



# INTERPERSONAL ACCEPTANCE



## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection Research in Chinese Populations (Part One)	2
Review of Rohner & Carrasco's Father Acceptance-Rejection Special Issue	6
Parental Acceptance and Rejection in Women's Prison Settings: A Review of the Literature	11
Activities of the Rohner Center	17
Announcement: 6th International Conference in Acceptance-Rejection in Madrid, 2016	18



## Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection Research in Chinese Populations (PART ONE)

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Chinese families, communities, and societies are attracting increasing scholarly attention because of their enormous population size, and because of the distinctive cultural traditions they represent. Residing primarily in Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau (often collectively referred to as “Greater China”), Southeast Asia, Singapore, and Malaysia, and as immigrants in other parts of the world, the Chinese constitute approximately one fifth of the world population. In spite of the vague definition of “Chinese”, high diversity, and wide geographic distribution of Chinese populations, members of Chinese ethnic groups are considered to share several common features. These include the endorsement of collectivism, high power distance, long-term orientation, and restraints on desires and impulses (Hofstede, 1983, 2011). These values and their consequent practices in everyday interpersonal interactions lead to speculations that the Chinese would be—at least in attachment relationships—calm, non-confrontational, respectful toward

those with higher social status, and reserved in both positive and negative emotions. In other words, the Chinese people supposedly demonstrate a low level of overt interpersonal rejection, have an implicit or nuanced behavioral repertoire of interpersonal acceptance, and depend on the power dynamics of specific relational contexts in their behavioral style.

Various anthropological accounts provide early empirical evidence about different aspects of interpersonal acceptance-rejection (IAR hereafter) in Chinese families. Wolf (1972), for example, conducted ethnographic work in rural north Taiwan. He described divergent parenting styles there between fathers and mothers in traditional Chinese families, with mothers being warmer and more nurturant than fathers, and fathers playing the role of stern disciplinarian. Comparing Chinese and American families, Hsu (1981) commented that “[t]he mutual affection of Chinese parents and children is toned down compared to that of their American





*counterparts.”* (p.87). Based on his fieldwork in Inner Mongolia, north China, Jankowiak (1992) found that the conjugal bonds of married Chinese couples in the 1980s were less charged with affection and physical intimacy than in their American counterparts. These insightful observations poignantly point out some of the major characteristics of interpersonal exchange in the Chinese cultural context. These observations also inspired a considerable amount of research.

Systematic investigations into interpersonal acceptance-rejection were limited in Mainland China before 1990. This was due largely to the detrimental impact of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) on scholars and academic enterprises. It was only recently that such social sciences as psychology, sociology, and family studies have become (re)established in Chinese academia. Moreover, only recently have structured methodologies such as questionnaire surveys and clinical interviews been applied to approach issues related to IAR. IAR-related research took off earlier in those Chinese societies, such as Taiwan and Hong Kong, who were unaffected by the Cultural Revolution. Researchers in these societies developed unique forms of indigenous and cultural psychology, as exemplified by Chao’s (1994) seminal paper on the Chinese parenting concept of

“training” (*guan*) which challenged Baumrind’s (1967) classic typology of parenting styles.

Research in the past few years on IAR in Chinese populations has undergone rapid expansion. This is shown by the growing volume of publications dedicated to common themes (discussed later) in both English and Chinese languages. This growth can be attributed mainly to recent developments in social science research in Mainland China, to the increasing cross-cultural contact between Chinese and non-Chinese societies, and to the heightened awareness of the need for culturally equivalent research.

### **Inclusion Criteria**

The current review aims to provide a brief summary of existing research that falls under the thematic scope of IPARTheory in Chinese populations. Articles included in this review come primarily from the following sources:

1) Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection Bibliography (Center for the Study of Interpersonal Acceptance and Rejection, 2014). Searches were done using key words such as “China”, “Chinese”, “Taiwan”, “Hong Kong” and “Macau”, yielding a total of 63 publications, 58 of which are available to the author.

2) Chinese Academic Journal Database (CAJD). Searches were done



in the CAJD using key words such as “acceptance”, “rejection”, “parenting”, “intimate partner violence”, and “family violence” in both English and Chinese. Using further filtering criteria such as availability of English abstracts as well as the journal’s reputation, 30 articles were identified. All were written in Chinese, and published in leading Chinese-language academic journals. Twenty-seven have English abstracts.

In total, 88 articles, including a mixture of empirical studies and review articles were identified using the above criteria. The empirical investigations were based on samples taken from various Chinese populations, mostly from metropolitan areas in Mainland China such as Beijing or Shanghai. (See Figure 1 for a map of Chinese cities and provinces that have been studied).

