



# INTERPERSONAL ACCEPTANCE

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## Classroom Peer Acceptance and Rejection and Children's Psychological and School Adjustment



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Both have been used extensively and have proven to be reliable and valid methods for assessing children's classroom peer group acceptance/rejection. When it is not possible to gather sociometric data, researchers have also relied on other methods, such as teacher reports and observational data (see Ladd, in press). However, comparative evaluations indicate that there is only moderate concordance between peer and teacher reports of peer acceptance/rejection.

### What are the Antecedents and Correlates of Classroom Peer Acceptance/Rejection?

Joining and becoming an accepted member of a peer group is a social task that all children confront as they enter and progress through school. To better understand how children approach, join, and develop a reputation or status within peer groups, researchers have studied the antecedents of peer group statuses, particularly peer group acceptance and rejection.

In the 1980's, researchers created playgroups of unacquainted or familiar boys and observed their interactions during a series of play sessions. Coie and Kupersmidt (1983) found that rejected boys were viewed by playmates as troublemakers (e.g., as persons who start fights) and tended to be more hostile and aggressive in their interactions with peers. Subsequent play-group studies clarified how different forms of aggression affected children's peer group reputations. Dodge et al. (1990), for example, found that instrumental aggression (e.g., using force to achieve an end) was associated with peer group rejection at all ages, but reactive aggression (e.g., emotional or defensive outbursts against peer provocation) and bullying (e.g., acts used to dominate or control peers) were stronger predictors of rejection among older children.

Because investigators tended to define aggression in ways that were characteristic of boys, they often found that boys were more aggressive than girls. Eventually, these findings were challenged by researchers who showed that girls were more likely to engage in indirect forms of aggression than boys, and that indirect aggression contributed to peer group rejection over and above overt forms of aggression (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). *Continued on page 2*

Psychologists and educators have long been concerned about the fact that some children do not fit into their classroom peer groups as well as do others. Beginning in the 1930s, it was proposed that children who had difficulty fitting into their classroom peer groups were more likely to display adjustment problems (e.g., Koch, 1933). Now, nearly 80 years later, it appears that these concerns were well founded. A substantial corpus of evidence, gathered across multiple decades, reveals that poor relations with one's classmates are one of the best predictors of multiple forms of dysfunction (e.g., psychological, scholastic, and interpersonal difficulties), not only in childhood but also in adolescence and adulthood (see Ladd, 2005).

### What is Classroom Peer Acceptance and Rejection and Why Has it Been Investigated?

Helen Koch (1933) was one of first investigators to study children's classroom peer relations. She proposed that "one index of the success with which an individual has taken his place in a social group is the degree to which he is enjoyed by the group, and the extent to which his associates like to work and play with him (p. 164)." During ensuing decades, investigators translated this premise into a construct that has come to be called *classroom peer group acceptance and rejection*. With few exceptions, investigators have defined classroom peer group acceptance/rejection in terms of group members' sentiments (i.e., classmates' feelings of liking vs. disliking) toward individuals within the group.

### How is Classroom Peer Group Acceptance/Rejection Measured?

Because peer acceptance/rejection refers to a child's relations with members of a *group*, attempts to operationalize this construct require that investigators obtain—from every member of the peer group—information about who they most or least like to associate with. To accomplish this, researchers have tended to rely on one of two forms of peer sociometry: Rating and nomination methods (see Ladd, Herald, Slutzky, & Andrews, 2004).

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In addition to aggressive behaviors, other aspects of children's social interactions and skills may play a role in the development of peer group acceptance/rejection. Included among these are shyness and social withdrawal, low sociability, poor communication skills, and hyperactivity (see Ladd, 2005).

#### What Are the Consequences of Classroom Peer Group Acceptance/Rejection?

Hypotheses about the effects of classroom peer acceptance/rejection on children's development and adjustment stem from the premise that children's status in a peer group determines the quality of their interactions with group members and access to peer activities. Investigators have shown that classmates tend to direct positive overtures toward liked children, but treat disliked peers in more punitive and even abusive ways. Also, disliked or rejected children tend to be avoided by peers, excluded from peer activities, and targeted for other forms of maltreatment (Buhs, Ladd, & Herald-Brown, 2006). Perhaps of greatest concern is the fact that peer group rejection has been linked with adverse psychological as well as scholastic consequences.

