

# Interpersonal Acceptance

International Society For Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection



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## Book Review



*Somebody Cares*

*Healing Days*

*Why Are You So Scared?*

*A Terrible Thing Happened:*

A collective review of four children's books

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Four books suitable for both children and adults published by Magination Press (the children's book imprint of the American Psychological Association) are related to issues of parental acceptance-rejection. These books, reviewed here, are: *Somebody Cares*; *Healing Days*; *Why Are You So Scared?*; and *A Terrible Thing Happened*. The books pertain to parental neglect, trauma, PTSD of adults and children, and to the experience of violence as a witness and secondary victim. As such, all four volumes are directly relevant to interpersonal acceptance-rejection theory (IPARTheory). IPARTheory is an evidence based theory of socialization and lifespan development that aims to predict and explain major consequences, causes, and other correlates of interpersonal acceptance and rejection worldwide (Rohner & Lansford, in press). The theory—which has nearly six decades of research behind it—is based on the hypothesis that humans have a biologically-based emotional need for positive response by their parents and important others throughout life. Children's feelings of emotional security depend on the quality of their relationship with their parents. That is why parental acceptance and rejection so heavily influences the development of children's personality over time. The quality of the emotional bond between parents and their children, as well as physical, verbal, and symbolic behaviors that parents use to express their feelings to them, form a continuum. One end of this continuum is marked by parental acceptance, the other end is characterized by parental rejection. Parental acceptance refers to expressions of positive feelings, love, and support toward children, whereas parental rejection includes hostility, aggression, indifference, emotional neglect, emotional coldness, and lack of affection toward children.

*Somebody Cares* is a guidebook for parents and clinicians to use with children and adults who have experienced neglect. It is designed to help children and parents understand and deal with their feelings, thoughts, and behaviors resulting from neglect. The book examines the impact of different kind of changes in the lives of children or/and their families. Many times it feels good to be a child, but there are times when children feel alone, scared, and burdened. Very often parents themselves need help in order to organize their lives to be able to take care of their children, to support them emotionally, and to show them love and affection. According to IPARTheory, when children's internal need for positive response by parents and important others is not satisfied, they may express: (a) hostility, aggression, passive aggression, or problems with the management of hostility and aggression; (b) heightened dependence or defensive independence, depending on the form, frequency, duration, timing, and intensity of rejection; (c) impaired feelings of self-esteem; (d) impaired feelings of self-adequacy; (e) emotional unresponsiveness; (f) emotional instability; and (g) negative worldview. Collectively, these personality dispositions are known as the *acceptance-rejection syndrome* (Rohner, 2004), and they collectively represent one significant expression of psychological maladjustment universally associated with the experience of parental rejection, including emotional neglect.

In addition, perceived parental rejection is thought in IPARTheory to lead to the development of distorted mental representations or cognitions of self, significant others, and the world in general. This rejection is likely to affect negatively not only parent-child relationships, but also children's peer relationships and intimate relationships in adulthood.

*Somebody Cares* includes many cases of neglect that children may experience, focusing on their feelings of loneliness, burden, guilt, fear, violence, freezing, and need for help. The book is easy to read. It includes drawings, and through many examples from home, school, and social environment children can understand that it is important to share their feelings and thoughts, and to ask for help from someone grown-up. The book can be used by the children themselves, their parents, and by their therapists. It includes a safety plan and a feel-good plan that can be used and applied by everyone. The author proposes a systemic approach to intervention for children and their parents. Sometimes both children and parents need help. Children feel bad and rejected, and parents can't find the right way to respond to the children's negative feelings. A specialist can help children and parents together to feel better, to build not only a safe environment with routines and new rules, but also to share new experiences with warmth, nurturance, and acceptance.

Two other books, *Healing Days* and *Why Are you So Scared?*, include many examples for children and adults who have experienced trauma. *Healing Days* is a self-help guide for children. Children can read the book by themselves, or with the assistance of a grown-up or a therapist. Also, the book includes many colorful pictures attractive for children, and it provides a great deal of information about the feelings, thoughts, and behaviors that traumatized children may experience. All the negative feelings and behaviors—along with the insecure attachment that a traumatized child may develop—are related to the acceptance-rejection syndrome. The book's author argues that it is very important for children to accept their negative feelings, to put aside feelings of guilt, and not to blame themselves for the trauma. Through the book's images, children can recognize different situations that they have experienced (e.g., aggression, anger, fear, loneliness, distraction, getting into trouble, etc.), and they can learn to feel safer, more relaxed, and confident. Also, according to the author, an adult attachment figure is important to help children, to talk with them, and to go together with them to a therapist. The author further explained that the 3 "fs" (**f**ight, **f**light, or **f**reeze) can explain much of children's behavior when something bad or scary happens. *Healing Days* also contains a safety plan and a feel-good plan with many ways to help children feel better, safer, and keep their feelings under control. At the end of the book, the author emphasized that it takes a while for traumatized children to feel happy, but every child can be happy with the experience of love, acceptance, and warmth.

