.e., NER) which, in turn, will predict participants anticipated behavioral responses to significant others whose rejection is ambiguous.

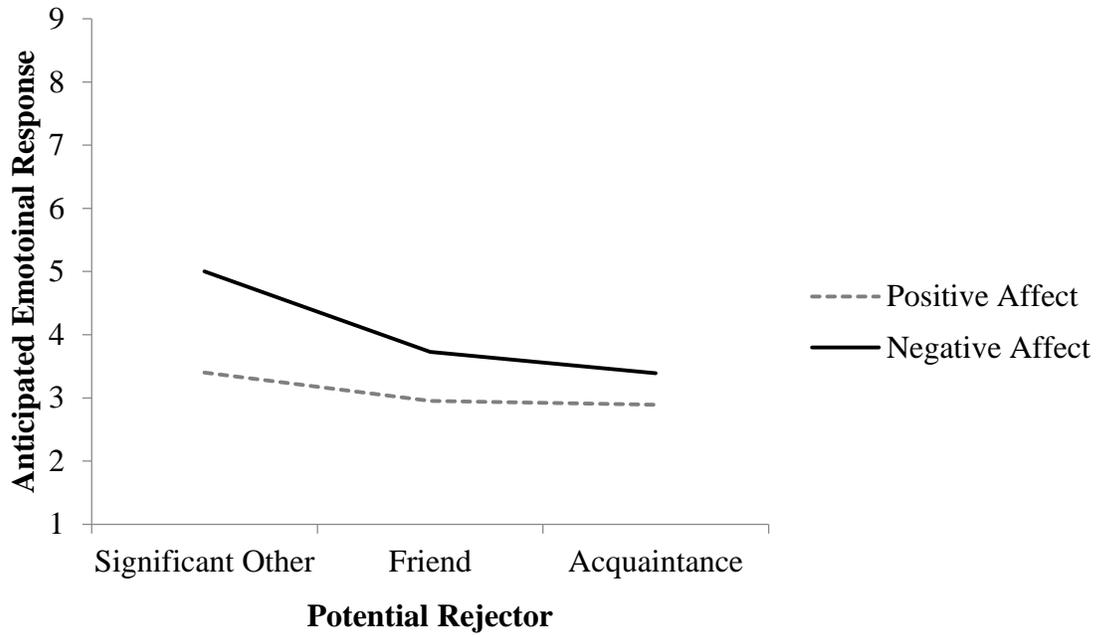


Figure 5 - Differences in participants' anticipated emotional responses as a function of the role of the potential rejector.

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Footnotes

¹Given the potential for individuals to experience both emotional arousal *and* emotional distress in the wake of interpersonal rejection, I have decided to assess participants' anticipated emotional responses to hypothetical social situations in which there is the potential for rejection via Watson, Clark, and Tellegen's (1988) Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (i.e., PANAS). The PANAS consists of two dimensions (i.e., Positive Affect and Negative Affect) and, according to Watson et al. (1988), higher average scores on Positive Affect reflect a heightened state of emotional arousal (i.e., a state of high energy and focused concentration wherein a person feels especially active and/or alert), whereas higher average scores on Negative Affect reflect a general state of "subjective distress...that subsumes a variety of aversive mood states" (p. 1063) including anger, guilt, fear, and nervousness. Although more information on the PANAS is provided later in this document, it is noteworthy that despite prior investigations indicating that the two dimensions of the PANAS (i.e., Positive Affect and Negative Affect) are unrelated (e.g., Kercher, 1992) or negatively correlated with one another (e.g., Crawford & Henry, 2004), a recent investigation using the PANAS has suggested that these two dimensions may, under some circumstances, be significantly and positively correlated with one another (O'Dea, Zhu, & Saucier, under review). Specifically, O'Dea et al. (under review) report that there may be some social situations that elicit feelings of emotional arousal (i.e., excitement or engagement) as well as feelings of animosity toward another person. Indeed, such findings make sense in that an individual who responds to a given social situation with an especially intense emotional response is likely to not only experience emotional arousal, but may be experiencing emotional distress as well.

