



INTERPERSONAL ACCEPTANCE

International Society for Interpersonal Acceptance and Rejection

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Message from the President



Dear members, future members, and friends of ISIPAR,

This is my first message to you as the second President of the Society. I am proud and excited to carry the flag for the next two years. I would like to thank you for trusting me with this position.

Our journey with Parental Acceptance-Rejection Theory started a long time ago and culminated in the establishment of the Society two years ago at the First International Conference on Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection in Istanbul, Turkey, as you know. With the establishment of the Society our mission and work has taken a different turn. We are trying to embrace and link different paths of research as well as applied work under one umbrella—extending as far as possible in terms of an international domain. Based on the diversity of participants, both in the Istanbul conference as well as in the recent conference in Crete (July, 2008), I can say with confidence that we have taken huge steps in this direction. Thirty-six countries were represented in Istanbul and 28 were represented in Crete. The variety of research topics and applied work was phenomenal, even though both conferences were fairly small in terms of the overall number of participants.

This brings me to the Society's most pressing mission at this time. That is, we must focus on increasing our membership. At least 1,900 people internationally are known to be interested in issues of interpersonal acceptance and rejection. This means that we should definitely be able enlarge our membership substantially, which in turn will open a route for each of us to extend and enhance our own personal research agendas with more collaboration through the Society—as well as provide more opportunities to raise funds for research and application. European Union funding agencies, for example, ask for international co-research groups, and they welcome organizational alliances.

Before closing I would like to mention that the stimulating conference in Greece was hosted by Dr. Elias Kourkoutas at the University of Crete. There we had both renowned plenary speakers like F. Motti-Stefanidi, Ronald P. Rohner, and David A. Wolfe, as well as long-term and younger researchers such as Ariel Knafo, all of whom presented exciting and thought-provoking research.

We will inform you as plans for the dates of the 2010 conference are completed. We hope to see you in Padua!

Finally, I would love to hear from you with any ideas you might have for empowering our Society in terms of membership as well as future growth and development.

With warm wishes from Istanbul, Turkey,

Fatoş Erkman
President, ISIPAR
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Acceptance: The Essence of Peace

ACCEPTANCE:
THE ESSENCE OF PEACE
SELECTED PAPERS
FROM
THE FIRST
INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS
ON
INTERPERSONAL
ACCEPTANCE AND REJECTION

FATOŞ ERKMAN, EDITOR

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from the 1st
International
Congress on
Interpersonal
Acceptance and
Rejection

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- Resilience and Coping with Perceived Rejection
- Comparative Studies of Parental Acceptance-Rejection
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Cognitive Correlates of Parental Acceptance and Rejection

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Introduction

Parental acceptance and rejection have long been of interest to investigators as predictors of child outcomes. Although these constructs are instantiated in highly variable and even idiosyncratic behavior patterns (Rohner & Khaleque, 2005), researchers consistently observe that behaviors congruent with parental acceptance, such as parental sensitivity and responsiveness, are linked with more positive socio-emotional outcomes. Likewise, behaviors concordant with parental rejection have been consistently associated with suboptimal psychosocial functioning (see Rohner, 2004, for reviews). In addition, growing evidence suggests that whereas parental acceptance may enhance cognitive functioning, parental rejection appears to have a negative impact. This review examines the evidence supporting the hypothesis that parental acceptance and rejection influence children's information processing abilities. Direct and indirect mechanisms for these relations are considered and directions for future research are proposed.

Cognitive Correlates of Parental Acceptance

In the last two decades, a literature has emerged pointing to the cognitive benefit of parental acceptance. Numerous studies now show that parental sensitivity and responsiveness foster children's information processing skills (Tamis-LeMonda & Bornstein, 2002). Investigations of infants, toddlers, and young children, employing standardized measures of attention and memory, language skills, executive functions, theory of mind, and global cognitive functioning, have revealed consistent positive associations between these abilities and behavioral patterns consistent with parental acceptance. Although much of the literature examines the contribution of *maternal* acceptance to children's cognitive functioning, the few investigations examining fathers likewise underscore the importance of paternal acceptance to children's cognitive outcomes (e.g., Tamis-LeMonda, Shannon, Cabrera & Lamb, 2004).

How and why does parental acceptance lead to these cognitive gains? I turn to this question after first considering the impact of parental rejection on cognitive functioning.

