



Rejection perceptions: feeling disrespected leads to greater aggression than feeling disliked^{☆,☆☆}



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HIGHLIGHTS

- Feeling disrespected mediates the relationship between exclusion and aggression.
- Feeling disrespected from exclusion increases aggression more than feeling disliked.
- Disrespectfully excluding people increased aggression.
- However, respectfully excluding people may reduce aggression.

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ABSTRACT

Social rejection can lead to feeling disliked and disrespected. From research on the culture of honor and perception of procedural justice, we predicted that feeling disrespected should be a more potent predictor of retaliatory aggression than feeling disliked. In four experiments, using correlational measures and experimental manipulations of dislike and disrespect, people who felt disrespected responded with greater aggression than people who felt disliked. The results suggest that merely being rejected may not be enough to trigger aggression; the person needs to feel disrespected. This has implications for understanding why people are more likely to respond to rejection with aggression, as well as future research explaining how people's perception of rejection affects their behavior.

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Which is preferable: to be seen as a lovable fool or a brilliant jerk? Obviously, if given an opportunity, people would like to be liked and respected, but that is not always possible. So the question is, when being pushed away, would people rather hear they are being rejected because they are disliked or because they are not respected? Based on prior research, we will argue that feeling disrespected leads to greater aggression than feeling disliked.

Rejection and aggression

Extensive evidence suggests that rejection is hurtful and often leads to aggression. For example, in a meta-analysis of 41 studies, peer rejected children demonstrated greater aggression than accepted children (Newcomb, Bukowski, & Pattee, 1993). Experimental evidence (e.g., Twenge, Baumeister, Tice, & Stucke, 2001; Twenge & Campbell, 2003) supports the conclusion that social exclusion, one type of interpersonal rejection, can cause rejected people to act aggressively. A meta-analysis on social exclusion studies conducted with adult populations confirmed a strong effect for social exclusion causing aggression (Gerber & Wheeler, 2009).

However, what is unclear from these findings is how rejection is interpreted. Rejection can communicate multiple messages; most significantly that one is not likeable or not worthwhile. In other words, people who are rejected may feel disliked or disrespected (or both, of course). Although these are both painful messages, they convey very different information about the person. Typically, in studies of exclusion, people are not told why they are being rejected or what criteria

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are being used, leaving the ultimate cause of the rejection ambiguous at best.

We believe that this is a critical oversight, as we suggest the rejection itself is less the cause of the subsequent aggression than what it communicates about the individual. That is, people do not aggress merely because of the rejection. Instead, they aggress because rejection tells the rejected people something negative about themselves, which they wish to negate. Indeed, arguments about the link between ego-threats and aggression hinge on the individual trying to prove that the negative information is not true (e.g., Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996; Tangney, Wagner, Hill Barlow, Marschall, & Gramzow, 1996; Twenge & Campbell, 2003). Hence, we think it is critical to examine how people interpret the causes of the rejection, rather just focusing on the rejection itself.

In particular, we think that feelings of being disliked and disrespected must be considered when examining the effects of rejection on aggression. Some theories on rejection suggest that different types of rejection may have distinct impacts on the rejected individual (Kirkpatrick & Ellis, 2001; Kirkpatrick, Waugh, Valencia, & Webster, 2002). This line of research suggests that when rejection leads the rejected individual to feel his or her status is threatened, this type of rejection (versus non-status threatening rejection) could lead to different cognitions about the rejection and their self-esteem. Thus, rejected people may feel a lack of appreciation for their status when they interpret rejection as a sign of disrespect.

Further research has suggested that feeling disliked and feeling disrespected make unique contributions for feeling included. Indeed, people feel disliked when they perceive a lack of fondness or enjoyment from others, whereas people feel disrespected when they perceive a lack of regard or consideration from others (Wojciszke, Abele, & Baryla, 2009). Thus, a person may feel disliked, but respected and vice versa. Furthermore, theories on the need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) suggest that people may seek inclusion through several different pathways, including being liked by others and by doing great deeds. Research has found that feeling respected by group members contributes to a sense of inclusion (de Cremer, 2002; de Cremer & Tyler, 2005). In other words, being respected may be just as important as being liked for fulfilling the need to belong.

Although it appears that both feelings of disrespect and dislike may trigger negative feelings of rejection and subsequently the need to belong, the effects of disrespect and dislike on resulting behavior may be very different. Indeed, research on topics very disparate from the social exclusion literature suggests that feelings of disrespect lead to very different outcomes than feelings of dislike (e.g., Cohen, Nisbett, Bowdle, & Schwarz, 1996; Judge, Scott, & Ilies, 2006). In particular, being disrespected seems to be much more likely to lead to aggressive behavior as compared to being disliked.

Disrespect, dislike, and aggression

Clearly, the concepts of dislike and disrespect have a great deal in common because both are negative appraisals (Benditt, 2008; Gawronski & Walther, 2008). But to some extent, they are distinct concepts because the information conveyed when people are disrespected or disliked is quite different. For example, some research suggests that being disliked is displayed by a lack of fondness for others, whereas being disrespected is expressed by lacking regard for others (Wojciszke et al., 2009). Conversely, a warm person would indicate a well-liked person, whereas competent people are respected people (Bergsieker, Shelton, & Richeson, 2010; Fiske, Xu, Cuddy, & Glick, 1999). These studies suggest it is possible to be disrespected, but still liked and disliked, but still respected.

Several other lines of research point to the critical role of feeling disrespected in aggression. Most notably, research on honor and aggression (e.g., Cohen et al., 1996) has suggested that there may be a link between feelings of being disrespected and aggression. That is, feeling

disrespected may lead to aggression as a means of regaining lost honor and proving one's worth. Indeed, in experimental studies of aggression, men (especially those who strongly subscribed to the importance of honor in relationships) who were publically disrespected responded with greater aggression than men who were not publically disrespected. This research points to the impact of feeling disrespected on aggression.

A lack of interpersonal justice, or feelings of respect, has also been linked to retaliatory behaviors (Skarlicki & Folger, 1997; Skarlicki, van Jaarsveld, & Walker, 2008). For example, workers who felt they were being treated rudely and with disrespect had greater feelings of hostility and anger than workers who were treated politely. Additional research on workplace attitudes and deviance indicated that feeling disrespected led to more negative and aggressive behaviors (Judge et al., 2006). The effects of being treated with respect even seem to negate injustices in pay and decision making (Skarlicki & Folger, 1997).

