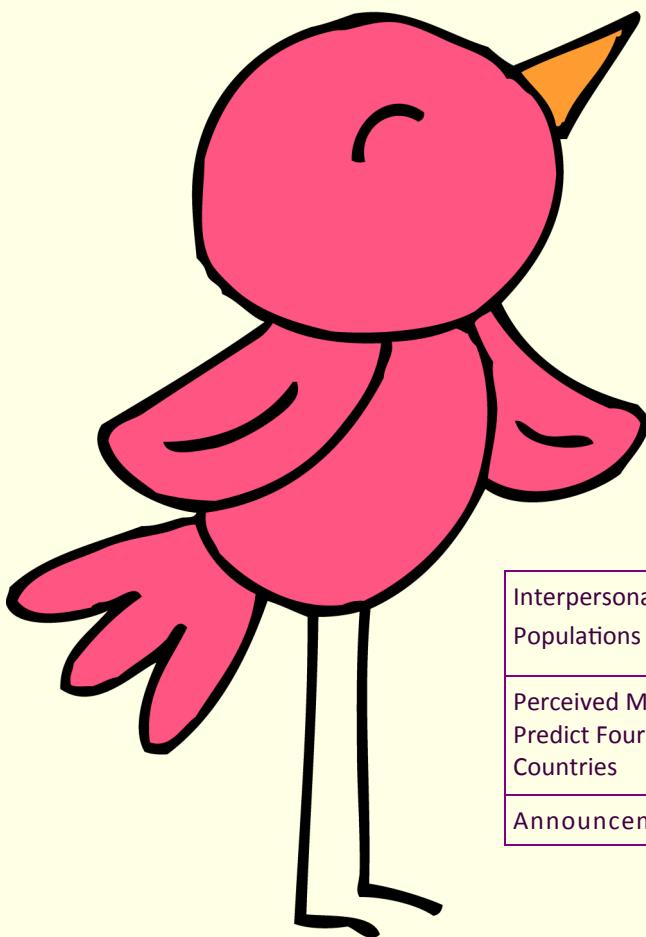


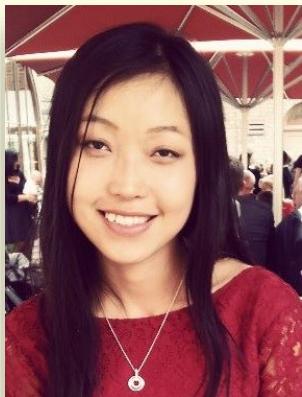


INTERPERSONAL ACCEPTANCE



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Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection Research in Chinese Populations

(PART TWO)

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[Editor's Note. This is Part Two of a two-part article dealing with interpersonal acceptance-rejection issues in Chinese populations. Part One of the article appeared in the January 2015 issue of *Interpersonal Acceptance* available online at www.isipar.org]

Parental Acceptance-Rejection and Its Effects

Early research provided support for the general conclusion that Asian parents tend to be harsher and more controlling than their European and North American counterparts (X. Chen et al., 1998; Choi et al., 2013). Often based on comparisons between immigrant Chinese and European American families, researchers found that Chinese parents were less accepting and more controlling toward their children than were European American parents. X. Chen and colleagues (1998), for instance, surveyed Chinese and Canadian mothers with toddlers. Chinese mothers in the sample reported lower acceptance and higher rejection than did Canadian mothers. Wu and Chao (2005), examining perceived parenting practices rather than self-reported attitudes, found that immigrant Chinese parents were perceived by their adolescent children to be less warm than did their European American counterparts.

Unlike these early studies, recent research on parental acceptance-rejection in Chinese families shows that contemporary Chinese parents now generally strive to adopt the same warm,

supportive—or at least non-punitive—parenting approach that also tends to be endorsed in European American families. A recent survey by J. Chen and Liu (2012) among Chinese parents, for example, suggested that parental punishment is seldom used, and that supportive parenting instead of “tiger parenting” is the most popular parental strategy used among immigrant Chinese (S. Kim et al., 2012) as well as Mainland Chinese parents (Lu & Chang, 2013). Comparing Chinese American and European American mothers’ behavior in videotaped family interaction, Jose et al. (2000) concluded that Chinese American mothers, while more directive, are no less warm than their European American counterparts. Similar trends have been found among fathers. That is, compared to previous generations, Chinese men today increasingly demonstrate paternal warmth and affection (Li & Jankowiak, 2015).