#### Psychological Adjustment

Early studies of children's peer group relations suggested that persons who were psychologically impaired as adults had histories of poor peer group relations as children. Subsequent longitudinal studies corroborated these findings by showing that peer group rejection anteceded many forms of psychological maladjustment (see Ladd, 2003). For example, links were found between peer rejection and loneliness during both early and middle childhood. Peer rejection also predicted several different types of externalizing problems such as misconduct, delinquency, and substance abuse.

#### School Adjustment and Academic Achievement

Links were also found between classroom peer acceptance/rejection and children's school adjustment. During the early grade-school years, it has been shown that classroom peer rejection antecedes multiple aspects of school adjustment, including children's school attitudes, school engagement, and scholastic achievement (see Ladd, 2003). Buhs and colleagues found that rejected children were often mistreated by classmates. The extent to which they were maltreated predicted decrements in classroom participation (Buhs, Ladd & Herald, 2006). Others have shown that peer rejection forecasts absenteeism during the grade school years, adjustment difficulties during the transition to middle school, and dropping out of high school during adolescence.

#### Chronicity of Rejection as a Predictor of Children's Adjustment

Peer rejection occurs at all levels of schooling and can be a fairly enduring or stable experience for some children. Findings show that rejected children tend to retain their social status across grade levels (Ladd, 2006).

*Psychological adjustment.* Studies have shown that children who have longer exposure to classroom peer rejection tend to develop more severe forms of internalizing and externalizing problems (see Ladd, 2006). These findings are important because they link the duration of peer rejection with the severity of children's psychological adjustment problems.

*School adjustment.* Chronic peer rejection has also been associated with negative school outcomes. In one study children's exposure to peer rejection was examined across a 7-year period (kindergarten through grade 6). Results showed that the longer children were rejected the more likely it was that they would disengage from school (Ladd, Herald-Brown, & Reiser, 2008). Compared to a group of non-rejected children who exhibited gains in classroom participation over time, chronically rejected children exhibited little or no growth in this aspect of school engagement.

#### Future Directions

Even though classroom peer rejection has been well studied, a great deal remains to be learned about this phenomenon. More needs to be learned about the social lives of rejected children, including the nature of the social exchanges and experiences they have with peers (see Asher et al., 2001; Sandstrom & Zakriski, 2004). To better understand the origins and consequences of peer group rejection, investigators must develop and utilize new methodologies. For example, some researchers have devised methods for observing peers' accepting and rejecting behaviors, and have found that such measures offer greater insight into the frequency and forms of rejection that children experience with specific classmates (see Ladd, in press; Nelson et al., 2005).

Given the evidence that has accrued on the stability of children's peer group rejection and its links with academic and psychological maladjustment, there is a need to develop effective prevention and intervention programs. Some programs have shown promising results for improving children's behavioral skills (e.g. fostering social competence) and peer group acceptance (Ladd, Herald, Slutzky, & Andrews, 2004). Further research is needed to extend these studies and findings. Much more needs to be learned, for example, about how to promote tolerance and respect for individual differences within peer groups.

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## ROHNER ACCEPTS APPOINTMENT AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Last October (2008) Ronald P. Rohner accepted the appointment to become ISIPAR's first Executive Director. Officers and other members of the Executive Council will continue to generate ISIPAR policies, but it is the responsibility of the Executive Director to implement these policy decisions. It is also the responsibility of the Executive Director to deal with routine queries and issues that regularly come before the Society. In this way, members of the Executive Council are freed from having to deal with day-to-day management of the Society's affairs.

Rohner invites you to communicate with him at [r.rohner@uconn.edu](mailto:r.rohner@uconn.edu) about any problems, ideas, or other issues you would like to bring up about the Society.