Research on the self also suggests that feelings of disrespect are a more potent driver of aggression than feelings of dislike. For example, narcissists who have inflated but unstable views of themselves are very sensitive to suggestions of disrespect. Consistent with that thesis, extensive research has found that narcissists respond to rejection with greater aggression (Twenge & Campbell, 2003). Likewise, research on shame (Tangney et al., 1996) further suggests that when individuals feel that their value as a person is diminished, they are more likely to respond with aggression.

Hypotheses

In prior research, it has not been clear if aggression that follows rejection is caused by participants feeling disliked, disrespected, or both. However, some research indicates that there should be a link between feeling disrespected and aggression. Thus, people's interpretations of the causes of rejection must be considered when examining the link between rejection and aggression. That is, rejection itself may lead to aggression only to the extent it communicates disrespect—that the person is not worthwhile. Currently, little if any research has examined if rejection solely due to being disliked (and not conflated with disrespect) will increase aggression. We believe that feeling disliked, while hurtful, should not lead to similar reactions of aggression. Although rejection may lead to feeling disliked and disrespected, especially if the reasons for the rejection are not made explicit, we believe that feeling disrespected, but not disliked, will lead to greater aggression. With four experiments, we attempt to dissociate the effects of disliking and disrespect on aggression.

Experiment 1

In the first experiment, we attempted to extend previous research on ostracism (a form of rejection) and aggression (e.g., Twenge et al., 2001) by asking participants to rate how disliked and disrespected they felt by the other participants in the experiment. We predicted that feeling disrespected (after controlling for feelings of dislike) should be a much more potent contributor to aggression than feeling disliked (after controlling for feelings of disrespect). In other words, feeling disrespected from rejection should predict aggression to a much greater extent than feeling disliked. In fact, feeling disrespected should mediate the relationship between rejection and aggression.

Method

Participants and design

We recruited 45 undergraduates (25 females and 20 males) from the University at Albany to participate in an experiment about taste preferences in exchange for course credit. Participants were randomly assigned to be either included ($N = 23$) or excluded ($N = 22$). One extreme outlier

was excluded from the analyses – an included male participant who felt that the inclusive game was extremely disrespectful.

Procedure

Upon arrival, the experimenter informed participants that they would be interacting with two other participants via the internet and that their pictures would need to be taken to upload onto a website. This was designed to set up the ostracism manipulation and aggression measures. After being photographed, participants were seated at computers and informed that they would play an internet-based game with the other participants. The experimenter presented “Cyberball”—an online ball-tossing game that manipulated whether or not participants were ostracized by the other participants (Williams, Cheung, & Choi, 2000). In reality, there were no other participants—the game was preprogrammed to exclude or include the participants.

The experimenter explained that during the game the participants would have the opportunity to catch and throw a virtual ball to the other players. Participants then read instructions on the computer screen that explained how to throw the ball and instructed participants to mentally visualize the game as if it were being played in reality. They saw a figure labeled “you” on the bottom of the screen and two other figures labeled “Trevor” and “Cassie”. Pictures of both Trevor and Cassie were alongside their own Cyberball figures. Excluded participants received the ball only twice, whereas Trevor and Cassie passed the ball to each other 28 times. Included participants received the ball 10 times, as did Trevor and Cassie. Afterwards, participants answered questions about how liked and respected they felt. They also completed the Brief Mood Introspection Scale (BMIS) to measure their mood valence and arousal (Mayer & Gaschke, 1988).

After participants completed these questions, the experimenter reentered the room and asked participants to help prepare food samples for one of the other Cyberball players – Trevor or Cassie. The experimenter explained that to keep the experiment unbiased, it was necessary for someone else to help with the food samples. After participants agreed to help (all did), the experimenter returned with a bowl of hot sauce, an eight ounce Styrofoam cup with a lid, and 2 spoons. Participants also received a taste preference inventory that indicated the other player hated spicy food. They were instructed to put in as little or as much hot sauce into the cup and that that hot sauce would be put into the player’s food sample.

After allocating the hot sauce, the experimenter weighed the cup while participants responded on a 9-point Likert scale to questions regarding the Hot Sauce task. These included: “To what extent did you use the taste preference inventory?” and “How useful do you think the Taste Preference Inventory was when giving out the food sample?”. This paradigm was based on the Hot Sauce Allocation task to measure aggression (Lieberman, Solomon, Greenberg, & McGregor, 1999).

At the end of the experiment, all participants were carefully debriefed. No one stated that they were suspicious about the experiment.

Measures

Brief Mood Introspection Scale (BMIS; Mayer & Gaschke, 1988)

Because social exclusion has led to a more negative mood in some previous research, we assessed the participants on the BMIS’s two subscales which assess mood valence (pleasant–unpleasant) and arousal (arousal–calm). Given that reliability was only acceptable for the valence subscale (valence, $\alpha = .80$; arousal, $\alpha = .53$) only mood valence was analyzed for this experiment. When responding to this scale, participants rated 16 adjectives from 1 (definitely do not feel) to 7 (definitely feel).

Manipulation checks

After playing Cyberball, participants responded to the following questions: “How much do you think the other participants respected

you?” on a 7-point scale (1 corresponded to “Felt Disrespected” and 7 to “Felt Respected”) and “How much do you think the other participants liked you?” on a 7-point scale (1 corresponded to “Felt Disliked” and 7 to “Felt Liked”). The presentation of these questions was counterbalanced to control for carryover effects. Responses were reverse scored so that higher numbers indicated feelings of disrespect or dislike respectively. Self-reported feelings of disrespect and dislike were positively correlated, $r(44) = .70, p < .001$. Participants also rated the pleasantness of the Cyberball game.

Results

Because research has suggested that the genders may differ in their aggression levels, we tested aggression differences based on gender. A *t*-test revealed that gender did not have a significant impact on aggression, $t(42) = .04, ns$. That is, overall, men and women were equally aggressive. Furthermore, among excluded participants, gender did not significantly affect aggression, $t(20) = .04, ns$. Moreover, gender did not interact with our manipulations to moderate aggression. Because gender was not a primary aspect of our hypotheses and had a non-significant impact on aggression in this experiment as well as all subsequent experiments, it will not be discussed in future analyses.

As for the aggression measure, initial analyses indicated that hot sauce allocations were not normally distributed. In order to avoid violating statistical assumptions and to provide a proper test of our hypotheses, we used the square root of the hot sauce allocations for the following analyses. For ease of understanding, non-transformed means and standard deviations are reported.