What happens when a parent—not the children—has Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)? How does the child feel? *Why Are You So Scared?* is a book for children explaining an adult's problem. This book describes with very simple words in a child-friendly language all the symptoms of PTSD that parents may be experiencing. The book also helps both adults and children cope with the negative feelings, thoughts, and behaviors associated with PTSD. When parents have PTSD, they don't react negatively on purpose. Sometimes parents seem scared and worried. Sometimes children can't understand their parents' feelings because they look fine, but the parents can't control their thoughts and behaviors. Through drawings, children can express their thoughts and feelings about their parents. And through images children can identify their own feelings. *Why Are You So Scared?* is also related to IPARTheory. Parents with PTSD can often be rejecting toward their children. And when children don't feel accepted, they are—as already noted—likely to develop impaired feelings of self-esteem, impaired feelings of self-adequacy, emotional unresponsiveness, emotional instability, negative worldview, and other maladaptive dispositions. This book helps children realize that their parents' negative behavior toward them is not related to them per se, but to a difficult traumatic situation in their life. Children are encouraged to express their feelings toward their parents, and to not feel guilty about the situation. *Why Are You So Scared?* also contains a note to parents and caregivers with many helpful tips to help them understand their symptoms, to communicate more effectively with their children, and—through a step by step process—to cope with PTSD.

*A Terrible Thing Happened* is also a self-help book suitable for children who are witnesses and secondary victims to violent or traumatic events. In this book, the hero—Sherman Smith—saw something very bad. Through colorful pictures the story helps children identify their negative feelings, thoughts, and behaviors, and it helps children express these to a grown-up or a therapist. The book further contains a note to parents and caregivers with helpful information about the research findings of secondary victims, a list of possible traumatic events that a child may have witnessed, and many suggestions to help children cope with these traumatic memories. Parents, teachers, and clinicians who read this book will profit from a background in IPARTheory.

The uniqueness of all four books published by Magination Press lies in the fact that they not only provide information about difficult and traumatic events in the lives of children and adults, but they also provide support to people through their self-help structure. These books offer specific strategies helpful for readers, and through a systemic perspective (i.e., working with both parents and children) the focus is on the development of parental warmth and acceptance. Through the help of Magination Press books, adults and children can be trained to support, feel, and express more easily their love and caring toward their important others.

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# INTERPERSONAL ACCEPTANCE

## *Brief Histories*

Seminal theoretical and applied perspectives on interpersonal acceptance-rejection

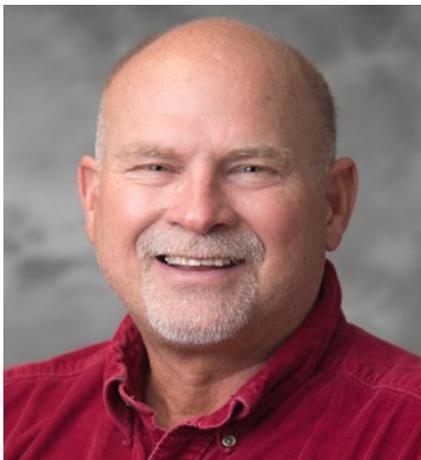
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## How I came to study ostracism

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I became interested in ostracism while watching a TV documentary about a West Point Cadet who was “silenced” for 2-1/2 years because of an honor violation. The other cadets wouldn’t look at him, talk to him, respond to anything he said. When he would go to the cafeteria to eat his meals, he would sit at a table filled with cadets, and immediately, they would stand and relocate to another table. I was blown away by the power of so-called non-behaviors. They didn’t harass him or call him names; he was invisible to them. I decided then that at some point, I wanted to do research in order to understand how ostracism affects individuals. Although it took me about 15 years to begin doing research on ostracism, I was thinking about it all of the time. Although I wanted to do research on ostracism, I lacked a theory and method (two pretty important things to have for an experimental social psychologist).