### ISIPAR Changed Its Address on the Web

The International Society for Interpersonal Acceptance and Rejection recently changed its address on the worldwide web. The slight change from [www.isiparweb.org](http://www.isiparweb.org) to [www.isipar.org](http://www.isipar.org) makes the domain name consistent with the Society's acronym.

### RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP/JOIN ISIPAR

Please be reminded that ISIPAR dues are payable for members who joined the Society in January 2007 (for two years) or in January 2008 (for one year). Renewing and new members are encouraged to use the membership application available online at <http://www.isipar.org/Membership%20application.doc>



### University of Connecticut Rohner Center Awards

Two Awards of \$1,000 each are expected to be given every two years at the biennial meetings of the *International Society for Interpersonal Acceptance and Rejection* (ISIPAR). The next Awards will be given at the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Congress in Padua, Italy, July 28-31, 2010. These cash awards are intended to both acknowledge outstanding contributions to the field of interpersonal acceptance and rejection and to help cover expenses associated with attending and giving an Awards Address at the international meeting. For eligibility requirements, deadlines, submission process, and evaluation criteria visit [http://www.isipar.org/index\\_files/Page1034.htm](http://www.isipar.org/index_files/Page1034.htm).

## Loving Relationships: A Key to a Better World

A review of *Acceptance: The Essence of Peace. Selected Papers from the First International Congress on Interpersonal Acceptance and Rejection*. Fatos Erkman (Ed.). Istanbul: Incekara Press. 2008. 274 pp. \$22 or €15 (paperback).



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*Acceptance: The Essence of Peace* is a compilation of selected papers from the first International Congress on Interpersonal Acceptance and Rejection that was held in Istanbul, Turkey in June of 2006. As I read each of the chapters in this volume, it was evident to me how each of them responds in its own way to a major question: Can we make a better world? The answers that each of these chapters gives to that question seem to coincide in one central theme: Loving relationships are the key to a better world.

The chapters compiled in this book sample the contributions of approximately 200 researchers and practitioners from around the world who gathered in Istanbul. These social scientists from 36 nations convened to present their research findings in recognition of the universal importance of accepting relationships as the foundation for constructing better societies and nurturing human development.

In each of the five major sections of the book, readers will find chapters that are inspired by Parental Acceptance-Rejection Theory (Rohner & Khaleque, 2005; Rohner, Khaleque, & Cournoyer, 2008) as well as the theoretical and empirical work of widely recognized authors in the fields of child development and relationship research such as Diana Baumrind, Kenneth Rubin, and John M. Gottman. In this way, the book provides readers with a theoretically-grounded collection of papers that not only reflects the current state of the literature but also reveals frontiers for future theory development. In addition, it is important to mention that most chapters are empirical research reports representing a variety of data collection methods and data analysis procedures.

The first section of the book - entitled Psychological Adjustment and Clinical Issues - is composed of four chapters. Two focus on issues of acceptance in therapy settings; the other two focus on issues of psychological maladjustment associated with interpersonal rejection. The first two chapters offer insights into the importance of individuals' perceptions of interpersonal relationships within the therapeutic system. They highlight the fact that in relationships between clients as well as in relationships between

clients and therapists, individuals' subjective appraisals of and expectations about acceptance/rejection may significantly influence therapeutic outcomes. The second set of chapters present empirical evidence about psychological and neural processes that may account for the effects of interpersonal rejection. Although these two chapters look at this issue from completely different perspectives, they both conclude that the ability to regulate emotions is key in mediating adaptive and maladaptive responses to the experience of interpersonal rejection.

Three research papers make up the second section of the book. This section is devoted to research on Family Interaction and Styles of Parenting. Variables relevant to the psychological adjustment of children and adolescents such as marital conflict, maternal responsiveness, and parenting styles are examined in these chapters. Three major contributions of these chapters are worth mentioning. First, one chapter provides empirical evidence showing the interplay between children's and parents' gender and the effects on children's social anxiety of marital conflict and perceived parental rejection. Second, the importance of considering the independent effects of both maternal and paternal acceptance on children's psychological adjustment is highlighted. Third, the need to consider cultural differences in the association between parenting styles and adolescents' psychological adjustment is underlined.

