INTRODUCTION TO PARENTAL ACCEPTANCE-REJECTION THEORY, METHODS, EVIDENCE, AND IMPLICATIONS

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Overview of Parental Acceptance-Rejection Theory (PARTheory)

Parental acceptance-rejection theory (PARTheory) is an evidence-based theory of socialization and lifespan development that attempts to predict and explain major causes, consequences, and other correlates of interpersonal—especially parental—acceptance and rejection within the United States and worldwide (Rohner, 1986, 2004; Rohner and Rohner, 1980). It attempts to answer five classes of questions divided into three subtheories. These are personality subtheory, coping subtheory, and sociocultural systems subtheory. Personality subtheory asks two general questions. First, is it true, as the subtheory postulates, that children everywhere—in different sociocultural systems, racial or ethnic groups, genders, and the like—respond in essentially the same way when they perceive themselves to be accepted or rejected by their parents or other attachment figures? Second, to what degree do the effects of childhood rejection extend into adulthood and old age?

Coping subtheory asks one basic question. That is, what gives some children and adults the resilience to emotionally cope more effectively than most with the experiences of childhood rejection? Finally, sociocultural systems subtheory asks two very different classes of questions. First, why are some parents warm and loving and others cold, aggressive, neglecting/rejecting? Is it true, for example—as PARTheory predicts—that specific psychological, familial, community, and societal factors tend to be reliably associated the world over with specific variations in parental acceptance-rejection? Second, in what way is the total fabric of society as well as the behavior and beliefs of individuals within society affected by the fact that most parents in that society tend to either accept or reject their children? For example, is it true, as PARTheory predicts, that a people's religious beliefs, artistic preferences, and other expressive beliefs and behaviors tend to be universally associated with their childhood experiences of parental love and love withdrawal?

Several distinctive features guide PARTheory's attempts to answer questions such as these. First—employing a multimethod research strategy—the theory draws extensively from worldwide, cross-cultural evidence as well as from every major ethnic group in the United States. Additionally, it draws from literary and historical insights as far back as two thousand years. And more importantly, it draws from and helps provide a conceptual framework for integrating empirical studies on issues of parental acceptance-rejection published since the end of the nineteenth century, mostly within the United States. From these sources the theory attempts to formulate a lifespan developmental perspective on issues surrounding parental acceptance and rejection. Much of this lifespan perspective is incorporated into PARTheory's personality subtheory, described later. First however, we discuss the concepts of parental acceptance and rejection, or the warmth dimension of parenting. At this point we should remind readers that in PARTheory the term parent refers to whoever the major caregiver(s) is/are of a child—not necessarily biological or adoptive parents.

The Warmth Dimension of Parenting

Together, parental acceptance and rejection form the warmth dimension of parenting. This is a dimension or continuum on which all humans can be placed because everyone has experienced in childhood more or less love at the hands of major caregivers. Thus, the warmth dimension has to do with the quality of the affectional bond between parents and their children, and with the physical, verbal, and symbolic behaviors parents use to express these feelings. One end of the continuum is marked by parental acceptance, which refers to the warmth, affection, care, comfort, concern, nurturance, support, or simply love that children can experience from their parents and other caregivers. The other end of the continuum

is marked by parental rejection, which refers to the absence or significant withdrawal of these feelings and behaviors, and by the presence of a variety of physically and psychologically hurtful behaviors and affects. Extensive cross-cultural research over the course of half a century in PARTheory reveals that parental rejection can be experienced by any combination of four principal expressions: (1) cold and unaffectionate, the opposite of being warm and affectionate, (2) hostile and aggressive, (3) indifferent and neglecting, and (4) undifferentiated rejecting. Undifferentiated rejection refers to individuals' beliefs that their parents do not really care about them or love them, even though there might not be clear behavioral indicators that the parents are neglecting, unaffectionate, or aggressive toward them.

These behaviors are shown graphically in Figure 1. Elements to the left of the slash marks (warmth, hostility, and indifference) in the Figure refer to internal, psychological states of parents. That is, parents may feel or be perceived to feel warm (or cold and unloving) toward their children, or they may feel or be perceived to feel hostile, angry, bitter, resentful, irritable, impatient, or antagonistic toward them. Alternatively, parents may feel or be perceived to feel indifferent toward their children, feel or be perceived to feel unconcerned and uncaring about them, or have a restricted interest in their overall well being. Elements to the right of the slash marks in the Figure (affection, aggression, and neglect) refer to observable behaviors that result when parents act on these emotions. Thus when parents act on their feelings of love they are likely to be affectionate. As noted in the Figure, parental affection can be shown physically (e.g. hugging, kissing, caressing, and comforting), verbally (e.g. praising, complimenting, and saying nice things to or about the child), or symbolically in some other way, as with the use of culturally specific gestures. These and many other caring, nurturing, supportive, and loving behaviors help define the behavioral expressions of parental acceptance.

When parents act on feelings of hostility, anger, resentment, or enmity, the resulting behavior is generally called aggression. As construed in PARTheory, aggression is any behavior where there is the intention of hurting someone, something, or oneself (physically or emotionally). Figure 1 shows that parents may be physically aggressive (e.g., hitting, pushing, throwing things, and pinching) and verbally aggressive (e.g. sarcastic, cursing, mocking, shouting, saying thoughtless, humiliating, or disparaging things to or about the child). Additionally, parents may use hurtful, nonverbal symbolic gestures toward their children.

The connection between indifference as an internal motivator and neglect as a behavioral response is not as direct as the connection between hostility and aggression. This is true because parents may neglect or be perceived to neglect their children for many reasons that have nothing to do with indifference. For example, parents may neglect their children as a way of trying to cope with their anger toward them. Neglect is not simply a matter of failing to provide for the material and physical needs of children, however; it also pertains to parents' failure to attend appropriately to children's social and emotional needs. Often, for example, neglecting parents pay little attention to children's needs for comfort, solace, help, or attention; they may also remain physically as well as psychologically unresponsive or even unavailable or inaccessible. All these behaviors, real or perceived—individually and collectively—are likely to induce children to feel unloved or rejected. Even in warm and loving families, however, children are likely to experience—at least occasionally—a few of these hurtful emotions and behaviors.

Thus it is important to be aware that parental acceptance-rejection can be viewed and studied from either of two perspectives. That is, acceptance-rejection can be studied as perceived or subjectively experienced by the individual (the phenomenological perspective), or it can be studied as reported by an outside observer (the behavioral perspective). Usually, but not always, the two perspectives lead to similar conclusions. PARTheory research suggests, however, that if the conclusions are very discrepant one should generally trust the information derived from the phenomenological perspective.

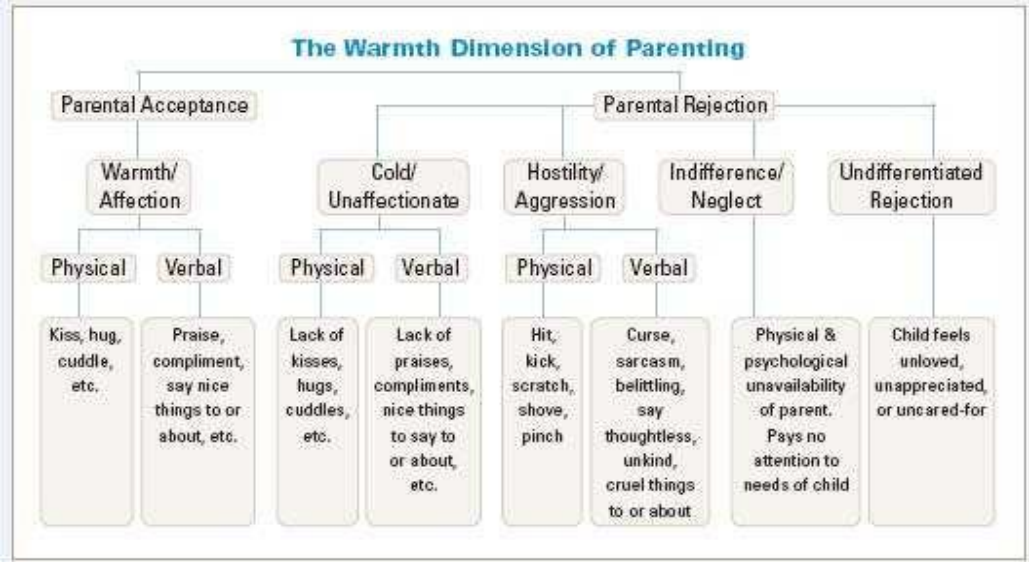


Figure 1. The Warmth Dimension of Parenting

This is true because a child may feel unloved (as in undifferentiated rejection), but outside observers may fail to detect any explicit indicators of parental rejection. Alternatively, observers may report a significant amount of parental aggression or neglect, but the child may not feel rejected. This occurs with some regularity in reports of child abuse and neglect. Thus there is only a problematic relation between so-called "objective" reports of abuse, rejection, and neglect on the one hand and children's perceptions of parental acceptance-rejection on the other. As Kagan (1978, p. 61) put it, "parental rejection is not a specific set of actions by parents but a belief held by the child."