Effects of social exclusion on mental state

Consistent with prior research (Leary, Twenge, & Quinlivan, 2006; Twenge et al., 2001; Warburton, Williams, & Cairns, 2006), excluded participants allocated more hot sauce to the other Cyberball player than the included participants (see Tables 1 and 2), $t(42) = 2.01, p = .05, d = .62$. As assessed by the BMIS, excluded participants reported they were in a more unpleasant mood than included participants after the Cyberball game, $t(42) = 2.29, p = .03, d = .71$. Perhaps not surprisingly, as reported in Tables 1 and 2, participants who were excluded felt less liked by the other participants, $t(42) = 6.52, p < .001, d = 2.01$, and less respected by the other participants, $t(42) = 8.20, p < .001, d = 2.53$.

Effects of dislike and disrespect on aggression

Although rejection leads to feeling both disliked and disrespected, the question we are investigating is whether one feeling is a more potent predictor of aggression than the other. First, we examined the impact feeling disrespected and disliked had on aggression with several regression analyses. After scores for feeling disrespected and disliked were mean-centered prior to analyses (Aiken & West, 1991), two interaction terms were computed for rejection condition (contrast coded as

Table 1

Experiment 1: means and standard deviations for manipulation checks and aggression for social inclusion and exclusion.

	Social exclusion		Social inclusion	
	M	SD	M	SD
Feel Respected	2.05 _a	.90	4.09 _b	.75
Feel Liked	2.36 _a	1.14	4.00 _b	.31
Used Taste Preference Inventory	7.27 _a	2.14	8.68 _a	.65
Believed Player Liked Hot Sauce	2.64 _a	2.26	1.82 _a	1.26
Mood, Valence	66.95 _a	12.30	75.18 _b	11.53
Mood, Arousal	36.36 _a	7.02	33.77 _a	7.89
Hot Sauce (ounces)	.71 _a	.48	.47 _b	.35

Note: In each row, different subscripts indicate a difference between means at the $p < .05$ level. Hot Sauce reported in non-transformed ounces.

Table 2
Experiment 1: correlations between measured variables.

Variables:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Feel Disked							
2. Feel Disrespected	0.70***						
3. Mood, Valence	−0.13	−0.31					
4. Mood, Arousal	0.13	0.22	0.07				
5. Used Taste Preference Inventory	−0.54***	−0.44**	0.09	−0.11			
6. Believed Player Liked Hot Sauce	0.27	0.23	−0.35*	0.00	−0.20		
7. Hot Sauce	0.32*	0.42**	0.07	0.04	−0.36	−0.08	

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. Here, hot sauce is square rooted.

−1 and +1) and feeling disrespected as well as the interaction for rejection condition and feeling disliked. Feeling disrespected was a significant predictor of aggression, $\beta = .08$, $t(42) = 2.99$, $p = .005$, even when experimental condition is included in the regression model, $\beta = .10$, $t(41) = 2.13$, $p = .04$. Feeling disrespected remained a significant predictor of aggression when both the experimental condition and the interaction between rejection and feeling disrespected were entered into the model, $\beta = .09$, $t(40) = 1.95$, $p = .05$. The interaction term was not significant in the full model, $t < 1$. However, in another regression analysis, feeling disliked was a significant predictor of aggression, $\beta = .07$, $t(42) = 2.19$, $p = .03$, but was not a significant predictor after controlling for experimental condition, $\beta = .07$, $t(41) = 1.06$, $p = .29$.

But to answer if feeling disliked or disrespected had the greater impact on aggression, we used a multiple regression analysis by entering participants' feelings of dislike and disrespect simultaneously as predictors of amount of hot sauce allocated. Linear regression analyses indicated that the link between feeling disliked and aggression was not significant when feelings of disrespect were partitioned out, $\beta = .01$, $t(41) = .26$, $p = .80$. After removing the effects of feeling disliked, feeling disrespected was not quite a significant predictor of aggression, $\beta = .08$, $t(41) = 1.92$, $p = .06$. After controlling for experimental condition, feeling disrespected did not quite reach significance as a predictor of aggression either, $\beta = .09$, $t(40) = 1.85$, $p = .07$. However, these last two analyses may have been under-powered, leading to non-significant results. Experiments 2–4 will examine the impact of feeling of disrespected and disliked further.

Next, we conducted a mediation analysis with bootstrapping and 95% confidence levels to analyze the indirect effects of feeling disrespected and disliked on aggression (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). First, we examined feeling disrespected as the mediator between exclusion and aggression. This analysis revealed a significant indirect effect of feeling disrespected on aggression, with a point estimate of .20. By including feeling disrespected as the mediator (uncorrected effect: $\beta = .15$, $p = .05$, CI 95% [.05, .38]), exclusion condition became a non-significant predictor of aggression ($\beta = -.04$, $p = .71$). Next, we examined the indirect effect of feeling disliked as a mediator between rejection and aggression. In this analysis, feeling disliked did not have a significant effect on aggression ($\beta = .05$, $p = .29$, CI 95% [−.13, .27]). Thus, feeling disrespected (as compared to feeling disliked) appeared to best explain the relationship between the rejection manipulation and aggression.

Discussion

The results of Experiment 1 suggest that although disrespect and dislike have considerable overlap, they make unique contributions to behavior following rejection. In particular, it appears that feeling disrespected is much more likely to lead to aggression than feeling disliked. When feelings of disrespect are controlled for, there is no link between feeling disliked and aggression. Removing feelings of dislike has little effect on the link between aggression and feeling disrespected.

Although informative, these results are limited in that we did not actively manipulate the perception of the rejection. Although this may

better represent what happens in daily living, it lacks clarity and precision. Experiment 2 attempts to address these shortcomings using an experimental paradigm which manipulates the message conveyed by rejection—some participants were told they were disliked and others were told they were not respected. In contrast, some participants were accepted in a way that expressed either a liking for them or respect for them. We predict that disrespectful rejection will be the most potent predictor of aggression.

Experiment 2

Methods

Participants and design

Undergraduate students ($N = 131$, 73 females, 58 males) from the University at Albany participated one at a time in an experiment for course credit. The experiment was a 2×2 factorial design with two levels of disrespect (respect and disrespect) and two levels of dislike (like and dislike). Thirty-three participants were assigned to each of the four experimental conditions—with the exception of the respected and disliked group which had 32 participants.

Procedure

The experimenter explained to participants that they would be working on a poster with two other people as part of an investigation about how groups work together. Participants were told that they were randomly assigned to be the project manager of the poster team. As project manager, their job was to develop and write down at least four ideas for the poster. The experimenter collected the ideas and pretended to give them to participants in other rooms. A short time later, the experimenter returned to the participant stating that the employees (the other phony participants) wrote some feedback about the ideas the actual participant created for the poster. Participants were either disrespected or respected and liked or disliked by one of the other participants (labeled employee A).