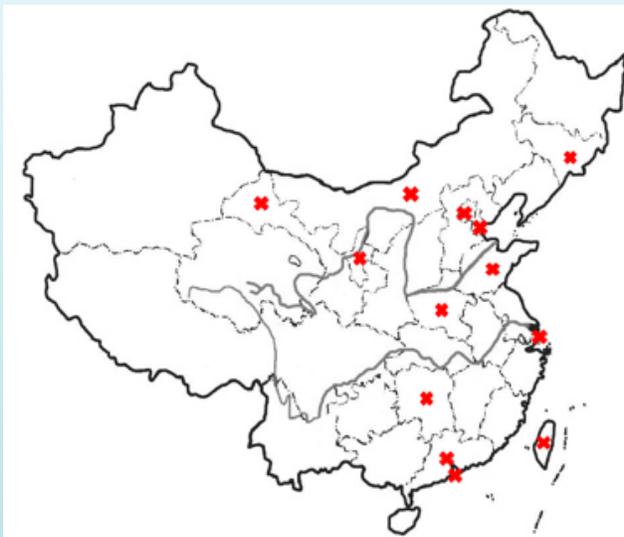


Figure 1. Areas in Greater China sampled for IAR-related studies

## Recurrent Research Themes and Commonly Used Methods

This review showed a strong focus in Chinese research on parental acceptance-rejection of children, followed by intimate partner acceptance-rejection (mostly family violence), and children’s and adolescents’ peer relationships. Only six out of the 88 reviewed articles discussed teacher acceptance-rejection. This is a surprisingly small fraction given Chinese children’s long hours spent at school. Interestingly, 17 of the reviewed articles discussed more than one domain of interpersonal acceptance-rejection.

The major methodology used in this body of research—especially in studies conducted in Mainland China—was the questionnaire. However, multi-method studies are becoming increasingly valued in recent IAR-related research. And interviews, observations, and sociometric instruments such as Mastens, Morison, & Pellegrini’s (1985) Revised Class Play are commonly applied, often in combination with questionnaires (Berndt et al., 1993; Chen, Liu, & Li, D., 2000; Lu & Chang, 2013; Sun & Roopnarine, 1996; Wang & Chen, 2000; Yau & Smetana, 1996, 2011).

Most of the instruments used to assess IAR among the Chinese—including measures developed by the Rohner Center, which are used in six





studies—are still imported into China. However, scholars oftentimes report tailoring existing measures for specific studies, such as the translation of English-language questionnaires into target language(s), and the construction of new measures using items of existing questionnaires. Some studies tested measures developed in other cultures to examine their applicability in Chinese populations, and to establish local norms (such as Pan, Li, Song, Xu, & Zeng, 2014; Zhao, Zhang, & Li, 2004). Truly indigenous measures of IAR-related constructs remain scant. Chao’s (1994) Chinese Child-Rearing Ideology Questionnaire is an exception.

**Major research findings from this review will be reported in the May, 2015 issue of *Interpersonal Acceptance*.**

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**Review of *Parental Power and Prestige Moderate the Relationship Between Perceived Parental Acceptance and Offspring's Psychological Adjustment.***

**R. P. Rohner & M. A. Carrasco,  
Editors SPECIAL ISSUE, *Cross-Cultural Research*, Vol. 48, No. 3, 2014.**



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Meta-analyses and reviews of cross-cultural and intracultural studies have shown that perceived parental acceptance is associated worldwide with psychological adjustment of children and adults (Ali, Khaleque, & Rohner, in press). But questions still remain: Who exerts the greater influence on offspring's psychological adjustment? Mothers or fathers? And why? Also, are there any moderator variables in this relationship? These questions have been put forth a number of times, and yet until now they have remained unanswered.

Taken together, articles in this Special Issue of *Cross-Cultural Research* represent a significant breakthrough in parenting research and in developmental psychology by providing preliminary answers to these questions. As background to these questions I should note that some researchers have found perceived

maternal acceptance to have a greater impact than perceived paternal acceptance on offspring's psychological adjustment (Forehand & Nousiainen, 1993; Gamble, Ramakumar, & Diaz, 2007; Gerlsma & Emmelkamp, 1994; Winsler, Madigan, & Aquilino, 2005). Other researchers have found that in some contexts perceived paternal acceptance tends to have greater impact than perceived maternal acceptance on offspring's adjustment (Rohner & Britner, 2002; Rohner & Veneziano, 2001). Still other researchers have found that neither parent's love-related behavior has a significantly greater impact than the other parent's love-related behavior on offspring's psychological adjustment (Rohner & Veneziano, 2001).