²In the following overview of our prior study, I have borrowed heavily from the text of the Jones et al. (2016) paper. This approach is in line with the Taylor & Francis (i.e., the publishers of *The Journal of General Psychology*) copyright agreement that encourages authors to include their published work in a thesis or dissertation. In addition, it is not my intention to present our previously published work as new scholarly material (i.e., a main criterion of self-plagiarism as discussed in the sixth edition of the APA Publication Manual). Instead, the overview of the Jones et al. (2016) investigation is intended to present a thorough description of our prior research in order to provide the necessary foundation for the current investigation. Please note that the text describing our prior research in the current document will undergo significant revision if/when a manuscript based on this study is submitted for publication.

³In our prior study, we included hostile attribution bias (i.e., the tendency to perceive hostile intent in another person's interpersonal behavior when the actual intent is unknown; Choe, Lane, Brabell, & Olson, 2013; Dodge, 1980; Dodge et al., 2003; Helfritz-Sinville & Stanford, 2014) as a rejection-relevant individual difference variable. However, given that (a) results from our prior study revealed that an individual's tendency to attribute hostile intent to another person when his/her actual intent is unknown was unrelated to the individual's anticipated emotional and behavioral responses to ambiguous social situations in which rejection might be inferred and (b) it is difficult to conceptualize hostile attribution bias as a target-specific individual difference variable (as addressed in this study), I decided to exclude this variable from the current investigation.

⁴It should be noted that the conceptual foundation for the path analyses performed in the Barnett et al. (2013) and Jones et al. (2016) studies is based on Weiner's (1980; 1995) model of motivated behavior.

⁵NFI, CFI and RMSEA are three of the most popular goodness of fit indices used in the psychological literature (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

⁶In the Get-Acquainted manipulation, participants are brought into a lab and asked to get acquainted with a group of strangers. Participants are then asked to select from this group a few individuals with whom they (i.e., the participants) would prefer to work on a given task while also being informed that the others are doing the same. All participants are then informed that they have to work alone because (a) they have been randomly assigned to work alone or (b) none of the others had chosen to work with them. In the Future-Alone manipulation, participants are told that they are likely to end up alone later in life based on their responses to a bogus personality inventory. In the Cyberball manipulation, participants play a computer game which is an online ball-toss with two other participants (who are typically strangers). However, participants are unaware that they are playing the ball-toss game with a computer and the other participants do not exist. When the game stops passing the ball to the participants, they are left to assume that they have been rejected by the other participants.

⁷Preliminary analyses were conducted to determine the extent to which participants from these two samples differed on the variables of interest to the current study. Independent samples *t*-tests revealed that participants recruited via the K-State SONA system did not significantly differ from participants recruited via Amazon's MTurk on their experiences with rejection from significant others or acquaintances, rejection sensitivity concerning significant others or acquaintances, their anticipated negative affect responses, or their anticipated avoidant responses (see Table 3). However, independent samples *t*-tests also revealed that SONA participants' scores were significantly, and surprisingly, (a) lower than MTurk participants' scores on their self-reported experience with rejection from friends, rejection sensitivity concerning friends,

anticipated positive affect response, and their anticipated retaliation and complain scores, but (b) were higher than MTurk participants' scores on their anticipated act-friendly behavioral response scores (see Table 3). The fact that participants were recruited from two separate samples was not ideal, but was necessary in order to better guarantee that the current investigation had an adequate overall sample size. Future research should seek to recruit participants from a single sample.

⁸Preliminary analyses were conducted to test for univariate and multivariate outliers (i.e., an extreme score on a single variable and a combination of extreme scores on multiple variables, respectively). The current data set was first screened for univariate outliers by following the recommendations of Meyers, Gamst, and Guarino (2012). Meyers et al. (2012) recommend that if there are cases exceeding 2.5 standard deviations above or below the mean on any particular measure, then these cases should be carefully considered for possible removal. Following these recommendations, the data were screened and seven univariate outliers were identified and excluded from subsequent analyses. To test for multivariate outliers, Mahalanobis distance (i.e., the extent to which a participant's ratings on a given variable differ from the average of all participants' ratings on a given *set* of variables) was calculated for the eight predictor variables (i.e., ER-SO, ER-FRI, ER-ACQ, ER-GEN, RS-SO, RS-FRI, RS-ACQ, RS-GEN). More specifically, this measure is calculated by using a table of critical values for a chi-square distribution with the degrees of freedom being equal to the number of variables being compared and a conservative significance level set at $p < .001$ (Meyers et al., 2012). Meyers et al. (2012) propose that any values exceeding this critical value reflect the presence of multivariate outliers and should be considered for removal. Results indicated that there were 13 cases that exceeded