Several influential predictors of parental acceptance-rejection have been identified. The most frequently examined factors include parent gender, child gender, family climate, and family socioeconomic status. Although not without exception, Chinese fathers are generally perceived to

be less accepting than mothers (Berndt et al., 1990; Cheah, Özdemir, & Leung, 2012; Li, 2014). Reports on the effect of child gender are less consistent. While some suggest that Chinese parents are egalitarian toward sons and daughters (Lu & Chang, 2013), others have found that Chinese boys tend to receive greater parental rejection than girls (J. Chen & Liu, 2012). Furthermore, parental acceptance-rejection tends to vary among families from different socioeconomic backgrounds in China, as is the case elsewhere internationally. Specifically, better-educated parents are usually more willing and better able to exhibit acceptance than are more poorly educated parents. Similarly, parents in economically disadvantaged families are less likely to display the same level of warmth and nurturance as their more affluent counterparts (Benner & Kim, 2010; J. Chen & Liu, 2012; X. Chen & Rubin, 1994; Shek, 2005).

Scholars have attempted to determine possible associations between parental acceptance-rejection and various indicators of child adjustment in Chinese families. The realization that Chinese parents hold qualitatively different socialization goals from European American parents once led to hypotheses that warm, accepting parenting might not benefit children in Chinese culture as much as it does in European American contexts (Chao, 2001). This assumption, however, has not received empirical support. In fact, coercive, restrictive, or punitive parenting has been found to contribute to children's aggressive behavior and psychopathology (J. Gao et al., 2012; Gau et al., 2008; Nelson et al., 2006; Petersen et al., 2005; Sim & Ong, 2005; Y. Xu, Farver & Zhang, 2009). Accepting parenting has been found to produce optimal socioemotional outcomes in children (X. Chen et al., 2001; X. Chen & Rubin, 1994; S. Kim et al., 2012). These studies, with samples from different sub-

groups of Chinese populations converge on the conclusion that the affective climate of parent-child interactions influences child development in much the same way in Chinese families as it does in other sociocultural contexts (Bradford et al., 2003).

As public awareness of child abuse rises, a small but growing fraction of the literature in China has become devoted to the investigation of extreme parental rejection. Although the majority of urban Chinese parents no longer approve of the use of corporal punishment, questionnaire surveys among Chinese children and adolescents indicate that Chinese children are often the victims of different degrees of family violence, and that children suffering from one type of abuse are more likely to be the victims of other types of abuse, too (Huang et al., 2006; D. Kim et al., 2000; Yang, Zhang, & Huang, 2004; X. Zhao et al., 2004). It is possible, however, that this conclusion represents a methodological bias insofar as these studies on child abuse have been based on samples from less developed areas of China, in contrast to studies which tend to concentrate in metropolitan areas such as Beijing or Shanghai.

Children's Peer Relationships and Their Effect

In traditional Chinese culture, childbearing—especially that of the male offspring—was encouraged. Large sibships were common. In the last few decades, however, the fertility rate in major Chinese populations such as Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan plummeted (<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.TFRT.IN>, retrieved November 25, 2014). In Mainland China, in particular, the One-Child Policy has led to the disappearance of siblings for most children born after 1978. The decline in sibship makes extrafamilial peer relationships—which often take place at

school—particularly significant for the socialization of Chinese children.

As with their counterparts in European American societies, Chinese children and adolescents that demonstrate prosocial behavior and socioemotional competence tend to be more popular among their schoolmates than do youth who do not display these behaviors. Aggressive children, on the other hand, are more likely to be rejected by peers (X. Chen, Li, & Li, 1995; Cheng & Gao, 2003; M. Wang & Chen, 2000, 2003; J. Zhao, Shen, & Zhang, 2006). This tends to be true in many other parts of the world too. However, norms defining peer behavior among Chinese children might be different from such norms among their European American counterparts. For example, shyness is often regarded as an undesirable trait in Western societies, but it tends to be valued among the Chinese as a sign of self-control and maturity. Thus, shy, sensitive Chinese children tend to be well-reputed among their peers (X. Chen, Rubin, & Li, 1995).

