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ARTICLES

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*The Rejection Sensitivity Model is used to examine the social antecedents to expectations of rejection among adults. College students (*N *= 314) completed measures of relational victimization and rejection sensitivity. Results indicate that relational victimization is significantly related to rejection sensitivity for women. Implications for counseling and research are offered.*

Early rejection experiences may be especially painful and confusing for adolescents who are in the process of developing a sense of personal identity (Portes, Sandhu, & Longwell-Grice, 2002). The outcomes of rejection specific to peers for young people are also well documented in the literature and are troubling. School violence (Leary, Kowalski, Smith, & Phillips, 2003), aggressive behavior (Barnow, Lucht, & Freyberger, 2005), depression (Prinstein & Aikins, 2004), and suicide (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010) have all been associated with adolescent peer rejection experiences. Research studies have also considered the long-term outcomes of early peer rejection experiences and found relationships between rejection and later academic performance, externalizing issues such as aggression, and internalizing difficulties such as loneliness, depression, and self-concept (for a comprehensive review, see McDougall, Hymel, Vaillancourt, & Mercer, 2001). What is less well understood, however, is whether frequent rejection experiences during adolescence affect interpersonal functioning during adulthood.

One likely outcome of frequent rejection experiences during adolescence is rejection sensitivity in adulthood. Rejection sensitivity refers to apprehensive expectations of, predispositions toward perceiving, and sensitive reactions to apparent rejection (Downey & Feldman, 1996). Some scholars have argued that

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insecure attachment related to rejection by caregivers or peers during childhood can result in higher levels of sensitivity to being rejected in adulthood (Downey & Feldman, 1996; Levy, Ayduk, & Downey, 2001). Much of the research in this area, however, has focused on the interpersonal and mental health outcomes of rejection sensitivity (Ayduk, Downey, Testa, Yen, & Shoda, 1999; Cassidy & Stevenson, 2005; Downey, Feldman, & Ayduk, 2000; Downey, Freitas, Michaelis, & Khouri, 1998), leaving many unanswered questions about its development. What appears to be missing from the knowledge base is research that attends to early social and personal relationships that may influence the development of rejection sensitivity (Butler, Doherty, & Potter, 2007). The purpose of the current study is to examine the impact of a specific type of rejection experience during adolescence, relational victimization, on the development of rejection sensitivity with specific attention to differences between the sexes.

REJECTION SENSITIVITY

Counselors have long recognized the important relationship between sense of belonging and healthy development (Hazler & Mellin, 2004; Mellin, 2008; Myers, Sweeney, & Witmer, 2000). Rejection sensitivity, which draws heavily on ideas from traditional attachment and interpersonal theories of personality (Downey & Feldman, 1996), similarly conceptualizes the relationship between belonging and well-being. Attachment perspectives assert that children who experience rejection early in their lives are likely to develop working models of others as being likely to reject them and, as a result, become more vulnerable to developing depressive and anxiety disorders (Carnelley, Pietromonaco, & Jaffe, 1994). These insecure working models of others are thought to result in distrustful or hesitant relationship styles in adulthood (Downey & Feldman, 1996). The Rejection Sensitivity Model draws on attachment theory to suggest that when parents fail to meet children's articulated needs, then children become hypervigilant to rejection and anxiously expect rejection from others (Downey & Feldman, 1996).

Attachment theories focus primarily on the role of rejection from parents in the development of insecure working models (Bowlby, 1980), but rejection from peers may also play a key role. The role of peers may be important to understanding the orientation children develop toward relationships with others and their related psychosocial development. Previous research has documented that as children age, there is a shift from attachment to parents to attachment to peers, and that shift appears to be significantly more salient in girls (Rubin et al., 2004). This finding indicates the potential importance peer rejection may have on the development of working models of others, especially for young girls.

The Rejection Sensitivity Model (Levy et al., 2001) may provide a useful framework for understanding how adolescent peer relationships might affect personal relationships during adulthood, especially among women. This model

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asserts that repeated rejection experiences increase people's expectations that others will not accept them. People who experience rejection may become so sensitive to the potential of being rejected that they act in ways that, paradoxically, elicit rejection from others. The Rejection Sensitivity Model includes five processes that describe the cyclical nature of rejection: (a) development of rejection sensitivity through prior rejection experiences, (b) resulting expectations and perceptions of rejection in circumstances where rejection is a possibility, (c) cognitive–affective (humiliation, disappointment, anger) reactions to perceived rejection, (d) behavioral reactions such as withdrawal or aggression, and (e) elicitation of rejection from others stemming from reactions to inaccurate and defensive perceptions of rejection. The behavioral reactions to rejection sensitivity may ironically elicit rejection from valued others that produces a cycle of expectations of, and reactions to, rejection by others.