the critical value, $\chi^2(8) = 26.13$, $p < .001$. Therefore, all cases containing multivariate outliers were excluded from subsequent analyses.

⁹The experience with rejection questionnaire used in the Jones et al. (2016) study was adapted from Barnett et al.'s (2013) measure designed to assess experiences with prosocial and antisocial teases.

¹⁰In the pilot study conducted online ($N = 175$; $M_{\text{age}} = 21.65$; $SD_{\text{age}} = 2.15$), I tested two similar, but distinct, versions of our Modified Experience with Rejection Questionnaire as well as a modified version of Downey and Feldman's (1996) Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire. Although both versions of the Modified Experience with Rejection Questionnaire were designed to assess participants' experience with rejection by specific individuals (i.e., significant others, friends, acquaintances), they differed in their approach to this assessment. Specifically, Version A consisted of a single 40-item measure with 10 statements for each of the three potential rejectors and 10 statements used as filler items whereas Version B consisted of four 7-item measures with three measures designed to assess experience with rejection from the three potential rejectors (i.e., significant other, friend, acquaintance) and one measure used as a filler to distract participants from the exact purpose of the study. Despite the results of this pilot study suggesting that both of these two measures were acceptable with regards to internal consistency, I ultimately decided to use Version A of this modified measure because of the reduced possibility of demand characteristics compared to Version B (i.e., Version B was overly repetitive and could inadvertently influence participants' responses).

¹¹An important distinction between the original Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire and the modified version to be used in the current investigation is the fact that the original version (Downey & Feldman, 1996; Downey et al., 1998) did not take into consideration possible

differences in one's tendency to anxiously anticipate, easily perceive, and generally overreact to experiences of social rejection from specific targets/individuals, instead relying on a one-factor structure (Levy, Ayduk, & Downey, 2001). Indeed, Levy et al. (2001) contend that this "one-factor structure also suggests that rejection sensitivity is likely to impact different types of interpersonal relationships" (p. 271). However, no prior research has investigated rejection sensitivity using a multi-factor (i.e., target-specific) scale. Therefore, the modified rejection sensitivity questionnaire that was used in the current investigation was altered to assess participants' rejection sensitivity specific to significant others, friends, acquaintances, and various others in an attempt to allow for more precise measurement.

¹²Participants' expectancy scores are multiplied by their concern scores because of the belief that individuals who experience heightened rejection sensitivity not only expect rejection, but are also concerned about the possibility of being rejected (Levy et al., 2001).

¹³The Modified Experience with Rejection Questionnaire and the Modified Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire were administered to participants in a randomized order to control for any potential order effects.

¹⁴As presented in Table 4, the ER-ACQ variable for the Acquaintance condition also had VIF scores that exceeded the recommended cutoff. However, this variable was not excluded from the subsequent analyses because when ER-GEN (which had a more extreme VIF score than ER-ACQ) was removed from the analyses and the collinearity analyses were recomputed, the collinearity statistics for ER-ACQ no longer exceeded the recommended cutoffs (see Table 5).

¹⁵I had initially proposed breaking the path analyses into multiple sets and subsets of analyses. More specifically, I proposed that experience with rejection (i.e., ER) by specific others would be assessed in the first subset, the extent to which participants are sensitive to being

rejected (i.e., rejection sensitivity or RS) by specific others would be assessed in the second subset, and *both* experiences with and sensitivity to being rejected by specific others would be assessed in the third subset. However, given that the results among the different subsets of analyses were found to be highly similar, I decided to present only the results from the analyses that included *both* experiences with rejection by specific individuals and sensitivity to being rejected by specific individuals as the predictors.