Parental Rejection and Cognitive Functioning

Whereas investigators have not explicitly examined the link between cognitive functions and parental rejection per se, a host of studies provides indirect support for the notion that parental rejection influences information processing abilities. Child maltreatment status, which reflects extreme parental rejection, has been associated with a wide range of cognitive decrements, independent of neurological insult (Crozier & Barth, 2005). Although substantiated physical abuse and neglect have been most readily associated with poorer performance on global and specific measures of cognitive functioning, sexually abused and emotionally maltreated children can also be distinguished from their non-maltreated peers in terms of information processing abilities (e.g., Sadeh, Hayden, McGuire, Sachs, & Civita, 1994; Huth-Bocks, Levendosky, & Semel, 2001). Findings from the maltreatment literature reveal decrements in attention, memory, language skills, executive functions, and global cognitive functioning.

Further evidence of the link between cognition and parental rejection can be found in studies of parent-child interactions in non-maltreating, low income families, and in the maternal depression literature. The former studies reveal that parent-child interactions characterized by parental negative regard, detachment, and restrictiveness were associated with lower child performances on measures of cognitive development (e.g., Ryan, Martin, & Brooks-Gunn, 2006).

The maternal depression literature indicates that the relatively poorer cognitive performance of children of depressed versus non-depressed mothers is due to lower maternal sensitivity in parent-child interactions (e.g., NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 1999).

“Numerous studies now show that parental sensitivity and responsiveness foster children's information processing skills”

These findings provide a clue as to why maltreated children tend to perform worse on cognitive tasks. In general, maltreating parents exhibit more problematic interactions with their children and lower levels of parental sensitivity. Compared to more typical parents, numerous investigations reveal that maltreating parents engage in fewer interactions with their children, are less inclined to engage in sensitive, elaborative play, are less warm and empathic, are less compliant with child requests, and exhibit less verbal teaching and more ignoring of their infants during free-play sessions. To be sure, other mechanisms are likely involved in the cognitive decrements of maltreated children. However, all findings taken together suggest that even more typical levels of parental rejection negatively affect children's cognitive abilities.

How do Parental Acceptance and Rejection Affect Children's Cognitive Outcomes?

Direct and indirect pathways seem involved in the link between parental acceptance rejection and children's cognitive outcomes. A consideration of the sociocultural theory of cognitive development sheds light on one direct pathway: The day to day interactions between parents and children. This theory argues that children's information processing skills are inextricably tied to the social context in which they develop (Rogoff, 1990). Whereas children occupy numerous social contexts during childhood, both theoretical (Bronfenbrenner, 1986) and empirical work (Downer & Pianta, 2006; Lugo-Gil & Tamis-LeMonda, 2008) point to the importance of the family environment, highlighting the parent-child relationship as a central mechanism in the link between family environment and child cognitive outcomes.

The sociocultural theory of cognitive development blurs traditional distinctions between cognitive, emotional, and social processes (Rogoff, 1990). According to this view, attention, perception, memory, and symbol understanding (e.g., written language) are all shaped by interpersonal factors and organized according to an individual's social experiences. Cognitive skills develop as a result of adult scaffolding of children's understandings. Optimal development takes place as a result of competent scaffolding, which requires an invested adult sensitive to children's needs and abilities.

As noted, parent-child interactions characterized by greater parental sensitivity, responsivity, and attunement are positively correlated with higher child scores on measures of cognitive functioning. These parent variables clearly reflect parental acceptance, implicitly conveying to children that they are worth parents' time and attention. Similarly, parent-child interactions characterized by parental hostility and indifference, i.e., parental rejection, are consistently linked with children's poorer performance on cognitive tasks. These findings are consistent with the sociocultural theory of cognitive development. Specifically, one would expect parental acceptance compared to rejection to lead to superior scaffolding by adults, and consequently to better child scores on measures of cognitive development. Likewise, one would expect parental rejection to result in much poorer scaffolding, and consequently poorer child performances on tasks tapping cognitive skills.

