

Interpersonal Acceptance

International Society For Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection



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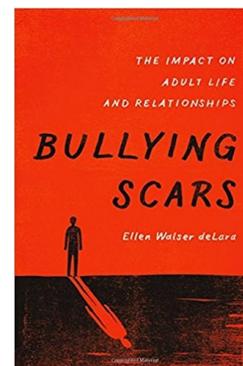
Book Review

Bullying Scars: The Impact on Adult Life and Relationships

(by Ellen Walser deLara)



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When I was invited to write a review for a book on bullying, my first thought was: “What innovation would a new book on bullying have to offer the scientific community?” What I initially had in mind was that there are hundreds of published books on the topic along with some 11,500 relevant papers in the Scopus database. After reading only the first few pages of *Bullying Scars*, however, I realized there was something more in this book than I thought. I will explain this below.

It is well established that bullying is one of the most frequent forms of victimization in childhood and adolescence (Price, Chin, Higa-McMillan, Kim, & Frueh, 2013). It is also well known that victims suffer from a variety of psychological difficulties such as depression, generalized or social anxiety, low self-esteem, and loneliness, to name but a few (Menesini, Modena, & Tani, 2009). Moreover, a growing body of literature has looked at the long term adverse effects of bullying in adulthood.

Despite all this accumulated knowledge—starting from the seminal work of Dan Olweus in the 1970’s—there are still many issues that are the subject of scientific discussion and sometimes controversy. For example, the debate regarding the definition of bullying is still with us. In fact many researchers point out that reaching a consensus on a definition of bullying is perhaps the most challenging task in psychological research (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). Indeed, current research indicates that approximately 10% to 30% of children and youth are involved in bullying at school. But its reported prevalence rates vary significantly because of the way bullying is defined and measured. Also prevalence rates vary dependent on which classification criteria are used (Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, & Sadek, 2010; Solberg & Olweus, 2003). This book challenges in a scholarly manner aspects of the definitions of bullying (e.g. the elements of power imbalance and chronicity), and it places major importance on individuals’ subjective perceptions of their lived experiences.

Another point that needs to be highlighted is the mixed-methods approach employed by deLara in order to test her initial hypotheses. Methodologists have noted that by combining quantitative and qualitative research, studies can maximize the strengths of each approach, develop more comprehensive and complementary understandings, increase the validity of results, and examine contextualized understandings and multilevel perspectives (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Indeed, this book is an excellent example of combining the two methodologies. The author has collected both quantitative and qualitative data from over 800 adults in a broad age-range (18-65 years). Although this sample size is fairly common in quantitative studies, it is impressive in qualitative methodology! The frequent use of examples, often accompanied with engaging narratives and articulate stories from participants throughout the book—combined with excerpts from the author’s clinical practice—gives voice to the author’s postulations regarding the effects of bullying across adult life, especially in terms of relationship issues. The book provides numerous case studies that offer valuable material for case conceptualization and psychological formulations by both psychology students and professionals. I myself will definitely use many of these cases in my classes.

Many other points caught my attention while reading the book. For example, the author challenges attachment theory. Drawing from her own research, she suggested that it is possible that “even those who feel very securely attached to their parents, can still end up with insecure attachments in primary relationships as adults due to the bullying and torment they experienced as children and adolescents”. The notion that issues of acceptance-rejection are pertinent to all important classes of interpersonal relationships throughout life is totally consistent with the basic postulations of IPARTheory (formerly known as PARTheory) proposed by Rohner (2004, 2014).

Another interesting point is that the author included under-researched areas such as teachers’ sexual misconduct toward children, and the effects of this misconduct on adults, parents, and siblings. However, in my opinion one of the most intriguing points introduced by the author is the notion of *Adult Post-Bullying Syndrome* – APBS. The APBS consisting of mistrust that adults contend with in interpersonal relationships, difficulty making or maintaining friendships, poor self-image, generalized feelings of helplessness, anxiety, and depression—stems from experiences of childhood bullying. All these responses to bullying are also among the expected consequences of adults’ remembrances of parental rejection in childhood. To my knowledge, this is the first time that such syndrome has been described. It opens new research paths that need to be subjected to further investigation (e.g. as a different entity from Post-traumatic stress disorder).

Although a large part of the book is devoted to the adverse effects of bullying across the life span, its innovation and differentiation from similar volumes lies in the inclusion of positive or—in the author’s words— “unexpected” outcomes of bullying and harassment. For example, the author mentions resiliency, increased empathy, positive moral development, and goal attainment as possible positive consequences of this experience in childhood years. This perspective is innovative and unusual in the bullying literature. The author does not negate the negative consequences of bullying, but she does back-up her postulations about its potentially positive consequences by making connections with another recently developed concept, namely *Post-Traumatic Growth*. Recent research increasingly acknowledges this phenomenon (Joseph, Murphy, & Regel, 2012; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004) by pointing out that it is possible to grow as a result of a traumatic experience (e.g. by achieving greater appreciation of interpersonal relationships and life in general, increased personal strength, and change in personal priorities). Future research could focus on the investigation of this innovative and de-pathologizing idea. Additionally, the book provides valuable information regarding current prevention and intervention programs designed to tackle bullying in school settings, as well as information about therapeutic interventions for helping adults cope with the aftermath of childhood bullying.