In effect, much of parental acceptance-rejection is symbolic (Kagan, 1974, 1978). Therefore, to understand why rejection has consistent effects on children and adults, one must understand its symbolic nature. Certainly in the context of ethnic and cross-cultural studies investigators must strive to understand people's symbolic, culturally-based interpretations of parents' love-related behaviors if they wish to fully comprehend the acceptance-rejection process in those settings. That is, even though parents everywhere may express, to some degree, acceptance (warmth, affection, care, concern) and rejection (coldness, lack of affection, hostility, aggression, indifference, neglect), the way they do it is highly variable and saturated with cultural or sometimes idiosyncratic meaning. For example, parents anywhere might praise or compliment their children, but the way in which they do it in one sociocultural setting might have no meaning (or might have a totally different meaning) in a second setting. This is illustrated in the following incident:

> A few years ago I [Rohner] interviewed a high caste Hindu woman about family matters in India. Another woman seated nearby distracted my attention. The second woman quietly and carefully peeled an orange and then removed the seeds from each segment. Her 9-year-old daughter became increasingly animated as her mother progressed. Later, my Bengali interpreter asked me if I had noticed what the woman was doing. I answered that I had, but that I had not paid much attention to it. "Should I have?" "Well," she answered, "you want to know about parental love and affection in West Bengal, so you should know...." She went on to explain that when a Bengali mother wants to praise her child—to show approval and affection for her child—she might give the child a peeled and seeded orange. Bengali children understand completely that their mothers have done something special for them, even though mothers may not use words of praise for to do so would be unseemly, much like

praising themselves. (Rohner, 1994, p. 113; see also Rohner and Chaki-Sircar, 1988).

At this point we should caution that in everyday American English the word rejection implies bad parenting and sometimes even bad people. In cross-cultural and multiethnic research, however, one must attempt to view the word as being descriptive of parents' behavior, not judgmental or evaluative. This is so because parents in about 25 percent of the world's societies behave in ways that are consistent with the definition of rejection given here (Rohner, 1975; Rohner & Rohner, 1980), but in the great majority of cases—including historically in the United States—these parents behave toward their children the way they believe good, responsible parents should behave, as defined by cultural norms. Therefore, in the context of cross-cultural research on parental acceptance-rejection, a major goal is to determine whether children and adults everywhere respond the same way when they experience themselves to be accepted or rejected as children—regardless of cultural, racial, ethnic, gender, or social class differences, or other such defining conditions. This issue is discussed next in the context of PARTheory's personality subtheory.

PARTheory's Personality Subtheory

As we said earlier, PARTheory's personality subtheory attempts to predict and explain major personality or psychological—especially mental health-related—consequences of perceived parental acceptance and rejection. The subtheory begins with the probably untestable assumption that over the course of evolution humans have developed the enduring, biologically based emotional need for positive response from the people most important to them (see also Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Bjorklund & Pellegrini, 2002; Leary, 1999). The need for positive response includes an emotional wish, desire, or yearning (whether consciously recognized or not) for comfort, support, care, concern, nurturance, and the like. In adulthood, the need becomes more complex and differentiated to include the wish (recognized or unrecognized) for positive regard from people with whom one has an affectional bond of attachment. People who can best satisfy this need are typically parents for infants and children, but include significant others and non-parental attachment figures for adolescents and adults.

As construed in PARTheory, a *significant other* is any person with whom a child or adult has a relatively long-lasting emotional tie, who is uniquely important to the individual, and who is interchangeable with no one else. In this sense, parents are generally significant others, but parents also tend to have one additional quality not shared by most significant others. That is, children's sense of emotional security and comfort tends to be dependent on the quality of their relationship with their parents. Because of that, parents are usually the kind of significant other called *attachment figures* in both PARTheory and attachment theory (Ainsworth, 1989; Bowlby, 1982; Colin, 1996). Parents are thus uniquely important to children because the security and other emotional and psychological states of offspring are dependent on the quality of relationship with their parent(s). It is for this reason that parental acceptance and rejection is postulated in PARTheory to have unparalleled influence in shaping children's personality development over time. Moreover, according to PARTheory's personality subtheory, adults' sense of emotional security and well-being tends to be dependent on the perceived quality of relationship with adult attachment figures. Thus acceptance or rejection by an intimate partner is also postulated to have a major influence on adults' personality and psychological adjustment. The concept *personality* is defined in personality subtheory as an individual's more or less stable set of predispositions to respond (i.e., affective, cognitive, perceptual, and motivational dispositions) and actual modes of responding (i.e., observable behaviors) in various life situations or contexts. This definition recognizes that behavior is motivated, is influenced by external (i.e., environmental) as well as internal (e.g., emotional, biological, and learning) factors, and usually has regularity or orderliness about it across time and space. PARTheory's personality subtheory postulates that the emotional need for positive response from significant others and attachment figures is a powerful motivator, and when children do not get this need

satisfied adequately by their parents (or adults do not get this need met by their attachment figures), they are predisposed to respond emotionally and behaviorally in specific ways. In particular—according to the subtheory—individuals who feel rejected are likely to be anxious and insecure. In an attempt to allay these feelings and to satisfy their needs, persons who feel rejected often increase their bids for positive response, but only up to a point. That is, they tend to become more dependent, as shown in Figure 2.

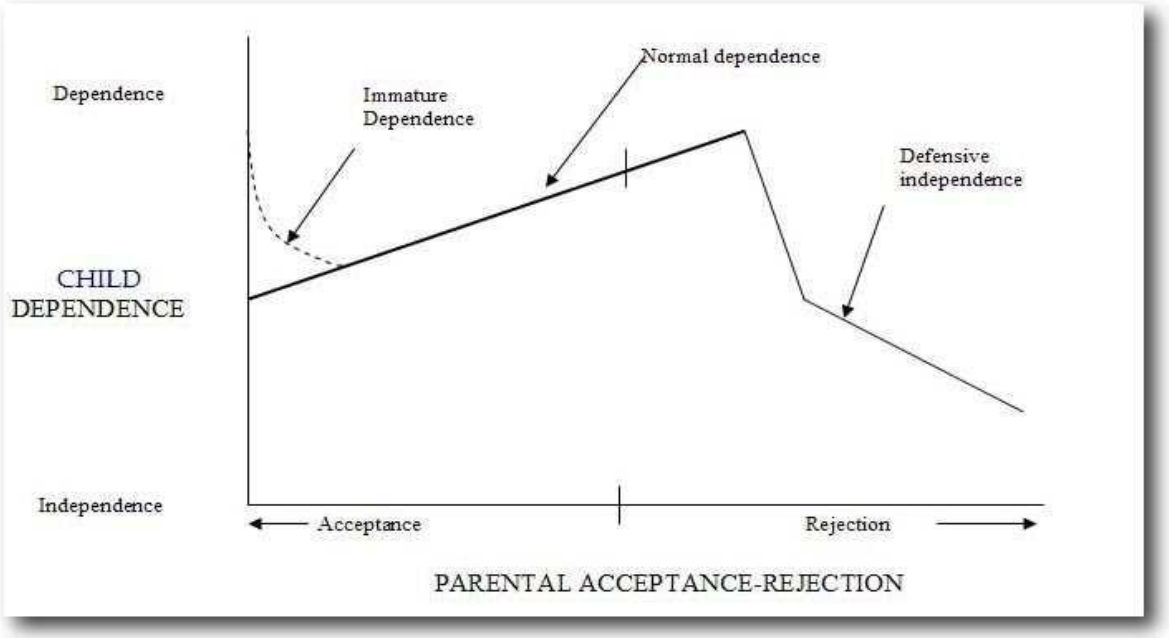


Figure 2. Dependence/Independence in Relation to Parental Acceptance-Rejection

The term *dependence* in the theory refers to the internal, psychologically felt wish or yearning for emotional (as opposed to instrumental or task-oriented) support, care, comfort, attention, nurturance, and similar behaviors from attachment figures. The term, as used in PARTheory, also refers to the actual behavioral bids individuals make for such responsiveness. For young children these bids may include clinging to parents, whining, or crying when parents unexpectedly depart, and seeking physical proximity with them when they return. Older children and adults may express their need for positive response more symbolically—especially in times of distress—by seeking reassurance, approval, or support, as well as comfort, affection, or solace from people who are most important to them—particularly from parents for youths, and from non-parental significant others and attachment figures for adults.