In 1985 when I was at Drake University, I was at a park with my dog and a frisbee rolled up to my blanket. I turned around, saw two guys waiting for their frisbee, and I stood and threw it to them. To my surprise, they threw it back to me, so I joined them and we started playing for awhile. Then, after maybe a minute or so, they stopped throwing it to me; they continued playing with each other, but didn’t look at me, talk to me, or throw it to me again. While embarrassing and painful, I had an epiphany: this is how I can manipulate ostracism in a laboratory: it was simple, had no context, no conversation, yet it seemed to me that it was powerful. I then started thinking about how it would affect people, and why. During the next 8 years, I was developing my theory (without knowing it).

So, about 8 years later, at the University of Toledo in 1994, I began a program of research that I continue to work on, and I am as enthusiastic about it now as I was then. My first paradigm was a face-to-face ball toss game, much like what had happened to me in the park. Half the participants were randomly assigned to be included; the other half received a few tosses, then no more for the remaining 4 minutes. The reactions of ostracized participants was startlingly strong; I had a hard time watching it from my observation window. We ran many participants through this procedure, but I wanted to scale down the manipulation and not have to use assistants (who, inevitably, began enjoying their ostracism treatment too much).

When I moved to the University of New South Wales (Sydney, Australia), I teamed up with two honors students, Christopher Cheung and Wilma Choi, and we developed Cyberball, an online virtual ball toss game in which participants, believing they are playing in order to practice their mental visualization skills, sit in their own cubicle in front of a computer screen, playing “toss” with two other players: half are included and half are ostracized. Despite not being in the physical presence of the other two players, not knowing who they are and not expecting to meet them, the impact of being ignored and excluded was just as strong and distressing as the face-to-face game. My research continued showing detrimental affects that were difficult to moderate while I was at Macquarie University (in Sydney). One of our landmark studies was when Naomi Eisenberger, Matt Lieberman and I had participants playing Cyberball while in an fMRI scanner. This was the first brain evidence that ostracism is detected as a painful stimulus. Cyberball has now been used worldwide in over 200 peer-reviewed publications, and has just been upgraded to allow for up to 9 players.

At Purdue University, I have continued to develop my theory, the temporal need-threat model of ostracism, which posits that almost everyone reacts to ostracism the same way when it first happens to them: it is painful, and their fundamental needs of belonging, self-esteem, control, and meaningful existence are threatened. Then, when individuals begin to make sense of what is going on and why, they think and behave in ways that will fortify these threatened needs. So, to increase a sense of belonging and social self-esteem, they become more socially pliable, succumbing more easily to social influence. On the other hand, if belonging opportunities are unlikely, they can fortify control and meaningful existence by being provocative and aggressive. For individuals who must endure ostracism for months, years, and decades, in school, at home, in church, or in the workplace, their capacity and resources for fortification become depleted, and they enter the resignation stage: giving up, feeling alienated, depressed, and worthless.

With the new upgrade to Cyberball, I intend to do more research aimed at assessing how groups feel and behave (within their group and when interacting with other groups) when ostracized. I can see myself doing research on this fascinating topic for years to come.

**You can read more about Kip Williams’ work and ostracism here:**

Williams, K. D. (2001). *Ostracism: The power of silence*. NY: Guilford Press.

Williams, K. D., Forgas, J. P., & von Hippel, W. (Eds.). (2005). *The social outcast: Ostracism, social exclusion, rejection, and bullying*. NY: Psychology Press.

Williams, K. D., & Nida, S. A. (Eds.) (2017). *Ostracism, exclusion, and rejection*. New York: Psychology Press.

# Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection Theory: Progress and Prospects

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I joined the Ronald and Nancy *Rohner Center* for the Study of Interpersonal Acceptance and Rejection at the University of Connecticut in 1999. Since then I have been working with Rohner to attain two specific objectives: (1) To extend the focus of the then parental acceptance-rejection theory (PARTheory) from predominantly parent-child relations to all forms of interpersonal relationships, and (2) To further establish the scientific foundation of the theory based on solid empirical evidence derived from 12 meta-analyses

To start the process of attaining the first objective, Rohner and I did the first major study beyond parent-child relations. The study specifically focused on intimate partner acceptance-rejection and psychological adjustment of heterosexual young adult women in the United States (Khaleque, 2001; Rohner & Khaleque, 2008). This path-breaking study sparked a great deal of international interest, so much so that intimate partner acceptance-rejection research spread worldwide within a short period of time (Rohner & Khaleque, 2010). Thus PARTheory gradually started expanding beyond its traditional concerns with *parental* acceptance-rejection and began focusing on all aspects of *interpersonal* acceptance and rejection throughout the life span (Khaleque, 2007).