Beyond this, it is useful to note that Chinese culture holds teachers in high regard and positions teachers above students in the interpersonal hierarchy. Accordingly, teachers' opinions have a strong influence on the peer acceptance of children (Cheng & Gao, 2003). Furthermore, the strong emphasis on academic achievement – a cultural tradition that has been reinforced by competition in the new market economy – links children's academic achievement with their peer acceptance. Instead of being teased as nerds, high-achievers in Chinese schools generally enjoy high popularity among classmates (Cheng & Gao, 2003; M. Wang & Chen, 2000, 2003; X. Wang, Li, Gao, & Zheng, 2008).

Peer acceptance is important for the adjustment and well-being of Chinese children and adolescence. In fact, peer acceptance has

been found to dampen the damage of other risk factors for depression among Chinese adolescents (Greenberger et al., 2000). Difficulties in peer relationships, on the other hand, tend to predict children's depressive symptoms and poor mental health (X. Chen, Rubin & Li, 1995; Lin, 2008; X. Wang et al., 2008). Unfortunately, children who are rejected by their peers are also more likely to be rejected by parents—and to display more unsociable behavior, leading to a negative cycle in their social life (X. Chen, Li, & Li, 1995; X. Chen, Rubin & Li, 1997). Taken together, these results suggest that the role of peer acceptance in children's social functioning is as important in Chinese populations as it is in European American culture.

Intimate Partner Acceptance-Rejection and Its Effect

The most studied subfield in interpersonal acceptance-rejection (IAR) among adult Chinese has to do with the prevalence of intimate partner violence, as well as its influence on women's health. Often referred to as "family violence" in Chinese literature, intimate partner violence is not uncommon in Chinese families. Parish et al. (2004), for example, found that 34% of Mainland Chinese women had experienced some form of physical violence from their current partner. This violence resulted in severe pain or injury for 12% of the women. Surveys of intimate partner violence among Chinese women yielded a lifetime prevalence between 3% to 26%. Surveys regarding the prevalence of intimate partner violence showed that from 4.5% to 67% of the women who responded had experienced intimate partner violence in the past year (K. Chan et al., 2010; Tang & Lai, 2008; X. Xu, Campell, & Zhu, 2001; X. Xu et al., 2005; Y. Zhang et al., 2004). Most cases of intimate partner abuse involve male perpetrators and female victims; although evidence suggests that some Chinese

men also suffer from intimate partner violence (Parish et al., 2004; A. Xu, 1995). Intimate partner violence is most common among couples with limited education, and who are in a state of financial stress, involved in substance abuse, and involved in extramarital affairs (Chan & Liu, 2010; Tang & Lai, 2008; X. Xu et al., 2005; X. Zhang, Zheng, Kong, & Zhou, 2013; Zou et al., 2012).

Not surprisingly, intimate partner violence is one of the major triggers for divorce in Chinese societies (L. Liu & Chan, 1999; X. Xu et al., 2001). However, intimate partner violence is also a public health issue, given its detrimental influence on victims. Y. Gao and Jacka (2012), for instance, found that rural Chinese women's physical and mental health were compromised by intimate partner violence, even after family income and other important contextual factors were controlled for. Parish et al. (2004), too, found that the general and sexual health of women was lowered by intimate partner violence. Although there have been no cross-cultural studies comparing intimate partner violence in Chinese and non-Chinese societies, it is clear that intimate partner violence has a negative impact on Chinese individuals and families just as it does on individuals and families elsewhere.

Summary and Future Directions for Research

This paper presents a brief review of the history and current state of interpersonal acceptance-rejection research in Chinese populations. An increasing volume of research concentrates primarily on acceptance and rejection in the context of parent-child, school-based peer, and intimate partner relationships. Drawing on increasingly diversified samples,

these studies provide further support for the universality of IPARTTheory. Existing research on parent-child, intimate partner, and peer relationships in the Chinese context also paint a more complicated picture of interpersonal acceptance-rejection than commonly suggested from cultural traditions. The rise of warm, accepting, overtly affectionate parenting style among today's Chinese families, for instance, signals a shift in cultural assumptions about interpersonal acceptance-rejection, with the explicit display of acceptance increasingly perceived as beneficial for child development.