Dependence is construed in PARTheory as a continuum, with independence defining one end of the continuum and dependence the other. Independent people are those who have their need for positive response met sufficiently so that they are free from frequent or intense yearning or behavioral bids for succor from significant others. Very dependent people on the other hand are those who have a frequent and intense desire for positive response, and are likely to make many bids for response. As with all the personality dispositions studied in PARTheory, humans everywhere can be placed somewhere along the continuum of being more or less dependent or independent. According to the theory, much of the variation in dependence among children and adults is contingent on the extent to which they perceive themselves to be accepted or rejected. Many rejected children and adults feel the need for constant reassurance and emotional support.

According to personality subtheory, parental rejection as well as rejection by other attachment figures also leads to other personality outcomes, in addition to dependence. These include hostility, aggression,

passive aggression, or psychological problems with the management of hostility and aggression; emotional unresponsiveness; immature dependence or defensive independence depending on the form, frequency, duration, and intensity of perceived rejection and parental control; impaired self-esteem; impaired self-adequacy; emotional instability; and negative worldview. Theoretically these dispositions are expected to emerge because of the intense psychological pain produced by perceived rejection. More specifically, beyond a certain point—a point that varies from individual to individual—children and adults who experience significant rejection are likely to feel ever-increasing anger, resentment, and other destructive emotions that may become intensely painful. As a result, many rejected persons close off emotionally in an effort to protect themselves from the hurt of further rejection. That is, they become less emotionally responsive. In so doing they often have problems being able or willing to express love and in knowing how to or even being capable of accepting it from others.

Because of all this psychological hurt, some rejected individuals become defensively independent. Defensive independence is like healthy independence in that individuals make relatively few behavioral bids for positive response. It is unlike healthy independence, however, in that defensively independent people continue to crave warmth and support—positive response—though they sometimes do not recognize it. Indeed, because of the overlay of anger, distrust, and other negative emotions generated by chronic rejection they often positively deny this need, saying in effect, "To hell with you! I don't need you. I don't need anybody!" Defensive independence with its associated emotions and behaviors sometimes leads to a process of counter rejection, where individuals who feel rejected reject the person(s) who reject them. Not surprisingly, this process sometimes escalates into a cycle of violence and other serious relationship problems.

In addition to dependence or defensive independence, individuals who feel rejected are predicted in PARTheory's personality subtheory to develop feelings of impaired self-esteem and impaired self-adequacy. This comes about because—as noted in symbolic interaction theory (Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934)—individuals tend to view themselves as they think their parents or significant others view them. Thus, insofar as children and adults feel their attachment figures do not love them, they are likely to feel they are unlovable, perhaps even unworthy of being loved. Whereas self-esteem pertains to individuals' feelings of self-worth or value, self-adequacy pertains to their feelings of competence or mastery to perform daily tasks adequately and to satisfy their own instrumental (task oriented) needs. Insofar as individuals feel they are not very good people, they are also apt to feel they are not very good at satisfying their needs. Or alternatively, insofar as people feel they are no good at satisfying their personal needs, they often come to think less well of themselves more globally. Anger, negative self-feelings, and the other consequences of perceived rejection tend to diminish rejected children's and adults' capacity to deal effectively with stress. Because of this, people who feel rejected often tend to be less emotionally stable than people who feel accepted. They often become emotionally upset—perhaps tearful or angry—when confronted with stressful situations that accepted (loved) people are able to handle with greater emotional equanimity. All these acutely painful feelings associated with perceived rejection tend to induce children and adults to develop a negative worldview. That is, according to PARTheory, rejected persons are likely to develop a view of the world—of life, interpersonal relationships, and the very nature of human existence—as being untrustworthy, hostile, unfriendly, emotionally unsafe, threatening, or dangerous. These thoughts and feelings often extend to people's beliefs about the nature of the supernatural world (i.e., God, the gods, and other religious beliefs) (Rohner, 1975, 1986), discussed more fully below in PARTheory's sociocultural systems subtheory.

Negative worldview, negative self-esteem, negative self-adequacy, and some of the other personality dispositions described above are important elements in the social-cognition or mental representations of rejected persons. In PARTheory, the concept of *mental representation* refers to an individual's more-or-less organized but usually implicit conception of existence, including conception of things that the

individual takes for granted about self, others, and the experiential world constructed from emotionally significant past and current experiences. Along with one's emotional state—which both influences and is influenced by one's conception of reality—mental representations tend to shape the way in which individuals perceive, construe, and react to new experiences, including interpersonal relationships. Mental representations also influence what and how individuals store and remember experiences (see also Baldwin, 1992; Clausen, 1972; Crick & Dodge, 1994; Epstein, 1994).

Once created, individuals' mental representations of self, of significant others, and of the world around them tend to induce them to seek or to avoid certain situations and kinds of people. In effect, the way individuals think about themselves and their world shapes the way they live their lives. This is notably true of rejected children and adults. For example, many rejected persons have a tendency to perceive hostility where none is intended, to see deliberate rejection in unintended acts of significant others, or to devalue their sense of personal worth in the face of strong counter-information. Moreover, rejected persons are likely to seek, create, interpret, or perceive experiences, situations, and relationships in ways that are consistent with their distorted mental representations. And they often tend to avoid or mentally reinterpret situations that are inconsistent with these representations. Additionally, rejected children and adults often construct mental images of personal relationships as being unpredictable, untrustworthy, and perhaps hurtful. These negative mental representations are often carried forward into new relationships where rejected individuals find it difficult to trust others emotionally, or where they may become hypervigilant and hypersensitive to any slights or signs of emotional undependability. Because of all this selective attention, selective perception, faulty styles of causal attribution, and distorted cognitive information processing, rejected individuals are generally expected in PARTheory to self-propel along qualitatively different developmental pathways from accepted or loved people.

Many of these effects of perceived rejection are also found in developmental trauma disorder (DTD; van der Kolk, 2010) and in complex posttraumatic stress disorder (Complex PTSD or simply CPTSD; Courtois, 2004). These are conditions where youths experience repeated trauma—especially interpersonal trauma—over an extended period of time and developmental periods. Included among the shared effects of perceived rejection, DTD and CPTSD are issues of hypervigilance, anxiety, often self-hatred, and problems with interpersonal relationships, and suicidality, among several others. Additionally, issues of depression and substance abuse, discussed later, are also implicated in both perceived rejection and in DTD and CPTSD.

The pain of perceived rejection is very real. In fact, brain imaging (*f*MRI) studies reveal that specific parts of the brain (i.e., the anterior cingulate cortex, and the right ventral prefrontal cortex) are activated when people feel rejected, just as they are when people experience physical pain (Eisenberger, 2012; Eisenberger, Lieberman, & Williams, 2003. See also Squire & Stein, 2003). Moreover, Fisher, Aron, and Brown (2005) found that different regions of the brain were activated among adults who were happily in love versus those who had been recently rejected by their partners.

In addition to research using *f*MRIs, results of both animal and human studies suggest that emotional trauma in childhood may affect brain structure and function in other ways. For example, evidence shows that emotional neglect in childhood may be a significant risk factor for cerebral infarction in old age (Wilson, et al., 2012). Moreover, perceived rejection and other forms of long-term emotional trauma are often implicated in the alteration of brain chemistry (Ford & Russo, 2006). The effect of these and other neurobiological and neuropsychological changes may ultimately compromise children's central nervous system and psychosocial development (Ford, 2005). On the positive side, however, Luby et al. (2012) found that the early experience of maternal nurturance among preschoolers was strongly predictive of larger hippocampal volume among the same children at school age. These results are important because

the hippocampus is a region of the brain that is central to memory, emotion regulation, stress modulation, and other functions—all of which are essential for healthy socio-emotional adjustment.

It is perhaps for reasons such as these that scores of studies involving thousands of participants cross-culturally and among major American ethnic groups consistently show that about 80% of the children and adults measured so far respond as personality subtheory predicts. In fact no adequate study anywhere—across cultures, genders, ages, geographic boundaries, ethnicities, and other defining conditions of the world—has failed to show the same basic trend portrayed in Figure 3.

That is, Figure 3 graphically displays PARTheory's postulates about expected relations between perceived acceptance-rejection and individuals' mental health status. More specifically, the Figure shows that, within a band of individual variation, children's and adults' mental health status is likely to become impaired in direct proportion to the form, frequency, severity, and duration of rejection experienced. Some individuals who come from loving families, however, also display the constellation of psychological problems typically shown by rejected individuals. These people are called "troubled" in PARTheory; many are individuals (e.g. adults) who are in a less than loving (e.g., rejecting) relationships with attachment figures other than parents. This fact helps confirm PARTheory's expectation that, for most people, perceived rejection by any attachment figure at any point throughout the lifespan effectively compromises the likelihood of healthy social-emotional functioning. However, it is also expected in PARTheory that a very small minority of individuals will be able to thrive emotionally despite having experienced significant rejection by an attachment figure. As shown in Figure 3, these people are called copers. They are the focus of PARTheory's coping subtheory briefly discussed next.