Eventually efforts such as these led to a paradigm shift in the theory's basic postulates. That is, originally PARTheory postulated that *parental* rejection is associated with the specific cluster of personality dispositions noted in personality subtheory. The reformulated postulate in IPARTheory states that perceived rejection by an *attachment figure at any point in life* is associated with the same cluster of personality dispositions found among children and adults rejected by parents in childhood.

As time went by, an increasing number of studies began on other forms of interpersonal relations, including but not limited to teacher acceptance-rejection, grandparents and sibling acceptance-rejection, spouse and in-laws acceptance-rejection, and others. Eventually, in June 2014, Rohner changed the name of theory from parental acceptance-rejection theory (PARTheory) to interpersonal acceptance-rejection theory (IPARTheory; Rohner, 2014, 2016).

To achieve the second objective of further establishing the scientific foundation of IPARTheory on an empirical basis, we started synthesizing findings from hundreds of empirical studies on the theory done all over the world (Khaleque & Ali, 2017). For these purposes, we performed 12 meta-analyses on 551 studies that fulfilled specific criteria. These studies were selected from among 4,400 studies on PARTheory/IPARTheory, archived in the Rohner Center through 2016. The selected studies were conducted over a period of 41 years (from 1975 through 2016). They represented an aggregated sample of 149,440 respondents who were taken from 31 countries on five continents (Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, and South America). The countries were: Bangladesh, Barbados, China, Colombia, Croatia, Czechoslovakia, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, Greece, India, Iran, Jamaica, Japan, Kuwait, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Romania, South Korea, Serbia, Spain, St. Kitts, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, and the USA. These meta-analyses were completed over a period of 14 years, from 2002 through 2016.

The purpose of these meta-analyses was to synthesize findings of empirical studies on the theory in order to test its basic postulates, solidify its empirical foundations, and verify its cross-cultural and universalist perspectives--and to test the psychometric properties of the principal measures used globally in cross-cultural research. Among the twelve meta-analyses, ten tested major postulates in IPARTheory's personality subtheory because it is the most well-researched of the three subtheories. Two meta-analyses were on IPARTheory measures. These 12 meta-analyses tested the following postulates (Khaleque & Ali, 2017):

- First, children all over the world are likely to be affected in a specific way (described in personality subtheory) when they perceive themselves to be accepted or rejected by their parents and other attachment figures.
- Second, adults' remembrances of parental acceptance-rejection in childhood are likely to be associated with the same form of psychological adjustment/maladjustment as found among children—though often to a lesser extent.
- Third, individuals who perceive themselves to be rejected by their parents or by other attachment figures tend to develop problems with: anger, hostility, aggression, passive aggression, and problems with the management of hostility and aggression; dependence or defensive independence; negative self-esteem; negative self-adequacy; emotional instability; emotional unresponsiveness; and, negative worldview. Negative worldview is characterized by beliefs that people and the world in general are unfriendly, hostile, or dangerous (Rohner, 1986, 1999).
- Fourth, paternal love-related behaviors often have stronger effects on children's and adult offspring's psychological adjustment, and emotional and behavioral development than do maternal love-related behaviors.
- Fifth, adults' perceptions of acceptance-rejection by an intimate partner or other attachment figure at any point in the lifespan are likely to be associated with the same form of psychological adjustment/maladjustment as experienced by children.
- Sixth, variations in culture, ethnicity, race, gender, and other such factors do not override the apparently universal tendency for individuals who perceive themselves to be accepted or rejected by attachment figures to respond in essentially the same way.

The overall findings of these meta-analyses reveal that interpersonal acceptance and rejection have significant pancultural associations with the psychological adjustment and personality dispositions of children and adults everywhere. The results also show that the principal measures, used so far in IPARTheory research,--especially the Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ) and Personality Assessment Questionnaire (PAQ)--are reliable cross-culturally. Global evidence provided in these meta-analyses suggest that, in all likelihood, IPARTheory's major postulates tested in these meta-analytic reviews are panculturally true and generalizable, regardless of differences in culture, ethnicity, gender, or geographical boundary. As IPARTheory research continues to expand, meta-analytic studies should also continue to synthesize the results of studies on different measures, assumptions, and conclusions within the theory.