The third section of the book is dedicated to research on Resilience and Coping with Perceived Rejection. The first chapter in this section focuses on the relation between two dimensions of parenting - warmth and control - and children's resilience in two different cultural and religious groups. This cross-cultural study showed that while parental warmth's positive effects on children's self-esteem were independent of cultural and religious backgrounds, the effects of parental control on these child outcomes were dependent on both ethnicity and religiosity. While this study offers a social-contextual view on resilience, the second chapter turns the reader's attention to internal psychological processes that moderate individuals' reactions to interpersonal rejection. More specifically, this second chapter shows that cognitive inhibitory control - a coping mechanism - functions as a moderator of the relation between rejection sensitivity and reactions to interpersonal rejection such as hostile conflict behavior.

The fourth section of the book is comprised of five chapters dedicated to Comparative Studies on Parental Acceptance-Rejection. This section contains four empirical studies and one review of research on parental acceptance. The review of research describes the development of empirical research on children's perception of parental acceptance in Arab countries during the last four decades. This chapter presents an organized analysis of the main themes and variables that have been considered in the study of parental acceptance there.

*Continued on page 5*

These themes and variables include children's age, sex, personality dispositions, and academic achievement. Throughout the other four chapters in this section, readers get a flavor of different approaches to analyzing the effects of cultural values and norms on parent-child relationships. For instance, by comparing families living in their country of origin with families who migrated to another country, two chapters invite us to reflect on the role of culture in parents' and children's perceptions of parental acceptance. One of these chapters compares families in Bangladesh with Bangladeshi immigrant families in the United States. This focuses on the level of agreement between mothers' and children's perceptions of maternal acceptance in each context. The study shows that there was more agreement between mothers and children in loving families than in less than loving families (as perceived by the children) regardless of their country of residence (Bangladesh or U.S.). The second study looks at the association between the level of parents' acculturation and their children's perceptions of parental acceptance and behavioral control in Bangladeshi immigrant families within the United States. Although children of both uniculturally and biculturally oriented mothers perceived their mothers as loving, those children whose mothers were biculturally orientated reported more maternal acceptance than did those children whose mothers were uniculturally orientated. Another important finding in this study was that children of biculturally oriented parents tend to perceive their parents as less controlling than do children of uniculturally oriented parents. Even though the findings from these studies need to be explored further in future research, they support conclusions from previous cross-cultural research drawing from Parental Acceptance-Rejection Theory with regard to: a) Children's more-or-less universal experience of parental acceptance, and b) children's tendency to perceive restrictive parental control as a form of parental rejection.

Two other chapters in this section provide a different approach to culture by exploring the role of cultural norms in shaping parent-child relationships and child outcomes. The first of these chapters looks at the relation between six cultural customs and the expression of gentle affection toward children in a sample of 78 communities around the world. This cross-cultural comparative study showed that gentle affection toward children correlates panculturally with young children being indulged, children being highly valued, and adults rather than child-caregivers being the major caregivers of infants. Gentle affection is also associated cross-culturally with the presence of minimal government above the community level, monogamous marriage, and early marriage of boys. The second chapter in this section examines the interplay between culture, gender, and parental acceptance in determining children's cognitive styles. In this study, cultural differences are examined based on the presence of either a matrilineal or a patrilineal system of kinship relations. Here, the authors highlight the role of parental warmth as a mechanism of cultural value-transmission in differentiating cognitive styles across cultures in North-East India.

The fifth and final section of the book is dedicated to methodology. It consists of one chapter on the psychometric properties of the Turkish form of the Teacher's Acceptance-Rejection/Control Questionnaire: Child version. The TARQ/Control is a self-report instrument that evaluates children's perceptions of teachers' acceptance/rejection and behavioral control. This study provided evidence about the reliability, construct validity, and concurrent validity of this instrument in Turkey. However, it also suggests that some of the items in the behavioral control subscale should be revised, and that the reliability and validity of this subscale in the Turkish context should be further researched.