Given mixed results in this body of work, the objective of the research reported here was to explore

conditions under which the love-related behaviors of one parent might have a greater impact than love-related behaviors of the other parent. In particular, authors in this Special Issue explored the question: Insofar as offspring perceive one parent to have more interpersonal power and/or prestige than the other parent, does that parent's love-related behaviors also tend to have a greater impact on offspring's psychological adjustment than does the love-related behaviors of the other parent? In other words, does perceived parental power and/or prestige moderate the relationship between perceived parental acceptance and offspring's psychological adjustment?

### **The International Father Acceptance-Rejection Project (IFARP)**

This Special Issue is part of the International Father Acceptance-Rejection Project (IFARP), which draws its primary conceptual stimulus from interpersonal acceptance-rejection theory (IPARTheory). IPARTheory (formerly known as parental acceptance-rejection theory, PARTheory) is an evidence-based theory that attempts to predict and explain worldwide consequences and other correlates of interpersonal acceptance and rejection throughout life. Empirical evidence overwhelmingly supports a major postulate in the theory's

personality subtheory which states that the experience of parental acceptance-rejection in childhood tends to have consistent lifetime effects on the psychological adjustment of offspring worldwide—regardless of differences in culture, ethnicity, race, language, gender, or other such defining characteristics. As noted earlier, however, the objective of the IFARP was to explore why the love-related behavior of one parent often has a *greater* impact on the adjustment of offspring (children and adults) than does the love-related behavior of the other parent.

**Does perceived parental power and/or prestige moderate the relationship between perceived parental acceptance and offspring's psychological adjustment?**

To explore this issue, the IFARP included 13 studies in 11 nations. These nations were: Bangladesh, China, Croatia, Greece (two studies), Korea, Pakistan (two studies), Poland, Portugal, Spain, Turkey,

and the United Kingdom. All these studies followed the same research design. That is, the researchers were given explicit guidelines to follow so that direct and explicit comparisons could be drawn across all studies and cultures. For example, researchers were asked to: a) include approximately 200 or more respondents balanced as much as possible by gender; b) recruit offspring from intact families where both mothers and fathers live together with their children; c) recruit offspring in the age range from 9 through 12

years for children, or from 13 through 18 years for adolescents; d) use five specific measures, namely: (i) Youth or Adult version of the Parental Power-Prestige Questionnaire (3PQ: Youth/Adult); (ii) short forms of the Child or Adult version of the Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire for mothers and for fathers (PARQ: Mother/Father); (iii) Child or Adult version of the Personality Assessment Questionnaire (PAQ); (iv) Gender Inequality Scale (GIS); and, (v) the Personal Information Form (PIF). Moreover, specific data analysis plan was also suggested. This plan terminated in a three-step hierarchical regression analysis that allowed for a test of moderation.

### Results of Research

Results of analyses showed that offspring in all studies tended on average to see their parents as being accepting and to self-report fair psychological adjustment. Perceptions of parental power and parental prestige fluctuated, however. The significance of this fact is discussed later. Beyond this, I should note that correlational evidence presented in this Special Issue supports IPARTheory's postulate about the pancultural association between perceived parental acceptance and offspring's psychological adjustment. Multiple regression analysis, however, also showed that the love-related behavior of one parent occasionally failed to make a *unique* (i.e., independent) contribution to offspring's

psychological adjustment when the love-related behavior of the other parent was controlled. Most importantly for the purposes of research reported here, though, is the fact that offspring's perceptions of parents' *interpersonal power and/or prestige* often *moderated* the relation between perceived parental acceptance and offspring's psychological adjustment. That is, the magnitude of the relationship between perceived parental acceptance and offspring's adjustment often intensified significantly under the condition of enhanced maternal or paternal power and/or prestige. This moderation effect occurred in 62% of the studies.

### Patriarchy as a Possible Moderator

Important satellite questions asked in this research were whether fathers in patriarchal nations tended to be perceived by offspring to have more interpersonal power and prestige than mothers. And if so, did the stronger position of males versus females in those societies make a difference in how important fathers were in the results? An analysis of these questions using the Gender Inequality Scale showed that adults in 55% of the nations in the IFARP reported their countries to be characterized by varying degrees of patriarchy. Offspring in those nations, however, were just as likely as offspring in the more egalitarian societies to perceive their mothers to have as much and sometimes more interpersonal power and prestige than their fathers. Thus the Editors of the

Special Issue concluded that the level of *institutionalized* gender inequality (patriarchy) in a society is not likely to be a significant moderator of the relationship between perceived parental acceptance and offspring adjustment.