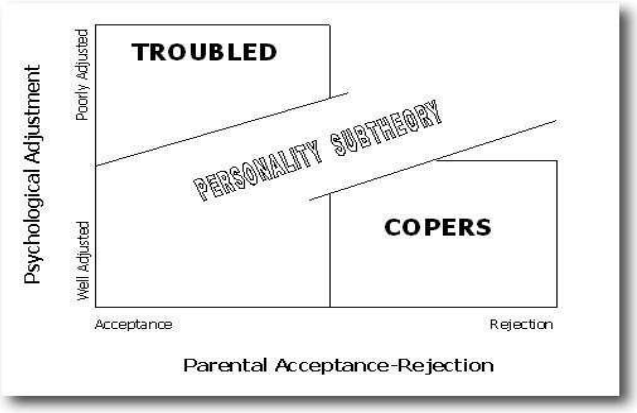


Figure 3. Copers and Troubled Individuals in Relation to PARTheory's Personality Subtheory

PARTheory's Coping Subtheory

As we said earlier, PARTheory's coping subtheory deals with the question of how some rejected individuals appear to be able to withstand the corrosive drizzle of day-to-day rejection without suffering the negative mental health consequences that most rejected individuals do. Theoretically and empirically the coping process is the least well-developed portion of PARTheory. As is true for most other bodies of research on the coping process (Somerfield & McCrae, 2000), little is yet known with confidence about the mechanisms and processes that help answer coping subtheory's basic question. Nonetheless it seems clear that in order to understand the coping process--indeed the entire acceptance-rejection process--one must adopt a multivariate, person-in-context perspective. This perspective has three elements: self, other, and context. Specifically, the multivariate model of behavior employed in PARTheory states that the behavior of the individual (e.g., coping with perceived rejection) is a function of the interaction between

self, other, and context. "Self" characteristics include the individual's mental representations along with the other internal (biological) and external (personality) characteristics discussed earlier. "Other" characteristics include the personal and interpersonal characteristics of the rejecting parent(s) and other attachment figure(s), along with the form, frequency, duration, and severity of rejection. "Context" characteristics include other significant people in the individual's life, along with social-situational characteristics of the person's environment. A specific research hypothesis coming from this perspective states that, all other things being equal, the likelihood of children being able to cope with perceived parental rejection is enhanced by the presence of a warm, supportive, alternate caregiver or attachment figure.

PARTheory's emphasis on mental activity—including mental representations—leads us to expect that specific social cognitive capabilities allow some children and adults to cope with perceived rejection more effectively than others. These capabilities include a clearly differentiated sense of self, a sense of self-determination, and the capacity to depersonalize (Rohner, 1986). More specifically, coping subtheory expects that the capacity of individuals to cope with rejection is enhanced to the degree that they have a clearly differentiated sense of self, one aspect of which is a sense of self-determination. Self-determined individuals believe they can exert at least a modicum of control over what happens to them through their own effort or personal attributes. Other individuals may feel like pawns: They feel as though things happen to them because of fate, chance, luck, or powerful others. Individuals with a sense of self-determination have an internal psychological resource for minimizing some of the most damaging consequences of perceived rejection.

Similarly, individuals who have the capacity to depersonalize are provided another social-cognitive resource for dealing with perceived rejection. Personalizing refers to the act of "taking it personally," that is, to reflexively or automatically relating life events and interpersonal encounters to oneself--of interpreting events egocentrically in terms of oneself, usually in a negative sense. Thus, personalizers are apt to interpret inadvertent slights and minor acts of insensitivity as being deliberate acts of rejection or other hurtful intentions. Individuals who are able to depersonalize, however, have a psychological resource for dealing in a more positive way with interpersonal ambiguities. All three of these social cognitive factors appear to provide psychological shields against the most corrosive effects of perceived rejection. However, these attributes themselves tend to be affected by rejection, thus complicating the task of assessing the independent contribution that each might make in helping children and adults cope with perceived rejection.

It is important to note here that the concept *coper* in PARTheory's coping subtheory refers to affective copers versus instrumental copers. *Affective copers* are those people whose emotional and overall mental health is reasonably good despite having been raised in seriously rejecting families. *Instrumental copers*, on the other hand, are rejected persons who do well school, in their professions, occupations, and other task-oriented activities but whose emotional and mental health is impaired. Instrumental copers maintain a high level of task competence and occupational performance despite serious rejection. Many prominent personalities in history have been instrumental copers. Included among them are such personages as Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong, John Stuart Mill, Richard Nixon, Edgar Allen Poe, Eleanor Roosevelt, Babe Ruth, and Mark Twain, among many, many others (Goertzel & Goertzel, 1962; Howe, 1982). Biographies and autobiographies of these individuals reveal that even though they were successful instrumental copers, they were not affective copers. All appear to have been psychologically distressed in ways described by PARTheory's personality subtheory.

Even though the mental health status of affective copers is reasonably good, it is generally not as good as that of individuals coming from loving (accepting) families—but it does tend to be significantly better than that of most individuals coming from rejecting families. Over time, from childhood into adulthood,

however, all but the most severely rejected and psychologically injured individuals are likely to have enough positive experiences outside their families of origin to help ameliorate the most damaging emotional, cognitive, and behavioral effects of parental rejection. Thus, given the ordinary resilience characteristic of most people most of the time (Masten, 2001)—in combination with successful psychotherapy, positive work experiences, satisfying intimate relationships, and other gratifying processes and outcomes—adults who were rejected as children are often better adjusted emotionally and psychologically than they were as children under the direct influence of rejecting parents—though they tend not to have as positive sense of well-being as adults who felt loved all along. That is, important sequelae of rejection are apt to linger into adulthood, placing even affective copers at somewhat greater risk for social, physical, and emotional problems throughout life than persons who were loved continuously. This is especially true if the rejection process in childhood seriously compromised the individual's ability to form secure, trusting relationships with an intimate partner or other adult attachment figure.

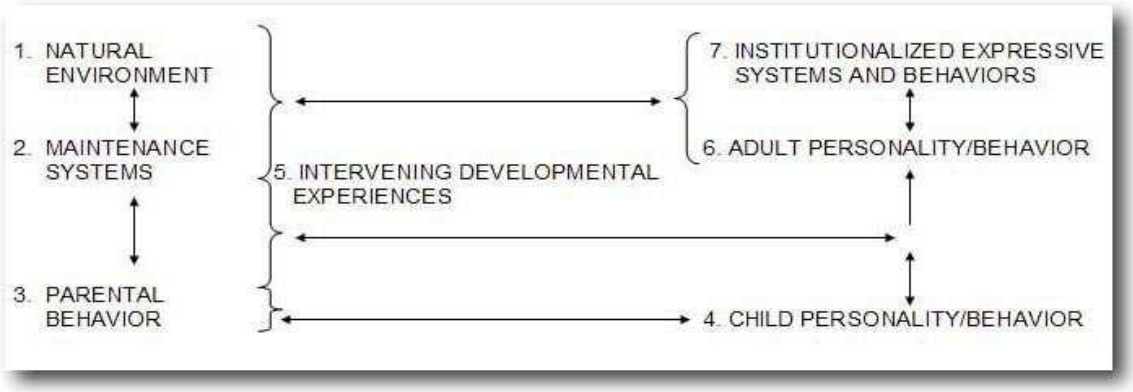
PARTheory's Sociocultural Systems Model and Subtheory

As we intimated above in our discussion of PARTheory's multivariate model, parental rejection occurs in a complex ecological (familial, community, and sociocultural) context. PARTheory's sociocultural systems model shown in Fig. 4 provides a way of thinking about the antecedents, consequence, and other correlates of parental acceptance-rejection within individuals and total societies. This model has its historical roots in the early work of Kardiner (1939, 1945a, 1945b), and later in the work of Whiting & Child (1953). It also shares notable similarities with Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1994) ecological model, and with Berry's (2006) eco-cultural model. It shows, for example, that the likelihood of parents (element 3 in the model) displaying any given form of behavior (e.g., acceptance or rejection) is shaped in important ways by the maintenance systems of that society including such social institutions as family structure, household organization, economic organization, political organization, system of defense, and other institutions that bear directly on the survival of a culturally organized population within its natural environment (element 1 in the model). The model also shows that parents accepting-rejecting and other behaviors impact directly on children's personality development and behavior (as postulated in personality subtheory).