¹⁶In addition to the path analyses reported in the Results section, exploratory path analyses were conducted using the negative emotional response (NER) measure that our lab has used in prior investigations (Barnett et al., 2013; Jones et al., 2016). The 7-item NER measure was included in the original proposal for this study and was incorporated in the 24-item Anticipated Emotional Response Measure (see Appendix D) in the present study that also includes the positive and negative affect items from the PANAS that was recommended by the committee.

The NER measure was retained in the present study for two reasons. First, I wanted to again test the target-specific hypothesis that experiences with and sensitivity to being rejected by specific individuals will uniquely predict participants' anticipated emotional response (especially *negative* emotional response, or NER) which, in turn, will predict their anticipated behavioral responses to similar (but not dissimilar) individuals in ambiguous social situations in which rejection might be inferred (see Figure 4 for the significant other example of the model being tested). Second, I was interested in attempting to replicate and extend the results from the Jones et al. (2016) study that used the NER measure ($\alpha = .91$ in the present study) rather than the PANAS.

Similar to the path analyses already reported using scores from the items on the PANAS, three additional sets of path analyses (one for each of the three potential rejectors) were conducted using scores from the items on the NER measure. In general, the NER analyses focusing on those who read about potentially being rejected by significant others or acquaintances were consistent with the corresponding PANAS analyses reported above in that they did not support the target-specific (nor the target-nonspecific) hypothesis. However, the NER analyses focusing on those who read about potentially being rejected by friends yielded results that were consistent with the target-specific hypothesis. As presented in Table 18, (a) the participants' experience with being rejected by friends (but not by significant others or acquaintances) and (b) their sensitivity to being rejected by friends (but not by significant others or acquaintances) were both found to be significant predictors of their anticipated negative emotional response (i.e., NER) to potentially being rejected by a friend. Furthermore, the participants' NER score was found to be a significant predictor of three of the four anticipated behavioral responses (all but Act Friendly). Although these patterns of findings support the target-specific hypothesis, it should be noted that the models for all four anticipated potential behavioral responses fit the data poorly (see Table 19).

¹⁷To be consistent with the exploratory path analyses reported in Footnote 16, an ANOVA was conducted using NER instead of the Positive and Negative Affect dimensions of the PANAS. More specifically, to test for potential differences in participants' anticipated negative emotional response (i.e., NER) to ambiguous social situations in which there is the potential to be rejected by significant others, friends, or acquaintances, a one-way ANOVA was conducted on participants' NER ratings. The results revealed that the participants' NER ratings differed across the three potential rejectors (i.e., significant other, friend, acquaintance), $F(2,$

478) = 33.05, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .12$. Results from a Bonferroni post hoc t -tests indicated that the participants anticipated having a more intense negative emotional response if they were potentially rejected by a significant other ($M = 5.04$; $SD = 1.54$) than if they were potentially rejected by either a friend ($M = 4.06$; $SD = 1.55$) or acquaintance ($M = 3.68$; $SD = 1.43$); the means for friend and acquaintance did not differ significantly from one another.

¹⁸The analogy between insecure attachment and rejection is certainly not perfect. Much of the attachment literature focuses on how a child's insecure attachment with a single caregiver (i.e., someone who can easily be considered a significant other) can affect his/her subsequent relationships with various other individuals (i.e., different significant others, friends, and even acquaintances). The current study's target-nonspecific hypothesis did not assume that participants' initial experience with rejection was solely from a significant other (e.g., mother, first romantic relationship) and it was also not assumed that this negative experience definitely affected subsequent relationships with others. Instead, this analogy was used in order to highlight the apparent overlap between insecure attachment and rejection by discussing how both of these phenomena can impact how we interpret social situations and interact with various others.