Disliked and disrespected participants received the following feedback: *The writer doesn't seem like a very nice person. I don't think I would have much fun working with them and I'm sure no one else would either. Their suggestions are pretty useless and dumb. They seem pretty stupid to me. In fact, it seems to me that they don't have a clue.*

The liked and respected group received this feedback: *The writer seems like a very nice person. I think I would have fun working with them and I'm sure other people would too. Their suggestions are useful and brilliant. They seem very smart. In fact, they seem to have a deep understanding of how to help the university.*

For participants in the liked/disrespected and disliked/respected conditions, the first two and last three sentences were switched accordingly. All participants (regardless of condition) received neutral feedback from employee B: "These ideas are O.K." After reading this phony feedback from the other employees, participants answered questions about how respected and liked they felt (see **Measures**). Participants also responded to the PANAS to assess mood variability (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988).

To assess aggression, we developed an aggression measure similar to the hot sauce measure of aggression (Lieberman et al., 1999), but with math work instead of hot sauce. Compared to the hot sauce aggression measure, this math work aggression measure worked better with the experiment’s cover story. Similar to the hot sauce aggression measure, participants received phony work preference inventories from the other participants that made it clear that Employee A hated math. In the original hot sauce measure, this inventory indicated that another participant hated spicy food. Employee B was neutral about the types of work he/she liked. Aggression was measured by how many minutes of math (out of a total of 40 min) work they gave to Employee A (the employee who gave the manipulated feedback). In contrast to the hot sauce measure, the minutes of math work were used in lieu of measuring allotted hot sauce in ounces. After making their assignments, participants responded to questions about this aggression measure.

Measures

Dislike and disrespect. After receiving the phony feedback about the poster ideas, participants rated how much they thought the other participants disliked and disrespected them. To assess feeling disliked participants rated the following questions on a 7-point scale: “How much do you think the employees disliked you?”, “How much do you think the employees were unfriendly to you”, “How much do you think the employees were not fond of you?”, “How much do you think the employees did not care for you”, and “How much do you think the employees did not enjoy working with you?”. This measure of believing one was disliked was highly reliable, Cronbach’s $\alpha = .92$. On the same scale, to assess feelings of disrespect, participants reported they felt dishonored, disrespected, disregarded, insulted, and offended by the others. This scale also held good reliability, Cronbach’s $\alpha = .89$. Factor analyses confirmed that these two sets of questions loaded on two different factors.

Affect. As in Experiment 2, participants’ positive and negative affect was measured with 20 items from the PANAS (Watson et al., 1988). The reliability was acceptable for both scales (positive affect, $\alpha = .89$; negative affect, $\alpha = .86$).

Measurement checks. Because this aggression measure was a new spin on the hot sauce task, we asked similar questions afterwards. Like in Experiment 1, participants were asked to rate on 9-point scale, “To what extent did you use the work preference inventory?” and “Indicate the extent to which the people you gave the assigned tasks to liked those tasks.” Responses to these items were positively correlated $r(128) = .51, p < .001$.

Results

We hypothesized that people who were disrespected would be more aggressive (assign more math work) than people who were disliked.

Likewise, we believed that the disrespected group would be in a more negative mood.

Effectiveness of the manipulation

Dislike vs. disrespected

To test if disrespected participants felt more disrespected and disliked participants felt more disliked, we conducted a 2 x 2 ANOVA (see Table 3 for means and standard deviations). For the measure of being disliked, participants who received disliking feedback felt significantly more disliked, $F(1, 127) = 102.12, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .44$. Participants who received the disrespectful feedback also felt significantly more disliked, $F(1, 127) = 22.87, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .15$. Finally, there was an interaction for disrespect and dislike experimental conditions for feelings of dislike, $F(1, 127) = 6.20, p = .01, \eta_p^2 = .05$. A post-hoc test suggested that the overlap in feeling disliked was likely due to the disrespected and disliked group feeling more disliked than the disrespected and liked group, $t(129) = 5.79, p < .001, d = 1.02$.

For the measure of disrespect, participants who received the disrespect feedback felt significantly more disrespected than participants who received the respected feedback, $F(1, 127) = 20.14, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .14$. Receiving disliked feedback also increased feelings of disrespect more than receiving liked feedback, $F(1, 127) = 12.63, p = .001, \eta_p^2 = .09$. There was no significant interaction between dislike and disrespect feedback for feeling disrespected, $F < 1$.

As indicated by the means in Table 3, the intensity for feeling disrespected was not stronger for disrespected participants than feeling disliked was for disliked participants. Also, the effect size for feeling disliked from being disliked was much stronger ($\eta_p^2 = .45$) than feeling disrespected from being disrespected ($\eta_p^2 = .14$). These results indicate that the experimental manipulations may have been stronger for the disliked groups than the disrespected groups. Therefore, any findings from the disrespected groups are unlikely due to feeling substantially more disrespected than disliked participants felt disliked. Furthermore, these results indicate that, although there was some overlap in feelings of disrespect and dislike, participants were able to distinguish if they were disrespected or disliked. Moreover, disrespect and dislike were manipulated experimentally as two distinct independent variables.

Mood

As assessed by the PANAS (Watson et al., 1988), participants who received disrespectful feedback did not report being in a less positive mood than participants who received respectful feedback, $F(1, 127) = .44, ns$. Similarly, being disliked did not significantly impact positive affect, $F(1, 127) = 1.27, p = .26$. There was no significant interaction between these variables for positive affect, $F < 1$.

For negative affect, receiving disrespectful feedback did not increase negative affect more than receiving respectful feedback, $F < 1$. Likewise, negative affect was not experienced more by the disliked versus the liked groups, $F(1, 127) = 1.58, p = .21$. We did find an interaction for being disrespected and disliked for negative affect, $F(1, 127) = 6.20,$

Table 3

Experiment 2: means and standard deviations for manipulation checks and math minutes assigned for disrespect and dislike.

	Disrespected				Respected			
	Disliked		Liked		Disliked		Liked	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Math Minutes Assigned	18.48 _a	7.61	16.38 _a	7.91	14.71 _b	4.88	14.46 _b	6.63
Disrespected Scale	23.87 _a	8.07	20.13 _{ab}	7.40	19.59 _b	8.40	11.76 _c	7.60
Disliked Scale	31.09 _a	4.76	23.78 _b	5.00	29.03 _a	6.27	15.48 _c	4.47
Used Work Preference Inventory	2.15 _{ab}	2.03	1.91 _a	2.40	2.46 _{ab}	1.37	3.00 _b	1.59
Liked Assigned Tasks	1.52 _a	1.89	1.59 _a	1.54	2.64 _b	.83	2.60 _b	1.19
Negative Affect	16.48 _a	5.53	21.00 _b	7.74	19.89 _b	8.24	18.40 _b	5.48
Positive Affect	29.21 _a	9.31	30.19 _a	8.17	29.50 _a	8.26	31.86 _a	7.58

Note: In each row, different subscripts indicate a difference between means at the $p < .05$ level.