The double-headed arrow in the model (designed to show an interaction between elements) suggests that personal characteristics of children such as their temperament and behavioral dispositions shape to a significant extent the form and quality of parents' behavior toward them. Arrows in the model also reveal that—in addition to family experiences—youths have a wide variety of often-influential experiences (element 5, intervening developmental experiences) in the context of the natural environment in which they live, the maintenance systems of their society, peers, and adults in the society (element 6), and the institutionalized expressive systems of their society (element 7).

Figure 4. PARTheory's Sociocultural Systems Model

Institutionalized expressive systems and behaviors refer to the religious traditions and behaviors of a people, to their artistic traditions and preferences, to their musical and folkloric traditions and preferences, and to other such symbolic, mostly non-utilitarian, and non-survival related beliefs and behaviors. They are called "expressive" in PARTheory because they are believed to express or reflect people's internal, psychological states, at least initially when the expressive systems were first created. Thus, expressive systems are believed in PARTheory to be symbolic creations, formed over time by multiple individuals



within a society. As the people change, the expressive systems and behaviors also tend to change, though sometimes slowly and grudgingly—especially if the systems have been codified in writing. It is important to note here—according to sociocultural systems subtheory—that even though expressive systems are ultimately human creations, once created and incorporated into the sociocultural system they tend to act back on individuals, shaping their future beliefs and behaviors.

Guided by the sociocultural systems model, PARTheory's sociocultural systems subtheory attempts to predict and explain worldwide causes of parental acceptance and rejection. The subtheory also attempts to predict and explain expressive correlates of parental acceptance and rejection. For example the subtheory predicts--and substantial cross-cultural evidence confirms-that in societies where children tend to be rejected, cultural beliefs about the supernatural world (i.e., about God, gods, and the spirit world) usually portray supernaturals as being malevolent, that is hostile, treacherous, unpredictable, capricious, destructive, or negative in other ways (Batool & Najam, 2009; Bierman, 2005; Dickie, J. R., Eshleman, A. K., Merasco, D. M., Shepard, A., Venderwilt, M., & Johnson, M; Rohner, 1975, 1986; Thiele, 2007). However, the supernatural world is usually thought to be benevolent—warm, supportive, generous, protective, or kindly in other ways—in societies where most children are raised with loving acceptance. No doubt these cultural differences are the result of aggregated individual differences in the mental representations of accepted versus rejected persons within these two different kinds of societies. Parental acceptance and rejection are also known to be associated worldwide with many other expressive sociocultural correlates such as the artistic traditions characteristic of individual societies, as well as the artistic preferences of individuals within these societies (Rohner & Frampton, 1982). Additionally, evidence suggests that the recreational and occupational choices adults make may be associated with childhood experiences of acceptance and rejection (Aronoff, 1967; Mantell, 1974; Rohner, 1986). All these and other expressive behaviors and beliefs appear to be byproducts of the social, emotional, and social-cognitive effects of parental acceptance-rejection discussed earlier.

Why do parents in most societies tend to be warm and loving, and parents in about 25% of the world's societies tend to be mildly to severely rejecting (Rohner, 1975, 1986; Rohner & Rohner, 1981). What factors account for these societal differences and for individual variations in parenting within societies?

Questions such as these, guide the second portion of PARTheory's sociocultural systems subtheory. There is no single or simple answer to these questions, but specific factors do appear to be reliably associated with societal and intrasocietal variations in parental rejection. Principal among these are conditions that promote the breakdown of primary emotional relationships and social supports. Thus, single parents (most often mothers) in social isolation without social and emotional supports, especially if the parents are young and economically deprived, appear universally to be at greatest risk for withdrawing love and affection from their children (Rohner, 1986). It is useful to note, however, that from a global perspective poverty by itself is not necessarily associated with increased rejection. Rather, it is poverty in association with these other social and emotional conditions that place children at greatest risk. Indeed, much of humanity is now and always has been in a state of relative poverty. But despite this, most parents around the world raise their children with loving care (Rohner, 1975).

Paradigm Shift from Parental to Interpersonal Acceptance and Rejection

As reported above, PARTheory traditionally focused on *parental* acceptance and rejection. But in 1999 it went through a paradigm shift from parental to *interpersonal* acceptance and rejection. More specifically, the central postulate in PARTheory originally stated that perceived *parental* rejection is associated with the specific cluster of personality dispositions noted in personality subtheory. The reformulated postulate now states that perceived rejection by an *attachment figure at any point in life tends to be* associated with the same cluster of personality dispositions found among children and adults rejected by parents in childhood. Now the theory and associated research is focused on all aspects of *interpersonal* acceptance-rejection, including but not limited to parental acceptance-rejection, peer and sibling acceptance-rejection, teacher acceptance-rejection, acceptance-rejection in intimate adult relationships, and acceptance-rejection in other attachment relationships throughout the lifespan. Despite this paradigm shift in theory and research-focus, the theory continues to be known as PARTheory because that label has become so widely recognized internationally.

The first empirical study to test PARTheory's reformulated postulate was conducted in 2001 (Khaleque, 2001; Rohner & Khaleque, 2008). That study examined the impact of perceived acceptance-rejection by intimate male partners on the psychological adjustment of 88 heterosexual adult females in the U.S. This path-breaking study sparked great international interest, so much so that the study was conducted in more than 15 countries worldwide. One of the earliest of these studies (Parmar & Rohner, 2005) dealt with 79 young adults in India. There, the authors found that the less accepting both men and women perceived their intimate partners to be, the worse was their psychological adjustment. Simple correlations also showed the expected positive correlation between adults' psychological adjustment and remembered maternal and paternal acceptance in the childhood of the adults. However, results of multiple regression analysis showed that partner acceptance was the strongest single predictor of men's psychological adjustment, though this relation was partially mediated by remembered paternal (but not maternal) acceptance in childhood. For women, on the other hand, both partner acceptance and paternal (but not maternal) acceptance were about coequal as predictors of psychological adjustment.

More recently, similar findings have been reported in eight other international studies, thus suggesting the possibility of universal relationships between adults' mental health states and their perceptions of acceptance-rejection by intimate partners, as well as by parents in childhood. These studies were conducted in: Colombia and Puerto Rico (Ripoll-Nunez & Alvarez, 2008) Finland (Khaleque, Rohner & Laukala, 2008); India (Parmar & Rohner, 2008); Japan (Rohner, Uddin, Shomsunaher, & Khaleque, 2008); Korea (Chyung & Lee, 2008); Kuwait (Parmar, Ibrahim, & Rohner, 2008); Turkey (Varan, Rohner, & Eryuksel, 2008), and the USA (Rohner, Melendez, & Kraimer-Rickaby, 2008)

The second major issue to be studied following the reformulation of PARTheory in 1999 dealt with the relative contribution of perceived teacher versus parental (maternal and paternal) acceptance and behavioral control to the psychological adjustment, school conduct, and academic achievement of school-going youths (boys and girls) within six nations cross-culturally (Rohner, 2010). These nations included Bangladesh, Estonia, India, Kuwait, the Mississippi Delta region of the US, and Turkey. Results of analyses exposed enormous gender and sociocultural variability in patterns of predictors assessed with each of the three outcome variables studied. As expected from PARTheory, however predictors of variations in youth's psychological adjustment were much more stable. More specifically, both perceived teacher acceptance and parental (maternal and paternal) acceptance were significantly correlated with the adjustment of both boys and girls in all nations where this relationship was studied. Results of multiple regression analyses, however, showed that perceived teacher acceptance mediated to a large degree the relationship between perceived parental acceptance and youth's psychological adjustment in Bangladesh and India. On the other hand these analyses showed that only perceived parental acceptance made independent or unique contributions to student's psychological adjustment in Kuwait and Estonia. The issue of psychological adjustment was not explored in Turkey or in the Mississippi Delta region of the US.

Methods in PARTheory Research

PARTheory's half-century program of research is guided methodologically by conceptual models called *anthroponomy* and the *universalist approach*, respectively (Rohner, 1986; Rohner & Rohner, 1980). Anthroponomy is an approach to the human sciences characterized by a search for universals, that is, for worldwide principles of behavior that can be shown empirically to generalize across our species (Homo-sapiens) under specified conditions whenever they occur. Although many propositions advanced by Western social scientists are assumed to apply to all humans, verification of such claims is complex and involves attention to the role of culture, language, migration, history, and other such factors. It also requires attention to the strengths and weaknesses of individual measurement procedures (e.g., self-report questionnaires) and general paradigms of research (e.g., the holocultural method) (Cournoyer, 2000; Cournoyer & Malcolm, 2004; Rohner, 1986).