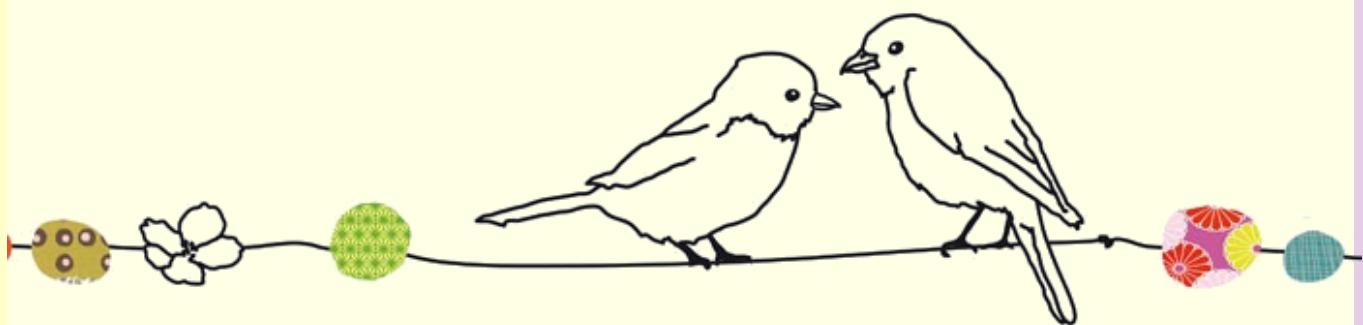
Many other subfields of interpersonal acceptance-rejection await further investigation in Chinese populations. A noticeable emergent branch of IAR-related research in Chinese populations involves teacher acceptance-rejection, an area to which scholarly attention is long overdue given the high regard in which teachers are held in traditional Chinese culture, and given Chinese children's long hours spent at school. Recently there has been an enhanced public awareness of the significance of teacher-child interaction. Empirical studies are beginning to help researchers and practitioners better understand the role of the teacher in children's cognitive and socioemotional development in the school context (see Bao & Lam, 2008; Cheng & Gao, 2003; and, X. Wang et al., 2008 for a few examples). In addition to this expansion in thematic coverage, IAR-related research in Chinese populations can be further improved in the future by better samples, such as those including participants from inland southwestern China, and the use of more carefully validated, adapted, or designed measures.

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Perceived Mother and Father Acceptance-Rejection Predict Four Unique Aspects of Child Adjustment Across Nine Countries

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Feeling accepted by one's parents is critical to adaptive child development (Gerhardt, 2004). However, the specific effects of perceived acceptance-rejection on diverse domains of child adjustment have been incompletely documented. Whether these effects hold across diverse populations, and for mothers and fathers are open questions.

Relations Between Acceptance-Rejection and Child Adjustment

Much of the literature on parental acceptance-rejection has focused on individual

effects on children (e.g., behavioral problems, depression). Research is mixed, however, about which indicators of child adjustment are consistently related to perceived parental rejection. Because indicators of child adjustment often share variance (e.g., Masten et al., 2005; Wentzel, 1991, 1993), it is possible that acceptance-rejection is really only related to one or two key aspects of child adjustment (e.g., behavior problems) which overlap with other aspects (e.g., school performance and social competence). Testing multiple indicators of adjustment (internalizing behavior,

externalizing behavior, school achievement, prosocial behavior, and social competence) in a single developmental model, as we do here, helps to determine whether parental acceptance-rejection is uniquely associated with all child outcomes, or whether the effects are driven by a smaller number of key aspects of child adjustment.

Universal versus Community-Specific Relations

Previous research on parental acceptance-rejection has focused mostly on single locales (Khaleque & Rohner, 2012; Rohner & Britner, 2002). However, theory asserts, and some reviews and meta-analyses have begun to indicate, that effects of perceived parental acceptance-rejection are universal (Khaleque & Rohner, 2002a, 2012; Rohner & Britner, 2002). Including samples from multiple countries in the same study permits a broader test of relations between acceptance-rejection and child adjustment.

Mothers and Fathers

Most research has examined only maternal acceptance-rejection, ignoring the contributions of fathers (Khaleque & Rohner, 2002), and when fathers are included, the literature is contradictory about whether both mother *and/or* father acceptance-rejection are predictive of children's adjustment. We therefore included mothers and fathers in all samples across multiple countries and compared relations across parents.