### **Limitations and Strengths of Research in the Special Issue**

It would have been useful if the researchers had included two different nations instead of publishing two studies each from Greece and Pakistan.

This issue was especially prominent in Pakistan, where the same researchers (except for one author in each paper) conducted two studies using different age groups in different regions of the country. Moreover, I found myself wanting more information about the cultural background of every country where the study was conducted. Rohner's introduction summarized key methodological and conceptual points but information about cultural context was missing.

Beyond this, it is important to note that even though the Special Issue answered many heretofore unanswered questions, it also brought forth many challenging new questions. For example, why in some studies did only parental power moderate the

relationship between perceived parental acceptance and offspring's psychological adjustment, whereas in other nations only parental prestige moderated the relationship? These, and many other questions like them, await future research. Despite its limitations, this Special Issue serves as a valuable resource for educators, administrators, and clinicians, who should feel confident about developing policies and practice-applications based on the evidence provided.

**The offspring's perceptions of parental power and prestige play a significant role in explaining why the love-related behavior of one parent often has a greater impact on offspring's psychological adjustment than the love-related behavior of the other parent.**

To sum up, evidence presented in the Special Issue not only supports IPARTheory's postulate about the universal association between parental acceptance and offspring's adjustment, but also confirms that the love-related behavior of one parent sometimes fails to make

a unique contribution to offspring's psychological adjustment when the love-related behavior of the other parent is controlled. The overarching message, however, is that offspring's perceptions of parental power and prestige play a significant role in explaining why the love-related behavior of one parent often has a greater impact on offspring's psychological adjustment than the love-related behavior of the other parent.

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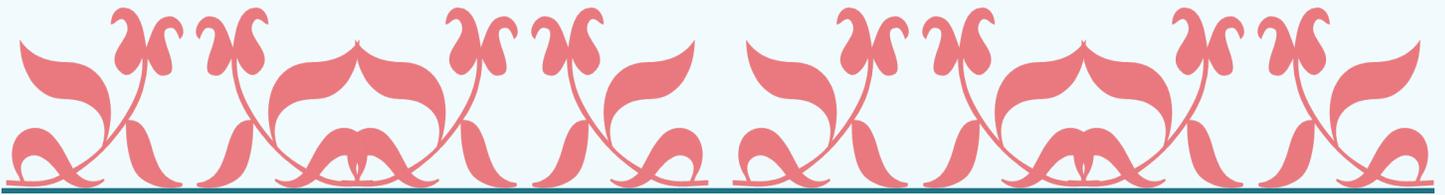
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Love is the  
natural, forward  
direction of Life!

—Lisa van Allen  
*The Wishing Thread*



Left to Right: Kerry Peterson, Barbara Joyce, Vanessa Hoener, Val Sievers

## **Parental Acceptance and Rejection in Women's Prison Settings: A Review of the Literature**

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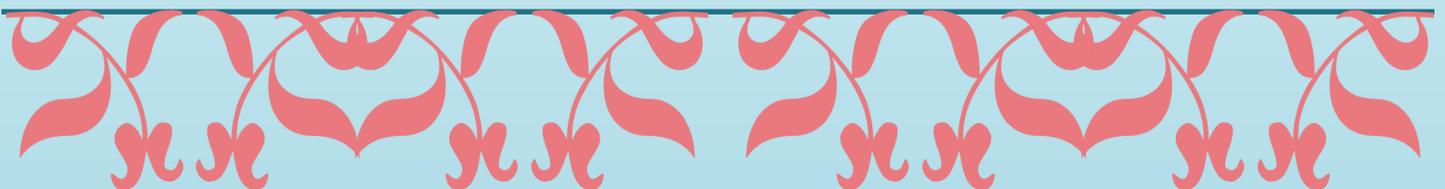
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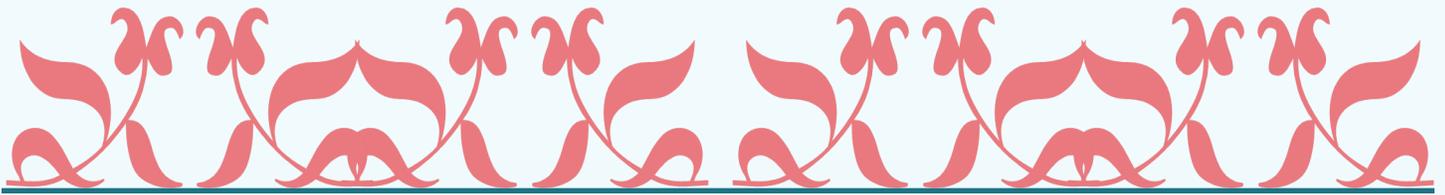
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Recent data on jail inmates from the Bureau of Justice Statistics shows that the female inmate population in the U.S. increased 10.9 percent (up 10,000 inmates) between midyear 2010 and 2013. This trend of an increasing female jail population is also reflected by an average one percent per year rise between 2005 and 2013. In 2010, 36 percent of jailed American women were incarcerated for violent crimes; 30 percent for property offenses, and 26% for drug related offenses (Minton & Golinelli, 2014).