Parental rejection is also a highly stressful experience, and children's efforts to cope with this stress may constitute an indirect pathway connecting parental rejection and children's cognitive outcomes. Studies have shown that, typically, children manage uncontrollable stress and anxiety with both behavioral and attentional disengagement (Boekaerts, 1996). Children experiencing chronic parental rejection may use disengagement to distract from an aversive interpersonal environment, or from their own negative arousal or emotional needs. A clear problem with this strategy is that rejected children may allocate fewer attentional resources to learning or problem-solving. In fact, Bugental and colleagues (Bugental, Lyon, Lin, McGrath, & Bimbela, 1999) have shown that disengagement or distraction from interpersonal stressors does exact a cognitive toll. Thus, efforts to manage the stress and anxiety of parental rejection may also contribute to decrements in cognitive outcomes.

Conclusion

Studies of children support the hypothesis that parental acceptance and rejection affect information processing abilities. Research indicates that both parental acceptance and rejection influence children's cognitive functioning directly through parent-child interactions. Further, parental rejection may indirectly affect information processing via the coping strategies children employ to manage the stress of rejection.

Continued on page 4

Cognitive Correlates...continued

More research is needed to clarify associations among parental rejection, child coping, and less than optimal cognitive outcomes. In addition, further investigation is encouraged to establish whether and how childhood experiences with parental acceptance and rejection influence adult information processing abilities. Might the impact of childhood parental acceptance or rejection on cognitive functioning persist into adulthood? Understanding the ways in which parental acceptance and rejection influence both children's and adults' abilities to attend to, recall, manage, organize, and make decisions about information is an important task. These skills are essential not only for academic success, but are probably involved in competent social and emotional functioning as well.

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Scientific English-Language Editing Services Available

Readers of *Interpersonal Acceptance* might be interested in knowing about the following editing services available to help authors (for a fee) prepare their manuscripts for publication in English-language journals:

- Cambridge language Consultants at www.camlang.com
- International Science Editing at www.internationalscienceediting.com
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2nd ICIAR—Crete, Greece

By Rob Veneziano

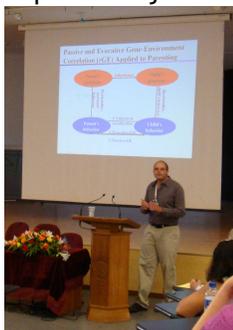


The Second International Congress on Interpersonal Acceptance and Rejection was held July 3-6, 2008, in Rethymno, Crete, at the University of Crete. Our able and superb local organizer, Elias Kourkoutas of the University of Crete, developed an exceptional program and provided us with a warm welcome to the many joys of Crete. He was joined in

organizing the conference by President-Elect Fatoş Erkman of Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, Turkey, and by Ronald P. Rohner, then President of ISIPAR, at the University of Connecticut, USA.

The theme of the conference was “Acceptance, Rejection, and Resilience Within Family, School, and Social-Emotional Contexts.” The Congress brought together participants from 28 nations representing the disciplines of psychology, anthropology, marriage and family therapy, counseling, nursing, medicine, social work, education and others. Some of the countries represented included Korea, Moldova, Cyprus, Belgium, France, Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Pakistan, Iran, Egypt, Israel, Kuwait, Turkey, Greece, Cyprus, Spain, Poland, Netherlands, Norway, Croatia, USA, Australia, Crete, Singapore, Italy, Estonia, Romania, Canada, and the Czech Republic.

The Congress contained a rich scientific and clinical program, with over 140 presentations (papers, symposia, workshops, and posters) on a wide array of topics related to acceptance-rejection in all relationships throughout the life span. Prominent speakers from around the world presented their work on topics related to: Teacher acceptance-rejection; other academic issues including social skills development, bullying, and disabilities; child abuse and violence; parental acceptance-rejection and psychological and behavioral adjustment; peer rejection; rejection sensitivity and attachment issues; a range of clinical issues related to parental and interpersonal acceptance-rejection; coping and resilience, the importance of paternal love; and intimate partner acceptance-rejection.



(Dr. Ariel Knafo earned the University of Connecticut Rohner Center Award for Outstanding Contributions to Research on Interpersonal Acceptance and Rejection)

Several excellent keynote addresses and special forums were presented including: Acceptance-rejection theory: Measures and microcounseling in relational therapy by Sandra Rigazio-DiGilio, Ron Rohner, & Jamie Donoghue; University of Connecticut Rohner Center Award recipient Ariel Knafo's presentation of “Parental discipline and affection, and children's prosocial behavior: Genetic and environmental links”; Keynote speaker David A. Wolfe's presentation of “Teaching strategies for healthy relationships to prevent adolescent dating violence and reduce risk behaviors”; F. Motti-Stefanidi's presentation of “Perceived discrimination and acculturation orientations as predictors of acceptance in the school environment”; new ISIPAR President Fatoş Erkman's closing ceremony presentation of “Acceptance: Foundation for resilience”; and The International Father Acceptance-Rejection Project (IFARP) facilitated by Rob Veneziano (Project Chair), David Cournoyer, & Ron Rohner.