Methods

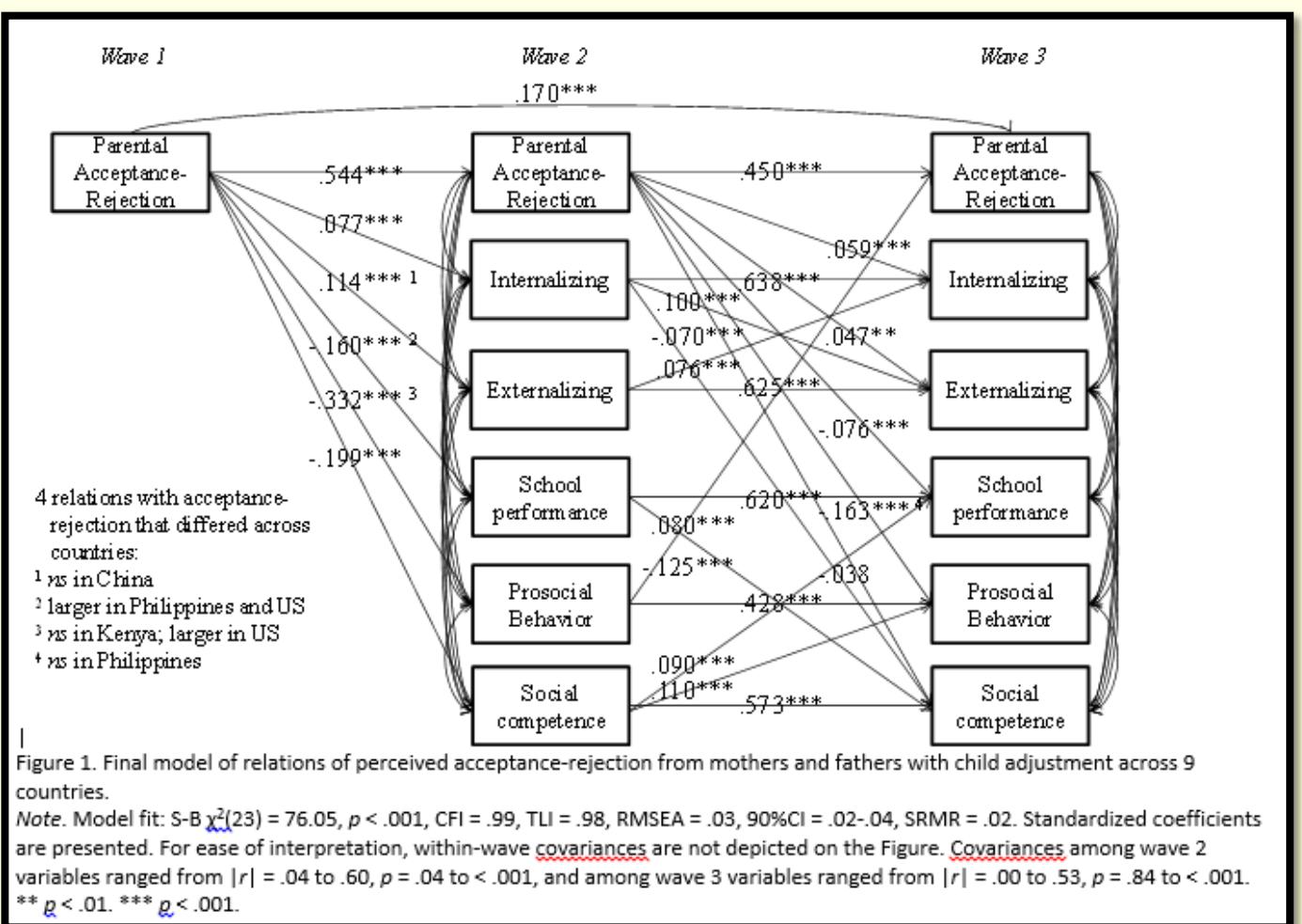
In this article, we present the results of a longitudinal, 3-wave study that investigated the impact of children's perceptions of mother and father acceptance-rejection on five diverse aspects of child adjustment (internalizing problems, externalizing problems, school performance, prosocial behavior, and social competence) in 1247 families from China, Colombia, Italy, Jordan, Kenya, the Philippines, Sweden, Thailand, and the United States.