Table 4
Experiment 2: correlations between measured variables.

Variables:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Feel Disliked							
2. Feel Disrespected	0.57***						
3. Positive Affect	−0.09	0.00					
4. Negative Affect	−0.17	0.06	0.15				
5. Used Preference Inventory	−0.17*	−0.18*	0.06	−0.02			
6. Believed Other Liked Math	−0.21*	−0.24**	−0.05	−0.17*	0.51***		
7. Math Minutes	0.25**	0.24**	0.14	0.02	−0.36***	−0.36***	

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

$p = .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$. As indicated in Table 3, this interaction was driven by the disrespected and liked group experiencing greater negative affect than the disrespected and disliked group. In fact, the disrespected and liked group experienced a significantly higher negative affect than the disrespected and disliked group, $t(129) = 2.71$, $p < .01$.¹

Aggression measure

We assessed how much participants used the employee's work preferences when deciding how much math work each employee had to do. As indicated in Table 4, the more math work participants assigned to Employee A, the more they admitted to ignoring Employee A's work preferences, $r(127) = -.36$, $p < .001$. People who assigned more math work were more likely to admit that Employee A did not like math work, $r(127) = -.36$, $p < .001$. These findings suggest that participants who assigned more math work appeared to disregard the employees' preferences, even though participants knew of their hatred towards math. In short, it appears that the amount of math delegated to a person who reports disliking math is a good measure of aggression.

Aggression

Being disliked versus disrespected

We conducted a 2 (respected vs. disrespected) \times 2 (liked vs. disliked) ANOVA on our measure of aggression (minutes of math assigned). As shown in Table 3, there was a significant main effect for disrespect, indicating that participants in the disrespected condition assigned more minutes of math work, $F(1, 127) = 8.01$, $p = .005$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$. There was not a significant main effect for being disliked, $F < 1$. This implies that participants in the disliked condition were not significantly more aggressive than liked participants. The interaction between dislike and disrespect was not significant, $F < 1$. In short, aggression was most likely caused by disrespectful feedback, not disliking feedback. Moreover, the combination of dislike and disrespect was no more potent than disrespect alone.

We conducted planned comparison analyses to further explore these effects (see Fig. 1 and Table 3). Critically, being disrespected seemed to increase aggression more than being disliked. The disrespected and disliked participants were more aggressive than the respected and disliked group, $t(127) = 2.33$, $p = .02$, $d = .41$. Also, disrespected and liked participants were more aggressive than the respected and liked participants, but this effect was marginal, $t(129) = 1.76$, $p = .08$. Although being disliked may have increased aggression, these findings suggest there is greater evidence for disrespect causing aggression.

Feeling disliked versus disrespected

After mean-centering self-reported feelings of dislike and disrespect, we conducted a regression analysis to examine these feelings and their

¹ After the disrespect/dislike manipulation, we also assessed ratings of politeness. Only the disrespected and disliked group felt the other participants were more impolite than the respected and liked group, $t(129) = 2.13$, $p = .04$, $d = .38$. There were no significant differences between the other groups, $ps > .11$.

effects on aggression. Although feeling disliked was related to our index of aggression, $\beta = .25$, $t(129) = 3.02$, $p < .01$, this effect disappeared when feelings of disrespected were controlled for, $\beta = .10$, $t(128) = .98$, $p = .33$. On the other hand, feeling disrespected was a significant predictor of aggression, $\beta = .22$, $t(129) = 3.17$, $p = .002$, even when controlling for feeling disliked, $\beta = .19$, $t(128) = 2.36$, $p < .05$. When controlling for experimental condition in addition to feeling disliked, feeling disrespected remained a significant predictor of aggression, $\beta = .17$, $t(127) = 2.15$, $p = .03$. There was no significant interaction between feeling disliked and disrespected, $t < 1$. These findings yield greater evidence that feeling disrespected was a more relevant predictor of aggression than feeling disliked.

Discussion

Our methods suggest that it is possible to dissociate *being* disrespected from *disliked* and that each makes a separate and unique contribution to aggression. Furthermore, *feeling* disrespected is a much more potent trigger of aggression than *feeling* disliked. Indeed, although there was a main effect for *being and feeling* disrespected on aggression, the link between *being* disliked and aggression was not significant. Only the link between *feeling* disliked and aggression was significant. However, feeling disliked was not a significant predictor of aggression when controlling for feeling disrespected. Moreover, the lack of a significant interaction between dislike and disrespect on aggression suggests the effect is almost entirely driven by feelings of disrespect.

Experiment 3

One potential shortcoming of the factorial design used in Experiment 2 (and its replication) is that the contrast between the positive and negative feedback may be particularly upsetting. Put another way, being told that one is liked but disrespected may be frustrating, because it seems incongruous (although one could argue that people often find their friends laughing at them or gossiping about them). Hence, in this experiment, we separated the dislike and disrespect feedback, so

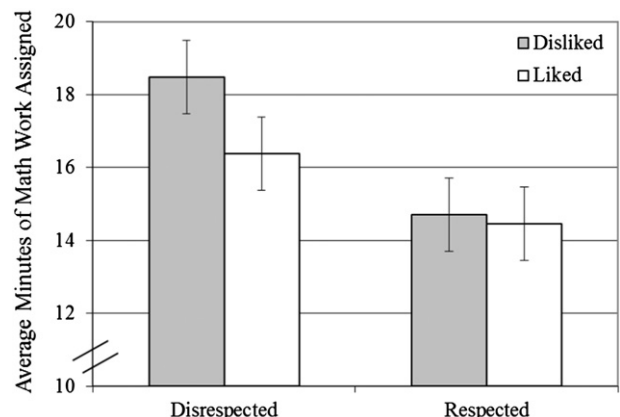


Fig. 1. Experiment 2: mean aggression as a function of disrespect and dislike.

everyone only received consistent information about themselves. In addition, participants were directly told that they were respected (or not) in Experiment 3, rather than being given respectful versus disrespectful feedback as in Experiment 2. Again, we expected that, contrasted with dislike feedback, disrespectful feedback should be the best predictor of aggression.

Methods

Participants and design

Forty-six undergraduates (26 males and 20 females) from the University at Albany participated in a study entitled “A Cooperation Study” for course credit. Participants were randomly assigned to be either liked ($N = 11$), disliked ($N = 10$), respected ($N = 12$), or disrespected ($N = 11$) by another participant. Males were told that they would be collaborating with a fictitious person named Michael and females were told they would work with Mary. Participants were told that their collaborator was in a similar experiment in another room.