Appendix A - Modified Experience with Rejection Questionnaire

The following questionnaire is designed to assess your experiences with people in general as well as your experiences with:

- significant others**--people with whom you have (or have had) a romantic and intimate relation
- friends**--people with whom you have (or have had) a close, personal, but non-intimate, relation
- acquaintances**--people you know (or have known) casually but do not consider to be friends,

Using the 9-point scale provided below, please rate how strongly you disagree/agree with each of the following statements.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Strongly Disagree		Disagree Somewhat		Neither Disagree nor Agree		Agree Somewhat		Strongly Agree

_____ 1. In the past, my significant others have not tried to get to know me really well. (SO)

_____ 2. I tend to be accepted by my acquaintances. (-)(ACQ)

_____ 3. My acquaintances tend to act like they wanted nothing to do with me. (ACQ)

_____ 4. I tend to be accepted by my friends. (-)(FRI)

_____ 5. In the past, my acquaintances have not tried to get to know me. (ACQ)

_____ 6. I tend to get rejected by others more than most people my age. (GENERAL)

_____ 7. I tend to get rejected by my friends. (FRI)

_____ 8. My significant others have seemed to go out of their way to avoid me. (SO)

_____ 9. My significant others tend to pay attention to me. (-)(SO)

_____ 10. My acquaintances tend to go out of their way to accept me. (-)(ACQ)

_____ 11. Usually, my significant others have taken the time to get to know me really well. (-)(SO)

- _____12. People have often abandoned me before getting to know me. (GENERAL)
- _____13. My friends have seemed to go out of their way to avoid me. (FRI)
- _____14. In the past, my friends have not tried to get to know me really well. (FRI)
- _____15. My friends tend to act like they wanted nothing to do with me. (FRI)
- _____16. I have often been abandoned by my significant others. (SO)
- _____17. Usually, my acquaintances have taken the time to get to know me. (-)(ACQ)
- _____18. I have often been ignored by my friends. (FRI)
- _____19. People tend to pay attention to me. (-)(GENERAL)
- _____20. I have often been ignored by others. (GENERAL)
- _____21. In the past, people have not tried to get to know me. (GENERAL)
- _____22. My acquaintances tend to pay attention to me. (-)(ACQ)
- _____23. My friends tend to pay attention to me. (-)(FRI)
- _____24. People have seemed to go out of their way to avoid me. (GENERAL)
- _____25. My friends have often abandoned me before getting to know me really well. (FRI)
- _____26. People tend to go out of their way to accept me. (-)(GENERAL)
- _____27. My acquaintances have often abandoned me before getting to know me. (ACQ)
- _____28. I tend to be accepted by my significant others. (-)(SO)

- _____29. I have often been ignored by my acquaintances. (ACQ)
- _____30. People tend to act like they wanted nothing to do with me. (GENERAL)
- _____31. I tend to be accepted by others. (-)(GENERAL)
- _____32. Usually, my friends have taken the time to get to know me really well. (-)(FRI)
- _____33. I tend to get rejected by my significant others.(SO)
- _____34. My friends tend to go out of their way to make me feel liked. (-)(FRI)
- _____35. I have usually gotten dumped by my significant others. (SO)
- _____36. My significant others tend to go out of their way to make me feel wanted. (-)(SO)
- _____37. Usually, people have taken the time to get to know me. (-)(GENERAL)
- _____38. My acquaintances have seemed to go out of their way to avoid me. (ACQ)
- _____39. I have often been ignored by my significant others. (SO)
- _____40. I tend to get rejected by my acquaintances. (ACQ)

Appendix B - Modified Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire

Each of the sentences below describes a hypothetical situation in which you might interact with a significant other, friend, acquaintance, or another person. In considering these situations, please use the following definitions of an acquaintance, friend, and significant other:

- Significant other**-- a person with whom you have a romantic and intimate relation
- Friend**--a person with whom you have a close, personal, but non-intimate, relation
- Acquaintance**--a person you know casually but do not consider to be a friend

Please imagine you are in each situation described in bold, and then respond to the question and the statement concerning each situation by using the corresponding 9-point scales.