(L-R: Ron Rohner, Fatoş Erkman and Rob Veneziano)

The Congress concluded with a farewell party at the Baja Beach Club where much dancing and merriment was had, and we all departed with fond memories of new friends made, old friends embraced, and anticipation of meeting again at the Third Congress in Padua, Italy in 2010.

Deadline for submission of material for publication in the January issue of *Interpersonal Acceptance* is **December 15, 2008**. Please direct correspondence to

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2010 INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON INTERPERSONAL ACCEPTANCE AND REJECTION TO BE HELD IN PADUA, ITALY



Professor AnnaLaura Comunian in the Department of General Psychology at the University of Padua has graciously agreed to organize the 2010 International Congress on Interpersonal Acceptance and Rejection in Padua, Italy. Working closely with her will be ISIPAR's President, Fatoş Erkman (ferkman@gmail.com) and President-Elect Robert A. Veneziano (raffven@usa.net).

Reservations for hotel accommodations as well as transfer from and to the airport, excursions and guided tours in Padua, Venice, and surrounding areas, along with other services will probably be provided by Leonardi Viaggi-Turismo (www.leonardiviaggi.com).

Additional information about the 2010 Congress will be provided in future issues of this Newsletter. In the meantime, please mark your calendar for late July, 2010. Specific dates for the congress are yet to be determined. A map of the area is available using the following link <http://maps.google.com/maps?ie=UTF8&q=padua+italy&ll=44.777936,16.435547&spn=13.752189,23.115234&z=5> Dr. Comunian can be reached by email at (annalaura.comunian@unipd.it).

SHOULD ISIPAR CREATE A JOURNAL ON INTERPERSONAL ACCEPTANCE AND REJECTION?

Interpersonal Acceptance (Newsletter of the International Society for Interpersonal Acceptance and Rejection) is currently distributed to approximately 1,900 people worldwide. With this many people sharing a common interest in issues of interpersonal acceptance, the question becomes: Is it time for ISIPAR to explore the possibility of creating its own journal?

ISIPAR officers want to hear from you, the reader, about this question. Before approaching a commercial press (e.g., Sage Publications and others) about publishing the journal, we need to do some market research. For example, given the fact that many journals already exist (though none that specialize specifically in interpersonal acceptance-rejection):

1. What need do you see for a journal focusing specifically on this topic?
2. To what extent are you likely to select the new journal as your first choice for submitting manuscripts for review?

3. What should the journal's editorial policy be? For example, should the journal accept research-oriented manuscripts, theoretical manuscripts, applied manuscripts, integrative reviews, and book reviews? What else?

ISIPAR's officers urge all readers of this Newsletter to send their thoughts about these issues to Ronald P. Rohner (rohner@uconn.edu). He will compile and condense them, and summarize them in the next issue of *Interpersonal Acceptance*, along with any decisions made by ISIPAR's Executive Council.

APA DIVISION 52 HONORS ISIPAR MEMBERS



Ramadan Ahmed (left) and Ronald P. Rohner (right) received Awards from Division 52 (International Psychology) of the American Psychological Association. The Awards were given in Boston, Massachusetts, USA, in August. Ramadan received the Award for

Outstanding International Psychologist Outside the United States of America for 2008; Ron received the Award for Outstanding International Psychologist in the United States of America for 2008. Ramadan is ISIPAR's Regional Representative for North Africa and the Middle East; Ron is Past President of the Society.

ISIPAR members who received Awards for related work are encouraged to notify Ron Rohner (Editor of *Interpersonal Acceptance*) at rohner@uconn.edu about the Award, and to send an electronic photo of themselves to be published in *Interpersonal Acceptance*.

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCE

Society for Cross-Cultural Research, Las Vegas, Nevada
February 18-21. <http://www.sccr.org/sccr2009/>



Editor of Interpersonal Acceptance: Ronald P. Rohner
Editorial Assistant: Lori Kalinowski