Procedure

All participants were informed that they would be in a study on cooperation and would be working with another participant. They responded to a paper version of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire – Revised (EPQ-R; Eysenck, Eysenck, & Barrett, 1985). The experimenter explained that, for the purposes of the experiment, Mary or Michael needed to get to know the participants better and thus would score the questionnaire for them. A few minutes were allowed to pass after the questionnaire was collected to appear as if the other participant was busy scoring the questionnaire. All participants were given a “24” as their score on the 48-item questionnaire, but the written interpretation of that score differed across conditions:

Liked: *From the personality questionnaire, I could tell that the other participant is a very kind and nice person. I would definitely want to spend time with them because they seem like a real friend! I'm pretty sure I'd really like this person!*

Disliked: *From the personality questionnaire, I could tell that the other participant is a very mean and cold person. I definitely would never want to spend time with them because they seem like a real bully! I'm pretty sure I'd really not like this person!*

Respected: *From the personality questionnaire, I could tell that the other participant is a very intelligent and brilliant person. I would definitely want to spend time with them because they seem like a real genius! I'm pretty sure I'd really respect this person!*

Disrespected: *From the personality questionnaire, I could tell that the other participant is a very dumb and stupid person. I definitely would never want to spend time with them because they seem like a real idiot! I'm pretty sure I'd really not respect this person!*

After reading one of these four types of feedback, participants responded to manipulation checks about how much they felt liked,

disliked, respected, or disrespected by the other participant and a mood questionnaire (PANAS; Watson et al., 1988). Finally, as in the previous experiment, participants were told that the other person needed to do 40 more minutes of work for their experiment. They were told that the experimenter needed to remain unbiased and therefore the participants would have to decide what type of work Mary or Michael needed to complete. All participants were given a Work Preference Inventory that suggested that the other participant hated Math, but liked art. They were asked to tell the target person how much of the 40 min they would have to spend on the disliked mathematical task (the remainder could be spent on the preferred art task). Afterwards, they responded to a statement on a 7-point (1 = Not True at All, 7 = Very True) scale to determine if the aggression measure was a form of retaliation—I assigned the amount of math work the other participant had to do in order to get back at them.

Results

Manipulation checks

In a one-way ANOVA (see Table 5 for means and standard deviations), a significant difference between all groups was found for feeling disliked, $F(3, 40) = 40.73, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .75$. As predicted, the disliked group reported feeling significantly more disliked by the other participant than all other groups, $t(44) = 3.85, p < .001, d = 1.16$. A significant difference was found between all groups for feeling disrespected, $F(3, 40) = 15.73, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .54$. Also, the disrespected group felt significantly more disrespected than all other groups, $t(44) = 4.42, p < .001, d = 1.33$. Disliked participants reported feeling more disliked than liked participants, $t(19) = 6.78, p < .001, d = 3.11$, and disrespected participants reported feeling more disrespected than respected participants, $t(21) = 7.00, p < .001, d = 3.67$. Critically, the effect size for disliked participants feeling disliked was substantial, whereas the effect size for disrespected participants feeling disrespected was not quite as strong, which suggests that feeling disrespected was not felt stronger than feeling disliked. As indicated in Table 6, the amount of math work assigned was significantly related to participants' reports that they were trying to get back at the other person, $r(44) = .61, p < .001$, which further suggests that this is a good measure of aggressive tendencies and a desire to retaliate.

Mood

In a one-way ANOVA, participants did not significantly differ in regard to negative affect, $F < 1$. The same analysis with positive affect as the dependent variable revealed a significant difference among the groups, $F(3, 40) = 3.76, p = .02, \eta_p^2 = .22$. As indicated in Table 5, the only significant mood difference was between the disliked group and the liked and disrespected groups. That is, disliked participants reported a less positive affect than liked participants, $t(44) = -3.14, p < .01, d = .95$. Also, disrespected participants reported a more positive affect than disliked participants, $t(44) = 2.61, p = .01, d = .79$. The differences between the liked and disrespected group for positive affect was not significant, however.

Table 5
Experiment 3: means and standard deviations for manipulation checks and math minutes assigned for disrespect and dislike.

	Liked		Disliked		Respected		Disrespected	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Math Minutes Assigned	4.45 _a	4.32	10.00 _a	12.00	6.25 _a	8.39	23.00 _b	12.43
Feel Disrespected	1.45 _a	0.69	3.20 _b	1.81	1.08 _a	0.29	4.00 _b	1.41
Feel Disliked	1.36 _a	0.67	4.30 _b	1.25	1.17 _a	0.39	4.18 _b	1.08
Used Math to Retaliate	1.45 _a	1.51	3.20 _b	3.97	1.17 _a	0.58	3.82 _b	2.68
Positive Affect	33.27 _a	4.43	24.60 _b	7.99	29.25 _{ab}	7.07	31.82 _a	5.31
Negative Affect	17.18 _a	5.19	19.30 _a	11.49	16.42 _a	5.38	20.00 _a	8.74

Note: In each row, different subscripts indicate a difference between means at the $p < .05$ level.

Table 6
Experiment 3: correlations between measured and experimental variables.

Variables:	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Feel Disliked						
2. Feel Disrespected	0.72					
3. Positive Affect	−0.34*	−0.06				
4. Negative Affect	0.21	0.26	0.02			
5. Used Math to Retaliate	0.38**	0.48***	−0.07	0.62***		
6. Math Minutes (square root)	0.36*	0.49***	0.12	0.28	0.61***	

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Aggression

In this experiment, minutes of math work assigned were positively skewed. To avoid violating assumptions of normality, these minutes of math work were transformed using the square root (similar to Experiment 1). The square root of minutes of math work were utilized in all subsequent analyses, however in Table 5, non-transformed minutes of math work are reported for ease of understanding.

Being disliked versus disrespected

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to test differences for aggression between all experimental groups and a significant difference was found, $F(3, 42) = 7.43, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .35$. Planned contrasts indicated that the disrespected group was significantly more aggressive than all other groups, $t(42) = 4.53, p < .001, d = 1.37$ (see Table 5). Also, the disrespected participants were significantly more aggressive than respected participants, $t(42) = 2.88, p = .006, d = .89$, and the disliked group, $t(42) = 4.09, p < .001, d = 1.26$. The disliked group was not significantly more aggressive than the liked group, $t(44) = 1.32, p = .20$. No significant aggression differences were found between the disliked and liked groups or the respected and liked participants, $ts < 1$. From these results, it seems the disrespectful feedback led to much more aggression than dislike feedback.