Although the Rejection Sensitivity Model has been successfully applied to interpersonal processes among both men and women, the situational context and outcomes of rejection sensitivity have been shown to vary by sex. More specifically for men, rejection sensitivity has been associated with anger (Cassidy & Stevenson, 2005) and dating violence (Downey et al., 2000). Among women, research has demonstrated relationships between rejection sensitivity and depression (Ayduk, Downey, & Kim, 2001), hostility (Ayduk et al., 1999), and rejection by romantic partners (Downey et al., 1998). Although previous research has helped increase understanding of the sex-specific contexts and outcomes of rejection sensitivity, both sex-neutral and sex-specific differences in the development of rejection sensitivity remain less well understood.

RELATIONAL VICTIMIZATION

Consideration of repeated experiences of adolescent relational victimization as an antecedent to adult rejection sensitivity may have specific implications for young women. Women's self-concept is often highly correlated with their perception of the success of personal relationships with others (Purdie & Downey, 2000). A similar connection between success of interpersonal relationships and sense of self is not commonly found among men, whose sense of self appears more closely related to individual accomplishments (Cross, Morris, & Gore, 2002). Establishing and maintaining relationships with others may therefore create unique differences in anxieties and fears between men and women.

The pressure for girls to be successful in interpersonal relationships is often considerable. Beginning in adolescence, according to Pipher (1994), girls' personal interests and achievements are less appreciated because being well liked and desirable to others takes precedence. Boys' friendships with other boys, however, are not likely to change nearly as much as girls' friendships. Whereas female friendships at this age tend to focus on popularity and sexuality, male friendships continue to consider the importance of individual interests and

achievements. The key difference is that the success of interpersonal relationships is not as closely tied to their sense of self because their individual interests and achievements are still valued.

During adolescence, many young people report significant levels of relational victimization that is characterized by an individual repeatedly being a target of relationally destructive actions in which relationships are used as a means for hurt (Crick et al., 2001). This type of victimization includes behaviors such as spreading fabricated rumors about someone, intentionally withdrawing friendship, and threatening to exclude or excluding someone from a social group (Cullerton-Sen & Crick, 2005). Whether the rates and impact of relational victimization vary by sex, however, continues to receive a great deal of theoretical and empirical attention.

Although results considering sex differences in rates of relational victimization have been mixed (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Galen & Underwood, 1997; Goldstein, Tisak, & Boxer, 2002), the impact of relational victimization on young women may be more pronounced. Research indicates that girls more than boys perceive relational victimization to be very upsetting (Crick & Rose, 2000) and also classify it as being as destructive as physical forms of aggression (Galen & Underwood, 1997). Studies considering the short-term impact of relational victimization on girls have found higher rates of depression, anxiety, social avoidance, and loneliness among girls who have been victimized compared with peers who had not been victimized (Crick et al., 2001). Although there seems to be some initial understanding of more immediate mental health outcomes of relational victimization, how repeated experiences of relational victimization during adolescence affect adult relationships seems to remain unknown.

RELATIONAL VICTIMIZATION AS A POSSIBLE ANTECEDENT TO REJECTION SENSITIVITY

The Rejection Sensitivity Model has previously been applied to aggression among young women; however, this work focused on rejection sensitivity as an antecedent to aggression rather than relational victimization as an antecedent to rejection sensitivity (Downey, Irwin, Ramsay, & Ayduk, 2004). More specifically, other researchers have previously argued that women with high rejection sensitivity and low self-regulatory competencies are more likely to engage in aggressive behavior and have poor personal and interpersonal outcomes. Although this model adds to theory about the relationship between rejection sensitivity and aggression, it is unidirectional and encompasses both relational and physical aggression among young women. One study (Butler et al., 2007) explored the relationship of childhood teasing experiences, adult rejection sensitivity, peer acceptance, and interpersonal competence among 104 college students. The study found a significant relationship between rejection sensitivity and childhood teasing experiences but did not report sex-specific

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differences. London, Downey, Bonica, and Paltin (2007) applied the Rejection Sensitivity Model to peer rejection as a social antecedent to childhood rejection sensitivity, and their results did consider sex differences. Their study found a link between peer rejection and childhood rejection sensitivity and further reported this relationship was more salient to boys who reported increases in both angry and anxious expectations of rejection over time. The results of this study are surprising given the rich line of research and theory supporting the impact that peer rejection has on young women and the sex-specific contexts and outcomes of rejection sensitivity. A more likely model may be that early experiences of a specific type of peer rejection, relational victimization, may help differentially predict adult rejection sensitivity between men and women.