Community corrections is a subfield of corrections that emphasizes rehabilitation. Facilities support residential and non-residential options. Offenders may be placed in community corrections as part of their sentence and fulfillment of





their time. Community correctional agencies supervise over five million individuals per year, which is the largest single sector of the correctional population (Glaze & Bonczar, 2008). The community corrections system in the U.S. is comprised of a number of diverse programs developed to provide alternatives to incarceration and to facilitate re-entry into the community, or following a term in prison (Hanser, 2009). A temporary period of highly structured and supportive living is provided to facilitate inmates to function independently upon release. Staff members monitor the progress and conduct of offenders during their sentence and assist offenders to reintegrate successfully back into society upon release.

Women's involvement in the criminal justice system has a disproportionately negative impact on the well-being of children. Women leave prison with few tangible skills, and face considerable obstacles once they re-enter the community. Moreover, women are more likely to recidivate when support services are lacking. Quality of the relationship of the women with those who support them is crucial to their

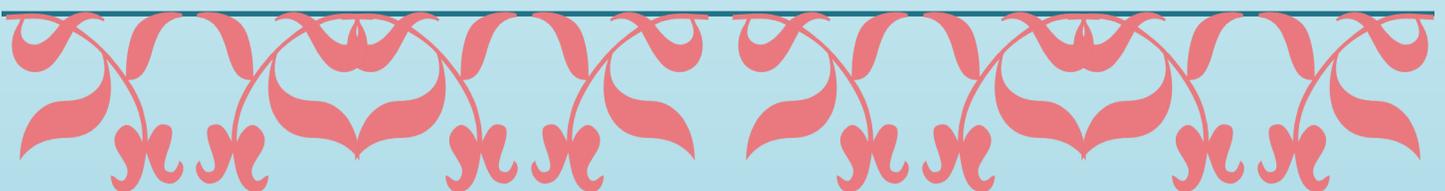
psychological adjustment and success (Johnson, 2009).

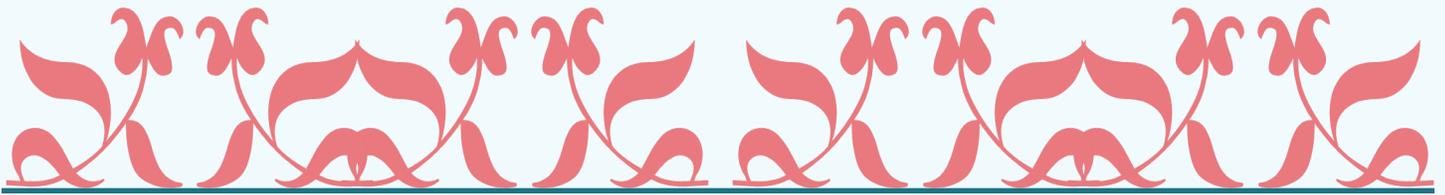
Substantial attention has been given to women's experiences of various types of abuse, such as intimate partner violence and child sexual abuse. Most of the research focuses on women in the community as opposed to incarcerated women, yet there is a growing body of literature documenting incarcerated women's extensive personal histories of violence and abuse (Bond & Semaan, 1996; Harris, Sharps, Allen, Anderson, Soeken, & Rohatas, 2003; Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lazano, 2002). Approximately 60% of women in state prisons within the U.S. have experienced physical or sexual abuse at some point in their lives (Braithwaite, Arriola & Newdirk, 2005; Fickenscher et al., 2001; Zlotnick, 1997).

This overexposure to violence has widespread implications for both the mental and physical health of incarcerated women.