In sum, the variety of topics covered in the five sections of *Acceptance: The Essence of Peace* makes this book a valuable resource for researchers and professionals interested in an empirically-based perspective on issues of interpersonal acceptance-rejection. Chapters are written in an academic style, yet their content is accessible to college and graduate students. In each section, the Editor has made an excellent selection of papers that represent the contribution of researchers worldwide to the question: Can we make a better world? I hope that readers will find in this book—as did I—an inspiration to strengthen their own personal relationships and those of others with whom they work.

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## To Create or Not Create a New Journal on Interpersonal Acceptance and Rejection: That is the Question

By Ronald P. Rohner, Executive Director, ISIPAR  
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In September 2008 I sent a letter to readers of *Interpersonal Acceptance* asking for your opinion whether ISIPAR should create a new journal on *Interpersonal Acceptance and Rejection*. Among other things, I asked, "What need do you see for a journal focusing explicitly on different aspects of interpersonal acceptance-rejection?" Below you will find a summary of the responses to that query:

- 1) 63% of the Americans who responded were in favor of creating a new journal. The remaining 37% were either opposed (17%) or not sure (21%) if the Society should found a new journal.
- 2) 81% of the international readers who responded were in favor of creating a new journal. The remaining 19% were either opposed (6%) to the idea, or not sure (13%) if the Society should found a new journal.
- 3) Most common reasons for being in favor or opposed/not sure include the following:

Reasons for being in Favor	Reasons for being Opposed or Not Sure
1) May encourage acceptance-rejection scholarship	1) Would ISIPAR members only talk amongst themselves (rather than infusing acceptance-rejection work elsewhere?)
2) Interdisciplinary research would have home in one place	2) Is there a true demand to merit the effort?
3) Would provide outlet for new researchers or researchers unable to publish in already established journals	3) Danger of losing important parts of your potential audience by becoming too narrowly focused
4) Outlet for authors with books to get reviewed	4) Would prefer to place papers where would be seen by other researchers in relevant application area
5) Would fill gap of dissemination of research on these issues	5) There are plenty of high quality journal outlets already
6) Fill the need for more international journals related to the field of psychology	
7) Growing group of non-Western countries that seek an outlet for their research	

In addition to summarizing results of this query, Staff in the Rohner Center for the Study of Interpersonal Acceptance and Rejection also tabulated the total number of articles (N=540) known in the Center to be published anywhere during the past decade (1999 thru Sept, 2008) on issues of interpersonal acceptance and rejection. These 540 articles were published in 228 journals internationally. The top 10 journals include the following:

	Journal	Articles Published
1	<i>Journal of Marriage and (the) Family</i>	34
2	<i>Child Development</i>	25
3	<i>Cross-Cultural Research</i>	20
4	<i>Journal of Youth and Adolescence</i>	14
5	<i>Journal of Family Psychology</i>	12
6	<i>Parenting: Science and Practice</i>	12
7	<i>International Journal of Behavioral Development</i>	11
8	<i>Journal of the Faculty of Education (Egypt)</i>	9
9	<i>Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology</i>	8
10	<i>Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry</i>	8

In addition to these journals, every issue of this Newsletter has published one or more short articles on some cutting-edge topic. One hundred forty-seven journals (27%) published only one article relevant to interpersonal acceptance in the past decade. A full list of journals that have published one or more relevant articles is available from me at [rohner@uconn.edu](mailto:rohner@uconn.edu).

Given the large numbers of journals that have a history of publishing at least a few articles on interpersonal acceptance and rejection, and given the fact that relatively few readers of *Interpersonal Acceptance* responded to my letter of inquiry, the issue still seems open whether the Society should explore the possibility of founding its own journal. Officers of the Society welcome any further comments you care to make. Please send them to me at the email address noted above.

### FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES



Society for Cross-Cultural Research, 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting in Las Vegas, Nevada, February 18-21, 2009.