THE CURRENT STUDY

The current study extends previous research on the outcomes of adolescent relational victimization and social antecedents of adult rejection sensitivity in three important ways. First, it examines the relationship between adolescent relational victimization and specific conceptualization of long-term maladaptive interpersonal functioning, rejection sensitivity. Second, it examines the specific context of peer rejection rather than parental rejection as an antecedent to adult rejection sensitivity. Third, this study specifies a type of peer rejection, relational victimization, and considers how the type of rejection may result in sex-specific antecedents to adult rejection sensitivity. Although previous research has considered both the short-term outcomes of relational victimization and sex-specific outcomes of rejection sensitivity, this study extends this work through consideration of both sex-neutral and sex-specific antecedents to rejection sensitivity. More specifically, the current study posits that adolescent relational victimization experiences will be related to higher levels of adult rejection sensitivity (Hypothesis 1) and the relationship will be stronger for women than for men (Hypothesis 2).

METHOD

Participants

Students (N = 325) enrolled in an undergraduate core course in interpersonal communication at a midsized public university were asked to participate in the study. Three hundred fourteen college students (237 females, 77 males; M = 19.44 years of age, SD = 1.91, range = 18–41 years) participated in the current study, representing a 96% response rate. Overall, the racial/ethnic background of participants was as follows: 94% (n = 296) White/Caucasian (non-Hispanic), 3% (n = 10) Black/African American, 1% (n = 3) Hispanic/Latino, 0.6% (n = 2), Native American/American Indian, and 1% (n = 3) identifying as other. On a 9-point scale (3 = *no financial stress* and 12 = *significant financial stress*),

the average level of socioeconomic stress reported by participants was 3.91. This indicator of socioeconomic strain was not significantly different by sex or racial/ethnic group.

Procedure

A research assistant for the principal investigator (current author) recruited students through the distribution of informational packets. Instructions for completing the instruments were read out loud by the research assistant, and the participants independently reviewed the remaining study materials. The principal investigator was available by phone or e-mail to answer participant questions. No compensation, including supplemental course credit, was offered for participation. Students were provided time to complete the study measures during the last 30 minutes of class time or, alternatively, were also provided the opportunity to complete the instruments in another setting (e.g., home, library) and return them to the researcher.

Instrumentation

Participants received a packet that included an informed consent and demographic form in addition to the instruments described below.

Indirect Victimisation Scale–Revised, Retrospective Version. The Direct and Indirect Prisoner Behaviour Checklist (DIPC; Ireland, 1999) is a 99-item, structured, self-report measure that considers both acts and experiences of direct and indirect aggression. The Indirect Victimisation–Revised, Retrospective version of the DIPC (DIPC-IV-RR) includes eight items. The term *indirect* is used as opposed to *relational* in this instrument. The items in this scale, however, are synonymous with the term *relational* used throughout this study as they measure harm done through manipulation of social relationships.

Ireland (1999) indicated that items for the DIPC were chosen based on both a modified version of a behavioral checklist developed originally by Beck and Smith (9S cited in Ireland, 1999) and on an Indirect Victimisation Index developed by Ireland (1997) for a previous study. Modifications to the original Beck and Smith checklist were made on the basis of a literature review of bullying behavior among prisoners. Items for the Indirect Victimisation Index were chosen on the basis of data from three different sources: (a) descriptions of bullying behavior based on research with middle and elementary school children, (b) previously accepted definitions of indirect aggression, and (c) observations of indirect aggression displayed in previous research with prisoners.