The history of physical abuse is associated with poor physical and mental health for female inmates (Fickenscher et al, 2001; Jordon, et al., 1996; Maruschak & Beck, 2001; Zlotnick, 1997). Psychological violence is difficult to define

**The relationship between parental acceptance-rejection and violence and health of incarcerated women may provide depth in understanding how to facilitate future program planning.**





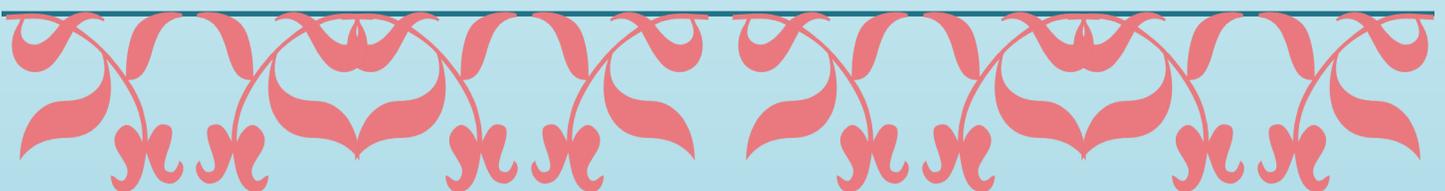
and has been understudied in the research literature, perhaps due to problems in definition. As applied to children, psychological abuse includes acts that have an adverse effect on the psychological and emotional health and development of a child and includes “the failure to provide an emotional and supportive environment” (Krug et. al, 2002). Social and cultural expectations of norms of family interaction may provide depth to understanding the influence of psychological violence. Perceptions of parental acceptance and rejection have rarely been assessed in incarcerated women, but the relationship between parental acceptance-rejection and violence and health of incarcerated women may provide depth in understanding how to facilitate future program planning. Familial influence (acceptance and rejection) and use of familiar methods of interaction and coping with intimate partners may have an influence on life changes required for successful community reintegration after prison.

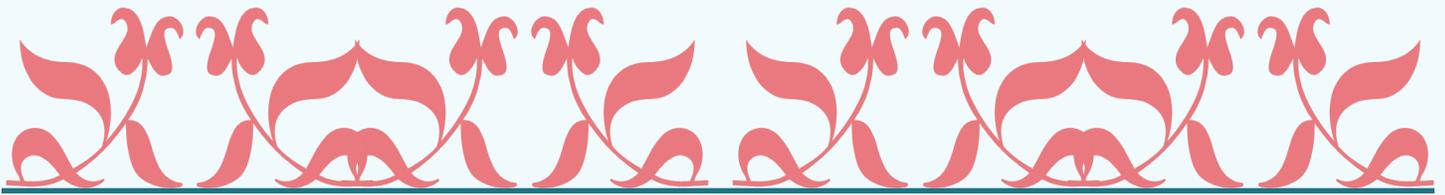
The impact of incarceration on families has been conceptualized as a form of family crisis, loss, demoralization, and victimization of children (Hairston, 2001; Loucks, 2004). There is robust

evidence about the relationship between child abuse and adult violence. These factors in the lives of incarcerated women increase the probability of continued violence after release (Tusher & Cook, 2010). Life experiences of women that may influence incarceration and/or have potential for causing decreased success after release or recidivism is our specific interest.

### **Critical Literature Review**

Six electronic databases were systematically searched to identify articles related to the Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ; Rohner, 2005) and women and men in corrections. They included: PsychINFO, PsychARTICLES, PubMed, Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL), Criminal Justice Abstracts with Full Text, and ProQuest Dissertation & Theses. In addition, a detailed hand-search of the bibliography from the Rohner Center for the Study of Interpersonal Acceptance and Rejection was also conducted (Rohner, 2014). Keywords utilized for this literature review included *parental acceptance-rejection questionnaire* (or *PARQ*) along with any of the following terms: *corrections, incarceration, prison, jail, criminal, offenders, inmates, parole, or probation*. The only limitation placed





on the search was that the report must be in the English language. Only four articles ultimately met these criteria. Three of these were dissertations cited on ProQuest. Two of the four studies examined incarcerated women, and the other two focused on juvenile male offenders/criminals. Following is a brief review of these studies:

Elkon (2005) conducted a retrospective study examining developmental correlates of antisocial behavior among 105 incarcerated women. Specifically, the study examined the nature of recalled parental rejection and behavioral control, recalled adolescent misconduct, and adult antisocial behavior. There were significant relationships between recalled caregiver rejection/control and recalled adolescent misconduct as well as adult antisocial behavior.