In sum, I need to mention that the author has made a thorough review of every topic included in the book, and she has cited the most up-to-date references in the relevant literature. Chapter one describes the phenomenon of bullying, and discusses various methodological issues regarding its definition. Chapter two discusses bullying as a traumatic experience, and introduces the concept of Adult Post-Bullying Syndrome. Chapter three focuses on individual differences as a potential source of harmful behavior toward others, such as body image, academic prowess, race, disabilities, and sexual orientation. Chapter four discusses the reactions people have to bullying experiences, such as the need to please other people, interpersonal insecurity, social anxiety, self-medicating behaviors, and feelings of revenge. Chapter five focuses on the negative consequences of bullying on adult friendships and intimate relationships, highlighting the fundamental nature of interpersonal acceptance as a basic human need, as well as the harmful effects of bullying on the ability to trust others. These issues are featured notably with the use of case examples. Chapter six is devoted to the effects of adverse childhood experiences on mental and physical health. Chapter seven discusses—with the use of informative vignettes—the impact of sexual harassment on youths and adults. The Chapter also includes the issue of sexual harassment based on sexual orientation and gender identity as well as the sensitive topic of sexual misconduct by school personnel and teachers. Chapter eight draws attention to the effects of bullying on adults’ decision-making processes, such as decisions about appearance, decisions related to moral development, and decisions about interpersonal relationships all of which are under-researched issues open to further investigation.

Chapter nine features the occurrence of bullying within the family system (i.e. from parents and siblings), and it discusses the inter-generational effects on parenting, using case studies. Chapter ten discusses a range of positive but unexpected outcomes stemming from bullying experiences by making connections with the concept of post-traumatic growth. Finally, the last part of the book includes the description of some helpful programs that have been implemented to tackle bullying in schools. This part of the book also describes an array of available treatment modalities for adults who suffer from the lasting influences of bullying and trauma.

In summary, *Bullying Scars: The Impact on Adult Life and Relationships* extends the relevant literature on the effects of bullying in childhood and adolescence to consider the long lasting outcomes across the life span. The vivid narratives of participants in this book echo the experiences of thousand adults across the globe who live with the scars of similar experiences. In that sense, the audience for this book includes mental health professionals, educators, students, and anyone who has experienced or witnessed a traumatic situation in their early years.

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In our troubled world...
If you care about somebody,
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Ronald P. Rohner, 2018

7th International Congress on Interpersonal Acceptance and Rejection (ICIAR)

May 15—18, 2018

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Important dates

Abstract submission deadline: February 28th, 2018

Early registration ends: March 31st, 2018

For further congress details visit:

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It's time to be RE-MEMBERED!



Congratulations!

Elected ISIPAR's Officers and Regional Representatives, 2018-2020

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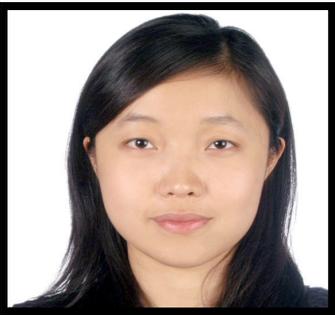
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Continued

Regional Representative for Europe: Vincenzo Paolo Senese, PhD.



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Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection Measures

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IPARTheory has 26 measures translated into 53 languages and dialects for assessing interpersonal acceptance-rejection and its consequences. More measures are being developed.

- 1 BFAQ = Best Friend Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (X)
- 2 ECBFAQ = Early Childhood Best Friend Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire
- 3 ECPAQ = Early Childhood Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (X/S)
- 4 ESAR/CQ = Elder Sibling Acceptance-Rejection/Control Questionnaire (X)
- 5 GARQ = Grandparent Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (X)
- 6 GIS = Gender Inequality Scale (X)
- 7 IARQ = Intimate Adult Relationship Questionnaire (X/S)
- 8 IARQ/CQ = Intimate Adult Relationship Control Questionnaire (X/S)
- 9 ILARQ = In-Law Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (X)
- 10 ILAR/CQ = In-Law Acceptance-Rejection Control Questionnaire (X/S)
- 11 IPAQ = Intimate Partner Attachment Questionnaire (X)
- 12 IPAR/CQ = Intimate Partner Acceptance-Rejection/Control Questionnaire
- 13 IPARLS = Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection Loneliness Scale (X)
- 14 IRAQ = Interpersonal Relationship Anxiety Questionnaire (X/S)
- 15 MARQ/C = Manager Acceptance-Rejection/Control Questionnaire (X)
- 16 PAQ = Personality Assessment Questionnaire (A/C/X/S)
- 17 PARQ = Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (A/C/P/X/S)
- 18 PARQ/Control = Parental Acceptance-Rejection/Control Questionnaire (A/C/P)
- 19 PECC = Parent's Evaluation of Child's Conduct
- 20 PCS = Parental Control Scale
- 21 PPQ = Physical Punishment Questionnaire (Parent, Youth)
- 22 SARQ = Supervisor Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire
- 23 SUQ = Substance Use Questionnaire (Y/X)
- 24 TAR/CQ = Teacher Acceptance-Rejection/Control Questionnaire
- 25 TESC = Teacher's Evaluation of Student Conduct (X/S)
- 26 3PQ = Parental Power and Prestige Questionnaire

Key to Abbreviations

C = Child version P = Parent version IC/ICQ = Measure include the behavioral control scale
 A = Adult version X = Standard Form
 Y = Youth version S = Short Form

National Hugging Day

(January 21st, 2018)

Even alligators deserve hugs...



Ron Rohner hugging a baby alligator in Florida (November, 2017)

Photo credit: **Michael R. Sadlon**