In PARTheory these issues are addressed in the universalist approach, a multi-methodology and multi-procedure research strategy that searches for the convergence of results across an array of discrete measurement modalities and paradigms of research in a broad range of sociocultural and ethnic settings worldwide. More specifically, five discrete methods or types of studies have been used to test core aspects of the theory. These methods can be discussed in two clusters. The first cluster consists of two types of studies. The first involves quantitative psychological studies using techniques such as interviews, behavior observations, and self-report questionnaires, most notably the Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ) (Rohner, 2005a), the Parental Acceptance-Rejection/Control Questionnaire (PARQ/Control) (Rohner,2005b), and the Personality Assessment Questionnaire (PAQ) (Rohner & Khaleque, 2005b). All these and other self-report questionnaires are contained in this *Handbook for the study of parental acceptance and rejection* (Rohner & Khaleque, 2005a).

Three versions of the PARQ and PARQ/Control exist. One is used to assess children's perceptions of the degree of acceptance or rejection (and behavioral control) they receive at the hands of their mothers, fathers, or other caregivers. Another assesses adults' recollections of their childhood experiences of maternal or paternal acceptance-rejection (and control). The third asks parents to reflect on their own accepting-rejecting and controlling behaviors. The PAQ, on the other hand, assesses individuals' (adults' or children's) self-perceptions of overall psychological adjustment as defined by the seven personality dispositions central to personality subtheory. Details about the PARQ, PARQ/Control, and PAQ—including about their reliability and validity for use internationally and among American ethnic groups—

is provided in Gomez and Rohner (2011), Rohner and Khaleque (2005a) and in Rohner (1986). References to several hundred quantitative psychological studies using all these techniques may be found in Rohner (2012). Meta-analysis, the second type of study in this cluster, summarizes and synthesizes results of a collection of these discrete psychological studies that may have conflicting results and may or may not include multiple cultural contexts. The work of Khaleque & Rohner (2002a) illustrates this method. This study was based on 43 studies representing 7,563 respondents in 15 nations and most major ethnic groups in the U.S. (e.g., African Americans, Asian Americans, European Americans, and Hispanic Americans). Results of that study supported PARTheory's postulate about the pancultural association between perceived parental acceptance and the overall psychological adjustment of both children and adults.

A second meta-analytic review (Khaleque & Rohner, 2002b) was based on 51 studies representing 6,898 respondents in eight nations and most major American ethnic groups. The purpose of that meta-analysis was to assess the reliability (as measured by coefficient alpha) of the two major classes of self-report questionnaires used in all these studies—that is, the PARQ and the PAQ. Results of the study confirmed that both sets of measures were reliable in all studies.

A third meta-analytic review (Rohner & Khaleque, 2010) expanded and refined the results of the first review, and it added an additional element. Specifically, that meta-analysis analyzed the association between adult males' versus females' overall psychological adjustment in relation to their remembrances of maternal versus paternal acceptance in childhood. Additionally, it analyzed adult males' versus females' overall psychological adjustment in relation to their perceptions of their intimate partners' current behavior (i.e., acceptance or rejection) toward them. The principal question addressed in that study was whether the psychological adjustment of adults who perceived themselves to be accepted or rejected by their intimate partners tended panculturally to be affected in the same way as is the psychological adjustment of adults who remembered themselves to have been accepted or rejected by major caregivers in childhood. The meta-analysis was based on 17 studies involving 3,568 adults in ten nations. Results showed that perceived partner acceptance in adulthood and remembered paternal and maternal acceptance in childhood tended in all societies studied to correlate highly with the current psychological adjustment of both men and women.

A fourth meta-analytic review (Khaleque & Rohner, 2011a) substantially expanded the first review. More specifically, that review was based on 68 studies involving 19,511 respondents from 22 countries on five continents. Results of analysis showed that the effect sizes of correlations between perceived maternal and paternal acceptance with offspring's psychological adjustment were significant for both children and adults across all cultures studied. Very importantly, the results also showed that the mean weighted effect size of the correlations between perceived *paternal* acceptance and children's psychological adjustment was significantly stronger than the mean weighted effect size of the correlation between perceived *maternal* acceptance and children's psychological adjustment.

Finally, a fifth study (Khaleque & Rohner, 2011b) took these meta-analyses a step further. Whereas the prior studies reviewed the pancultural association between perceived or remembered acceptance-rejection and overall psychological adjustment, this study broke the concept of psychological adjustment (as construed in PARTheory) into its constituent components—i.e., the seven personality dispositions most central to the acceptance-rejection syndrome described earlier. Our objective was to ascertain if each of the seven dispositions is panculturally associated with perceived maternal and paternal acceptance in childhood and with adults' remembrances of their childhood experiences of maternal and paternal acceptance. Results of the meta-analysis showed that both maternal and paternal acceptance correlated significantly and pan culturally with all seven personality dispositions measured on the Child PAQ. Additionally, remembered maternal acceptance correlated significantly and panculturally with all seven

personality dispositions of adult offspring. Remembered paternal acceptance, however, did not correlate as expected with dependence. These results were based on 36 studies that included 10,943 respondents from 22 countries.

The second cluster of distinctive methods used in PARTheory consists of three types of studies based on ethnographic research. The first of these is the ethnographic case study such as the one done by Rohner & Chaki-Sircar (1988). Ethnographic case studies employ long-term (e.g., six months to several years) participant observation procedures within a specific culturally organized community, along with structured and unstructured observations, interviews, and other such procedures. Such ethnographic studies produce a context-rich account of the lifeway of a people. A second method within this cluster is the controlled comparison or concomitant variation study (Naroll, 1968; Pelto & Pelto, 1978; Rohner, 1977). In these studies investigators usually locate two or more culture-bearing populations in which one of two conditions is true: (1) Relevant variables in the sampled populations vary, but other sociocultural factors remain constant, or (2) relevant variables in the sample population remain constant while other sociocultural factors are free to vary. Rohner's (1960) comparative study of parental rejection in three Pacific societies (i.e., a Maori community of New Zealand, a traditional highland community of Bali, and the Alorese of Indonesia) illustrates the second type of study in this cluster. Finally, the holocultural method (often called the cross-cultural survey method) is the third approach within this cluster (Naroll, Michik, & Naroll, 1976; 1980; Whiting & Child, 1953). This method is a research design for statistically measuring the relation between two or more theoretically defined and operationalized variables in a random, stratified sample of the world's adequately described sociocultural systems. The sources of data are ethnographic reports rather than direct observations, self-report questionnaires, interviews, or other such procedures (Rohner, et al., 1978). Rohner's 1975 study of 101 well-described non-industrial societies distributed widely throughout the major geographic regions and culture areas of the world illustrates this type of study.

Each of these five types of studies contains unique strengths and weaknesses. The strengths of the psychological-study cluster, for example, are several--including valid, reliable, and precise descriptions of phenomena. Estimates of both central tendency and variability in data generated in this cluster of methods allow sensitive statistical procedures to be employed to tease out subtle effects. A potential weakness of these studies however, is the fact that rich contextual data is often missing. Special strengths of the methods in the ethnographic research cluster are validity and groundedness. That is, ethnographic studies produce accounts that are rich in cultural detail and context. Derived as they are from ethnography, holocultural studies are also grounded, but they have an important additional strength in that they allow for truly species-wide sampling that takes into account the full range of known sociocultural variation. A weakness of these methods, however, is the fact that measures coded from ethnography are sometimes imprecise, and therefore may be low in reliability.

Evidence Supporting the Main Features of PARTheory

Overwhelmingly, the most highly developed portion of PARTheory is its personality subtheory. Evidence bearing on that subtheory comes from all five types of studies described above. Because of their robustness and simplicity, however, scores of researchers internationally have chosen to use the PARQ, PARQ/Control, and the PAQ with tens of thousands of children and adults in many ethnic groups and societies on every continent of the world except for Antarctica. More evidence has been compiled from these studies than from studies using any other set of measures. Accordingly, results of these studies are given greatest attention here.

Virtually every study that has used these measures—regardless of racial, cultural, linguistic, geographic, and other such variations—has reached the same conclusion: The experience of parental acceptance (or

rejection) tends to be associated with the form of psychological adjustment (or maladjustment) postulated in personality subtheory. The meta-analysis described earlier of 43 studies drawing from 7,563 respondents worldwide using the PARQ and PAQ, for example, showed that 3,433 additional studies, all with nonsignificant results, would be required to disconfirm the conclusion that perceived acceptance-rejection is panculturally associated with children's psychological adjustment; 941 such studies would be required to disconfirm the conclusion among adults (Khaleque & Rohner, 2002a). All effect sizes reported in the meta-analysis were statistically significant. Additionally, results showed no significant heterogeneity in effect sizes in different samples cross-culturally or within American ethnic groups.