Feeling disliked versus disrespected

As in the prior experiments, we also examined the unique contributions of self-reported feelings of dislike and disrespect (both mean-centered) on aggression using multiple regression. Feeling disrespected by the other participant predicted a significant amount of aggression exhibited, $\beta = .61, t(41) = 3.64, p = .001$, even when controlling for feeling disliked, $\beta = .60, t(41) = 2.44, p = .02$. Moreover, feeling disrespected remained a significant predictor of aggression, even after controlling for experimental condition, $\beta = .51, t(40) = 2.11, p = .04$. The converse was not true however—although feeling disliked predicted greater aggression, $\beta = .43, t(41) = 2.50, p = .02$, feeling disliked was not a significant predictor of aggression beyond the effects of feeling disrespected, $\beta = .02, t(41) = .06, p = .95$.

Discussion

Teasing apart these manipulations of disrespect and dislike further demonstrated that disrespect is a much more potent predictor of aggression than dislike. Overall, the disrespectful feedback led to much greater aggression than the disliking feedback. Moreover, feeling disrespected was apparently the leading cause of aggression; any effect of aggression linked to disliking is being driven by the associated feelings of disrespect.

Experiment 4

Although these experiments have demonstrated that the effect sizes on aggression for feeling disliked were stronger than for feeling disrespected, it is possible that the disrespect condition was more severe than the dislike condition. In the next experiment, we utilized more toned down feedback than the feedback in Experiment 3. This

experiment should more clearly determine if feeling disrespected or disliked causes more aggressive behavior.

Methods

Overall, this experiment was a replication of Experiment 3, but with milder and simpler feedback for participants in the disrespect and dislike conditions. Again, 41 participants from the University at Albany were randomly assigned to be liked, respected, disrespected, or disliked. For participants who were disliked, they were provided the following feedback—“From the personality questionnaire, I could tell I just don’t like this person.” In contrast, liked participants were provided the following—“From the personality questionnaire, I could tell I like this person.” For participants in the disrespect condition, they received different feedback—“From the personality questionnaire, I could tell I just don’t respect this person.” Respected participants, on the other hand, were provided this feedback—“From the personality questionnaire, I could tell I respect this person.”

Afterwards, participants responded to the manipulation checks that were administered in Experiment 4. They also were given the same opportunity to aggress against the rejecter and report if they were retaliating against the rejecter. The experimenter informed participants that the other person must work for 40 more minutes for the rest of the experiment. Participants decided how much math work the math-averse participant would have to complete for the remainder of his/her experiment.

Results

Manipulation checks

In a one-way ANOVA, all experimental groups differed significantly for feeling disliked, $F(3, 36) = 28.94, p < .001, d = .71$ (see Table 7). Planned contrasts indicated that the disliked group reported feeling significantly more disliked than all other groups, $t(36) = 5.06, p < .001, d = 1.69$. Also, disliked participants reported feeling more disliked than liked participants, $t(20) = 6.04, p < .001, d = 2.57$. A significant difference was found between all groups for feeling disrespected, $F(3, 36) = 20.31, p < .001, d = .63$. Planned contrasts revealed that the disrespected group felt significantly more disrespected than all other groups, $t(36) = 4.75, p < .001, d = 1.58$, and disrespected participants reported feeling more disrespected than respected participants, $t(16) = 5.38, p < .001, d = 2.41$.

Mood

Next, several analyses indicated that there were no significant mood differences between the groups. In a one-way ANOVA, participants did not significantly differ in regard to positive affect, $F < 1$. Likewise, this analysis with negative affect as the dependent variable did not reach significance either, $F(3, 36) = 1.71, p = .18$.

Aggression

Similar to Experiments 1 and 3, minutes of math work were positively skewed so we used the square root transformation to normalize the data. Again, all subsequent analyses will utilize the square rooted transformation for minutes of assigned math work.

Aggression was significantly related to participants’ reports that they were trying to get back at the other person, $r(41) = .54, p < .001$. Similar to the Experiment 3, this finding again suggests that the assignment of math work was a good measure of aggression (see Table 8).

Being disliked versus disrespected

Next, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to test differences for aggression between all experimental groups and a significant difference

Table 7

Experiment 4: means and standard deviations for manipulation checks and math minutes assigned for disrespect and dislike.

	Liked		Disliked		Respected		Disrespected	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Math Minutes Assigned	4.09 _a	4.74	5.00 _a	7.07	3.40 _a	6.24	13.75 _b	11.22
Feel Disrespected	1.09 _a	0.30	3.09 _b	1.14	1.10 _a	0.32	3.38 _b	1.30
Feel Disliked	1.18 _a	0.41	3.64 _b	1.29	1.10 _a	0.32	3.88 _b	1.13
Get Back at Participant	1.00 _a	.00	2.73 _a	2.94	1.90 _a	2.85	2.63 _a	3.82
Positive Affect	29.64 _a	6.92	29.18 _a	8.24	31.40 _{ab}	6.67	32.50 _a	5.42
Negative Affect	14.55 _b	4.78	12.36 _{ab}	2.34	11.70 _a	1.34	13.13 _{ab}	2.23

Note: In each row, different subscripts indicate a difference between means at the $p < .05$ level.

was found, $F(3, 37) = 3.64, p = .02, \eta_p^2 = .23$. Planned contrasts indicated that the disrespected group was significantly more aggressive than all other groups, $t(37) = 3.28, p = .002, d = 1.08$ (see Table 6). Also, the disrespected participants were significantly more aggressive than respected participants, $t(37) = 2.99, p = .005, d = .98$, and the disliked group, $t(37) = 2.68, p = .01, d = .88$. The disliked group was not significantly more aggressive than the liked group, $t < 1$. Respected and liked participants did not significantly differ in their aggressive responses, $t < 1$. Thus, the disrespectful feedback led to much more aggression than dislike feedback.

Feeling disliked versus disrespected

Next, several regression analyses examined the impact of mean-centered, self-reported feelings of disrespect and dislike on aggression. The first analysis indicated that feeling disrespected led to greater aggression, $\beta = .72, t(38) = 3.99, p < .001$. Also, feeling disliked increased aggression, but this increase was marginally significant, $\beta = .32, t(38) = 1.81, p = .08$. As in the prior experimental analyses, we also examined the unique contributions of feelings of dislike and disrespect on aggression using multiple regression. When controlling for feeling disliked, feeling disrespected by the other participant predicted a significant amount of aggression exhibited, $\beta = .96, t(37) = 3.65, p = .001$. However, feeling disliked did not predict aggression beyond the effects of feeling disrespected, $\beta = -.28, t(37) = -1.25, p = .22$. Similar to Experiments 2 and 3, after controlling for experimental condition, feeling disrespected still significantly increased aggression, $\beta = .92, t(36) = 3.19, p = .003$.