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**For more details about Khaleque's work and about IPARTheory please visit :**

Rohner Research Publications: [www.rohnerresearchpublications.com](http://www.rohnerresearchpublications.com)

Rohner Center: [www.csjar.uconn.edu](http://www.csjar.uconn.edu)

International Society for Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection: [www.isipar.uconn.edu](http://www.isipar.uconn.edu)

*Giving will  
Make you  
Smile*

Chinese Fortune Cookie





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*“Family means no one gets left behind or forgotten.”*

David Ogden Stiers

## Book review

# Cue-Centered Therapy for Youth Experiencing Posttraumatic Symptoms: A Structured, Multimodal Intervention (Therapist Guide).

By

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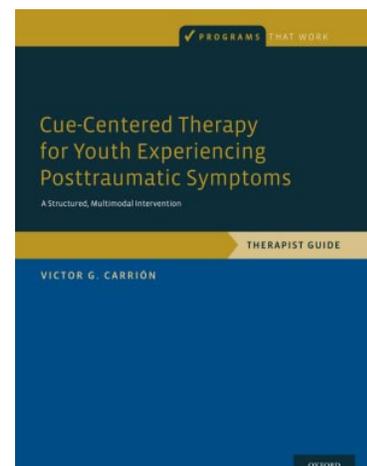
This book is about cue-centered therapy (CCT), and the way in which therapists and clinicians can utilize the therapeutic approach in their practice to provide treatment for posttraumatic stress symptoms. CCT is suitable for use among children eight years of age or older who have experienced trauma in the past or who continue to experience traumatic events during the course of treatment. The therapeutic model covers a broad range of trauma, such as physical and sexual abuse, witnessing violence, being exposed to community violence, being kidnapped, experiencing the death of a loved one, and experiencing natural or human-made disasters. CCT's name derives from its focus on individuals' sensitivity toward trauma-related cues. Instead of focusing on unlearning maladaptive reactions that are conditioned to trauma cues, CCT focuses on generating new behavioral responses through interventions.

Components of trauma described in CCT are consistent with perceived rejection described in interpersonal acceptance-rejection theory (IPARTheory). The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) (2013) defines psychological trauma as an "emotionally painful, shocking, distressing, or even life-threatening experience that can result in negative mental and physical health effects" (p. 2). Exposure to trauma can result in various symptoms, including posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety disorders, conduct disorder, and suicidal ideation. Trauma may also be related to other negative outcomes such as substance use, school disengagement, academic difficulties, poor attention, and cognitive difficulties. These too are common sequelae of perceived rejection.

This book also recognizes positivity and resilience by addressing effective ways of treating trauma symptoms via cue-centered therapy. CCT provides evidence-based treatment, and tries to educate children and caregivers about how to actively make changes in their lives. Through therapy, CCT tries to provide tools to help traumatized youth understand and assess their current psychological

status and trauma cues, and to encourage them to find alternative cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses that can replace the automatic and symptomatic reactions caused by the trauma. CCT also assists children and youth to learn more about subconscious trauma-related cues that they did not heretofore understand.

The manual is divided into four phases and session-by-session components of the therapy process. Each session provides an outline with the goals and objectives of the session, the therapist's role in the session, step-by-step instructions, and necessary materials for practice. Phase one includes sessions one through three. This phase involves initial education of youth and caregivers about the psychological aftermath of trauma, long-term consequences of not dealing with trauma, and sessions regarding mindfulness, relaxation, and cognitive tools for dealing with trauma. Phase two includes sessions four through seven. This phase offers a session on the youth's traumatic stress history. This gives youth the opportunity to narrate their experiences, and to process their traumatic stress history, all of which allows them to redefine their identity as survivors rather than as victims. This session also allows traumatized youth to rewrite their narratives in more positive ways. Phase three includes sessions eight through twelve.



Specifically, (8) mid-therapy updates for youth and caregivers, (9) discussion of new ways of thinking and feeling about the trauma, (10) conversation about imaginary exposure to cues, (11) within-session exposure to cues, and (12) evaluation of the in-vivo exposure assignment. Finally, Phase four includes sessions thirteen through fifteen. The focus here is on processing the chronic traumatic-stress history, the first closing session for youth and caregivers, and the second closing session for the youth only.