That meta-analysis also showed that regardless of culture, ethnicity, or geographic location, approximately 26% of the variability in children's psychological adjustment and 21% of that in adults' is accounted for by perceived parental (paternal as well at maternal) acceptance-rejection. These results support PARTheory's expectation that the magnitude of the relation between perceived acceptance-rejection and psychological adjustment is likely to be stronger in childhood--while children are still under the direct influences of parents--than in adulthood (Rohner, 1986, 1999). Obviously, a substantial amount of variance in children's and adults' adjustment remains to be accounted for by factors so far unmeasured in this program of research. No doubt a variety of cultural, behavioral, genetic, and other learning factors are implicated in this variance (Reiss, 1997; Saudino, 1997).

As we said above, three other classes of data also support the major postulates of PARTheory's personality subtheory. These are cross-cultural survey (holocultural) studies, ethnographic case studies, and controlled comparison (concomitant variation) studies. Regarding the first, results of the major holocultural study (Rohner, 1975) of 101 well-described non-industrial societies mentioned earlier confirmed the conclusion that parental acceptance-rejection is associated panculturally with the psychological (mal)adjustment of children and adults. Additionally, the controlled comparison of three sociocultural groups in the Pacific mentioned earlier (Rohner, 1960) also supports this conclusion, as does an 18-month ethnographic and psychological community study in West Bengal, India (Rohner & Chaki-Sircar, 1988). Additionally, a six-month ethnographic and psychological case study of 349 9-through 16-year-old youths in St. Kitts, West Indies (Rohner, 1987) along with a six-month ethnographic and psychological case study of 281 9-through 18-year-old youths and their parents in a poor, biracial (African American and European American) community in Southeast Georgia, USA (Rohner, Bourque & Elordi (1996); Veneziano & Rohner, 1998) also confirm the conclusion that perceived parental acceptance-rejection is associated with youths' psychological adjustment.

All this evidence about the apparently universal expressions of acceptance-rejection along with evidence about the worldwide psychological effects of perceived acceptance-rejection led Rohner (2004) to formulate the concept of a relational diagnosis called *the acceptance-rejection syndrome*. The acceptance-rejection syndrome consists of two complementary sets of factors. First, nearly 500 studies show that children and adults everywhere appear to organize their perceptions of parental acceptance-rejection around the same four classes of behavior discussed earlier (i.e., warmth/affection—or its opposite—coldness/lack of affection, hostility/aggression, indifference/neglect, and undifferentiated rejection).

Second, as just noted, cross-cultural evidence strongly supports the conclusion that children and adults who experienced their relationship with parents (and other attachment figures) as being rejecting tend universally to self-report the specific form of psychological maladjustment specified in personality subtheory. Together these two classes of behavior comprise a *syndrome*, that is, a pattern or constellation of co-occurring behaviors, traits, and dispositions. Any single psychological disposition (e.g., anger, hostility, or aggression) may be found in other conditions; it is the full configuration of dispositions that compose the syndrome. In addition to issues of psychological adjustment described in personality

subtheory and in the acceptance-rejection syndrome, evidence also strongly implicates at least three other mental health issues as likely universal correlates of perceived parental rejection. These issues are (1) depression and depressed affect, (2) behavior problems, including conduct disorders, externalizing behaviors, and delinquency, and (3) substance (drug and alcohol) abuse (Rohner & Britner, 2002). Evidence regarding each of these topics is briefly amplified below.

Depression. Parental rejection has been found to be consistently related to both clinical and non-clinical depression and depressed affect within major ethnic groups in the United States, including African Americans (Crook, Raskin, & Eliot, 1981), Asian Americans (Greenberger & Chen, 1996), European Americans (Belsky & Pensky, 1988; Jacobson, Fasman, & DiMascio, 1975; Whitbeck, Conger, & Kao, 1993; Whitbeck, Hoyt, Miller, & Kao, 1992), and Hispanic Americans (Dumka, Roosa, & Jackson, 1997). In addition, parental rejection has been found to be linked with depression in many countries worldwide, including Australia (Parker, 1983a; Parker, Kiloh, & Hayward, 1987), China (Chen, Rubin, & Li, 1995), Egypt (Fattah, 1996; Hassab-Allah, 1996; Salama, 1990), Germany (Richter, 1994), Hungary (Richter, 1994), Italy (Richter, 1994), Sweden (Perris et al., 1986; Richter, 1994), and Turkey (Erkman, 1992). Moreover, a number of longitudinal studies show that perceived parental rejection in childhood tends to precede the development of depressive symptoms in adolescence and adulthood (Chen, Rubin & Li, 1995; Ge, Best, Conger, & Simons, 1996; Ge, Lorenz, Conger, Elder, & Simons, 1994; Lefkowitz & Tesiny, 1984; Peterson, Sarigiani, & Kennedy, 1991; Robertson & Simons, 1989).

Behavior problems. Parental rejection also appears to be a major predictor of almost all forms of behavior problems, including conduct disorders, externalizing behavior, and delinquency. Cross-cultural findings that support this conclusion come from Bahrain (Al-Falaij, 1991), China (Chen, Rubin, & Li, 1997), Croatia (Ajdukovic, 1990), Egypt (Salama, 1984), England (Farrington & Hawkins, 1991; Maughan, Pickles, & Quinton, 1995), India (Saxena, 1992), and Norway (Pedersen, 1994). Studies also support this conclusion among American ethnic groups, including African Americans, Asian Americans, European Americans, and Hispanic Americans (Chen et al., 1998; Marcus & Gray, 1998; Rothbaum & Weis, 1994; Whitbeck, Hoyt, & Ackley, 1997). Finally, a number of longitudinal studies in the U.S. (Ge, Best, Conger, & Simon, 1996; Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1986; Simons, Robertson, & Downs, 1989), and globally (Chen et al., 1997) show that parental rejection tends to precede the development of behavior problems.

Substance abuse. Support for the worldwide correlation between parental acceptance-rejection and substance abuse comes from studies conducted in Australia (Rosenberg, 1971), Canada (Hundleby & Mercer, 1987), England (Merry, 1972), the Netherlands (Emmelkamp & Heeres, 1988), and Sweden (Vrasti et al., 1990). Some of these studies clearly suggest that parental rejection is *causally* connected with both drug abuse and alcohol abuse. Parental rejection has also been found to be connected with substance abuse in major ethnic groups in the U.S., including among African Americans (Eldred, Brown, & Mahabir, 1974; Myers, Newcomb, Richardson, & Alvy, 1997; Prendergast & Schaefer, 1974; Shedler & Block, 1990), Asian Americans (Shedler & Block, 1990), and Hispanic Americans (Coombs & Paulson, 1988; Coombs, Paulson, & Richardson, 1991). Moreover, Rohner and Britner (2002) found a number of studies providing evidence about the relation between parental rejection and substance abuse among middle class and working class European Americans.

The importance of father love. Substantial evidence in all these classes of study suggests that father love (acceptance-rejection) is often as strongly implicated as mother love in the development of behavioral and psychological problems as well as in the development of offspring's sense of health and well-being (Rohner, 1998; Rohner & Veneziano, 2001; Veneziano, 2000, 2003). Studies supporting this conclusion tend to deal with the following six issues among children, adolescents, and adults: (1) personality and psychological adjustment problems (Ahmed, Rohner, & Carrasco, 2011; Amato, 1994;

Dominy, Johnson, & Koch, 2000; Khaleque & Rohner, 2011a; Komarovsky, 1976; Stagner, 1933);(2) mental illness (Barrera & Garrison-Jones, 1992; Lefkowitz & Tesiny, 1984); (3) psychological health and well-being (Amato, 1994); (4) conduct disorder (Eron, Banta, Walder, & Laulicht, 1961); (5) substance abuse (Brook & Brook, 1988; Emmelkamp & Heeres, 1988); and (6) delinquency (Andry, 1962).

Some of these studies, especially those carried out in the 1990s and later, use multiple regression, structural equation modeling, and other powerful statistical procedures that allow investigators to estimate the relative contribution of each parent's behavior to youth outcomes. Many of these studies conclude that father/paternal love explains a unique and independent portion of the variance in specific child outcomes over and above the portion explained by maternal love (Ahmed, Rohner & Carrasco, 2011; Carrasco & Rohner, 2011; Veneziano, 2003). Other studies conclude that paternal love is sometimes the sole significant predictor of specific child outcomes (Rohner & Veneziano, 2001). Studies in this latter category tend to address one or more of the following issues: (1) personality and psychological adjustment problems (Barnett, Marshall, & Pleck, 1992; Bartle, Anderson, & Sabatelli, 1989; Dickie et al., 1997); (2) conduct and delinquency problems (Kroupa, 1988); and (3) substance abuse (Brook, Whiteman, & Gordon, 1981; Eldred, Brown, & Mahabir, 1974).