Note: ACQ = Acquaintance; FRI = Friend; SO = Significant Other

1. You ask an acquaintance from class if you may borrow his/her notes. (ACQ)

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 7 8 9

I would expect that the person would willingly lend me his/her notes. very unlikely very likely
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

2. You ask your significant other to move in with you. (SO)

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your significant other would want to move in with you? very unconcerned very concerned
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

I would expect that he/she would want to move in with me. very unlikely very likely
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

3. You ask your parents for a loan to help you through a difficult financial time. (GENERAL)

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 7 8 9

I would expect that my parents would want to help me. very unlikely very likely
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

4. You ask your significant other for help in deciding what classes to enroll in next semester. (SO)

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your significant other would want to help you? very unconcerned very concerned
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

I would expect that he/she would want to help me. very unlikely very likely
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

5. You ask an acquaintance you met at a party if you could borrow his/her phone because you forgot yours at home. (ACQ)

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not the person would want to lend you his/her phone? very unconcerned very concerned
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

I would expect that the person would want to lend me his/her phone. very unlikely very likely
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

20. You approach your professor to ask if he/she would be willing to write you a letter of recommendation. (GENERAL)

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your professor would want to write you a letter of recommendation? very unconcerned very concerned
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

I would expect that he/she would want to write me a letter of recommendation. very unlikely very likely
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

21. You ask your significant other if he/she really loves you. (SO)

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your significant other would say yes? very unconcerned very concerned
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

I would expect that he/she would answer yes sincerely. very unlikely very likely
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

22. You go to a party and notice an acquaintance from class on the other side of the room and then you ask him/her to dance. (ACQ)

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 7 8 9

I would expect that he/she would want to dance with me. very unlikely very likely
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

23. You ask your significant other to come home to meet your parents. (SO)

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your significant other would want to meet your parents? very unconcerned very concerned
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

I would expect that he/she would want to meet my parents. very unlikely very likely
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

24. You ask your parents to come to a campus event that is really important to you. (GENERAL)

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not you parents would want to come? very unconcerned very concerned
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

I would expect that my parents would want to come. very unlikely very likely
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Appendix C - Ambiguous Social Situations

Ambiguous Situation #1

Significant Other. Imagine you are interested in joining a local club on campus so you decide to attend one of their weekly meetings. You arrive at the meeting a few minutes early and you decide to take a seat at one of the empty tables. Not long after you sit down, you notice your significant other walk through the door. You and your significant other frequently spend time together and the two of you even decided to take some of the same classes together. In all of your shared classes, the two of you always sit together and you frequently exchange lecture notes. Your significant other looks around the room, apparently trying to find a place to sit, and it appears to you that he/she notices you sitting by yourself but you have no way of knowing for sure. He/she walks in your general direction but quickly sits down at a different table as the meeting starts.

Friend. Imagine you are interested in joining a local club on campus so you decide to attend one of their weekly meetings. You arrive at the meeting a few minutes early and you decide to take a seat at one of the empty tables. Not long after you sit down, you notice that a friend of yours walks through the door. You and your friend frequently spend time together and the two of you are even taking some of the same classes. In your shared classes, the two of you always sit together and you frequently exchange lecture notes. Your friend looks around the room, apparently trying to find a place to sit, and it appears to you that he/she notices you sitting by yourself but you have no way of knowing for sure. He/she then walks in your general direction but quickly sits down at a different table as the meeting starts.

Acquaintance. Imagine you are interested in joining a local club on campus so you decide to attend one of their weekly meetings. You arrive at the meeting a few minutes early and you decide to take a seat at one of the empty tables. Not long after you sit down, a student you recognize from a couple of your classes walks through the door. You have never really spoken with this person outside of your shared classes, but the two of you usually sit together in class and occasionally exchange lecture notes. Your acquaintance looks around the room, apparently trying to find a place to sit, and it appears to you that he/she notices you sitting by yourself but you have no way of knowing for sure. He/she then walks in your general direction but quickly sits down at a different table as the meeting starts.

Ambiguous Situation #2

Significant Other. Imagine you are walking through campus one morning and you see your significant other walking several yards ahead of you. The two of you frequently spend time together in the evenings and on weekends, so you decide to call your significant other to see if he/she would like to go to lunch with you. While the phone is ringing, you see your significant other reach into his/her pocket, pull out a phone, look at it, and then put it back in his/her pocket. Meanwhile, your call suddenly goes to voicemail.