The DIPC-IV-RR was used to assess past relational victimization and was chosen because it includes many items that broadly measure this type of aggression. Three primary alterations were made to this scale. First, the time reference of the DIPC was shifted from the experience of indirect victimization over the past week to during adolescence. This change was necessary because there is no known retrospective and comprehensive measure of relational victimization for

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use with adults. The second alteration to this scale involved changing responses from a dichotomous yes/no format to a continuous scale. Items were measured on a 5-point rating scale (0 = *not at all,* 1 = *seldom,* 2 = *sometimes,* 3 = *often,* and 4 = *very often*). This scale has been used in other indirect victimization instruments (Björkqvist, Österman, & Kaukiainen, 1992). This alteration was necessary to attain a specific understanding of how the level of adolescent relational victimization may relate to adult rejection sensitivity. The scale's original dichotomous format only allowed for understanding of whether participants have experienced relational victimization, not the intensity of those experiences. The last alteration to the scale concerned removing the word *prisoner* from the scale. In the original scale, one item read, "Someone has tried to turn other prisoners against me." To make the item more directly applicable for the current sample, the item was changed to "Someone tried to turn others against me." The author of the DIPC gave full support and permission for all alterations described. The revised, retrospective version of this scale created specifically for use in this study was found to have high internal consistency, indicated by an alpha of .87.

Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire. Rejection sensitivity was measured with Downey and Feldman's (1996) Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire (RSQ). This is an 18-item fixed-choice response measure that assesses the operationalized definition of rejection sensitivity. This questionnaire operationalizes rejection sensitivity as "generalized expectations and anxiety about whether significant others will meet one's needs for acceptance or will be rejecting" (Downey & Feldman, 1996, p. 1329). As a measure of rejection sensitivity among participants, the RSQ assesses both the degree of anxiety and the expectations about being rejected within specific relational contexts, including strangers (five items), friends (four items), parents (five items), and romantic partners (four items). No subscales, however, have been developed based on the relational contexts of questions.

Fixed-choice responses are applied to each situation in which participants are asked to assess their degree of both anxiety about being rejected (e.g., "How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your boyfriend/girlfriend would want to help you out?") and their expectations for being rejected (e.g., "I would expect that he/she would willingly agree to help me out"). Respondents are asked to answer the first fixed-choice response (about the degree of anxiety they may feel) on a 6-point rating scale ranging from 1= *very unconcerned* to 6 = *very concerned*. Regarding their expectations for being rejected, respondents are instructed to also rate these on a 6-point rating scale ranging from 1 = *very unlikely* to 6 = *very likely*.

Research indicates that the RSQ assesses a stable and logical disposition toward expecting and processing the behaviors of others (Downey et al., 1998). The test–retest reliability in Downey and Feldman's (1996) initial study with undergraduate students on the RSQ indicated a reliability coefficient of .83

over a 2- to 3-week period and a reliability coefficient of .78 over a 4-month period. Initial studies on the RSQ also revealed that it is not a redundant measure of other related constructs such as timidity, attachment style, social anxiety, social avoidance, and confidence (Ayduk et al., 2001). In the current study, this instrument had high internal consistency, indicated by an alpha of .90.

RESULTS

Male and female students reported similar scores on the RSQ (male students, $M = 6.56$, $SD = 2.45$; female students, $M = 6.24$, $SD = 2.11$) and DIPC-IV-RR (male students, $M = 11.02$, $SD = 6.57$; female students, $M = 10.71$, $SD = 6.09$). Independent t tests were conducted to examine possible sex differences in adolescent relational victimization and adult rejection sensitivity scores. There were no significant effects for sex on the adolescent relational victimization measure, $t(307) = 0.400$, $p = .690$, or adult rejection sensitivity measure, $t(295) = 1.13$, $p = .260$. The DIPC-IV-RR was positively skewed (ranging from 0 to 32.5), with many participants reporting infrequent relational victimization. The RSQ was normally distributed, with scores ranging from 1.5 to 14.5. Higher scores on both instruments indicate higher levels of either adolescent relational victimization or adult rejection sensitivity.

To examine the relationship between adolescent relational victimization and adult levels of rejection sensitivity, I conducted a simple regression analysis using retrospective reports of adolescent relational victimization and self-reported levels of current adult rejection sensitivity. Adolescent relational victimization was significantly related to adult rejection sensitivity scores, $b = .265$, $t(292) = 4.70$, $p < .001$. Adolescent relational victimization also explained a small amount of the variance in adult rejection sensitivity scores, $R^2 = .07$, $F(1, 294) = 22.08$, $p < .001$.