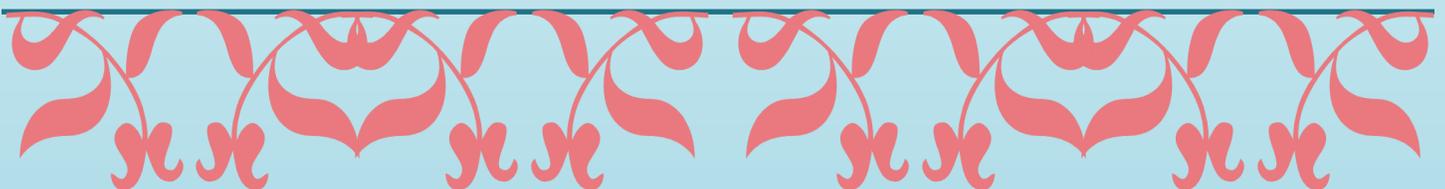
Joo (2009) conducted a study examining the relationship between past experiences of child abuse and current parenting practices among 199 incarcerated women at a maximum-security state prison. The results indicated there were moderate correlations between past experiences of abuse and

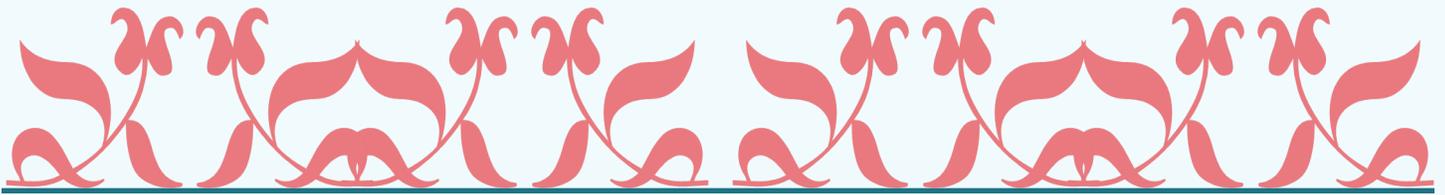
current parenting practices. The incarcerated women's perceptions of poor relationships with their own mothers, including perceptions of having been neglected, was associated with emotionally abusive practices toward their own children.

Esquivel (2010) examined the psychological adjustment and parental relations of adolescent sex offenders and their non-offending siblings. A total of 60 adolescent sex offenders residing in two residential facilities participated in the study, along with 34 siblings. Results showed that adolescent sex offenders were significantly more likely to have experienced greater maternal rejection but not paternal rejection than their siblings. In addition, greater perceived rejection by parents was correlated with greater psychological maladjustment.

Finally, Rafail and Haque (1999) conducted a study in Pakistan with 100 male juvenile criminal and non-criminal adolescents. The results of that study found that juvenile delinquency was positively associated with the total perceived rejection scores. The criminal adolescents perceived both parents to be

**There has been very little empirical research examining parental acceptance and rejection in correctional populations.**





significantly more aggressive, neglecting, and overall more rejecting compared to the non-criminal adolescents.

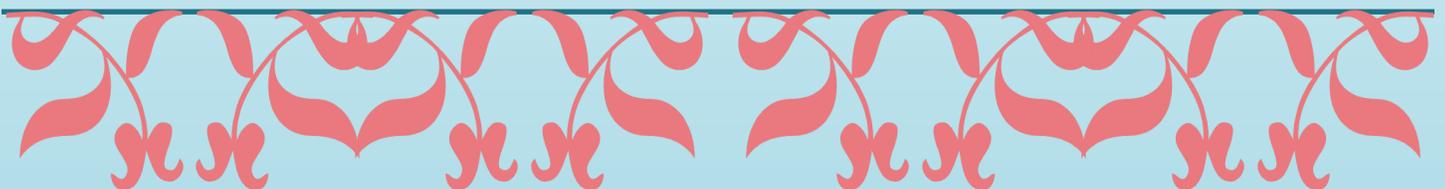
Overall the findings of our literature review demonstrate that there has been very little empirical research examining parental acceptance and rejection in correctional populations. This is, however, an important area for future research.

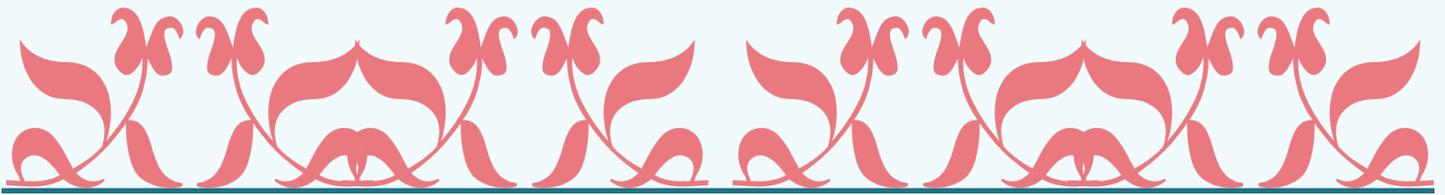
Our own research (Joyce, Hoenner, Peterson, Sievers, 2014) explores the relation between incarcerated women's remembrances of parental acceptance-rejection in childhood and women's lifetime experiences of interpersonal violence, as well as their current health status. The use of inmates' records provided the database for our correlational study. There were significant correlations among physical and sexual abuse on the one hand, and paternal and maternal acceptance-rejection on the other hand. Additionally, current medical problems were also associated with these experiences of interpersonal violence. The study provided valuable insight for future program development related to life skills, stress, coping, parental role behaviors, and violence prevention strategies. The study also identified the

