



Introduction:

Rejection sensitivity, a term that originates in the field of psychology, is when a person expects and reacts intensely to signs of rejection because of past traumatic experiences. This activity aims to examine rejection sensitivity that stems from past experiences related to identity (for example, discrimination based on gender, race, sexuality, etc.).

Participant Instructions:

1. Consider these examples:
 - You were rejected by a past romantic partner's family because of race, religion, socioeconomic status, gender identity, or some other identity-marker. Then, when you go to meet your new partner's family, despite the evening going well and your partner reassuring you that their family likes you, you are convinced that they are faking just to be polite.
 - At your previous job, you experienced many microaggressions from your coworkers because of race, gender identity, age, education level, or some other identity-marker. Now, at your new job, you are constantly anxious about everyday interactions with your new coworkers and tend to avoid them whenever possible.

For more information, see [this scholarly article](#) by Berenson and colleagues (2010).

Identity-based rejection sensitivity is hyper awareness of the risk of rejection by others based on a stigmatized identity. It doesn't happen randomly – it's a legitimate response to prior negative experiences. This finely tuned sensitivity can help people avoid other harmful situations because they can spot the discrimination coming, so to speak. But people can also grow over-sensitive as a result of many negative experiences, coming to expect and see bad intentions in others in all situations, even when they aren't really there. These inaccurate assumptions and interpretations then get in the way of positive relationships.

2. Brainstorm different types of identities (education, gender, age, race, etc.) that in some contexts might be stigmatized and therefore likely to face a pattern of rejection. Share in the group.
3. Using the pen/pencil and paper provided, list the identities about which you feel most sensitive to rejection. You can include identities listed in the group discussion as well as any that were not mentioned. In addition to listing the identities, you should reflect on why these identities cause you to be sensitive to rejection.
4. Partner up and share what you wrote. As you share, you should attempt to analyze your responses by answering the following questions:
 - Who is the rejection coming from?

- Why does the stigma against this identity exist?
 - How does the rejection manifest in your interactions with others?
 - Are there counterexamples of when you had come to expect rejection but didn't encounter it?
 - Are there any similarities and differences in how these identities affect your sensitivity to rejection?
5. Take the [Identity-Based Rejection Sensitivity Quiz](#) in Qualtrics.
6. Debrief as a group with the following questions:
- Why does rejection sensitivity matter?
 - Whose responsibility is it to address issues concerning identity-based rejection sensitivity?
 - What can we do about our own and others' identity-based rejection sensitivity?