In addition, to examine sex-specific variations in the relationship between adolescent relational victimization and adult rejection sensitivity, I completed two separate linear regression analyses. For male students, adolescent relational victimization was not significantly related to adult rejection sensitivity scores, $b = .021$, $t(85) = 0.193$, $p = .847$. A closer examination of the data for female students, however, did reveal a significant relationship between the two variables, $b = .393$, $t(204) = 6.13$, $p < .001$. Adolescent relational victimization also explained a modest amount of the variance in adult rejection sensitivity scores for female students, $R^2 = .16$, $F(1, 206) = 37.52$, $p < .001$.

DISCUSSION

This study investigated whether adolescent relational victimization helped predict self-reported levels of rejection sensitivity among adults. On the basis of previous research and theory, this study also considered whether the impact of

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the hypothesized model would be stronger for women than for men. The results of the data suggest that although men and women both experience similar levels of adolescent relational victimization and adult rejection sensitivity, adolescent relational victimization appears to be a sex-specific antecedent to adult rejection sensitivity for women. Before discussing the results and implications of the current study, however, it is important to first note the limitations of the study.

Limitations

There are two primary limitations to the current study. First, the study's sample limitations should be considered when evaluating practice and research inferences from the results. The results of this study are limited by the use of a convenience sample that was relatively homogeneous in terms of race, age, socioeconomic status, and educational attainment. Sampling based on availability may compromise the generalizability of the results, thus the results of this study should not be extended to populations that differ in terms of race, age, socioeconomic status, and level of education. Future researchers should seek out samples with greater diversity. Given the recent and well-deserved attention to suicides related to antigay bullying, for example, exploring relational victimization and rejection sensitivity among lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender adults may be a particularly useful study. A second limitation was the use of self-report data for the assessment of adult rejection sensitivity and retrospective self-report accounts of adolescent relational victimization. The use of self-report data for the assessment of retrospective accounts of relational victimization has been the focus of ongoing debate. It has been argued that autobiographical accounts of childhood abuse or trauma are not accurate over time because of contamination or revision, but little evidence has been found to support this line of reasoning (Rivers, 2001). Even with ongoing debates on their accuracy in assessing a variety of issues, self-rating scales remain among the most popular and widely used types of assessment tools in psychological research (Wetzler & Marlowe, 1993), and research has shown that they can be both valid and reliable in retrospective accounts of bullying (Rivers, 2001). The relationship between adolescent relational victimization and adult rejection sensitivity, however, would be best tested using multiple research approaches, to include longitudinal, qualitative, and experimental methods.

Despite these limitations, however, this study does contribute to the lack of available research on the social antecedents to adult rejection sensitivity and how those processes vary by sex. The results demonstrated that adolescent relational victimization was significantly related to adult rejection sensitivity scores, thereby providing initial support for the first hypothesis. Additionally, in their study considering a similar but distinct antecedent to adult rejection sensitivity, childhood teasing, Butler et al. (2007) found that childhood teasing and adult rejection sensitivity were significantly correlated (r = .34). The effect size of r = .27 for both male and female participants between adolescent

relational victimization and adult rejection sensitivity in the current study is similar to the results reported by Butler and colleagues.

Although Butler et al.'s (2007) study did not report sex differences in correlations, the data from the current study suggest that although both men and women experience adolescent relational victimization, it affects them differently. The relationship between adolescent relational victimization and adult rejection sensitivity initially appeared significant for both sexes; however, when the data were analyzed separately by sex, the results were significant for women but not for men. This indicates support for the second hypothesis. Men who actually had slightly higher scores on the measure of adolescent relational victimization did not report higher levels of adult rejection sensitivity. The effect size for women was $r = .39$; the effect size for men was $r = .02$ and nonsignificant.

London et al.'s (2007) study on the social causes of rejection sensitivity did report results that contradict the sex-specific findings of the current study. In their study, London et al. reported that boys more than girls who were categorized as experiencing peer rejection reported increased childhood rejection sensitivity. There are important distinctions, however, between London et al.'s study and the current study. Most important, peer rejection was assessed by peer nomination measures and was a categorical measure that did not consider the type or frequency of peer rejection. As described by previous research, although both men and women may experience adolescent relational victimization, the meaning they attach to it and the associated outcomes appear to vary by sex. It may be that adolescent relational victimization experienced by women differentially results in the development of insecure attachment models; for men, other types of peer rejection experiences that are more salient to their sex-specific development of self-concept (e.g., being left out of activities because of perceived lack of ability by peers, rejection from athletic or other special interest groups) may have more of an impact on interpersonal functioning during adulthood. Type of peer rejection experience and sex-specific processes in the development of adult rejection sensitivity are important questions that need to be addressed by future research.