need for health care for incarcerated women who plan to return to the community with their children.

### **Implications for Further Research**

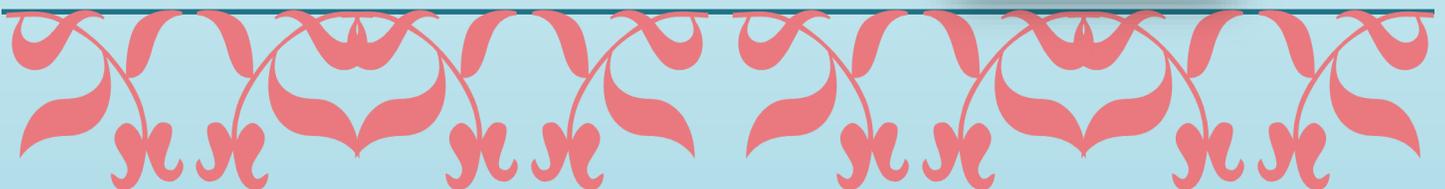
The correctional system routinely collects data, and uses the information to develop individual treatment plans. The use of existing data to better understand the aggregate of incarcerated women has provided useful information for program planning. Further study to determine additional relationships between other recorded data might be beneficial in order to document funding needs for additional program planning. The consistent use of the PARQ in correctional settings—as part of an intake assessment in both male and female prison populations—may promote early identification, and may help facilitate the design of focused intervention programs. Specialized programs designed to meet the specific needs of female inmates could address health education, intersections with substance use and abuse, perceptions of healthy lifestyles, and positive parenting programs. Replication of this study with male offenders may facilitate further understanding of lifestyle perceptions that promote or hinder successful reentry after incarceration.





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# Activities of the Rohner Center

## Greater New York Meeting

Last November I had the privilege of chairing a one-hour symposium on Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection Theory (IPARTheory) and related empirical evidence at the 26<sup>th</sup> Greater New York City Area Conference on Behavioral Research. Symposium participants included researchers and students from the University of Connecticut, CUNY, and State Medical University of Moldova. The first paper provided an overview of IPARTheory as an evidence-based theory. The second



Left to Right: Annamaria Csizmadia, Ronnit Nazarian, Harold Takooshian

paper summarized findings of a study of abused and abandoned children from Moldova. The last paper discussed findings of a study in which relations between retrospective reports of childhood parental acceptance-rejection and rejection sensitivity in adulthood were examined. Collectively, the three presentations highlighted the utility of IPARTheory in understanding the implications of interpersonal acceptance-rejection for developmental adjustment in diverse, clinical, and general populations.

(Symposium organized by Faculty Affiliate Annamaria Csizmadia; Discussant: Faculty Affiliate Amanda Denes.)

Csizmadia, A., Rohner, R. P., & Nazarian, R. (2014). Fundamentals of interpersonal acceptance-rejection theory and evidence. Paper presented at 26<sup>th</sup> Greater New York Conference on Behavioral Research, Marymount Manhattan College, NYC, November 9, 2014.

Divale, W. T. (2014). Parental acceptance-rejection and psychological adjustment of abused and abandoned children in Moldova. Paper presented at 26<sup>th</sup> Greater New York Conference on Behavioral Research, Marymount Manhattan College, NYC, November 9, 2014.

Flannery, K. M., Smith, R. L., Rohner, R. P., & Ibrahim, D. M. (2014). Adults' remembrances of parental acceptance-rejection in childhood and associations with rejection sensitivity. Paper presented at 26<sup>th</sup> Greater New York Conference on Behavioral Research, Marymount Manhattan College, NYC, November 9, 2014.

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

ISIPAR's 6th International Conference



## DETAILS FORTHCOMING

For further information or to volunteer, contact Miguel Ángel Carrasco ([macarrasco@psi.uned.es](mailto:macarrasco@psi.uned.es)), Chair of the local organizing committee.