Implications of PARTheory Evidence

The search in PARTheory for cross-culturally valid principles of behavior is based on the assumption that with a scientific understanding of the worldwide antecedents, consequences, and other correlates of acceptance-rejection comes the possibility of formulating culture-fair and practicable programs, policies, and interventions affecting families and children everywhere. This research contributes to the goal of culture-fair programs and policies in that it asks practitioners to look beyond differences in cultural beliefs, language, and custom when making judgments about the adequacy of parenting, and to focus instead on whether individuals' basic needs (e.g., the need for positive response from significant others, especially attachment figures) are being met. Social policies and programs of prevention, intervention, and treatment based on idiosyncratic beliefs at a particular point in history are likely to prove unworkable for some, and probably even prejudicial for many minority populations. Policies and programs based on demonstrable principles of human behavior, however, stand a good chance of working as nations and people change. The values and customs of a particular sociocultural group, therefore, are not—according to PARTheory—the most important criteria to be used to evaluate the adequacy of parenting in that group. Rather, the most important question becomes how loved (accepted) do children perceive themselves to be. Insofar as children perceive their parents and other attachment figures to be accepting, then—according to both theory and evidence presented here—it probably makes little difference for children's developmental outcome how external reporters view parents' behavior.

It is thoughts such as these that have motivated a great part of PARTheory research. Now, after five decades of research with thousands of individuals in more than 60 cultures worldwide, and with members of every major American ethnic group, at least two conclusions seem warranted. First, the same classes of behaviors appear universally to convey the symbolic message that "my parent. . ." (or other attachment figure) "loves me" (or does not love me, care about me, want me-i.e., rejects me). These classes of behavior include the perception of warmth/affection (or its opposite, coldness and lack of affection), hostility/aggression, indifference/neglect, and undifferentiated rejection, as defined at the beginning of this article. Second, differences in culture, ethnicity, social class, race, gender, and other such factors do not exert enough influence to override the apparently universal tendency for children and adults everywhere to respond in essentially the same way when they perceive themselves to be accepted or rejected by the people most important to them, especially attachment figures. Having said this, however, we must also stress that the association between perceived acceptance-rejection and psychological outcomes for youths and adults is far from perfect. Indeed, even though perceived acceptance-rejection appears to account universally for an average of about 26% of the variance in the psychological

adjustment of youths and adults, approximately 74% of the variance is yet to be accounted for by other factors. No doubt behavior genetics, neurobiological, sociocultural, and other experiential factors are among these influences. Nonetheless, results of research completed so far are so robust and stable cross-culturally that we believe professionals should feel confident developing policies and practice-applications based on the central tenets of PARTheory—especially PARTheory's personality subtheory—despite the fact that much is yet to be learned about the causes, effects, and other correlates of perceived interpersonal acceptance and rejection.

PARTheory's Place in the History of Research on Parental Acceptance-Rejection

The empirical study of parental acceptance-rejection has a history going back to the 1890s (Stogdill, 1937). It was not until the 1930s, however, that a more-or-less continuous body of empirical research began to appear dealing with the effects of parental acceptance-rejection. Today more than 3,000 studies are available on the topic (Rohner, 2012). A great many individuals have contributed to this body of work, but a handful have made especially significant and sustained contributions. These individuals and groups represent different programs of research, employing distinctive concepts, measures, and research designs. For example, an especially productive early collection of acceptance-rejection research papers came from the Fels Research Institute in the 1930s and 1940s (Baldwin, Kalhorn, & Breese, 1945, 1949). Researchers associated with the Institute used the Fels Parental Behavior Rating Scales (Champney, 1941). During the 1930s and 1940s the Smith College Studies in Social Work also produced a long and useful series of research chapters on the effects of parental acceptance-rejection (e.g., Witmer, Leach, & Richman, 1938).

Especially noteworthy in the 1950s and 1960s--and extending into the 1970s and 1980s--was the seminal work of Schaefer and associates using the Children's Report of Parental Behavior Inventory (CRPBI; Schaefer, 1959, 1961, 1965; Schludermann & Schludermann, 1970, 1971, 1983). Also noteworthy from the 1960s and 1970s was the work of Siegelman and colleagues using the Parent-Child Relations Questionnaire (Roe & Siegelman, 1963). Rohner's program of research, which ultimately led to the construction of PARTheory and associated measures in the 1970s and 1980s grew directly out of these psychological traditions in the United States as well as from his own program of cross-cultural comparative research beginning in 1960 (Rohner, 1960, 1975; Rohner & Nielsen, 1978; Rohner & Rohner, 1980, 1981).

Other independent programs of research on issues of acceptance-rejection have also evolved, especially in the 1980s and 1990s but also expanding well into the 21st century. In the U.S. four of these programs are especially prominent. One is the sociological tradition of research based on the concept of "parental support" and "parental supportive behavior" advocated by Rollins & Thomas (1979)—and utilizing a wide variety of research measures and research designs (Amato & Booth 1997; Amato & Fowler, 2002; Barber & Thomas, 1986; Barnes & Farrell, 1992; Peterson & Rollins, 1987; Peterson, Rollins & Thomas, 1985; Whitbeck, Conger, & Kao, 1993; Whitbeck, Hoyt, Miller & Kao, 1992; Young, Miller, Norton, & Hill, 1995).

Another program of research comes from Baumrind's widely recognized conceptual model dealing with parenting prototypes, including the concepts of authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and rejecting/neglecting styles of parenting (Baumrind, 1966, 1968, 1989, 1991). Her work has been widely discussed and incorporated into the research of many other investigators. Perhaps most prominent among these investigators is Steinberg and colleagues (Glasgow, Dornbusch, Troyer, Steinberg, & Ritter, 1997; Gray & Steinberg, 1999; Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991; Steinberg, Elman, & Mounts, 1989; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992). Baumrind's parenting prototypes have also

generated more controversy than any other single parenting model, especially the claim that the authoritative style of parenting produces the most competent children. Increasingly, doubt is growing whether authoritative parenting necessarily produces optimum developmental outcomes for such ethnic minorities as African Americans (Baumrind, 1972; Smetana, 2000), Chinese Americans (Chao, 1994), Hispanic Americans (Torres-Villa, 1995), Korean Americans (Kim & Rohner, 2002), and others.

A third program of research comes from the work of Downey, Feldman, and colleagues (Downey & Feldman, 1996; Downey, Khouri, & Feldman, 1997; Feldman & Downey, 1994). These researchers explore the issue of "rejection sensitivity." According to them, interpersonal rejection—especially parental rejection in childhood—leads children to develop a heightened sensitivity to being rejected. That is, the children become disposed to anxiously and angrily expect, to readily perceive, and to overreact to rejection in ways that compromise their intimate relationships as well as their own wellbeing. Additionally, these authors and their colleagues have found that rejection sensitive children and adults often interpret the minor or imagined insensitivity of significant others—or the ambiguous behavior of others—as being intentional rejection.

Finally, a seminal body of research is now emerging on the neuropsychological and psychobiological correlates of perceived rejection. This body of work is not associated with a specific person or named group of persons, but rather is derivative from the neurosciences, especially from research dealing with the genetic, neurological and physiological underpinnings of perceived rejection. Thus research shows clearly that the pain and suffering associated with perceived rejection is no mere epiphenomenon, but rather has a directly measurable impact on the physical and mental health and development of individuals (e.g., see MacDonald & Jensen-Campbell, 2011; Van Harmelen, et al, 2011).

All these bodies of work, except for Rohner's, focus heavily—though not exclusively—on European Americans. However, at least three programs of international acceptance-rejection research also exist. First, with the construction and validation of a self-report questionnaire called the EMBU (Perris, Jacobsson, Lindstrvm, von Knorring, & Perris, 1980), Perris, Emmelkamp, & others launched a productive European and cross-cultural program of research on the psychological effects of acceptance-rejection (Arrindell, Gerlsma, Vandereycken, Hageman, & Daeseleire, 1998; Emmelkamp & Hecrus, 1988; Perris, Arrindell, & Eisemann, 1994; Perris et al., 1985; Perris, Arrindell, Perris, Eisemann, van der Ende, & von Knorring, 1986).

Second, a somewhat less developed body of international research is that of Parker and associates, working primarily in Australia and England, and using the parental bonding instrument (PBI) (Parker, 1983a, 1983b, 1984, 1986; Parker, & Barnett, 1988; Parker, Tupling, & Brown, 1979; Torgersen, & Alnaes, 1992). Finally, beginning in the 1990's Chen and colleagues have been developing a productive series of longitudinal and cross-sectional studies primarily in The People's Republic of China and Canada on issues surrounding both maternal and paternal acceptance and rejection (Chen, Dong, & Zhou, 1997; Chen, Hastings, Rubin, Chen, Cen, & Stewart, 1998; Chen, Liu, & Li, 2000; Chen, Wu, Chen, Wang, & Cen, 2001).

Among these programs of research on acceptance-rejection, the work of Rohner and colleagues—drawing from PARTheory and associated measures—is most highly developed.

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