The results of the regression models, however, are not surprising. For women, in particular, sense of self is often closely related to the success of their interpersonal relationships with others (Guimond, Chatard, Martinot, Crisp, & Redersdorff, 2006). Additionally, previous research has demonstrated that peer relationships are more relevant to the development of a sense of self among women, whereas parental relationships appear more influential for men (Coleman, 2003). Adolescent relational victimization commonly takes place among friends; when they are hurt repeatedly over time by someone they care about, it is not surprising that women would be more vulnerable than men to becoming sensitive to rejection as adults. Although the results of this study suggest men and women experience adolescent relational victimization at similar rates, the key difference between the sexes may be the meaning they attach to it. Attach-

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ment processes related to peers during adolescence may therefore have a more substantial impact on the development of working models of being likely to be rejected by others for women than for men.

Implications for Counseling and Future Research

This study found that adolescent relational victimization is more likely to be related to adult rejection sensitivity for women than for men with similar experiences, which relates to some specific counseling recommendations. Future investigations on the social and developmental aspects of these factors are also needed to acquire additional information about the long-term outcomes of adolescent relational victimization and antecedents to adult rejection sensitivity.

Counselors who are working with female clients who exhibit high levels of rejection sensitivity are encouraged to explore adolescent relationships with peers, and more specifically, experiences with relational victimization. The findings of this study suggest that these early experiences with peers may be affecting the clients' relationships with others as adults. Identifying such antecedents for anxious expectations of rejection by others may help young women move forward in productive ways. Future research that more specifically considers the processes that result in higher levels of adult rejection sensitivity for women who have experienced frequent adolescent victimization by peers also seems important. Because this is the only known study to look at the specific relationship between adolescent relational victimization as an antecedent to adult rejection sensitivity, more research is needed to make scientifically grounded conclusions. Research that applies different theories of attachment to understand the specific mechanisms that correlate adolescent relational victimization to adult rejection sensitivity would be a significant contribution. Understanding of such processes will likely inform models that can be used to help prevent or alleviate future problematic interpersonal functioning patterns that are related to adolescent relational victimization experiences. Experimental, qualitative, and longitudinal studies may be able to better discern the specific mechanisms and related variables that contribute to this relationship for women.

In this study, men, unlike women, did not report significantly higher levels of adult rejection sensitivity when they had elevated scores on measures of adolescent relational victimization. Although men reported similar levels of adult rejection sensitivity, they did not appear to be related to adolescent relational victimization, suggesting that the antecedents to adult rejection sensitivity may be sex specific. When working with men who are exhibiting signs of rejection sensitivity, counselors should explore the unique experiences that likely informed working models of distrust and anxious expectations of rejection from others. Whether it be early experiences with parents, other types of bullying by peers, or rejection by important adults in the lives of young men, counselors and their clients may find benefit in exploring the antecedents to rejection sensitivity. Likewise, future research investigations could consider other possible sex-specific antecedents to

adult rejection sensitivity for men, such as rejection related to achievement and individual interests (e.g., academic, athletic), because sense of self is highly correlated to these two constructs for men. It may be that not being selected for participation in specific athletic, musical, or other groups is more directly related to the development of insecure attachment models for men than for women. In this study, men actually scored slightly higher than women on the measure of adult rejection sensitivity, indicating that they have developed some insecure attachment models; however, those models clearly do not appear to be related to adolescent relational victimization experiences. It would therefore be important for future investigations to consider the sex-specific contexts and processes of different types of peer rejection and rejection from parents to better understand the antecedents rejection sensitivity for men. Understanding of these contexts and processes would be useful in prevention and intervention in adult rejection sensitivity among men. Prevention and intervention approaches may be particularly important for men and their romantic partners given previous research that has demonstrated links between adult rejection sensitivity and domestic violence. Counselors working with men who are exhibiting high levels of rejection sensitivity should be alert to this relationship.

CONCLUSION

This study found that adolescent relational victimization was uniquely related to adult rejection sensitivity for women. Future research is needed that uses a variety of methods to explore the specific mechanisms that inform these processes both similarly and differently for men and women to make more scientifically grounded conclusions about these findings. Additionally, the results of future research can be used to help prevent adult rejection sensitivity among adults who are still struggling with the social hurt of childhood.

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