

# He's Just Not That Into Me: Rejection Influences Women's Risky Sexual Decision Making

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Given the significant consequences involved in women's choices to have unprotected sex, empirical research designed to understand the in-the-moment factors influencing women's risky sexual decision-making has become crucial. For the present study, we employed Downey and Feldman's Rejection Sensitivity Model (RSM; 1996) as a theoretical base to examine how a woman's exposure to potentially rejecting cues from a romantic partner can influence her in-the-moment intentions to have unprotected sex with him, as a function of her intrapersonal level of rejection sensitivity. Utilizing an experimental vignette paradigm, we asked 133 female college students ( $M_{age} = 19.17$ ,  $SD = 1.22$ ) to read and project themselves into a vignette depicting a common dating scenario between a man and woman after completing a background measure of rejection sensitivity. We manipulated the man's behavioral cues within the vignette to be either accepting, ambiguous, or rejecting, and randomly assigned each participant a vignette containing only one type of cue. Women's rejection sensitivity and their assigned cue conditions positively predicted perceptions of rejection within the experimental vignette. As women's perceptions of rejection in their partner's behavior increased, so did their angry-affective reactions. Not surprisingly, stronger angry-affective reactions predicted decreased intentions to have unprotected sex. Interestingly, rejection sensitivity also had a direct, positive relationship with unprotected sex intentions, but only among women who received explicitly rejecting cues from their romantic partners within the experimental vignette. Thus, the RSM delineates both a direct and an indirect path whereby rejection sensitivity and potential cues of rejection from a romantic partner can influence women's unprotected sex intentions. These results provide empirical support for the Rejection Sensitivity Model's application to research in women's sexual decision-making, and contribute to the literature focusing on both the interactive and independent influences of interpersonal factors on women's sexually risky behaviors.

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