Families were recruited from schools

that served socioeconomically diverse populations in each participating community. At waves 1 (M child age = 8.25, SD = .63), 2 (M child age = 9.31, SD = .73), and 3 (M child age = 10.35, SD = .72), children completed questionnaires about their parents' acceptance-rejection using the Parental Acceptance-Rejection/Control Questionnaire-Short Form (Rohner, 2005). At waves 2 and 3, mothers and fathers completed questionnaires about their child's internalizing and externalizing behavior problems using the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL; Achenback, 1991), school performance (CBCL; Achenback, 1991), and social competence (adapted from Pettit, Harrist, Bates, and Dodge, 1991), and children completed a questionnaire about their prosocial behavior (adapted from Pastorelli, Barabaranelli, Cermak, Rozsa, and Caprara, 1997).

Results

Higher perceived parental rejection at wave 1 (age 8) was associated with higher internalizing and externalizing behavior problems and lower in-school performance, prosocial behavior, and social competence in wave 2 (age 9), controlling for within-wave relations among child adjustment. Higher perceived parental rejection at wave 2 (age 9) predicted increases in internalizing and externalizing behavior problems and decreases in school performance and prosocial behavior at wave 3 (age 10), controlling for within-wave relations, and stability across waves (Figure 1). Results were similar controlling for parental age, education, and social desirability bias. Multiple group models that constrain the model paths to be equivalent across groups indicated that the model fit well for mothers and fathers with no modifications, indicating that perceived acceptance/rejection from mothers and fathers exerted similar influences on child functioning. The model also fit well across all nine countries after releasing 7.5% of the constrained paths. The model modifications were minor, with only six involving a relation between acceptance-rejection and child adjustment (see Figure 1).



Discussion

Overall, perceived mother and father acceptance-rejection have unique effects on five separate aspects of child adjustment in 9 countries. After controlling for stability in acceptance-rejection and each indicator of child adjustment from wave 2 to wave 3 and relations among all variables within each wave, changes in perceived parental acceptance-rejection predicted unique changes in children's internalizing and externalizing behaviors, school performance, and prosocial behaviors over time. Moreover, patterns of relations were similar across mothers and fathers and (with a few exceptions) across all nine countries. This study provides a robust and conservative test of the general proposition that children's perceptions of their parents' acceptance-rejection are systematically and universally related to multiple, independent aspects of children's adjustment.

The parent- and country-common effects of perceived parental acceptance on unique changes in children's internalizing and externalizing behaviors, school performance, and prosocial behavior over time may have important clinical applications. Results of parenting interventions (usually with mothers) in the United States and Europe have demonstrated that improving parenting behaviors can have positive effects on later child adjustment (Guttentag et al., 2014; Hanisch, Hautmann, Plück, Eichelberger, & Döpfner, 2014; Landry, Smith, Swank, & Guttentag, 2008; Watson et al., 2014). The results of this study suggest that parenting interventions with mothers and fathers may promote child adjustment in at least four important areas of internalizing and externalizing behavior problems, school performance, and prosocial behavior and may have similar effects on child adjustment in Western and non-Western countries.

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ANNOUNCING

ISIPAR's 6th International Conference



Please join us at the 6th International Congress on
Interpersonal Acceptance and Rejection in Madrid,
Spain, June 7-10, 2016 to help celebrate ISIPAR's 10th
birthday since its founding in 2006.

For further information or to volunteer, contact Miguel Ángel Carrasco (macarrasco@psi.uned.es), Chair of the local organizing committee, or visit the Congress website
<http://isiparmadrid2016.wix.com/isiparmadrid2016>

Invitation for Nomination to Elected Office in the International Society for Interpersonal Acceptance and Rejection



Soon ISIPAR will hold elections for the office of **President -Elect** and for a **Regional Representative** from each of the following regions of the world:

- **Central and South Africa**
- **Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean**
- **North Africa and the Middle East**
- **South America**
- **Southeast Asia**

Nominations for office (including self-nominations) are invited. Please send your nominations to Ronald P. Rohner (r.rohner@uconn.edu). Provide an email address for your nominee, and specify which region of the world your nominee represents. Also, briefly describe the nominee's interest and background in interpersonal acceptance-rejection research and/or practice.

Nominees do not have to be current ISIPAR members, but will have to join in order to be considered for office.