Friend. Imagine you are walking through campus one morning and you see one of your friends walking several yards ahead of you. The two of you frequently spend time together so you decide to call your friend to see if he/she would like to go to lunch with you. While the phone is ringing, you see your friend reach into his/her pocket, pull out a phone, look at it, and then put it back in his/her pocket. Meanwhile, your call suddenly goes to voicemail.

Acquaintance. Imagine you are walking through campus one morning and you see an acquaintance from one of your classes walking several yards ahead of you. Although you have rarely spoken to this person outside of class, the two of you usually sit together in class and, during the first week of the semester, you exchanged names and cell phone numbers just in case one of you missed a lecture. You decide to call your classmate to see if he/she would like to go to lunch with you. While the phone is ringing, you see your classmate reach into his/her pocket, pull out a phone, look at it, and then put it back in his/her pocket. Meanwhile, your call suddenly goes to voicemail.

Appendix D - Anticipated Emotional Response Measure

Using the following 9-point scale, please indicate how much you would feel each of the following feelings and emotions in this situation. In responding to this questionnaire, please insert each of the feelings emotions listed below, one at a time, in the blank within the question:

“If this situation happened to you, how _____ would you feel?”

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not at All		A Little		Somewhat		Moderately		Extremely

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. _____ interested(+) | 13. _____ ashamed(-)* |
| 2. _____ distressed (-) | 14. _____ inspired(+) |
| 3. _____ excited(+) | 15. _____ nervous (-) |
| 4. _____ upset(-)* | 16. _____ determined(+) |
| 5. _____ strong(+) | 17. _____ attentive(+) |
| 6. _____ guilty (-) | 18. _____ jittery (-) |
| 7. _____ scared(-) | 19. _____ active(+) |
| 8. _____ hostile (-) | 20. _____ a afraid (-) |
| 9. _____ enthusiastic (+) | 21. _____ rejected(-)* |
| 10. _____ proud(+) | 22. _____ angry (-)* |
| 11. _____ irritated(-)* | 23. _____ happy(+)* |
| 12. _____ alert(+) | 24. _____ sad(-)* |

+ denotes positive affect items

- denotes negative affect items

* denotes items that were included in the NER (see Jones et al., 2016)

Appendix E - Behavioral Response Questionnaires

Ambiguous Situation #1—Behavioral Responses

Using the following 9-point scale, please indicate how likely you would be to respond in each of the ways listed if you were in this situation. In responding to this questionnaire, please insert each of the phrases listed below, one at a time, in the blank at the end of the question:

“If this situation happened to you, how likely would you be to _____?”

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not Likely at All				Somewhat Likely				Very Likely

1. ignore the fact that your acquaintance/friend/significant other did not sit with you (AV)
2. approach your acquaintance/friend/significant other and aggressively tell him/her how mad you are at him/her (RE)
3. go and sit with your acquaintance/friend/significant other and strike up a friendly conversation (AF)
4. confront your acquaintance/friend/significant other after the meeting and aggressively accuse him/her of intentionally ignoring you (RE)
5. tell your acquaintance/friend/significant other how disappointed you are that he/she did not sit with you (COM)
6. go and sit with your acquaintance/friend/significant other and start talking to him/her about the classes you are taking together (AF)
7. avoid your acquaintance/friend/significant other by remaining at your table (AV)
8. tell your acquaintance/friend/significant other that you do not appreciate being ignored (COM)
9. decide that it's not a big deal that your acquaintance/friend/significant other did not sit with you (AV)
10. get back at your acquaintance/friend/significant other by refusing to speak with him/her the next time you see him/her (RE)
11. complain to your acquaintance/friend/significant other after the meeting about not sitting with you (COM)
12. wave at your acquaintance/friend/significant other and gesture for him/her to come sit with you (AF)

Ambiguous Situation #2—Behavioral Responses

Using the following 9-point scale, please indicate how likely you would be to respond in each of the ways listed if you were in this situation. In responding to this questionnaire, please insert each of the phrases listed below, one at a time, in the blank at the end of the question:

“If this situation happened to you, how likely would you be to _____?”