<http://www.sccr.org/sccr2009/>



American Psychological Association, 117<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention in Toronto, Canada, August 6-9, 2009



International Council of Psychologists, 67<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention in Mexico City, Mexico, July 3-8, 2009

<http://conference.icpweb.org/>

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## Family and Disability



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Children with various forms of physical, cognitive, emotional, or behavioral impairments and dysfunctions comprise a complex and heterogeneous group characterized by diverse needs and abilities. Definitions for such disabilities are based on diagnostic criteria which vary depending on cultural values, social context, and scientific approaches. Until recently the dominant scientific approach to classifying children was based on strict (or positivistic) methodological procedures and had restricted educational practice (Befring, 1999). These restricted educational practices separated children with disabilities from their natural developmental context. Such policies and practices are now considered by many to be another form of stigmatization and exclusion that can cause serious problems in family functioning and in children's psychosocial development. On the other hand, corresponding services emerging from the same ideology have exclusively promoted iatrogenic approaches for the families of children with complex difficulties (Dale, 1996). These approaches also overlook contextual variables that contribute to maintaining disability conditions (Fraser, 2004).

Effects of disability on children's psychosocial development and family life depend upon a series of interrelated factors. A key element in the development of a comprehensive disability support framework is an understanding of the complex interrelations between a child's capabilities and shortcomings, the parents' attitudes, the quality of professional support available, and integration of the entire family into social networks (Guranlick, 2005).

Currently many researchers support a multidimensional view of children's disability and outcome assessment, focusing on social support networks and on children's psychosocial development as shaped by school participation and specialized services received (Dunst & Trivette, 1996). For instance, many studies reveal that low quality social systems or deficient school contexts that do not embrace an inclusive policy may pose significant barriers in supporting children and their families in their effort to cope with and overcome their distress (Hornby, 2000). Extreme iatrogenic and specialist-centered approaches have also been criticized as not being meaningful for families of children with disabilities (Turnbull, Turnbull, & Turnbull, 2000). In any case, a child's family is considered one of the primary factors that promotes children's psychosocial integration. The family should be seen as an interdependent entity in specific social and cultural contexts (Seligman, 1999). The impact of an ecosystemic/transactional approach viewing the child in the center of multiple systems created a considerable shift in both theory and research agenda, and a true

evolution in professional practice and services offered to the disabled. Models of resilience that consider parents as partners and critical determinants of their children's positive outcomes have been the main emphasis in more recent theoretical models, empirical investigations, and intervention practices (Turnbull, et al., 2000). Accordingly, during the last decade in the USA and other countries, parents have become the focus of many services in order to help at-risk families deal with adverse internal (disability, mental health problems, academic deficits) or external (social and economic disadvantages, poor education, school rejection) factors.

### Parental acceptance and parents' reactions toward children with special difficulties

Evidence from longitudinal studies highlights the significance of positive bond between parents and children for the development of children's stable psychosocial identity. Parental rejection on the other hand, increases the risk for the development of a wide range of disorders in cognitive, emotional, academic, and psychosocial domains (Rohner & Britner, 2002). Damaging outcomes depend on the form, frequency, intensity, and extent of parental rejection and other aversive parental practices. Children with special difficulties are confined by their restricted or moderately-developed abilities in various domains, and accordingly have an increased need for emotional or even professional support in order to deal with their social and developmental challenges. Many authors believe that a strong and secure attachment between children with developmental delays and their primary caregivers may moderate the effects of the disability (Zipper & Simeonsson, 2004), and may facilitate primary social and school inclusion (Hornby, 2000).

A family's reaction to the birth of a child with serious impairments depends on a variety of factors such as: Each parent's psychological state, personality and parenting skills; the marital relationship; pre-existing family characteristics; the family's social resources; father's role/involvement; and, the severity and type of disability. Many studies draw from a stage theory which proposes distinct emotional phases in dealing with the birth of a child with a significant disability. These phases include: Confrontation (denial, blame-guilt, shock); adjustment (depression, anger, bargaining); and, adaptation (life-cycle changes, realistic planning, and adjustment of expectations). Even though stage theory has been criticized for lack of consistent empirical support (Seligman & Darling, 2007), most specialists agree that families are likely to confront a series of emotional and structural problems as they attempt to deal with the challenges of a child with serious deficits.