General discussion

Across four experiments, we found that feeling disrespected following a rejection experience was a more powerful predictor of subsequent aggression than feeling disliked. Indeed, we found that feeling disliked did not always predict aggression and did not potentiate the effects of disrespect on aggression. Similarly, the effects of disrespect on aggression remained strong when statistically controlling for feelings of dislike. On the other hand, feelings of dislike are only weakly related to aggression when feelings of disrespected are partialled out. Indeed, even when the feedback was less severe (see Experiment 4), being

and feeling disrespected predicted aggression much more than being and feeling disliked.

Overall, the results suggest that when people are rejected, it is the feeling of being disrespected that leads to aggression, not feeling disliked. In the first experiment, using people's self-reports of feelings of being disliked and disrespected after a rejection experience, we found that feeling disrespected could explain subsequent aggression much better than feeling disliked. The final three experiments involved manipulations for dislike and disrespect with rejecting feedback. In these experiments, it was found that only rejecting feedback that conveyed disrespect was related to aggression. Feedback about being disliked was not related to aggression when we controlled for being disrespected.

In short, the clear implication is that feeling disrespected (and not feelings of dislike) is what leads to aggression from rejection. The experiments suggest that the reason rejection leads to aggression is because rejection is typically associated with a disrespect cue; if the rejection can somehow be made about dislike rather than disrespect, aggression diminishes. Indeed, previous research has found that feeling disrespected is a potent trigger of aggression (Cohen et al., 1996; Twenge & Campbell, 2003). The present research builds upon that research, to show that feeling disrespected while being rejected leads to greater aggression.

These findings imply that theories of rejection (e.g., Twenge et al., 2001; Williams, 2001) should consider how the individual interprets the rejection and how these interpretations impact aggression. Indeed, the rejection itself may be less painful than the disrespect it communicates. Further research should consider the impact of perceiving disrespect and dislike on rejection outcomes. In practice, our findings suggest that being careful not to convey disrespect when rejecting someone may be critical for avoiding aggressive reactions from the rejected individual.

Overall, our experimental manipulations suggest that people can separate feeling disliked from feeling disrespected. Yet in reality, many situations likely can trigger both feelings and it is up to the individual to make attributions. Hence, people high in rejection sensitivity (Ayduk, Gyurak, & Luerksen, 2008) may be more likely to interpret rejection as disrespectful and subsequently respond to rejection with retaliation. Similarly, narcissistic individuals may feel that rejection is an attack on them and their honor, which could account for the greater aggression among such people as compared to non-narcissistic people (Twenge & Campbell, 2003).

Ultimately, rejection that feels disrespectful may lead to more aggression through a compensatory mechanism. That is, as has been argued for the link between shame and aggression (Tangney et al., 1996), individuals who feel disrespectfully rejected may turn to aggression as means of gaining a sense of control (see also Warburton et al., 2006). Alternatively, aggression may be a way to demonstrate the value of the self and avoid future rejections, as suggested by the culture of honor research (Cohen et al., 1996). The present research did not test the exact mechanism, but because these effects are specific to disrespectful rejection, it appears that merely thwarting the need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) is not enough to lead to aggression. Instead,

Table 8

Experiment 4: correlations between measured and experimental variables.

Variables:	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Feel Disliked						
2. Feel Disrespected	0.73***					
3. Positive Affect	0.11	-0.08				
4. Negative Affect	0.10	0.13	-0.04			
5. Assigned Math to Retaliate	0.36*	0.54***	0.19	0.22		
6. Math Minutes (square root)	0.28	0.54***	0.16	0.18	0.51***	

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

the rejection may need to convey disrespect in order for the rejected to respond with aggression.

It is important to note that our results are valid to the extent that we were able to separate dislike from disrespect (either statistically in Experiment 1 or experimentally Experiments 2–4). The manipulation checks in the experimental design lend support to our assertion that we were able to create feelings of disrespect without creating feelings of being disliked. These feelings of disrespect were also linked to aggression. By utilizing multiple rejection manipulations and aggression measures, it is unlikely our results were due to usage of specific methodologies. Moreover, our conclusions about the differential impact of disrespect on aggression are supported by our statistical analyses in Experiment 1. Nonetheless, the division of perception of exclusion into feelings of disrespect and feelings of dislike should be refined in future studies to ensure that these constructs are measured and manipulated as cleanly and clearly as possible.

One could also argue that the disrespect feedback is more negative than the dislike feedback. At one level, we concur—it is clear from the results that being disrespected is clearly a more potent trigger of aggression than being disliked. However, merely the fact that being disrespected leads to greater negative affect than being disliked and the negative affect leads to aggression (e.g., Berkowitz, 1993) is not a good explanation for the results. For instance, the disrespected and disliked feedback had similar impact on people's feelings (in Experiment 2, the magnitude of feelings of disrespect was nearly identical to the feelings of dislike). Moreover, the mood of people given disrespected feedback was no more negative than the mood of people given disliked feedback. An examination of the individual items making up these mood scales further suggests that the effect is not being driven by specific negative feelings. The few significant mood differences were not reliable across experiments. This suggests that the effects cannot be simply explained by the disrespectful feedback evoking more negative affect than the dislike feedback.

One could also argue that the disrespect feedback contains more information than the dislike feedback. Again, this is possible, as we argue that the disrespect feedback tells more about social standing than the dislike feedback. However, in Experiments 3 and 4 we attempted to equate the feedback and still found feelings of disrespect had a larger impact on aggression than feelings of dislike. Perhaps more importantly, in Experiment 1 where feelings of being disrespected were measured but not manipulated, we still found it to be a larger predictor of aggression than feelings of being disliked.

One final argument could also be made—the sample sizes in some of our experiments may be considered small. However, given the effect sizes and the consistent replications across all experiments (total $N = 263$), these findings are quite convincing of our primary hypothesis—feeling disrespected from rejection is a better predictor of aggression than feeling disliked. Future studies should consider utilizing larger sample sizes with higher power when extending on our findings.

In conclusion, it appears that effects of rejection on aggression are driven by feelings of disrespect. People who feel more disliked than disrespected by rejecters are no more aggressive than non-rejected individuals. This has clear practical implications for any negative or rejecting feedback which should be presented so as not to attack people's sense of honor. At the theoretical level, it further helps clarify why rejection leads to aggression and points the way to future research on people's perception of rejection, as well as how being rejected changes people's motivation.

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