CCT provides an excellent and detailed example of evidence-based therapy for young populations experiencing trauma. As such, the book is highly recommended for practitioners who are interested in helping clients deal with the effects of trauma (including rejection), and in promoting posttraumatic growth.

#### Reference

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# Introduction to IPARTheory

LESSON CREATED BY **JULIAN LLOYD** USING **TEDEd**VIDEO FROM **Ronald Rohner** YOUTUBE CHANNEL

## Let's Begin...

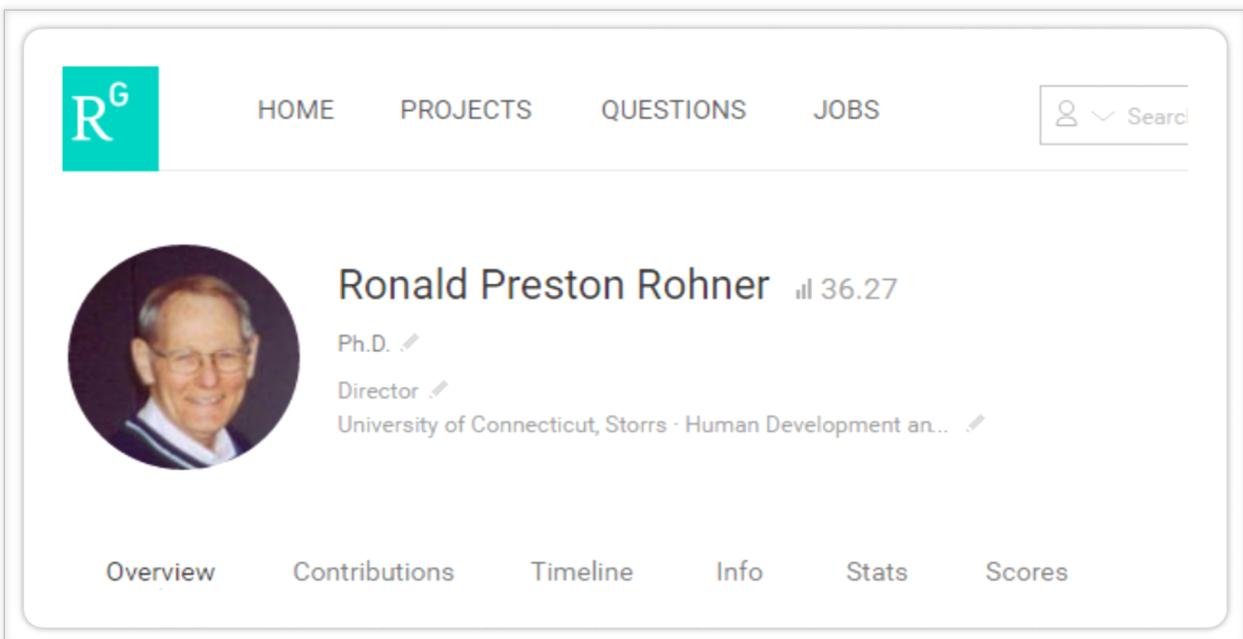
The activity was designed for students taking a level 5 undergraduate module, PS5014 Psychology of Parenting.

Having considered Rohner and Veneziano's (2001) review of research on fathers as caregivers, we will now examine Rohner's (2016) Interpersonal Acceptance and Rejection Theory (IPARTheory), formerly known as Parental Acceptance Rejection Theory (PARTheory).

<http://ed.ted.com/on/WzxWbpt7>

## Social Media Updates

Follow us on ResearchGate and read online first articles and get access to full-text IPARTheory-related articles.



The image shows a screenshot of a ResearchGate profile page. At the top left is the ResearchGate logo (R<sup>G</sup>). To its right are navigation links: HOME, PROJECTS, QUESTIONS, and JOBS. On the far right is a search bar with a person icon and the text "Search". Below the navigation is a profile card for Ronald Preston Rohner. It features a circular profile picture of an older man with glasses. To the right of the picture, the name "Ronald Preston Rohner" is displayed in a large font, followed by a citation index of "36.27". Below the name, the text "Ph.D." and "Director" are listed, each with a small pencil icon indicating it is editable. The affiliation "University of Connecticut, Storrs · Human Development an..." is also shown with a pencil icon. At the bottom of the profile card, there are six tabs: Overview, Contributions, Timeline, Info, Stats, and Scores.