Many studies suggest that concomitant or secondary disorders related to childhood disability impose an additional burden that affects family functioning, and consequently increase the risk for inadequate caring or negative parental reactions (Seligman, 1999). For example, stigma causes anxiety and stress, while certain forms of disability such as autism interfere with a

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### Family and Disability...Continued

families' normal social life. A child's life-threatening conditions or extreme physical disability also force families into stressful emotional states, thus increasing the probability of extreme reactions such as overprotection of the child and emotional instability. These reactions tend to restrict the child's efforts to experience autonomy and to develop capacities towards independence (Dotar, 2006).

Inability to deal with children's problematic behaviors or children's extreme disruptive reactions may also become a risk factor for parents of hyperactive or aggressive children. Children's behavior problems may lead parents to adopt rejecting behaviors toward their child (Campbell, 2002). Parents of these children are often trapped in a vicious cycle of mutually negative overreactions. This increases the risk of the child developing a more severe psychological disorder, and it limits opportunities to teach and to help the child in more constructive ways (Campbell, 2002).

The presence of a child with disabilities in a family that has few internal and external resources or has serious dysfunctions may increase the risk of parental rejection, maltreatment and/or victimization. Children with disabilities are about two times more likely than typically developing children to be victims of maltreatment or physical abuse (AAP, 2001). Rejection may also include child neglect and inadequate support of the child's cognitive, emotional, and educational needs.

Factors such as poverty, social adversity, lack of parenting skills, inconsistent parenting, high work-related stress, parents' psychological problems, alcoholism and drug abuse, emotional instability, or paternal absence may also pose significant obstacles to the development of resilience in children with disabilities.

Meeting childcare demands for a child born into a deprived environment may be an almost impossible challenge to families, service providers, and policy makers (Seligman & Darling, 2007).

Before concluding I should note that a growing body of empirical evidence shows that a significant number of parents report numerous benefits and positive outcomes for their families associated with raising children with disabilities (Ferguson, 2002).

Such seemingly contradictory results from various studies are often explained by the diverse methodological approaches used, as well as by inherent differences in the target groups. However, such contradictory evidence may also reflect the complex and multiple realities experienced by these families.

In order to adopt a comprehensive framework for studying the impact of raising children with persistent and serious impairments, it is important to employ a multidimensional, ecological perspective and a risk/resilient model (Zipper & Simeonsson, 2004). Family and contextual factors should be explored, especially the way in which they contribute to increasing a child's risks for social marginalization and school exclusion.

Accordingly, these factors are placed at the center of current approaches in disability literature (Turnbull et al., 2000).

Although the role of parents is crucial for the psychological development and social inclusion of children with impairments, school and other contextual factors also play a significant role in determining disability outcome. As stated by many authors, the "cumulative-risk perspective" is essential in demonstrating that focusing on only one risk factor or even on one risk domain is likely to explain only a modest amount of the variance observed in families as well as in the disability outcome. Contemporary professional interventions tend to be family-based—emphasizing a partnership approach (Turnbull et al., 2000)—and they tend to promote a holistic and positive outlook on children's functioning.

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## FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES Continued...

## INTERAMERICAN SOCIETY OF PSYCHOLOGY

# JUNE 28- JULY 2, 2009



The 32<sup>nd</sup> Interamerican Congress of Psychology will be held in Guatemala, June 28-July 2, 2009. Judy Gibbons, Vice President for the United States of America and Canada for the Interamerican Society of Psychology (SIP), invites you to review the Society's website [www.sipsych.org](http://www.sipsych.org). Information can be found at [www.sip2009.org](http://www.sip2009.org). To contact Judy directly, email her at [gibbonsjl@slu.edu](mailto:gibbonsjl@slu.edu).

[WWW.SIP2009.ORG](http://WWW.SIP2009.ORG)

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