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not Likely at All				Somewhat Likely				Very Likely

1. ignore the fact that your acquaintance/friend/significant other did not take your call (AV)
2. approach your acquaintance/friend/significant other and aggressively tell him/her how mad you are at him/her (RE)
3. run over to your acquaintance/friend/significant other and strike up a friendly conversation (AF)
4. leave an aggressive voicemail that has the potential to hurt your acquaintance's/friend's/significant other's feelings (RE)
5. leave a message on your acquaintance's/friend's/significant other's voicemail saying how disappointed you are that he/she ignored your call (COM)
6. leave your acquaintance/friend/significant other a voicemail asking if he/she would like to meet you for lunch (AF)
7. tell your acquaintance/friend/significant other that you did not mean to call him/her if he/she asks you about your phone call later (AV)
8. leave a message on your acquaintance's/friend's/significant other's voicemail complaining about how rude it is to screen someone's phone call (COM)
9. decide that it's not a big deal that your acquaintance/friend/significant other did not answer your phone call (AV)
10. get back at your acquaintance/friend/significant other by screening his/her call if he/she tries to call you back (RE)
11. complain to your acquaintance/friend/significant other about not answering your phone call the next time you see him/her (COM)
12. text your acquaintance/friend/significant other and ask if he/she would like to go to lunch with you (AF)

Appendix F - Informed Consent

Experiences with and Attitudes Toward Specific Social Situations

The current investigation is an extension of previous studies we have conducted examining individuals' experiences with and attitudes relevant to specific social situations. Although we have learned a lot in our prior investigations, we have encountered several limitations concerning our assessment of these experiences with and attitudes toward specific social situations. Therefore, the purpose of the current study is to further expand upon our previous work and address some of these limitations by using more thorough assessment techniques. Your participation in this research will help us determine the best way to assess these individual differences.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to provide some basic information about yourself (e.g., your age and gender). You will then be asked to complete two different questionnaires designed to assess (a) how much experience you have within a specific social situation and (b) your attitudes toward a specific social situation. Next, you will be asked to review different social situations and indicate how you think you would respond to the other person in these situations.

Your participation in this study should take approximately 25-30 minutes. The research involves no foreseeable risks beyond what you would normally encounter in your daily life. **Participants are free to withdraw from the study at any time.** Participation in this study is completely anonymous; no personally identifying information is requested and there is no way for the researchers to know which survey is completed by which participant.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to call Dr. Mark Barnett at (785) 532-0603 (Professor, Department of Psychological Sciences, 422 Bluemont Hall, Kansas State University). If you have any concerns about participants' rights or the manner in which this research is conducted, please contact Dr. Rick Scheidt at (785) 532-6195 (Chairman, Institutional Review Board, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University).

[Below will be the start of a new section in Qualtrics.]

I understand that my participation in this research project is completely voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent and stop participating at any time without explanation.

There are two options below. If you have read and understand this consent form and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described, please select the first option below (i.e., "*Yes, I consent to participate in this study.*"). However, if you have read and understand the consent form but do not agree to participate in the study under the terms described, please select the second option below (i.e., "*No, I do not consent to participate in this study.*").

- Yes, I consent to participate in this study.
- No, I do not consent to participate in this study.*

*Skip Logic to → End of Survey

Appendix G - Debriefing Statement

Debriefing Statement

Thank you for your participation in this study. It would not be possible to conduct psychological research without the help of individuals like you.

As you may infer from the questionnaires you completed today, we are interested in assessing your (a) prior experience with rejection, (b) your rejection relevant attitudes, and your anticipated emotional and behavioral responses to various social situations. This study is designed to assess the factors that influence how we respond to different social situations.

There were no right or wrong answers to any of the questionnaires you completed. Only the researchers involved in this study will have access to your responses, and they will not be able to determine which participants completed which questionnaires.

If you would like to know more about this study, or if you have any questions or concerns, you may contact Dr. Mark Barnett, Professor, Department of Psychological Sciences, Kansas State University at barn@ksu.edu.

Thank you again for participating in this study and have a great day!